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Book: The Boy's Own Book of Indoor Games and Recreations
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HOME RECREATIONS.

SECTION II

HOME ENTERTAINMENTS

THE Home Entertainment is a delightful institution, and has a charm that the more public entertainment often lacks. The object of this section is to provide the material for a series of interesting and fascinating entertainments for the home.

In most cases, everything in the nature of apparatus can be made at home, and without any considerable outlay of either money or skill.

As to the entertainer himself, the remarks in the conjuring section on courtesy and mien apply with added force. The charm of an exhibition, whether it be Conjuring, a Shadow-show, Paper-folding, a Diorama, or any kind of entertainment executed largely by one person, depends upon the presence and charm of manner of the performer quite as much as upon the excellence of his performance. It was said of a famous magician :

“ His smiles made his cunning deceits
Innocuous, he even tricked our faces into smiles.”

How to make a Diorama

A Diorama affords excellent entertainment, and is not at all difficult to make. In Fig. 1 we have a front and complete view of the show, even to the chairs ready for your audience to be seated, and I hope with no stint of praise and applause for you. In this fit-up the principal thing is the frame which closes the picture in. At the top you see flags of all nations arranged in pyramid form. These can be bought nowadays for a few pence from most drapers, and give a pleasing effect of colour. Then, to shield operations behind, I have here shown curtains, but of course you can use folding screens, or, indeed, any kind of screen that may best please you or be most readily obtained. The frame should be built up from laths ; ordinary window-blind laths answer the purpose very well, and these you can

purchase from most oil shops. Then cover them with some dark material such as paper or stuff, dark green or chocolate in colour for preference, and the same tone for your curtains or screens, as a light colour will detract from the effects of your pictures.

You will notice that there is a straight and flat board across the bottom of the frame; this is to conceal the illuminating power which is to light up your pictures.

We will now go behind the scenes (Fig. 2). As you can see at a glance, this is so clear and simple that it needs but little explanation. The curtains are here purposely left out to make the diagram clear

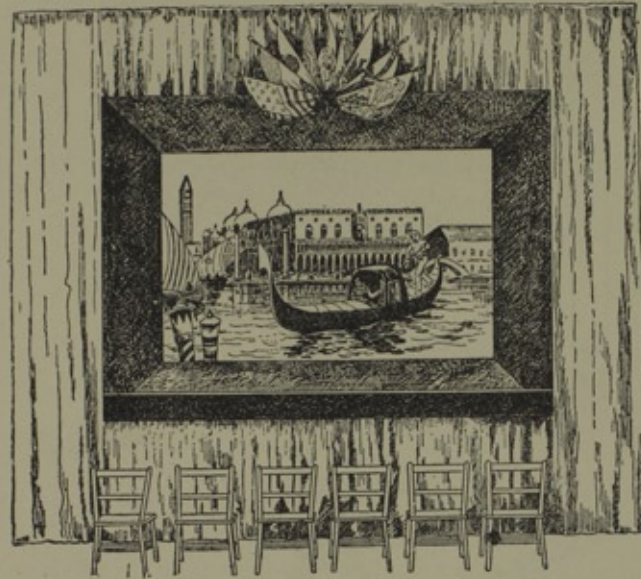


FIG. 1.

and without confusion. A is the frame, B the rollers on which the scenes are wound, and here notice that the commencement of the cloth is cut at an angle, and the point tacked on to the roller at the top. By this means the cloth on which the pictures are painted will wind on easily and evenly; and the other end of the cloth should be exactly the same to allow the diorama to be wound back again ready for the next performance.

It will be observed that when the rollers are not in use they can be brought close together and can then be packed away into a small space. C are the two uprights which support the frame and rollers, made of any wood you prefer or happen to have handy. The frame is fixed in its place on the wooden uprights by small thumbscrews E,

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to be had ready made from any ironmonger's. G is a narrow flat board that is to go between the rollers and the back of the frame. This will keep in its place without any fastening, its use being to support gliding or movable objects, as ships, etc., and also to steady the bottom edge of scenes. H shows small hook and eye to fasten the frame together.

