



sufficient power to overthrow the traditional system based on privileged birth.

These dire prognostications are reinforced by the vignette prominently placed at the centre front. As if it were her natural right, an elegant young woman sits reading a sentimental story, delicately eating sliced pineapple beneath a parasol held aloft by her little black servant. Both the food and the boy are emblems of wealth and colonial domination. Pineapples were luxury items, often prominently displayed on aristocratic dining tables without being eaten. But here, a scruffy labourer is greedily consuming an entire fruit, while his slovenly friend enquires 'Vont you take a hiee Joe?' – ice cream being another expensive treat still reserved for the rich.

Above this scene of social upheaval, passengers on Greenwich Hill are scrambling to climb aboard a metal cylinder for the next direct trip to Bengal operated by the GRAND VACUUM TUBE COMPANY. At its other end, a passenger has just disembarked to shake an Indian's hand in front of some misplaced palm trees. Behind them is 'The Company's Suspension Bridge', supposedly stretching to Cape Town and probably a reference to the competition for spanning the Clifton Gorge near Bristol. In real life, the engineer George Medhurst had already proposed using air-propelling cylinders for trains. After they were installed in Dublin, Croydon and Devon, passengers loved the smooth ride, free from the smell of sulphur and the irritation of coke dust. If only Victorians had thought more about the future of their planet and less about money: this low-pollution travel was rejected as less profitable than dirty steam engines.

At the time, it was impossible to be sure which innovations would endure. To the right of the pineapple stall, Heath shows 'The Steam Horse VELOCITY' trundling along on a wheeled platform, smoke pouring from its nostrils. Fifteen years earlier, several collieries had introduced *Steam Horse* locomotives pushed by mechanical feet plodding along the ground behind. They had soon been abandoned, but here seem no more bizarre

than the watering can just behind Greenwich Hill. Its mocking tag – 'McAdams newly Invented to lay the Dust he makes' – reveals that nobody realised cheap road surfaces had arrived to stay.

This caricature is delightfully even-handed in its irreverence. Heath must have enjoyed devising its complexities, although the passage of time has made some of the jokes hard to decipher. The winged creature in the sky is flying to New South Wales, its convict passengers looking suitably scurrilous. A cloud of castles in the air is captioned 'Scheme for the Payment of the National Debt', while beneath them a cannon unleashes an explosion of 'Irish Emigrants'. The triumphal arch on the left, now at Hyde Park Corner, was originally planned to celebrate the British victory over Napoleon, but by 1829, money had run out, and there was still no statue on top. Instead, this empty plinth bears a gibbet 'Designed to Elevate the Architects.' Next to it a church with Gothic windows and exotic decorations satirises the trend for increasingly ornate styles in British architecture, despite attempts to reinforce the power of Anglicanism.

Defying the gloomy prognoses, cheap books did not bring an end to civilisation. Today's nostalgic technophobes forecast the opposite – that society will collapse when electronic media have eliminated printed books. But perhaps their pessimism will be proved similarly wrong.

### Main Sources and Further Reading

James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

\*Dr Patricia Fara is an historian of science and has been President of the AHS since 2016. This is number eleven in a series of short articles in which she discusses a number of images, each illustrating a different way of incorporating time and its passing within a picture without showing a clock.