

BITS AND PIECES

THIS ISSUE'S 'BITS AND PIECES' FEATURES a diverse range of references to the magic lantern which have one thing in common: they were found by internet searching of contemporary newspaper accounts. The quantity of material available in this way has increased enormously in recent years, boosted by projects such as the British Library's *Nineteenth Century British Library Newspapers* collection, from which a number of these accounts are culled. Not all such resources are generally available to the casual browser – many require an expensive licensing arrangement – but local public library services and university libraries are increasingly making them more accessible.

A lot of the (literally) tens of thousands of references turned up by a simple search on 'magic lantern' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspapers are repeats of the same advertisements, and more again are metaphorical uses of the term (e.g. 'The actual Government of France is a magic lantern, where the figures pass by with so much rapidity that it is hardly possible to observe their attitude' – *Mirror of the Times*, London 5 May 1798). But a little patience or a rainy afternoon begins to reveal myriad references to actual uses of the lantern, and the examples here are the tiniest scratch on a very big surface. – *Ed*.

MODERN MAGIC LANTERN

Mr Baddeley, of Drury Lane theatre, is the comedian who invited the town yesterday evening to the Le Beck's Head. He prefaced his exhibition with a modest, sensible exordium, producing an empty purse as the *primum mobile* of his undertaking, and declaring that he did not pretend to the disinterestedness of those cheesemongers and punch-makers who profess to sell cheese and punch at a low rate merely *pro bono publico*, but honestly confessing, that his first wish was to amuse the town; his second, to reap advantage from their amusement. The exhibition consisted of a variety of different caricatures, painted on glass, and exhibited in the rays of light cast upon a blank sheet through the focus of the lantern; about each of these caricatures, Mr Baddeley either told a laughable story, or made some satirical remarks on them.

The entertainment continued an hour, and was divided into two parts; in the former was given the character of a modern widow, who upon the death of her first husband, by whom she had three children, erected a superb monument to his memory, affected to be inconsolable, adopted for her motto, 'Love lies a bleeding,' and nevertheless in a very short time went off to France in company with a horse grenadier. In the second part an old Jew and his son Isaac were shewn, and a humorous catechism between them was recited. Besides these, a great variety of figures were produced, some of a general tendency, others which would bear a peculiar and personal application. In the course of the entertainment, several strokes levelled at known foibles and remarkable persons were introduced, most of which had a good effect. This species of exhibition affords an ample field for ridicule and satire. Mr Baddeley deserves credit for the thought, and will doubtless meet with encouragement. We deem his last night's exhibition a mere trial, we shall not therefore enter minutely into a discussion of its merits, but shall content ourselves with declaring that it was by no means unentertaining, although it may be considerably improved and heightened.

Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, Wednesday 10 August 1774.

CENTRIFUGAL RAILWAY – ADELPHI THEATRE

As in these holiday times there is no practice more popular than that of resorting to places of popular amusement, we deem it unnecessary to make any apology for exhorting our readers, if they would consult for their own gratification, to pay as early a visit as

possible to the Centrifugal Railway, now open to inspection in the Adelphi Theatre, Great Brunswick Street. It is an exceedingly novel and interesting exhibition, and we speak in all sincerity when we declare that we know of no place where half an hour may be spent more rationally, more pleasantly, and withal, more cheaply.

In addition to the railway a variety of curious experiments are attempted by means of the magic lantern, illuminated by the oxy-hydrogen light, representing various figures and diagrams both amusing and instructive. The exhibition will finally close in a few days.

Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser (Dublin), Tuesday 27 December 1842.

CELEBRATION OF THE QUEEN'S MARRIAGE IN EDINBURGH

[in the middle of a long list describing celebrations in different parts of the city]

SALISBURY STREET – Here the Messrs Dun, teachers, with characteristic anxiety for the entertainment of the junior portion of the population, exhibited, by means of the magic lantern, the splendid array of the Coronation Procession and an infinite variety of phantasmagoric illusions. This spot formed during the evening the centre of attraction to a numerous and delighted concourse of spectators, whose joyous shouts made the welkin ring as the gorgeous pageant and the grotesque figures glided noiselessly past.

Caledonian Mercury (Edinburgh), Thursday 13 February 1840.

VIEWS FROM THE SAHARA

Prof Albert S. Bickmore gave his last lecture in the Spring course to teachers at the Museum of Natural History yesterday morning. The subject was 'Tunis and Algeria,' and the lecture was an entertaining account of Prof. Bickmore's travels last year, with pictures taken by himself and Mrs Bickmore with flashlight cameras, showing the natural features of the country, the odd cities and villages, the natives at home and on their journeys, and the gardens and the buildings, modern and ancient, of that historic land.

