

# A LANTERNIST'S CRI DE COEUR

Laurent Mannoni's article deals mainly with the magic lantern's battle for survival in the face of competition from the infant cinematograph. In this country it is in the ancestor of our own journal that we find evidence of the battle. Early in the new century *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* had changed its name to *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*. By 1910 films had overrun the entire magazine. This prompted a heart-felt letter from an old reader which appeared in the issue of 13 January 1910:

**More Wanted About the Lantern**  
Mr F. W. Lewis writes from Derby:

DEAR MR EDITOR,

As an old lanternist and one who has taken interest in the *Lantern Journal* since its birth, I cannot understand why little or no room is found for the lanternist. We get all the new films, all the latest bioscopes, all the novelties for the kinematograph, but the old lanternist who has stood the heat and burden of the day gets nothing new. It's film, film, film, column after column of kinematograph shows, pages of machines, and one begins to wonder if there are any lanterns and lantern shows left in the world. Are there no new inventions? Have there been no new lots of slides published or new improvements made? Is the lantern to be completely wiped out by the motion pictures? Surely Mr Editor, there are thousands of lanternists who would welcome more space in your valuable paper devoted to lantern matters, new ideas, inventions, tricks, new slides, etc., and which would tend to make the paper more acceptable to all parties.

The Editor replied defensively:

Once again we are taken to account for not devoting more space to optical lanterns and accessories, but we remind the writer that we are the only journal that has done anything at all in the matter during the past few years – and that without much support from the trade whom we are trying to save. We engaged 'Condenser' to take up this section of our journal and we shall shortly announce some interesting developments therein.

Alas, no announcement came, and except for a few small ads advertising old lanterns and slides for sale, that was the last that was heard of the lantern in the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*.



## PUSSY CAT PROJECTION

John Townsend has recently added to his collection a turn-of-the-century French children's book, *Les Animaux Joyeux* (The Jolly Animals). The book includes this illustration of cats excitedly watching a lantern show, evidently about their favourite subject. The text which accompanies the illustration reads (in translation):

Preparations are in hand for a magnificent festival, to be held in the pleasure palace of Dr Rominagrobis; for this occasion, the celebrated cat doctor, whose patients come from all walks of life, discards his normal grave personality, and assumes one of great importance but at the same time good-humoured; for it is he who will operate the magic lantern!

After long and thorough studies of his subjects, he has discovered that gaiety and fun can protect them from a large number of illnesses and, without going to great lengths to give examples of this fact, he also pretends to treat those afflicted by imaginary ills by distracting their emotions.

There is no scene that can excite an audience of cats (and I mean all cats, from society cats to alley

cats) like the sight of moving pictures crossing a bright screen.

'To your seats! – to your seats!' cries a voice of authority, which belongs to the little grey, who is in charge of keeping order in the room.

'In the front row: Prince Chocolat and Princess Bichette'; these two very distinguished personages are customers of Dr Rominagrobis, and cause him his biggest headaches! The evening begins! . . . three mice chasing one another in the magic circle. The cats' eyes light up; the excitement is at its height; the room is filled with a deafening miaowing; alone, the distinguished cats who live solely on chocolate and biscuits show no emotion. These sorts of things are only for the rabble.