

# THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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### PHOTOGRAPHIC CIRCULARS.

Among the advantages of the past, the "good old times"—which, in one respect at least, deserved their laudatory epithet—was that negative bliss, the absence of discomfort too frequently occasioned in the present by the arrival of the everlasting circular. How often have wild words wandered from the mouth of Jones, who has long languished, expectant of that little cheque, and anxiously attending its arrival by every post, when he discovers—brought to him by the careful postman—now a list of the marvellous cures of a new medicine, and now a description of the advantages to be derived from becoming at once a member of the Company (Limited) for importing asses into Spain! To our ancestors these multiplied copies of exposition of mercantile interest called circulars, as addressed to a circle or number of persons, were happily unknown. Dr. Johnson, in his Dictionary, though in addition to the ordinary meaning of geometrical form, he treats of circular lines and circular sailing, is altogether dumb about the circular, the business circular of modern time.

The photographer who wishes to add to the heap of gold which he keeps at his bankers, it behoves to be wary exceedingly in the composition of circulars. What is the advantage now, in this brazen age of scepticism and incredulity, to chatter about "high finish" or "artistic skill"? Of what profit is it now to prattle in print in the page consecrated to advertisements of the "finest studio" in Stockwell? What boots it to talk of the "best portraits" in our modern Babylon? Of what avail to add that these same portraits are the "most economic" in all England? Or of what service to challenge to competition the world at large? People are no longer like those Bereans, more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica—the Bereans who received the word with all readiness of mind. Incredulity is in the air. We have learned to doubt the genuineness of such circulars, and to distribute them is but to sow the sand, to preach

to the wind, to beat the waves, to bay the moon, to whistle a waltz to a milestone. The public is as careless of the "finest studio," the "best portraits," the "cheapest cartes," as the neighbouring rustics were in the old fable of the plaintive voice of the shepherd lad who beguiled his leisure moments by ejaculating "Wolf! wolf! wolf!" when there was no wolf. The public is all too wise to be caught by this venerable bait. Too often have the "best portraits" been weighed in the scale of family censure and been found wanting. Too often has the "finest studio" proved to be a small, ill-lighted, dilapidated, and draughty attic. Circulars conceived in this style serve less to attract than to repel. They have come to be synonymous, to the experienced understanding, of those weird words which Dante imagined written over the portals of Hell. What, then, is wanted in a photographic circular, when such incitements as these have been proved to be insufficient, and even our "own particular process" has been discovered to be totally inadequate to fulfil the design for which its ingenious parent brought it into being? The answer to this question is contained in one word—novelty. Nay, the successful circular must be like the latest comedy, not only new but also original.

The Athenians and strangers which were in Athens in the days of Paul were not, probably, the only people in the world of his period who spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. The saint, for his own purpose, singled them out especially, but the desire of novelty is as strong and universal in our metropolis in the time of our most gracious sovereign lady Queen Victoria, as it was in Athens in the days of the heathen Emperor Nero. The yearning avidity for something fresh, which is the chief principle of attraction in the crowd unable to fill its heart with gazing at the *kyrielle* of a street quack, or the gew-gaws used in the coronation of a queen, may be censured by ministers of the Gospel as arguing a worldly, shallow, or unsettled mind; but it is, nevertheless—by reason, perhaps, of our corrupt