Daguerre to Hunt, “The effect being instantaneous,” 19 February 1841
(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, Robert Hunt, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography.)

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Manuscript letter:

Robert Hunt, Esq
   Secretary for the Royal Cornwall
   Polytechnic Society  Falmouth

    Sir,
I have received your very amiable
letter and I wish I could give you an
answer more suitable to your wishes
and to my desire of being either agreeable
or useful to you. But though
the principle of my new discovery
is certain, I am determined not to
publish it before I have succeeded
in making the execution of it
as easy for every body as it is to
myself. I have announced it
immediately at the Royal
Academy of Paris merely to [illeg.]
date is to ascertain my right to the
priority of the invention. By means
of that new process it shall be
possible to fix the image of objects
in motion such as public ceremonies
market places covered with people, cattles &c.
The effect being instantaneous. —

   I sincerely regret to be unable
for the present to give you any more
precise information and I hope for
another opportunity of being of
some service to you.

   I am, Sir, very respectfully
your obedient S'. [servant—Ed.]
   Daguerre
Paris the 19th of February
EDITOR’S NOTES:
Robert Hunt mentions this correspondence in 1844:

As long back as 1841, it was announced that M. Daguerre had discovered a process by which an instantaneous effect was produced; and in a communication with which the author was favoured from Daguerre himself he states, “By means of that new process it shall be possible to fix the images of objects in motion, such as public ceremonies, market-places covered with people, cattle” &c. But, up to the present time, some great obstacle appears to have interfered with the successful practical use of this new and important discovery. It has been stated, and apparently on satisfactory evidence, that electricity is the agent employed to assist the operations of Light in bringing about the required change.¹

It is possible that Hunt wrote to Daguerre with the hope of incorporating Daguerre’s “improvements” in his 1841 book, [Robert Hunt.] A Popular Treatise on the Art of Photography, including Daguerréotype, and all the New Methods of Producing Pictures by the Chemical Agency of Light (Glasgow: Richard Griffin and Company, 1841).


Daguerre’s admitted his “improved” process as being “rather complicated,” The process received scant notice nor incorporation into practical use.

1. Robert Hunt, Researches on Light: and Examination of all the Phenomena connected with the Chemical and Molecular Changes produced by the Influence of the Solar Rays; embracing all the Known Photographic Processes, and New Discoveries in the Art (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844): 89.
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