The lecture was of especial interest because a new method of projecting the pictures on the canvas was employed. Dr L.H. Laudy of the School of Mines of Columbia College had placed two arc lamps, with a device invented by himself, in the rear of the room, and he supervised their working. The apparatus is the differential arc lamp, designed especially for use in exhibitions of this sort. Prof. Laudy claims no new theory or principle, but his lamp differs from others, he says, in the nicety of its adjustment, which regulates the length of the arc, keeping it constant and overcoming the objections of constant sputterings and variations in intensity, which often exist with the arc light. The apparatus worked satisfactorily yesterday, and gave a series of pictures that were more nearly true to nature than it has been possible to secure with the oxyhydrogen light.

This lay in the coloring of the pictures. Before beginning the lecture Prof. Bickmore showed the different effects of the two kinds of light by throwing a series of six pictures on the canvas first with the oxyhydrogen light and then with the electric. The oxyhydrogen had a decidedly yellowish look in comparison. Another noticeable difference in the two lights was the greater distinctness with which details of pictures were shown with the arc light. With the oxyhydrogen light the intensity was but about 1,000 candle power. With the lamps used by Prof. Laudy the light had from 2,500 to 3,000 candle power. After the arc lamps had been used for the seventy-two pictures which accompanied the lecture, Prof. Bickmore said there would be no return to the oxyhydrogen light. Double lanterns would be put in, and dissolving views would thus be secured.

Prof. Bickmore's trip through Algeria began at Gibraltar, and his route lay thence to Southern Spain, then south to the African coast to Melilla, thence over mountains to Bougie, across to Algiers, then on to Constantine and to the desert. Bescole was the stopping place in the Sahara, and then he went up to the coast, to the site of ancient Carthage. The lecture covered this ground, and was rich in description and full of picturesque incidents and odd scenes of travel.

[ten further paragraphs give a detailed description of the lecture's content]

New York Times, Sunday 24 May 1891

CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT – FRIDAY

LARCENY BY A SERVANT

John Dalasalle, aged thirty-two, optician, was indicted for stealing one microscope, several slides, part of a magic lantern, some prisms, and other articles, the property of William Westley and another, to whom he was servant.

Mr Clarkson appeared for the prosecution.

Mr Ballantine defended the prisoner, who, under advice of his counsel, retracted his plea of not guilty, and pleaded guilty.

Mr Clarkson said it was the wish of the prosecutor to recommend the prisoner to mercy. The property had been taken for the purpose of making up certain articles in the line of the prosecutor's business, by which they had been seriously injured. In fact, there were articles thus made up selling for £2, similar to those which actually cost the prosecutors £4. The prisoner made up those things, and disposed of them to certain persons who should take warning by this case, and not again purchase from tradesmen's servants.

Mr Ballantine would beg leave to add to the observations of his learned friend that those persons to whom his learned friend had alluded had better not only avoid purchasing from servants or journeymen; but they should not tempt them, which he (Mr Ballantine) was instructed had been the case in the present instance.

The Common Sergeant said that such persons had better take care of themselves. He wished he could catch them, and he promised them they should be transported. His lordship then sentenced the prisoner to six months' imprisonment, with hard labour.

Morning Chronicle (London), Saturday 7 January 1843.

LECTURES ON ASTRONOMY

On Wednesday evening, 26th ult., the fourth of a series of lectures on this interesting science was delivered in the Rev. Mr McAllister's Meeting-house, Hollywood, by Mr Mackeown, of the Rosemary Street School, Belfast. The subject of the present lecture were the phenomena of the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and the Georgium Sidus [Uranus], which, with their satellites, rather resembled miniature systems than isolated orbs.

[...]

At the conclusion of the lecture a powerful magic lantern was produced, by means of which a number of beautiful diagrams were shown, and celestial phenomena explained, in a manner at once lucid and convincing. By attentively studying such diagrams, the lecturer remarked more was to be learned than by the most lengthened series of lectures consisting of words only. It is proper to remark in conclusion, that these lectures have been got up by some of the more opulent in and about Hollywood, for the benefit of their neighbours, and to create a taste for science and literature in all classes in the place; and it is gratifying to state, that so fully are these exertions appreciated by those for whom the lectures have been got up, that after Mr Mackeown's first visit, the original place of lecture was found to be too small for the accommodation of the numbers that attended, and he had, therefore, to remove to the Meeting-house in Shore Street, the use of which was kindly granted by the Minister and congregation.

