

The Magic Lantern in 1693

This small piece of research started with the discovery of a rather old damaged book containing an early engraving of a magic lantern. The text was in early French, and a translation was undertaken by Claudine Davies, and the book restored and bound by Charles Southcombe. The translation revealed a detailed description of the construction of the lantern and how the author of the book used it as a visual aid to demonstrate his 'Treaty on the Divining-Rod'.

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Chairman of the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain.
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Dedication

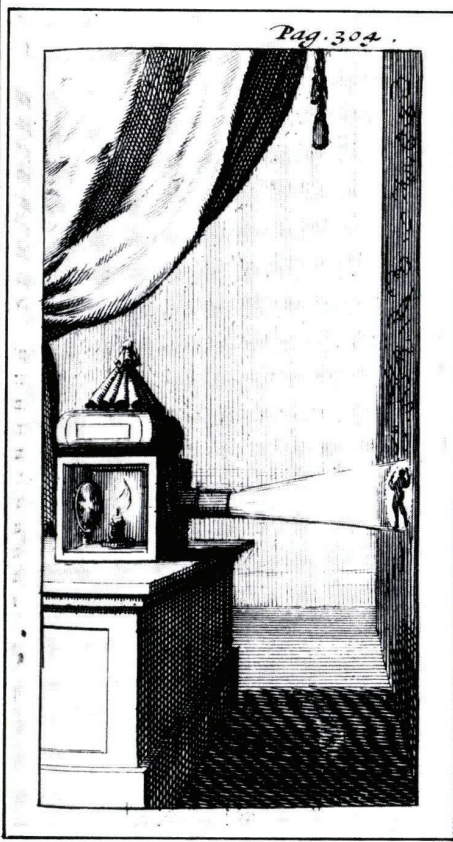
To Monsieur Pollart,
Counsellor to the King
in Parliament of Paris.

The author chooses this gentleman as his protector and patron. M. Pollart is a Magistrate — obviously of some repute.

The author extends his eternal thanks for all the kindness of the said gentleman and wishes to return some form of gratitude and thus chooses to dedicate the book to him. He does stress that when the name of his Patron will head his book, everyone will look upon it more favourably. He says:

'It is this reputation, so beautiful, so well-established that makes it possible for all of us to accept your sentiments as if they were the Oracles, and that those whom you condemn equally join the vast number of people who sing your praises. But amongst those who rightly claim your virtues I can boldly state that if anyone equals my zeal, no one assuredly surpasses the respect and sacred attachment I bear for you, Sir'.

Your very humble and
most obedient servant
...Vallemont



THE PHYSICS OF THE OCCULT OR

TREATY ON THE DIVINING-ROD

and of its use for the discovery of the sources of water,
surface-mines, hidden treasures, thieves
and fugitive murderers.

With principles which explain phenomena of the
most obscure kind in Nature.

by M.J.L. de Vallemont
Priest and Doctor in Theology.
following the Paris Publication

Amsterdam 1693

The author tries to explain the fact that the 'eye' sees colours and shapes clearly, irrespective of disturbance in the air such as wind — and that colours never get confused. He states that we cannot examine what happens in the natural eye of a living man, but an 'artificial eye' can serve to explain how it is that colours do not get confused. The Magic Lantern is admirable to demonstrate this, says he.

The Magic Lantern

The Magic Lantern is an optical machine. It is called 'magic', no doubt, because of its prodigious effects and the apparitions, the horrifying monsters that it reveals, and that people who do not know of its secret attribute it to magic.

M. Sturmius calls it 'megalo-graphic' because it produces large-sized figures from the original minuscule ones that are placed in it. It is said that it can make an elephant from a mouse.

This invention, which some people believe Solomon knew of, is accredited to Roger Bacon, an English monk. What can be ascertained is that this machine has been much talked about for a long time and that Swenterus is the first who has published instructions on its construction, under the title: *deliciae mathematicae part 6 pro posit 31*.

The body of the lantern is made of tin. It is square 8½" deep and 1½" high. There is a bright metal mirror at the back, 4" in diameter, with a lamp of which its cotton wick has to be very thick. It requires olive oil or spirit of wine. The mirror and the lamp can be

brought forward or pushed back by a slide which is placed at the base of the lantern.

There is in the front a round 3½" opening, where, if one wishes to use the lantern, one places a tin tube of the same thickness, in which are placed two lenses a little larger than 3", which can be manoeuvred in such a way as to converge the rays of light and magnify the objects.

There is, between the lantern and the tube where the lenses are enclosed, a slot to place the frames which hold the little figures that will appear magnified. They are painted on glass in clear colours or on pieces of soap-stone 3" in diameter. At the top of the lantern there are air-vents to enable the smoke to escape and thus it will not darken the lantern which needs to be very clear to be effective.

This is how mine is made. In the illustration the lantern is open in order to reveal the inside.

When we wish to use the Magic Lantern we light the lamp and darken the room where the show is to be given. The lantern is placed about 18-20 feet distance facing a wall covered with a white sheet. On this sheet will appear the images of the objects in gigantic monstrous size and in exquisite colours. We do not accept Mr. van Dale's chimera about the fact that the Pythoness of Andorra revealed the Prophet Samuel to King Saul in this way. I will say more on this subject later on when I discuss the publication of this author of his 'Treaty on Oracles' [see pp. 420-421].

I know full well that this artifice can be abused at the expense of ignorant and credulous people, especially if this wile is manipulated by a skilled man. By this very artistry a very able mathematician revealed to Emperor Rodolphe II those who had led the Roman Empire, from Julius Caesar to Maurice [probably Maurice of Saxony (1500-58) Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Spain]. This was done in such a realistic way that those who were present believed that this could only have happened through 'Magic' and 'Necromancy'.

The author very dogmatically refutes Mr. van Dale's theory that it was all a trick. The church and all its 'great and wise men' had declared the case to be one of necromancy and the work of the devil. [pp. 420-421. The story occurs in the Book of Kings, chap. 28].