

The Magic Lantern

IN DARKEST AFRICA

Dick Moore

In 1890 the London-based publishers Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington Ltd published Henry Morton Stanley's (Fig.1) own account as leader of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition – his fourth, final and most controversial expedition to Africa that had ended earlier the same year. In *Darkest Africa* – or *the Quest, Rescue, and Retreat of Emin, Governor of Equatoria* comprised two substantial volumes, illustrated by engravings.¹ The publishers issued these as a set of magic lantern slides through Newton & Co., with a hand-coloured option. A selection from my set is shown here together with



4. Emin Pasha, engraving from a photograph

some from York & Son's set (Fig. 2) on the same subject based on illustrations from *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* and *The Graphic*. Stanley used the Newton slides to illustrate his own lectures (Fig.3) and his slides are in the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Turverein, Belgium.

Stanley (1841–1904) began life in Wales as John Rowland, the illegitimate son of an 18-year-old domestic servant who rejected him.

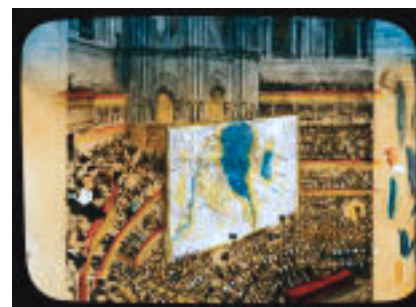


1. Henry M. Stanley



2. Title slide from York & Son set

After an unsettled early life, he ended up in the workhouse at age 9, where he probably developed his tendency for exaggeration and even fantasy. At 18 he went to New Orleans, claimed that cotton trader Henry Hope Stanley befriended him – which was not true – but nevertheless took on his name.²



After a spell in both the Union and Confederate Armies and the Union Navy, in 1867 he joined *The New York Herald* as a special correspondent under publisher James Gordon Bennett (whose reputation may be the basis of "Gordon Bennett" becoming an expression of incredulity). This appointment led to Stanley's first expedition in Africa, setting off from Zanzibar in January 1871 to find Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone.

Meanwhile, Eduard Schnitzer, born 1840 in Prussia, had made an even more dramatic transformation. He went to Turkey and shed his European identity completely, becoming Mehmed Emin – eventually Emin Pasha (Fig.4). In 1875 he joined General Charles Gordon in Khartoum and in 1878 was appointed Governor of Equatoria (southern Sudan). When Khartoum was taken in 1885 during Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi's uprising and General Gordon killed, Emin Pasha withdrew south and was effectively cut off by the jihadis and warring tribes. Blaming their Government for Gordon's death through delaying relief, the British public called for Emin Pasha be rescued. Here our story begins.

THE EXPEDITION

The expedition was to be a mission of mercy but Stanley was also involved with two other players with their own agendas, each also having a different proposal for Emin Pasha himself: William MacKinnon, co-founder of the British India Steam Navigation



5. Tippoo Tib, engraving from a photograph

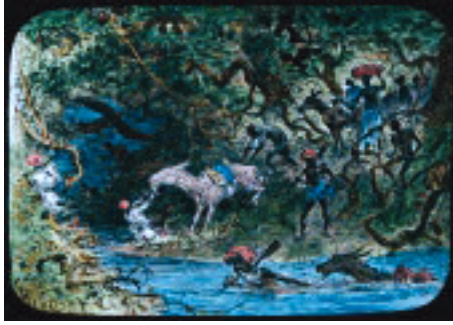


6. Stanley with Tippoo Tib and natives

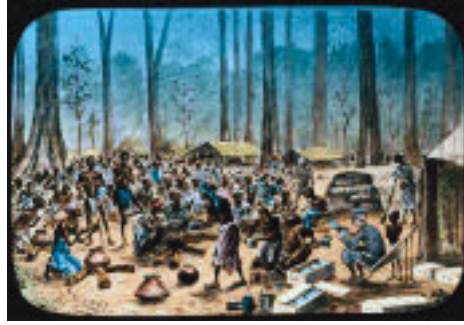
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7. *Marching through the forest*, by Riou



8. *'Starvation Camp' – serving out milk and butter for broth*



9. *South end of the Albert Nyanza*

Company and Chairman of the Emin Pasha Relief Committee who wanted to set up a new trading company – the Imperial British East Africa Company; and King Leopold II of Belgium who wanted to develop the Congo Free State, his privately owned country, by acquiring more territory along the Congo River.

