

“Sun-Painting,” 15 March 1839

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, William Henry Fox Talbot, Desmaret, Nicephore Niépce, Charles, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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SUN-PAINTING.—We have all heard of the ingenious project which so long occupied the sage people of Laputa—that of extracting sun-beams from cucumbers, so as to send them about when evening drew near, and remove altogether that disagreeable impediment to improvement, called Night. If the device had succeeded it would not have produced greater astonishment than the discovery which is just now producing prodigious excitement in France and considerable sensation in England—that of employing the sun to create pictures, landscapes and portraits, persons and things; any object, indeed, which Nature presents to the eye; taking the pencil out of the hands of all classes of artists, except it may be the historical painter, and away from the engraver altogether! We have, in type, a long article, on the subject; but really the lights are at present so much in darkness that we do not know how to deal with it, in anything like a moderate space. First came Mr Daguerre with his discovery—which he christened “The Daguerrotype;” next our own accomplished countryman, Mr Fox Talbot, with his, which he named “Photogenic Drawing.” More recently M. Desmaret has put forward his claims; from Germany there is another applicant for the fame of it; but now it appears that the actual inventor is a M. Neipce [Niépce—ed.], of Chalons-sur-Saône, who has been dead several years; but even he, it seems, was indebted for the hint to a M. Charles. There is, however, no question that the honour of the discovery does not belong to M. Daguerre; although it is equally certain that he has the merit of considerably improving upon it.

[End of text.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

The referenced “long” article “in type” never appears; the next articles on this topic of any length appears in the August and September issues (after the disclosure of the Daguerre’s process.)

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