

BOOK REVIEW : 1

In addition to keeping the Society's books our Treasurer and Secretary Mike Smith continues to produce those of his own. To his earlier *To Catch a Sunbeam* (1) and *The Road to the Isles* (2) he now adds *Traditional Nursery Tales seen through a Magic Lantern* (3).

This reproduces in colour, slides and accompanying readings from eight sets in the Primus Junior Lecturers' Series: no 503 *Nursery Rhymes*; no 518 *There was an Old Woman who lived in a Shoe*; no 520 *The Queen of Hearts*; no 603 *Little Red Riding Hood*; no 612 *Dick Whittington*; no 615 *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*; no 763 *The House that Jack Built* and no 772 *Aladdin*. The last two of these sets are reproduced in full (8 slides each) and the others in part only – 35 of the 48 slides involved appearing. These reductions in numbers are no doubt inevitable to make the sets – even given their relatively small original size – acceptable to the modern audience. In a what is perhaps a further attempt to make the slides more 'modern' the readings on two of the three sets from the 'Series A' (whose slides carry printed readings as part of their images) have been removed.

Only one of these omissions seems 'significant', that of the final slide in the *Red Riding Hood* set. This shows 'The Wolf sold to a Wild Beast Show' – an image and an ending to the story perhaps unique to this magic lantern treatment – not having been killed at all 'by the kind farmer and his men'. The accompanying text has been correspondingly modified: 'They at once set upon the greedy old wolf, and beat him with sticks until he was dead' whereas the original reading had 'was nearly dead'. This freedom with the source material, though it can be justified on a variety of grounds, fits rather oddly with book's subtitle *Seen through a Magic Lantern* (itself, it must be admitted, rather odd: making the lantern sound like a variety of telescope) – since, when the magic lantern makes a distinct contribution to one of the tales, it is removed to bring the story into line with the official *Traditional* version.

3. The slide reproduced is number 3 in the *Dick Whittington* set.

traditional Nursery Tales

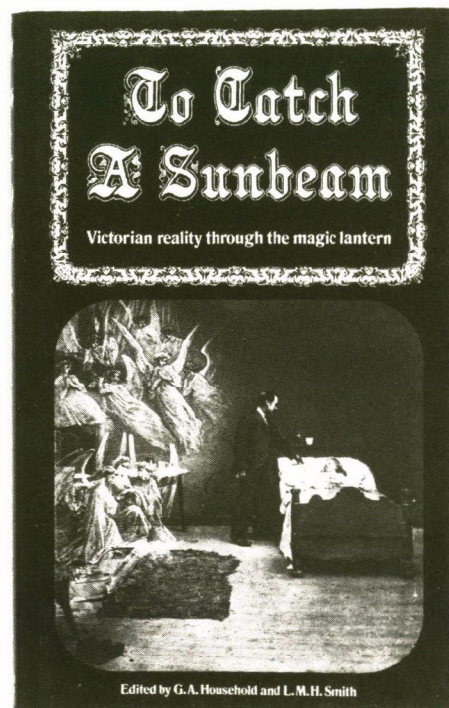
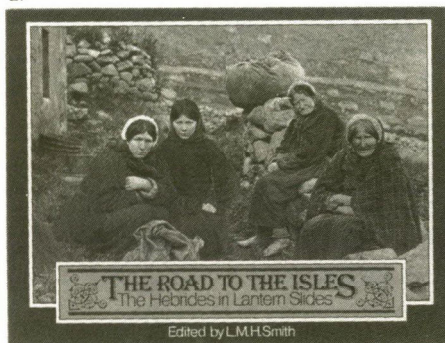
Seen through a Magic Lantern

From the collection of L. M. H. SMITH. London: Hamlyn, 1986. 28x20cm. 64p.

The standard of the colour illustrations is high. In addition to the illustrations described and those on the dust-wrapper – all reproduced in colour – the front cover of the book carries an embossed reproduction derived from slide 8 in the *Ali Baba* set – 'Morgiana kills the Robber Chief'. The trouble which has been taken over this – for many people an easily overlooked detail – is also evident on each of the book's pages and reflects the care which has been given to its design and production throughout.

The book has the modest price of £5.95 – making it the lowest priced of Mike's books to date – and it will no doubt sell widely on the basis of this and its very attractive contents.

David Henry



traditional Nursery Tales



Seen through a Magic Lantern



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