

“Uses of the Daguerreotype,” January 1843

(keywords: James Franquet, James P. Weston, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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USES OF THE DAGUERREOTYPE

THE Daguerreotype process can represent objects all but in motion; a momentary suspension of movement only is necessary to fix the image on the plate, and a transient expression of the countenance is rendered permanent. If there is one thing more than another that the magic power of the Daguerreotype is valuable for it is this, of limning the fleeting shades of expression in the human face: for here the art of the painter, however great his skill, is most at fault. Could Garrick have looked all his characters before the lens of the Daguerreotype, generations would have beheld again and again, what was given to his contemporaries to see once and away. Charles Matthews, who dipped for faces behind his green table, need only to have presented his various physiognomies before the Daguerreotype camera, to have them reflected in that retinent mirror. We instance actors in particular, because their art consisting in assuming at will characters and feelings, the Daguerreotype is peculiarly well adapted to take their portraits in a state of emotion.

The value of the Daguerreotype as an aid to artists both in landscape and portraiture is not yet fully appreciated; nor is the practice of producing prints from photographs so general as it is likely to become. We have lately seen two Daguerreotype views taken by Messrs. Franquet & Weston, of No 12 Park Place, the one of the Astor-House, the other of the City Hall—they are beautifully executed, and are the most exact representations of Public buildings that can be imagined. To appreciate them duly, these photographs should be viewed through a medium of high magnifying power. We have also seen some Daguerreotype portraits by Franquet & Weston, which, for finish, and artistical disposition, are superior to any which have come before us. Being themselves artists, these gentlemen perfectly understand the position most favorable to the party sitting for a portrait. Most persons under such circumstances, sit in a stiff and constrained posture, pursing up their mouths, and looking very gravely. But Mr. Franquet alters all this, he places them in an easy and natural attitude. We have seen several most graceful and lovely portraits of ladies, taken by his Daguerreotype. The whole process does not occupy more than two minutes, so that any person can easily maintain the same expression of countenance, during the whole time of sitting. We would hint to the ladies, that figured silk, or stamped velvet dresses, give most effect to these pictures; every minutiae of their patterns coming out with miraculous exactness.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

The daguerreotypists mentioned are James Franquetet and James P. Weston.

Only nine issues of this monthly publication were issued before it was absorbed by *Lady's World* (later *Peterson's Magazine*.)

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