Now for the stand D, which is a simple structure, its purpose being to light up the pictures from the back. It is made of wood, with a

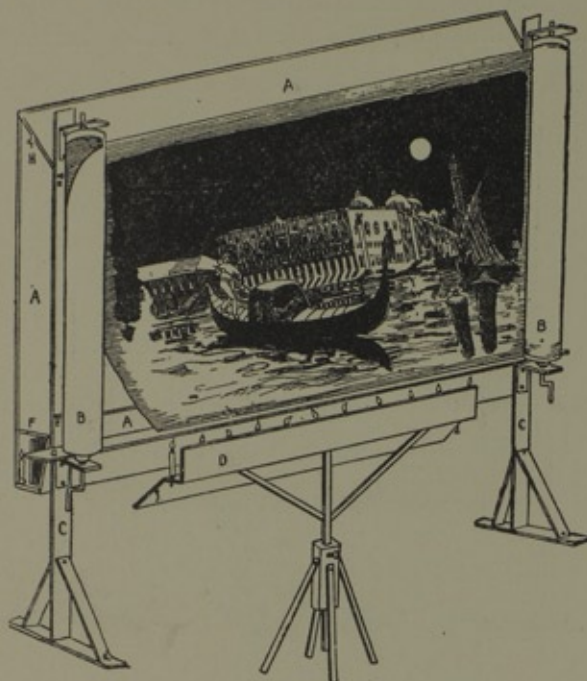


FIG. 2.

centre support to run up and down, and, when the requisite height is obtained, to be held in its place by a thumbscrew. There you see eleven candles burning, but the number will depend on the size of your pictures and the amount of light you may require. Don't use other lights such as oil; it is too risky. A candle can soon be put out in case of accident. The side of the board facing lights should be covered with a piece of sheet tin, so as to reflect and cast a good light on to the scenes. In the front of the candles you will observe that a board is hanging down. This is supported by hinges. Its use is to prevent any light from being cast on to the scene; the reason for this will be explained later on. When it is necessary it must be lifted

up perpendicularly the same as the back board or reflector, and then fixed for the time by the hook and eye to the bottom board which supports the light, thus leaving the scene at the back in darkness.

At the side of frame at F will be seen a small opening showing one of the many candles in front of scenes, and a board hinged, which is to answer exactly the same purpose as the hinged board on D, this opening being to save any unnecessary mechanism. As will be understood, the board can easily be placed upright or laid back by hand, as occasion may require. The position in Fig. 2 shows the light shut off the front of the picture, while the back is lighted up.

Fig. 3 is one of the rollers in detail—the top and bottom should be made of wood. The true circle may be got by the aid of compasses, and then a keyhole saw will do the rest. Now take two of these circular pieces of wood, and in one fix a stout screw or French nail, in the centre, a screw for preference, and then in the second piece of wood fix a stout wire handle. Before making it permanent, get a wooden ball such as is used for the game of rounders, and saw it equally in half, the flat side of one section to be fixed by brads or glue to the underneath wooden part of roller, and then the handle driven through its centre and fixed. The reason for this is, that as little as possible friction should play on the angle pieces that support the rollers, which are shown in Fig. 2, and which can be made of sheet iron or wood.



FIG. 3.

Having got so far, we will now complete the roller. Get some cardboard—by the way, strawboard is the best and the cheapest. Having determined the height or length your rollers are to be, cut your board that length, the width to be the circumference of your circular top and bottom. Now mark with a pencil and rule straight lines down the length of board from top to bottom. Having done this, then score with a blunt knife down those lines, but only so deep that the board will bend easily. Now you can place them round your circular pieces of wood and fix them on with tacks securely. When the whole thing is firm, lay an even coating of thin glue all round your strawboard and quickly, before it dries, fix on to it some paper, or calico, all round, thus ensuring a fairly even surface.

The scenes should be painted with water-colour, or, better still, distemper, this being colour in powder mixed with size and water, made thin, and used warm; both the size and colours are to be obtained from most oilshops, and the best material to paint on, known as union cloth, can be purchased from the draper's establishment, or good unbleached calico will answer the purpose very well.

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When you have decided on your subject and the number of scenes you intend to use in your show, then think out how many of these will require any after-effect from that first presented to the audience; such, for instance, as a quiet and calm scene in summer time, and which for some reason you wish to give a winter aspect to; or a dreamy hot day in some foreign clime, and then, with scarcely any



FIG. 4.

warning, a noise as of thunder is heard, and the whole landscape is thrown into semi-darkness—the buildings wrecked, fire and smoke issuing from a volcanic mountain, people thrown down, wounded and killed, etc.