In addition Stanley had to deal with Tippoo Tib (aka Hamad bin Muhammad) (Fig.5) an immensely powerful and ruthless Zanzibari slave and ivory trader who controlled large tracts of territory around the Congo as well as the fearsome Manyuema cannibal tribe (Fig.6). Stanley needed his co-operation to travel safely and provide additional porters. The expedition included a number of British military officers and men. Stanley also took an ingenious steel boat, *Advance*, built in 12 sections. Each section could be carried by two porters on land and then the

sections bolted together for river travel. Probably due to King Leopold's aim, Stanley decided not to set off from the east but to go up the Congo River from the west – a costly decision. The expedition was fraught with difficulties from the start including friction among the officers and among the various ethnic factions. Due to lack of boats, Stanley had to leave 131 men and supplies at Leopoldville

before they began. He again had to split the expedition, leaving 271 men and supplies at Yambuya (the end of the navigable portion of the Congo River) when Tib refused to provide the agreed 600 porters. He left Major Barttelot in charge of this encampment, supported by Sergeant Bonny and James Jameson, an artist.

Having reached Bosoko near Stanley Falls (now Boyoma Falls, Democratic Republic of the Congo) the path led into the Ituri forest – a dense tropical rainforest – unknown territory and much larger than Stanley had estimated (Fig.7). Near starvation and depleted in numbers through desertion, illness and death, Stanley had to leave Captain Nelson and 56 men in a camp (that became known as 'Starvation Camp') near the confluence of the Ituri and Huri Rivers with few provisions. Fig.8 shows them serving out milk and butter for broth.

Finally, they emerged from the Ituri Forest and reached Lake Albert (Albert Nyanza) in December 1887 where they expected to find Emin Pasha (Fig.9). Not until the end of April 1888 did a fit and well-looking Emin Pasha arrive at the camp, somewhat reluctant to be 'rescued', leading to months of negotiation. Meanwhile Stanley headed back to

Yambuya but at Banalya, 95 miles east of his destination, met Sergeant Bonny, who had been with Major Barttelot, together with the 92 men remaining (out of 271) – most of the porters had deserted. The Major had inflicted such terrible atrocities that he was murdered when threatening to shoot one of the women. Jameson had purchased a young girl to watch her being killed, dismembered and cooked (he even made sketches) – he later died of fever. They returned to Albert Nyanza and, nearly a year later, on 10 April 1889 the expedition finally left the region travelling east to Zanzibar. However Stanley was denied a triumphant return to the UK with Emin Pasha – the latter stayed in Africa (as had Livingstone), joined the German East Africa Company and was killed by slave traders in 1892.

Around two-thirds of the expedition members perished and in reality it became a nightmare of disease, starvation, desertion and brutality. The families of Barttelot and Jameson launched a public campaign to restore the reputation of their sons, but Stanley's reputation never fully recovered as a result, despite his major contribution to exploration through discovering the headwaters of the Nile, mapping Lake Albert, Lake Victoria and the Congo River and increasing knowledge of the flora, fauna and people of Africa.

THE IMAGES

By Stanley's time there was significant public interest in the exploration of new territories and photography was seen as providing the detailed, accurate description people wanted. However photography was problematic on these expeditions. In 1890 Stanley's publisher, Edward Marston, went to Cairo to work on the book with Stanley and commented on the photographs from the expedition: "Alas I am sorry to say that many of the pictures had disappeared from the glass, and at best could only serve to suggest valuable hints to our artist. These had been over-exposed or not sufficiently exposed in the blazing sun of the tropics; others I was delighted to find come out quite clearly, and represent scenes of great value, artistically and geographically..."³

Marston knew the photographs lacked drama and contrast. Figs 10 and 11 show similar scenes, the first from a photograph and the second illustrated by Montbard. However, the danger of using an artist is, as Mathilde LeDuc Grimaldi, curator of the Stanley Collection at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Belgium, points out: "These final images are most of the time made by artists who provide images for the adventure novel and not travellers' stories."⁴

Marston brought British artist Joseph Bell to Cairo with him to draw the preliminary sketches, giving the artist access to Stanley's notes, drawings, photographs and Stanley himself. The sketches, together with Bell's notes, were then passed on to a



10. *The river at Stanley Pool, 1000 miles up the Congo*



11. *The river column ascending the Aruwimi*



12. *Suspension bridge across East Ituri*, by Skelton



13. *In the night and rain in the forest, by Carreras*



14. *Gymnastics in a forest clearing, by Riou*



15. *Fight with Avisibba tribe, Lt Stairs wounded, by Riou*



16. *Lt Stairs wounded, by unknown artist*

group of mainly French artists and illustrators including Riou, Montbard, Carreras, Forestier and Forsyth. Riou had studied with Gustave Doré, whose influence is clear (see, for example, Fig.7), and illustrated books by Jules Verne. The illustrations were then passed to engravers – these included Cooper, Maynard and Brabant. The final image, therefore, might have some basis in a photograph but was more strongly influenced by the explorer's account (and prone to exaggeration in

Stanley's case), the artist's style and imagination (never having seen the place or event), and the engraver's interpretation.

