

Mrs Olive Falvey, who spent her later years in the Netherlands, where she died in 1992 at the age of 94, had vivid memories of providing piano accompaniments for magic lantern shows before the First World War. Although Mrs Falvey herself never recorded her memoirs, her daughter Mrs Sheila Lok has sent us the following evocative and charming account of her musical gifts and her recollections of early-century Australia:

PLAYING FOR THE LANTERN IN THE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK IN 1912

SHEILA LOK

"As a young girl, about 14, my mother played the piano when the magic lantern show came to town. The town in question was Nebo, in Queensland, Australia. I think the 'show' arrived by horse and cart, and came along a couple of times a year.

"My mother was a talented pianist even at that age, and was pleased to be asked to perform. (There was no remuneration!) Her father gave permission on the condition that he accompany her.

"From my mother's accounts, it didn't seem like a lot of fun - more educational. The slides were mostly of historical buildings in Europe. Buckingham Palace was one. But the slide my mother remembered best was that of a donkey, with the comment from the magic lantern man, 'A noble animal, not found in these parts.' Even 80 years later she could still find it very amusing. 'We must have been desperate,' she said.

"It didn't matter what music she played, whatever she herself thought appropriate. (I don't remember what she said accompanied the donkey.)

"A regular feature was the breakdown of the equipment. At this point my mother would break into some 'popular' piece and everyone would sing along. According to Mum they all enjoyed this, and some were even sorry when repairs were completed and the show could carry on. There would also be requests for 'Happy Birthday' if anyone in the gathering had a birthday remotely near the time.

"With the arrival of the silent movie, a vast improvement, Mum continued to play when the show was in town. She always said she had the silent movies to thank for the fact that she played so well without music (in the dark).

"Although she played mostly pieces she had learned from the music, she also had to improvise when the scene changed. Rumbling bass for thunder, etc. She watched the screen and made the appropriate background. She was able to play whatever she heard, without music, and would bring in a few bars of something currently popular, if needed.

"Music, and especially the piano, gave her great pleasure all her life. Playing at home for 'musical evenings', for dances and parties, or just for her own amusement. She had her first lesson, at age 5, from a Miss Brown who had to lift her on to the stool. And hardly a day passed by for the rest of her life that she didn't play. When her sight deteriorated in later years and she



couldn't see the music, she would play from memory. And not only old pieces, but whatever she heard on radio or TV. The theme music from Dad's Army, 'Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler?', was rattled off with great gusto. One of our favourites.

"Her love of music, and talent, passed on to my sister, who is a good pianist and church organist, and to her great-grandson, now 16, who plays well. She was delighted.

"I'm afraid I haven't much of historical interest for you. But somehow I can see it all before me, the magic lantern man arriving in town, a ripple of excitement going around. The hall prepared, the pianist notified, everyone spruced up and shuffling in, and then 'the show'. I guess in a way it was magic. The passing of an age.

"I don't know if any of this is of interest to you, but I have enjoyed recalling it. We miss her music."

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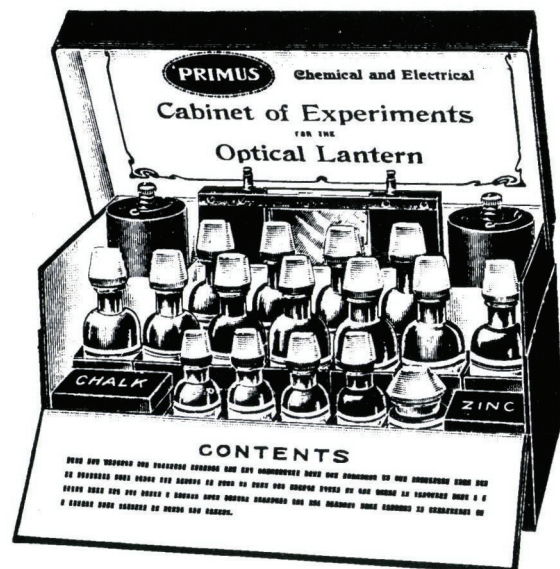
THE "PRIMUS" CABINET OF CHEMICAL EXPERIMENTS FOR THE OPTICAL LANTERN.

MESSERS. BUTCHER AND SONS, Ltd., Camera House, Farringdon Avenue, E.C., have recently added to their numerous useful photographic accessories a complete chemical cabinet of interesting and entertaining experiments for use in the optical lantern. The experiments are simple in character, so that they can be performed by practically anyone who possesses a lantern; but as a means of exhibiting chemical and physical experiments no better or more seasonable method of instruction and entertainment combined can be suggested.

The interesting experiments described by Mr. Colville Stewart in the Christmas Number of THE A.P. AND P.N. will be found included in this cabinet, and also a great number of others, all of which produce beautiful and striking effects on the screen.

The cabinet includes a flatted glass chemical tank in mahogany frame, which can be used for chemical and electrical experiments (for the latter two brass terminals are provided); also dry batteries and glass pipettes are included, the latter for dropping acids and other reagents into the tank.

Any amateur possessing a lantern with a stage sufficiently wide to accommodate a small chemical tank (about one clear inch is required) should certainly get one of these outfits without delay. The cabinet contains sixteen stoppered bottles of chemical solutions, the chemical tank and dry cells, zinc wire, chalk, and other accessories. Everything is supplied labelled and with full instructions for use at the price of 25s. Full



particulars of the experiments can be obtained on application to Messrs. Butcher at the above address, and they will also be pleased to send their interesting and instructive booklet on "Optical Lanterns and How to Use Them."