

emy's influence as a source of inspiration and encouragement.

The celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the institution which had produced such a marked effect on the progress of science in America finished with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne," the departing guests sympathizing with those who were unable to participate in the hearty and genial conclusion of a program which was unanimously declared to be a complete success.

*THE MISUSE OF LANTERN ILLUSTRATIONS BY MUSEUM LECTURERS*¹

THE illustrated lecture has long been a very prominent feature of the educational and scientific work of the public museums of this city. It has long been a feature of the meetings of clubs and societies of all kinds, not so much for instruction as for popular entertainment.

So general is the use of lantern illustrations at all sorts of gatherings, that it has become commonplace. It is necessary for the legion of lecturers who employ them to procure better, and yet better pictures, to make their performances attractive. We appear to be in the midst of a great rivalry as to who can make the finest pictorial display, and anybody, apparently, may occupy the platform.

At a recent meeting of ornithologists in Philadelphia, I sat for many hours watching a continuous performance of stereopticon lecturers. Some of them did their parts remarkably well, but the three-days meeting was manifestly, although unconsciously, a lantern-slide competition. During the intermissions, the audience, composed chiefly of professional ornithologists, talked almost entirely of the admirable pictures that had been shown, making animated comparisons of the success achieved by this or that photographer.

There have come among us hosts of skilful photographers or enthusiastic travelers, back

from hasty trips to Zuñi or East Africa, ready to exhibit the best of pictures, to any kind of an audience that they can get, and to talk more or less amusingly while doing so.

Many of these so-called lecturers are successful enough, and audiences are forthcoming anywhere from the Museum of Natural History to the Suburban Entertainment Club. Even Peary's colored cook is doing a rattling lecture business with his master's slides.

Good pictures are dangerous in the wrong hands. Imagine a dull and dreary talker, still talking in public if he were deprived of lantern slides.

The use of lantern slides should be on a safer basis. They should not only be reduced in number, but be partially replaced with something more intellectual.

There could be no objection to lantern pictures as an inexpensive form of entertainment, if it were understood to be chiefly for entertainment, but when a fine collection of pictures of the Grand Cañon, accompanied by the talk of a mere traveler, is announced as a lecture on geology, it is a sign that we are losing our powers of discrimination.

When some superb pictures of Indian habitations on the table-lands of the southwest are described by a mere photographer engaged in making money out of the lantern slides, shall the authorities of the great museum allow the performance to be advertised as a lecture on ethnology? The City Bureau of Free Lectures employs a legion of lantern slide lecturers on travel, some of whom doubtless have never visited the lands they describe in glowing terms. There are art lecturers in this city showing colored photographs of the great paintings of Europe, who have never seen the originals. I am not undertaking to condemn the work of the free lecture bureau. It doubtless affords thousands of people entertainment that is wholesome and not without instruction.

Some of the lecturers make a specialty of describing the wonders of the Art Museum, or the Aquarium, and I personally shouldn't care to lose that much free advertising for my own institution. No doubt the pictures

¹Part of a paper read at a meeting of curators of the public museums of New York, December 19, 1911.

and talk about art send many persons to the Art Museum.

But shall the museums, holding, as they do, authoritative positions respecting art and science, disregard the fact that the amateur is among us with lantern pictures that may be better than ours? Is it not time to consider whether by continuing as we are doing, we may be cheapening the labors of the distinguished specialists who cheerfully do their part in our own lecture courses?

There are reasons for believing that the general public is pretty well satisfied with what it gets, and also that it is incapable of distinguishing between the noted authority and the mere amateur who has the same kind of pictures. Shall we continue to be satisfied with this kindergarten way of lecturing?

Shall we continue to supply sugar-coated science until even the more discriminating part of the public begins to think that the professional ornithologist is really no better than the enthusiastic amateur who can photograph birds just as well?

While there are many of our number who can lecture most acceptably using lantern illustrations, there are certainly some of us who habitually depend upon the effect of the pictures used. Lecturing with lantern illustrations has so nearly superseded the well-prepared, authoritative discourse, that the latter has become a rarity.

I am convinced that what we have come to call lecturing is not the real thing, that the effect of the present over-illustrated lecture upon the audience is not what it should be.

The presentation is to the eye rather than to the mind, and the audience accepts it with a passive, rather than an active mind. The audience is already lost to the lecturer; he does not see its face, and there is no response to him.

In the experience of most of us, many a slovenly lecture has been tolerated because of the excellence of its illustrations. We continue to endure the indifferent talk of the lecturer, because we seem to be getting our money's worth out of his pictures.

