

Francis Frith

“The Art of Photography,” March 1859, *The Art Journal*, p. 71

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Excerpt:

The rapidity of production of which the merely mechanical process of photographic picture-making is capable, may easily become a source of great mischief. The student should bear in mind that what he is to aim at is not the production of a large number of “good” pictures, but, if possible, of ONE which shall satisfy all the requirements of his judgement and taste. That one, when produced, will be, we need not say, of infinitely greater value to his feelings and reputation than a “lane-full” of merely “good” pictures. Think of the careful thought and labour which are expended over every successful piece of canvas, and the months of patient work which are requisite to perfect a first-class steel plate! and then turn to the gentleman who describes a machine which he has contrived for taking six dozen pictures in a day! Every one of them – this is the distressing part of the business – every one of them capable of throwing off as many impressions as the steel plate! We shudder to think of the thousands of vile “negatives” boxed up at this moment in holes and corners, any one of which may, on a sunny day, hatch a brood of hateful “positives.”

We feel it to be a solemn duty to remind photographers of the responsibilities which they incur by harbouring these dangerous reproductive productions; and we beg of them – for their own sakes, and for that of society – to lose no time in washing off, or otherwise destroying, by far the greater part of these “negative” possessions.