

# BITS AND PIECES

## PANORAMAS IN ALL PARTS OF THE HOUSE

The *Century Magazine* of September 1900 carried a lengthy account of the Paris 'Exposition Universelle' of that year, including this description of some of the large-scale visual attractions.

### **Amusements of the Paris Exposition**

[...] First there are the panoramas: the *Tour du Monde*, the *Transatlantic*, the *Sahara*, the *Alpine Club*, and many others which present glimpses of foreign lands to the masses. Panoramas have been greatly perfected; they no longer consist merely of linen backgrounds. Now the foregrounds are genuine; trees are planted in them, houses are built in plaster and inhabited by veritable natives. The effect is enchanting.

The idea of representing the civilization of the world by dances has never been carried further than in the 'Tour of the World'. This is a huge circular panorama, the background of which represents on canvas some admirable scenes in the two hemispheres. Here, for instance, is Greece, with the Parthenon, or the Piraeus; here is Spain, there Constantinople and the Bosphorus; here is Japan, with a delightful tea-house and its delicate and childlike mousmés; here Java, and there Ceylon. Before each painted scene is a stage on which the inhabitants of the country disport themselves and successively go through the dances peculiar to their race. I was present on the opening day, and found the spectacle one of the greatest interest.

In the foreground of the *Transatlantic* panorama, which represents Algiers, there is a collection of houses on the side of a steep hill; Arabs are seen living on the terraces; there are mats spread out and chairs placed about; water cools in the *alcarrazas*, and in the clear, even light from lamps that are hidden behind shutters the natives are occupied with their daily tasks. At sunset the muezzin is heard from the top of a minaret. There are also panoramas of the Sahara, of the journey of Commandant Marchand across Africa, and of Madagascar.

The ingenuity of artists and engineers does not stop there: they have given us moving panoramas. Here is the *Trans-Siberian*, for example. One gets into veritable cars of the great International Express Company, the name of which they bear in Chinese and Russian letters. By the side of the train landscapes unfold, and cities through which one seems to pass. By a clever trick the foreground unrolls much more rapidly than the background, which appears almost immovable, while the train advances steadily. With a little imagination you travel across the steppes of Asia. And if you wish to be a true *Trans-Siberian* traveler, you lunch before leaving, at the station of Moscow, in the restaurant of the Russian pavilion, and find the lunch very poor, which is more natural. On arriving at the other end of the train, you descend into the Chinese official

pavilion, where, on decorated lacquer terraces, genuine Celestials, whose steps are soft and muffled, serve you swallows' nests, which you have no end of trouble eating with Chinese chopsticks. Is not this a triumph? For twenty cents the workman or the clerk may indulge in the luxury of a voyage which would necessitate weeks of leisure and a considerable sum of money.

Another moving panorama reveals the shores of Algiers. It is arranged with great art. One is at sea, but immovable; the canvas glides before your eyes. Near by are deep-furrowed waves; on the blue ocean a fleet of war-ships passes. Light torpedo-boats flutter about among the heavy vessels; they plunge their prows into the foam tossed up by the waves; they splash in it and rise again joyously; they look like enormous whales sporting in the midst of the squadron. Farther on, the hills appear, Bona, Bougie, Algiers, the white Oran. The illusion is produced in the simplest possible manner, and the views are charming.

But it was reserved for the *mareorama* to show us a panorama at the same time inhabited and moving. In it one stands on the bridge of a ship one hundred and twenty feet long by thirty wide. The boat rolls and pitches with a gentle movement that gradually becomes more pronounced and even unpleasant to poor sailors. But only a suggestion of discomfort is awakened, and immediately the weather and the sea become serene and beautiful again. About the ship a vast panorama is unfolded, showing Marseilles, Tunis, Susa, Naples, Venice, and Constantinople. The canvas is nine hundred yards long and fourteen high. Breezes which have been made salt in passing over piles of seaweed are blown by ventilators across the bridge of the steamer; the vibration of machinery makes the boat tremble. Dancers visit it at ports where it stops, giving at Naples the tarantella, at Constantinople a *danse d'Almées*. Nothing more could be done in the way of a panorama.

There is also a *lineorama* organized on new principles. It is a pretended balloon ascension. One is seated in a balloon car and sees colored projections made by the cinematograph of various scenes taken from a balloon at different heights, such as an Arabian fantasia, a bull-fight, and the port of Marseilles lined with steamboats. The ingenious part of it is that these views were taken from real balloons at the moment when they were ascending, and that the illusion is therefore perfect. But with this balloon one is at least sure of reaching earth again.