Belfast News-Letter, Friday 4 November 1842

ACCIDENTS, OFFENCES, &C.

THE TOWER GHOST – Last Monday night gave birth to a most important discovery, the detection of no less than the Tower Ghost! It will, probably, be in the recollection of some, that considerable anxiety had a few months since been excited among the inhabitants of the Tower, by a singular appearance, which for some nights was observed near the north-east bastion, assuming a variety of forms of the most appalling nature, and in one or two instances had nearly proved fatal from extreme fright to the sentinel stationed on the spot. The strictest inquiry was instituted, but nothing could be elicited that could lead to the detection of the nocturnal disturber. What had disturbed and puzzled the heads of many has been discovered by the sentinel on duty, the night above alluded to, to be nothing more than the reflection of a figure from the window of a house adjoining, effected by a magic lantern!

The Examiner (London), Sunday 4 August 1816.

COLCHESTER

ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS – On Tuesday afternoon, about 36 'working' boys and 26 girls, employed in tailoring, mat making, plaiting, gardening, &c. at this excellent institution, during the year, assembled at their annual tea party, after which their esteemed friend, the Rev. Edwin Sidney, M.A., rector of Cornard Parva, distributed prizes of books and toys to the most deserving, and entertained them for some time with an extensive magic lantern exhibition. Mr Jones and a band of musicians belonging to the asylum greatly enhanced the pleasures of the evening by a talented performance of favourite airs. At the close a cordial vote of thanks was proposed to the Rev. Mr Sidney, for his kind services on the occasion. This was ratified by the boys giving a round of cheers for the rev. gentleman, who acknowledged the compliment. Cheers were also respectively given to Mr Millard, and Mrs Tapper, the respected master and matron, to the musicians, and other friends who had contributed to promote the harmony of the proceedings. The children sang a hymn, and as a finale were each presented with an orange, by the kind liberality of Miss Monk, of London, whose deceased father was an excellent friend of the institution. A number of ladies and gentlemen from the town had the pleasure of being visitors on the occasion.

Ipswich Journal, Saturday 3 January 1857.

POSTSCRIPT – THURSDAY'S POST

We have received exclusively from Paris, a letter which announces the existence of a very bad spirit in France. An incendiary paper had been posted up in several parts of the city; a man was discovered in the act. The method he took to paste up the inflammatory article, is new and curious. He carried a little boy in a box like the magic lantern; and while he leaned against the wall, as if to rest himself, the little boy drew back a slider, pasted on the paper, and shut himself up again; and the man took a proper occasion to walk off to another resting place. – *Dublin Patriot*

Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, Thursday 20 April 1820.

LOCAL NUISANCES, IMPROVEMENTS, &c., AND BRIEF NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS

[among many varied items of local news]

We have heard of numerous inquiries respecting the means by which the appearance of a rainbow is introduced in the picture of the City of Rouen, now exhibiting at the Diorama, Bold Street. We are not in the secret, nor do we pretend to guess at it. Some of our correspondents have suggested the magic lantern as the cause of the effect. We must confess there *is* something like magic in it, but whether it be lantern magic, or any other kind of magic, we presume not to decide; all that we can gather from our inquiries is, that the artist is deeply versed in the science of optics, and has taken a hint from nature herself, by which he has been enabled to produce so successful an effort at representing one of her most beautiful and evanescent phenomena. We recommend our readers not to lose an opportunity of seeing this magnificent work of art.

Liverpool Mercury, Friday, 31 July 1829.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE AND THE WONDERS OF THE EARTH

Mr Smith, of Liverpool, has just concluded a successful tour in the county of Durham, lecturing on these interesting subjects, and he now visits Newcastle. The Liverpool papers say – 'These lectures are novel and interesting, containing a mass of information derived from almost innumerable sources, and they are so arranged and illustrated that whilst the lecturer gives philosophical explanations of the various beauties and wonders or terrestrial creation, a number of splendid views are exhibited, finely coloured from nature, and illuminated by the magic lantern. Is the lecturer expatiating on the ocean, a mountain torrent, or a cavern, – exquisite views of those objects are displayed to the eye: is the subject a polar region, a Swiss glen, or lake, and Alpine pass, an exploding volcano, or a peaceful scene in the Holy land, – beautiful representations render the whole perfectly intelligible, and make most valuable and lasting impressions on the mind.' The lectures will commence at our Music Hall, on Tuesday evening next.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne Courant, Friday 1 December 1837.