

Spassky at a Safe Distance, Issue 9
or
“The Great Exhibition of Victorian Inventions”

1: Introduction

2: Spassky’s Senior Speculation

3: Story + Bonus



1

As a rule, I like to keep a safe distance from things that may turn me into a different state of matter, which is why I have brought a guest to guide you through the Great Exhibition of Victorian Inventions.

You would be in safe hands if our guest had any.

Anyway, I trust this issue with your guide to-be because he is an absolute authority on Victorian inventions, having himself been subject to various Aerial Velocipedes, Electric Branding Irons, things with funny smells, and most recently, Dr.Morrison’s Transcription Device. “Most recently” being about 150 years ago, and I should add “most infamously Dr.Morrison’s Transcription Device” because (having not read the **BOLD LETTERED, RED, italicised,and underscored**,text beneath the YOU MAY VERY SPEEDILY DIE IF YOU DO NOT-label) our guest misused the honourable doctor’s Transcription Device – and after a lot

of things going “Pang!” “Boom!” and “WOOOOEEEEEEWOOOOOO!” will exist throughout eternity in the alphabetical form in which you will soon acquaint him.

Despite the inconvenience of being eternally transcribed, my guest is adamant in continuing his happy work – selling the greatest advancements in antique science for a wholesome price.

At any rate, I’ll leave you with him now! Have fun, and stick around for the story and the bonus (they are, I daresay, the most effective “HmMMM” Inducers on the market)

2

Step up! Step up! Step up, and do step in, to the Great Exhibition of Victorian Inventions: the fresh footprint of man’s trek into the future, the gallery of manufactured fantasy, the place whose wares are – for a limited time, indeed – under a discount of ninety nine percent!

I’m Alfie Betical, and I will be your guide through the Exhibition. It is my job to make you go “Hmmm”, or “Aaaaaaaaah!”, or a faithful variation of “I think I shall buy that!”, and then you will buy That. Mark you, you will buy That.

Please get your pence and pounds rattling, and ready them for transport – lend a hand to one who hasn’t any! And when you have had your inferences of what is beyond man’s mortal hands to create shattered, vaporised – or if you step too close to the The Bedazzling Bronchiole Bereaver – muciliaginised – and are of a mind to pay – you should direct your money either to my address at St. John’s Home for Bodily Displaced Persons (ask for Alfie), or – for those of a tarnished sense of charity – to the Cuddlesome Cats With Big Eyes Foundation, at St. John’s Home for Bodily Displaced Persons (ask for a man wholly unrelated to me named Alfie).

Alright then, follow me – this first one is a sensation!

Invention the First: The Aquatic Velocipede



Some people walk on water, others use canoes, but only the selectest trespassers on the province of fish strap themselves to three thirty litre floats, fix paddles to their feet, and suspend themselves, over a pretty embarrassing death, on a sausage-thick rope. And it is these adventurous souls that the Aquatic Velocipede was made for!

I shall ask for sixpence!

...

Starting price: sixpence.

Come on, then – a meremeagre sixpence, some floats and two paddles and you'll be off among the mermaids!

"I've got an Aquatic Velocipede" is a sentence that can get you far, you know.

What? "Move on"?

Very well If the Aquatic velocipede didn't do it for you, I am CONvinced this next one will!

Invention the Second *Vigor's Horse-Action Saddle*

The Readiest Road to Health
is by means of **PHYSICAL EXERCISE**,
and the easiest and readiest mode of Exercise is by using

VIGOR'S HORSE-ACTION SADDLE

Which not only provides, as Dr. GEORGE FLEMING, C.C., writes, "A PERFECT SUBSTITUTE FOR THE LIVE HORSE" but acts so beneficially upon the system as to be of almost priceless value. It

- PROMOTES GOOD SPIRITS
- QUICKENS THE CIRCULATION,
- STIMULATES THE LIVER
- REDUCES CORPULENCE
- CREATES APPETITE
- CURES INDIGESTION AND GOUT.

The Field: "We have had an opportunity of trying one of the Hercules Horse-Action Saddles and found it very like that of riding on a horse; the same muscles are brought into play as when riding."

The World: "It is good for the figure, good for the complexion, and especially good for the health."

PARTICULARS AND TESTIMONIALS POST FREE.

Vigor, 21, Baker St., London.