Supplied by Peter Lane



### **A RUSSIAN LANTERN AT LAST**

In an earlier issue ('Lanterns in Moscow', *NMLJ* Vol. 8 No.5, p.13) David Robinson observed that 'little evidence has so far come to light about the use of the magic lantern in pre-Revolutionary Russia'. That's still the case, but here at last is an actual Russian lantern, described by Bernd Scholze as 'an unexpected find on eBay', where it was sold with a single transfer litho slide. The construction is simple, with a metal body held between wooden front and back panels on a wooden base.

The manufacturer's name and address are shown on a stamped metal badge on the front: 'S. Peter. Workshop of Educational Instruments / Troitskaya [Street] 9 / awarded 15 medals.' This suggests manufacture in St Petersburg – there was a Troitskaya ('Trinity') Street there, which was renamed in 1929 after its most famous resident, the pianist Anton Rubinstein – though the same street name is also found in Moscow and other cities.



Supplied by Bernd Scholze

## FELONIOUS DEEDS

Mo Heard has discovered a fascinating internet resource, the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674–1834* ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org)), a vast searchable record of the published summaries of trials at London's Old Bailey criminal court. This is one of those addictive web resources where one could spend months browsing – here are just a few theft cases revealed by searching for 'magic lantern' and 'optical'. The relative values of items are particularly interesting: for those unfamiliar with the currency, 'l' indicates one pound, 's' is shillings (20 to the pound) and 'd' pence (twelve to the shilling).

Joseph Hudson, theft: simple grand larceny, 19 February 1817

**JOSEPH HUDSON** was again indicted for that he, on the 18th of January, feloniously did steal and take twelve packs of playing cards, value 2l. 5s.; twenty books of leaf gold, value 1l. 10s.; eleven pencils, value 9s.; one piece of India rubber, value 2s.; seventy-nine knives, value 5l.; four prayer-books, value 1l. 10s.; one umbrella, value 5s.; fourteen bound books, value 15s.; nine brushes, value 3s.; four leather cases, value 16s.; two silver tooth pick cases, value 2s.; two pair of tweezers, value 1s.; one magic lantern, value 5s.; one box of dominoes, value 3s.; one fire-box, value 2s. 6d.; one almanack, value 1s. 9d.; two memorandum books, value 3s.; two pamphlets, value 1s. 6d.; one ink pot, value 1s.; one pair of dividers, value 1s.; one purse, value 2s.; one box, value 1s.; one magnetic table, value, 5s.; one silver pen, value 4s.; six quires of paper, value 3s.; and two pounds in monies numbered; of the goods and monies of Joseph Nowill and Joseph Burch, and sixty-seven 1l. bank-notes; the said bank-notes at the time of committing the felony aforesaid, being the property of the said Joseph Nowill and Joseph Burch, and the said several sums of money payable and secured, and upon the said bank-notes being then, to wit, at the time of committing the felony aforesaid, due and unsatisfied to the said Joseph Nowill and Joseph Burch, the proprietors thereof, against the statute. [...]

**GUILTY** – Aged 20. Transported for seven years.

Richard Russell, John Lee, theft: shoplifting, 4 December 1822

**RICHARD RUSSELL** and **JOHN LEE** were indicted for stealing, on the 24th of October, twelve box scales and sectors, value 20s., the goods of John Bleuler privately in his shop.

**MR. JOHN BLEULER.** I am an optician, and live on Ludgate-street. On the 24th of October, twelve box scales, and twelve sectors were on my compter [counter], between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, wrapped up in paper. Lee came in about five and asked the price of a magic lantern, he looked at some slides – I had occasion to turn my back to get them – he stood alone at the compter, and went away without buying any thing. I did not see Russell that I know of; there was a person waiting outside, looking in at the shop. I cannot tell who it was. In the afternoon of the next day, the officer called. I did not miss them till he shewed them me – they were in the same paper as when they laid on my compter. I had not sold them. I saw the prisoners at Bow-street, two or three days after, and am certain of Lee. [...]

**LEE's Defence.** I had been on business for my father, was returning, and on Ludgate-hill, seeing a magic lantern in the window, I went to ask the price. I was going to the theatre to keep a place for my father, and met Russell in the Strand, who went with me.

