

The Lantern Lecture

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Amateur photographers are frequently asked to give lantern lectures, and sometimes the task is undertaken in a very lighthearted spirit, but at the end of the lecture the photographer may feel that it has all been a 'mess' and a good photographer does not like making a mess. He usually wishes to do himself credit, and to exhibit a number of excellent slides, but to feel that the effect has been 'flat' is certainly disappointing. And often the lecture might have been a great success if only the would-be lecturer had made himself acquainted with the essentials of a good lantern lecture.

It does not follow because a photographer has a number of lantern slides that he can give lantern lecture. People who know little about either slides or lecturing, though, often think that the possession of the former guarantees the possession of the qualities required for the latter.

In a lantern lecture the lecturer and the lanternist have to work together. A large number of slides is usually dealt with, the time devoted to the use of each slide being short. A lantern lecture may be very instructive; it may simply give impressions or help to put ideas in proper perspective. Certainly during a lecture something must be developed, and the pictures must help to develop that "something", else the exhibition of the slides has been in vain. A great mass of material has to be dealt with in a comparatively short time, and very skillful treatment is necessary in order that the relative values may be properly assigned to different portions of this material.

When a lecture is being given, the lecturer is dependent on some operator for working the lantern, and the success or failure of the lecture depends to some extent on the lantern operator. A clumsy operator may easily ruin a good lecture.

Since the lecturer is not operating the lantern, he must know the order in which the slides are going to appear on the screen. The slides will have been previously arranged for the lecture in the required order. The order may be committed to memory or a list of the slides in the order may be to hand for the lecturer's use. It is not a difficult matter for the one who is using the slides to commit such a list to memory and it is very advantageous to do so. Unfortunately, efficient lanternists are not always available, and the lecturer often has to put up with a very indifferent exhibition of his slides. Delays at the lantern cause gaps. There may be a blank screen for some seconds, and when the picture appears it may be the wrong way up, which causes further delay. The lecturer has unfortunately to be prepared for all this and must be able to prepare the audience during

these “blanks” for the picture which will shortly appear. It is under such conditions that the advantage of knowing the order of the slides is made evident. It follows, of course, that the slides must be arranged at the lantern so that the order is absolutely fool proof. If not, something may happen which is very amusing to the audience, but somewhat disconcerting to the lecturer.

The signal to adopt by the lecturer to inform his operator when to change the slide is a matter of importance, It certainly should not be a verbal one. The best is an electrical signal, which so far as the audience is concerned is a silent one. The lecturer operates a ‘push’ which is attached to a flexible connection between him and the lanternist, the connection being attaché to a piece of apparatus which somewhat similar to an electric bell apparatus without the bell. With a good dry battery this apparatus can be easily rigged up and the lanternist hears a buzzing sound when the lecturer signals by pressing the ‘push’. A movement of the pointer used by the lecturer in a particular way will be sufficient to an observant lanternist, and in addition to being simple is also good as a signal, and properly carried out is unobtrusive.

The lantern lecturer should always be provided with a suitable pointer for use in connection with the pictures on the screen. One sees various implements, including broomsticks, walking-sticks, and window rods, pressed into service for this purpose. Some people seem to think that it does not matter what is used, but the user of such objects looks paltry and helps to spoil a lecture. Little refinement give much towards giving tone to a lantern lecture.

A lecturer’s reputation is made or marred by the lectures he gives, and he cannot be too careful in his preparation. Besides, to deliver a badly prepared lecture is an insult to an audience.

A lantern lecture should never be read. If a person cannot give a lecture without reading it he should not attempt to lecture. Notes may be used, but the use of these should be slight and unobtrusive. If a lantern lecture is properly prepared the slides will be ample notes. Slides which have been carefully thought about will prove sufficient reminders when projected on the screen, and projected in proper sequence should serve the purpose for which they are desired. — *Amateur Photographer*

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