In such a case the lecturer, perhaps a man

of real scientific attainment, has actually degraded himself to the level of a showman. He may even be content with the applause bestowed only upon his achievements as a photographer.

But the audience, too, has degraded itself, by its intellectually languid acceptance. It will eventually tire of even the best of slides, and be satisfied with nothing less exciting than motion pictures.

The effect of the average lantern lecture can be readily judged by any one who cares to hear the remarks of the departing audience: "What splendid photographs," "How beautifully colored." We have all repeatedly heard just these words. The talk is of the *show*, and the self-satisfied showman on the platform has merely cracked the whip and given the signals to the real performer—the stereopticon man.

Let us contrast such a performance in the darkened hall, before an audience of sight-seers awaiting the next flash of the lantern, with that of a lecturer addressing the mind of his audience. Imagine Mr. Roosevelt or Beecher or Ingersoll receiving such applause as they have received if they had stood in the dark explaining pictures that might have told their own story. Have not some of our lecturers practically arrived at the point where the automatic lantern, carrying labeled slides, could do the trick as well?

But assuming that we must use pictures, what shall we say of the well-informed lecturer who thoughtlessly turns his back to the audience, and addresses the changing panorama on the screen, so that his weak voice can be heard only by those who sit in the front rows?

What shall we say of the lecturer, who, depending upon his pictures, has not prepared himself to discuss with at least a show of animation what each picture presents, and who can do little more than industriously wield the pointer, and inform his benighted audience that a tree is a tree, and a wild Indian an Indian?

What shall we say of the well-known writer, who, having no gift for extemporaneous speaking, mars the good effect of excellent il-

illustrations by neglecting to use the manuscript that would make his discourse coherent?

Perhaps mere notes would save him from helpless verbal floundering.

What shall we say of that misguided person, who, having at least eighty pictures to illustrate his lecture on Alaska, or some other far-away place, throws in about forty more, to show how he got there? Half a dozen to get the ship away from the dock at Seattle, half a dozen shots at the city as he steams away, a few more at passing vessels, another half dozen at the members of his party (in which he is careful to show up in most of the groups himself), a few pictures of the captain, and about a dozen showing the Indian villages of the British Columbia islands, as he steams kodaking along, and all of which have been kodaked by a dozen tourists on every steamer, every week for the past twenty years.

I witnessed such a performance at the afore-mentioned meeting in Philadelphia. The exhibitor of slides held the platform for an hour and a half, until even the picture-bewitched ornithologists were audibly in revolt.

How shall we use the lantern slide? Is it not possible for the lecturer to first present his matter, so that it will appeal to the mind of his audience, and then follow his discourse with a limited number of illustrations selected for their fitness rather than their beauty? It would be quite useless to show pictures first. No audience will stay after the last picture. The unceremonious exit stampede begins at once, even if the distinguished president of the society has risen to make some concluding remarks.

And how about manuscript which is unfortunately often necessary? There is no need for a slavish use of manuscript, if the matter is good and delivered in a vigorous manner. Many speakers use it effectively. Ingersoll never spoke without it, and Roosevelt uses it for all lengthy discourses.

Our museum lecturer should unquestionably devote more time to preparation. He should make his address worth hearing with-

out illustrations at all. He should be able to get the same applause for his matter that he gets for his pictures. When he does that he will be on a dignified basis himself, and will pay a long-deferred compliment to the intelligence of the audience, that it will be likely to appreciate.

I should like to see some of our museum men doing their platform work without pictures, and I am sure that some of them are capable of doing it. Most of those who try it should write out their lectures in full, and thus get the benefit of the work of arranging their matter and becoming familiar with it.

There must, of course, be reference to the manuscript, but the audience will not mind that if the subject is of real interest and the speaker deals with it in a forcible manner, impressing his hearers with the fact that they are listening to a man filled with his subject and sure that it is a good one. Lack of earnestness means that the audience will get weary or begin to slip out. I am sure that a good lecture half an hour long, followed by half the usual number of illustrations, will be an improvement on the present method.

Should we not illustrate our lectures, and cease to lecture about our illustrations?

C. H. TOWNSEND

N. Y. AQUARIUM

RALPH STOCKMAN TARR

As Cornellians and former students of Professor Ralph Stockman Tarr we learn with sorrow of his death and extend to his family our heartfelt sympathy and condolence. We feel keenly the loss to the university of his unselfish service and forceful personality, and we regret that his brilliant contributions to geology and geography have been cut off at a time when they were most fruitful and convincing. Above all we deplore the loss of the personal influence which we have found so helpful and inspiring in his home, in the classroom and in the field. Those of us who have known him under the trying conditions of life in northern ice fields, where no hardship was too great to be cheerfully borne, can most fully