**RUSSELL's Defence.** I do not know where the shop is, we had not been in company above ten minutes when we were taken. On the 23d of October, the day before I was taken, I had been to my master's to enquire about a situation, having lost it through illness, and in the Borough I saw a Jew boy, who said he would sell me some rules, which I bought for four shillings, for a glazier, who I knew wanted some. I was waiting to meet the glazier at the corner of Richardson-street – I saw Lee and went with him.

**GUILTY** – LEE . Aged 18. Transported for seven years.

**GUILTY** – RUSSELL. Aged 15. Transported for seven years.

David Lazarus, theft: simple grand larceny, 28 October 1818

**DAVID LAZARUS** was indicted for stealing, on the 28th of September, one mahogany case, value 12s.; one body of a microscope, value 7s. 6d.; four glasses, value 7s.; four ivory sliders and objects, value 4s.; one concave mirror, value 2s.; one plane mirror, value 2s.; one side illuminator, value 3s. 6d.; one pair of nippers and crutch, value 2s.; one pair of corn-tongs, value 6d., and one brass plate, value 1s. 6d., the goods of Philip Brock.

**PHILIP BROCK.** I am an optical instrument-maker, and live in Church-

row, Aldgate. On the 28th of September I was at work at the window – the articles stated in the indictment were in a case behind me. The prisoner came in to buy a glass for a show. I said I had nobody to serve him, he said he would call in half an hour-he went round on my left hand, and went out. In about five minutes I missed the microscope and case. I informed the officer. I am certain the prisoner is the boy who came into the shop. The microscope was safe when he came in, and nobody came in after till I missed it. [...]

**GUILTY** – Aged 14. Transported for seven years.

Charles Eyre, theft: simple grand larceny, 9 December 1778

**CHARLES EYRE** was indicted for stealing two steel mandrills, value 20s. and three iron rests, value 20s. the property of John Dolland, Nov. 6th.

**JOHN DOLLAND** sworn. I lost two steel mandrills and three rests; they are tools for turning optical instruments, they are part of lathes. The prisoner was a workman in Mr. Burton's house, and went away at his death. I kept on the business as executor to Mr. Burton. They were lost out of his house in Johnson's-court. I missed them on Friday the 6th of November. I saw them on the Wednesday before. They were found in the hands of Ashmore the pawnbroker.

**JAMES ASHMORE** sworn. I am a pawnbroker. I took in two mandrills and three lathes, on the 6th of November from the prisoner.

(They were produced in court, and deposed to by John Dill and George Wood, servants of Mr. Dolland, who likewise produced the collars belonging to them, which were left behind; they appeared to fit exactly.)

**PRISONER's DEFENCE.** I have nothing to say. I leave myself to the mercy of the court.

**GUILTY.**

Peter Ritchie, theft, 12 December 1764

**PETER RITCHIE** was indicted for stealing eight pounds weight of brass, the property of Edward Nairne, Oct. 8.

**EDWARD NAIRNE.** I live opposite the Royal Exchange, in Cornhill, and am an optical, philosophical, and mathematical instrument maker. On the 4th of October, Mr. Gyles, a brass founder, in Shoe-lane, came to me, and said his clerk had bought several parcels of brass of a woman, who called her name Wells, and particularly the day before, amongst which was a rough brass foot to a reflecting telescope, which had been broke to pieces, by being first made hot in the fire; I went and saw it, and it evidently appeared to be cast from my patterns: the clerk told me some conversation he had with that woman; that she said, she had been at Gibraltar, from which I concluded it must be the wife of the prisoner, as he had been there, and worked in my house. I desired him to take care of that brass, and if she came with any more, to buy it, and let me know; and in the interim I ordered my foreman to put a private mark upon my brass. On the 18th of Oct. Mr. Gyles's clerk brought another parcel of brass, which he said he bought of that woman the day before: on examining it, I found two pieces with that private mark: I then got a warrant, and took up the prisoner at the bar, and his wife; they were examined before Mr. Alderman Alsop; Mr. Gyles's clerk swore he bought it of the wife, and my foreman swore to the private marks. The prisoner acknowledged the woman to be his wife, and that he had part of that brass in his custody: I never knew the woman to come to my shop: here is part of an air-pump handle, which was part of the work he had to do for me.

Mr. Saunders deposed to the brass being the property of his master the prosecutor; and Mr. Cardel, clerk to Mr. Gyles, deposed, the brass was brought to his master, by the woman the prisoner owned to be his wife.

**GUILTY.**

Supplied by *Mo Heard*