To give such pictures as these, whatever their subject may be: a ship sailing calmly on her voyage, and then to show her on fire or wrecked, with the lifeboat to the rescue; houses in street in daytime, then at night with one on fire, with engines and firemen; these, and any pictures of this kind you may select, must all be treated in the following manner (see Fig. 4). Here we have an Italian view on a bright and sunny day, without the least suggestion of the impending earthquake. Suddenly all brightness has gone, the mountain is blazing forth smoke and lava, buildings are wrecked, houses in distance on fire, and people stricken to the earth (see Fig. 5). Now for this or any scene that has a second change it must be painted on both sides of the cloth: the front would show everything peaceful, lights on in front, dark at the back. When ready for the second view, a low rumbling sound is heard, the lights are shut off in the front and flashed on from behind, and the thunder-like noise should continue.



FIG. 5.

You will understand by this that when the lights are shut off in front the picture on that side cannot be seen, and the lights being exposed behind will show the second picture through the cloth. One thing must carefully be attended to. All fixed things as buildings, trees, statues, etc., must be exactly in the same spot, except where

parts of them may be thrown down; moving figures as persons, animals, etc., of course may have their positions varied.

Having drawn and painted your front view, now place a light in front of it, then go behind and it will show through, thus making it quite easy to trace on the back the objects drawn on the front; by this means you get everything in its proper place. The thunder and rumbling noise is accomplished by shaking a large piece of sheet tin or iron—the larger the piece the deeper and stronger the noise.

Fig. 1 shows daytime on the canal at Venice; then we change it to night (Fig. 2), with moon and reflections from windows on the water, etc., and do not forget that the colouring for the picture at the back will in most cases vary very much from the front. For instance, in the Venice scene, the back of it, or the night effect, the sky would

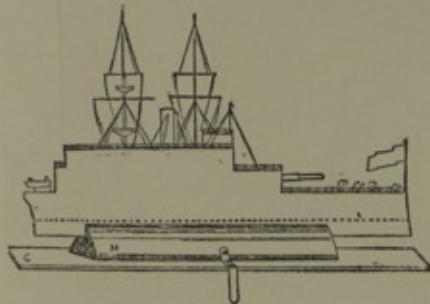


FIG. 6.



FIG. 7.

be a very deep blue, the water very much darker with light reflections from the windows, and the buildings much darker, some of them being quite in shadow; the windows, where there is supposed to be a light in the building, should have very little colour on them, and that of a slight yellow tone; but a little thought bestowed on the subject before you commence it, should set you on the right track for the colour.

Now suppose for your last scene you desire to have a grand finish—say, for example, a naval review of moving ships. Choose your background or scene—sea, with ships on it, then majestically floating along in front of scene and in full view of audience, ironclads, torpedo-boats, and any shipping you may think proper (see Figs. 6 and 7). This is a back view, quite plain, it being unnecessary for any paint or detail to be on it, the spectators not seeing this side. Ships can be cut from cardboard and quite flat, the masts being thin wooden sticks, and the rails and rigging of stout thread or thin string.

The ships are fixed into a piece of wood, M, with a slot in it, into

which is fixed with nail or screw a tin handle to move it along the board G, which corresponds with board G in Fig. 2, the boats having to go between the roller and back of front. The tin handle can be turned level with the boat, and then turned down again. With smaller craft you may desire to give a slight rocking motion as you move it across. This is easily done by rounding the underneath part of M (Fig. 7). The dotted lines shown on these two boats are supposed to be the water-line, and should be only just below the frame. In our last illustration you will see how your scenes should be painted one into the other to avoid a straight perpendicular line between each picture, which would be unpleasant.

On the left, is a fair and sunny landscape just receding from the



FIG. 8.

view of the audience and softening itself into a stormy scene, and this melting into a seascape. Here you have three pictures, and, of course, all your scenes will be on one length of cloth. I do not bind you to any particular size or material or subjects; in these please yourself, as you can make a show to stand on the table or large enough to fill up one end of your drawing-room.

You can paint your pictures on paper if you prefer it, but then there is not much strength in it, and you must be careful of accidents. The illustrated papers and books will give you plenty of subjects to copy from if you require them. It may take one, two, or three to work the show, and you should have a lecturer to describe the scenes and events, and, if possible, a little music during the progress of the scenes. A very good and interesting subject, I would suggest, is a tour round the world.