Sometimes mistakes were made in the long journey from explorer's account to engraving and printing. Fig.12 shows a scene described by Stanley as: "This last river was ... deep and swift as a rapid. Spanned by a bridge of

such fragile make that we could only pass one at a time in safety."¹ The artist, Skelton, shows an almost serene river and more than one person on the bridge.

The different artists often highlight contrasting elements of a similar scene. Fig.13 shows Carreras' rendition of a thunderstorm in the forest. The focus is on the storm with the people a proportionate size in relation to the trees. Fig.14, on the other hand, shows a forest clearing by Riou and the forest plays the more dominant role with menacing trees much larger in proportion. Another pair compares an incident that neither artist had seen – a fight with the Avisibba tribe when Lt Stairs was injured. Fig.15 is

Riou's version and Fig.16 by an unknown artist for the *ILN*. In Riou's you are observing the battle from a distance, the river is blue and you can see the "obstinate savages."¹ In the second you are in the midst of the foray, the river is brown and hard to discern from the grass and the "obstinate savages" can hardly be seen.

Figs 17 and 18 show an incident when Stanley attempted to shoot an elephant. The first, again by Riou, shows an enormous elephant compared to the people and the second by an unknown artist draws on

Stanley's own words "a few yards out".¹ A final and excellent example of how artist renditions impact the viewer perception and even emotions regarding an event can clearly be seen in the images of the remains of 'Starvation Camp' that was mentioned earlier (see also Fig. 8). When an officer finally returned to Nelson at 'Starvation Camp' after 25 days (not the three originally planned) only five of the original 56 remained and two of those were dying. The rest were either dead or had deserted. The Riou image in Fig. 19 clearly shows the devastation, while the same scene depicted by the artist Dalton for the *ILN* (Fig.20) is very serene, like a travel postcard, with no sense of the extensive death and desolation that occurred. I will finish with three of my favourite images:

- Phalanx dance by Mazamboni warriors that greatly impressed Stanley (sitting in his chair), by Riou (Fig.21)
- The expedition climbing the rock in the Valley of Ankori, by Carreras (Fig.22) and
- The expedition winding up the Gorge of Karya Maboro, by Forestier (Fig.23).

As can be seen in these and the other slides, the overall artistry and exquisite colorization is superb, particularly when you realise that none of the artists had seen any of the scenes. While the differences in the artists' style and imagery clearly impact the viewer's perception of Stanley's trek, the detail, perspective and exacting proportionality immerses one into each scene and takes your breath away as you share their journey in your imagination.



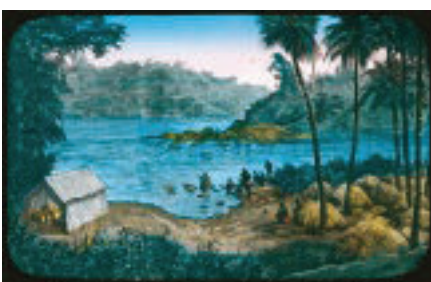
17. *Attacking an elephant in the Ituri River, by Riou*



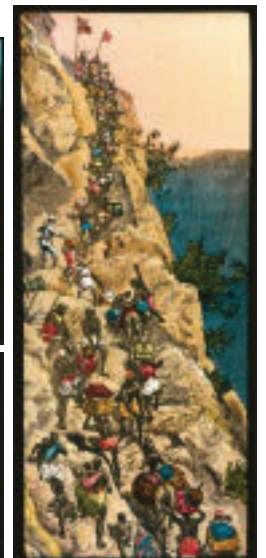
18. *Elephant shooting, unknown artist*



19. *Relief of Nelson and survivors at 'Starvation Camp', by Riou*



20. *'Starvation Camp', by Dalton for ILN*



21. *Phalanx dance, by Riou (top left)*
22. *Climbing the rock, by Carreras (above)*
23. *Winding up the gorge, by Forestier (bottom left)*



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