

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NEWS.

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ABOUT SOME LANTERNS.

THE lantern has now become almost as familiar to amateur workers as the camera, but, unlike the latter instrument, it requires great care in working—that is to say, if it be fitted with lime-light. Much has lately been written about its capabilities as a means of instruction, and its use has even been advocated as an aid in religious services. There could be no possible objection to such recommendations if the worthy writers who ventilate their views would only seek some acquaintance with the working of the instrument itself. This they commonly neglect to do. It is sufficient for them that the lantern will be an effective handmaid to them, and they talk as airily of the manner in which it is used as if the operation were as easy as the spinning of a top. And yet, as all who have had any experience with the instrument must know, the lantern should not be handled by anyone new to the task without several words of caution.

This universal cry for more lantern work has had one bad result, which, however, in the natural course of things, must be of a temporary nature only. It has caused a great influx of rubbish in the shape of optical lanterns, and the creation of a certain class of dealers who know somewhat less of the instrument than do their customers. It has been our fortune, within the past year or so, to be appealed to by many persons who have bought cheap lanterns—at least, they are by courtesy called cheap—and who have forwarded or brought the instruments to us in order that we may pronounce an opinion upon them. This we invariably decline to do, in the first place, because we do not care to increase the number of threatened actions for libel which is the common lot of newspapers to receive; secondly, because we have no time for experiments with apparatus which, at a glance, we see to be useless; and thirdly, because we do not care to run the risk of bodily injury from "fooling around," as the Americans say, with faulty apparatus. But "faulty" is no word to describe some of the fearful and wonderful instruments which come to us in this way; "fraudulent" would be

by far the better adjective to employ. In what other way could we describe a lime burner with the jet attached to the gas supply tubes with *solder*? But we will not multiply examples, although we could easily do so. Let it be sufficient to point out that the first risk run by the aspiring lanternist is not from contact with mixed gases, but from contact with one of these low-class dealers.

We have expressed the opinion that the evil is only of a temporary kind, for a man who sells rubbish becomes known sooner or later, and his trade declines. But it must be remembered that such traders could not go on for long unless they had clients ready to patronise them. Some people—and well-to-do people too—will take a vast amount of trouble to save a few shillings in a purchase. There are many well-known dealers in lanterns who would not, for any sum offered to them, allow a faulty instrument to leave their premises. Their names are known all over the civilised world for the excellence of their work, for which they charge a fair price. But the buyer of the type already alluded to takes no count of all this. He is deluded by the specious advertisement of a dealer of mushroom growth, buys his lantern, and, when he has found how worthless the thing is, is only too glad to sell it at a fraction of its cost.

An inexperienced buyer is very apt to be deceived by the outside appearance of a lantern. A case of this kind came under our personal notice only a few weeks back. We were asked to lecture at a large provincial hall; a lantern, which was described as "a magnificent triunial," being provided by the promoters. Upon entering the room, this gorgeous instrument at once attracted our attention, so brilliant was it in its array of polished mahogany and lacquered brass. "What do you think of that?" said our guide. Our answer was that we would reserve our opinion until we saw the instrument at work, whereupon the operator lighted up his jets, and we handed to him a test slide. This was a birdseye view of a portion of London, full of detail, and as perfect a picture in other respects as