Lo! and exclaim, customer; amaze and wonder – swoon now if you're prone to it, for the particulars of Vigor's Horse-Action Saddle are weapon-grade wondrous and may well kill the faint of heart with blunt incredulity and awe!

It trots.

It canters.

It gallops, gentlemen and ladies.

They say it promotes good spirits.

Physicians affirm it quickens the circulation.

Mr. Bartleby's liver had never, ere Vigor's Horse-Action saddle, been so stimulated.

Corpulence is banished at its presence.

And appetite is created.

IT CURES INDIGESTION AND GOUT!

IT IS VIGOR'S HORSE-ACTION SADDLE!

Available now for tuppence and under.

Who said that! And what did Who say?

What?

"Does it neigh?". I am afraid, dear customer, that Vigor's Horse Action saddle does not neigh. But if you give it a piece of sugar and step on it for a bit it may go "Clonk", or, on occasion, "Clank".

What?

"How do you use it?"? Well, first you get on it. Then placing one's hands and feet somewhere should be a fair enough continuation. Then I suppose you trot, or canter, or gallop. Did you know it cures gout?

You want it, I promise you want it! You want Vigor's Horse Action Saddle so much that that desire masks itself behind wanting to get very far away from it. It's a good invention. Most...good as well as...it's very most good.

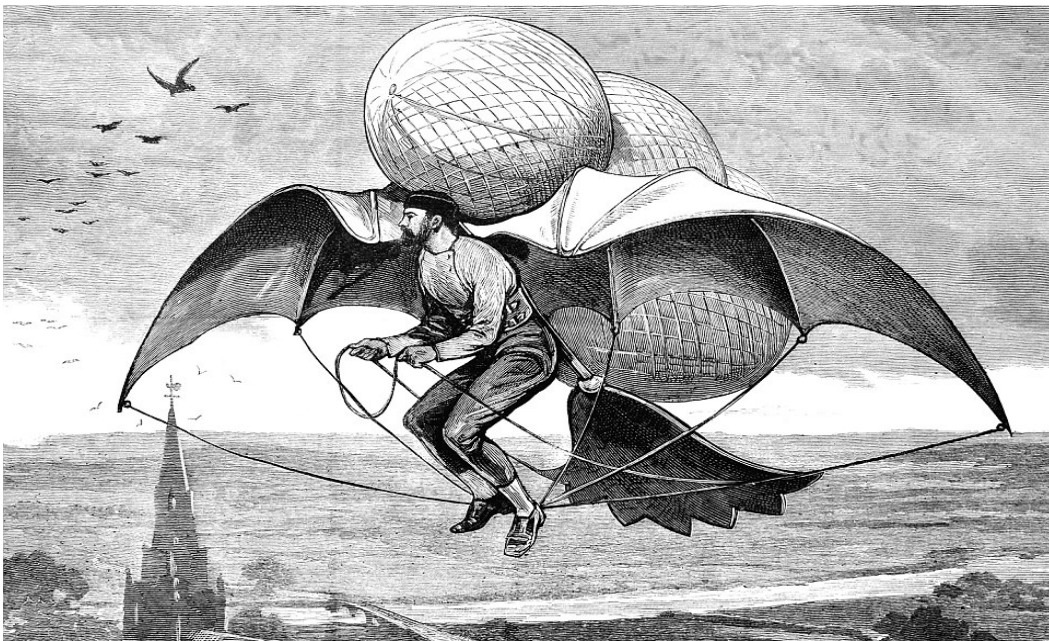
Tuppence?

Alright, a penny?

I'll look the other way if you steal it?

Invention the Fourth

The...What?



If Vigor's Horse Action Saddle wasn't lethal enough...

Or.

Or that Aquatic...

No!

You know what? Screw it, and bolt it, and nut it too! That's got to be the stupidest thing I've ever seen! No, I won't try to scam you on this. Hell, I should pay you for looking at it. Stop looking at it!

This was a dumb idea; other immortals spend their time blowing up galaxies and making primates worship them as gods, and here I am, selling Aquatic Velocipedes, and Horse-Action Saddles...

Snake-oil was the right call.

Let's sell snake-oil, then, or horse dewormer – it's gonna be the next big thing.

[Short Story of the Week: A Voyage to the Moon \(Edgar Allan Poe, 1835\),](#)

[Bonus: Queen Victoria's Journal \(I can't paste the PDF for some reason -- just click the link and there it'll be\)](#)