TELEVISION
Behind the Scenes

John K. Newnham

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What do you know of television? It is the youngest of the entertainment arts, and the most exciting entertainment since the birth of films.

There are many books on the technical aspects of television; but what of the human side? Even among enthusiastic viewers there are few who know what goes on behind the scenes. The aim of this book is to introduce the personalities of Alexandra Palace, home of television, to the viewer and would-be viewer. It tells how the announcers work and who they are, reveals the secrets of television shows and the men and women who produce them, and tells the full, fascinating story of television since its inception.

Whether you own a set or not, you will find it filled with interesting information.

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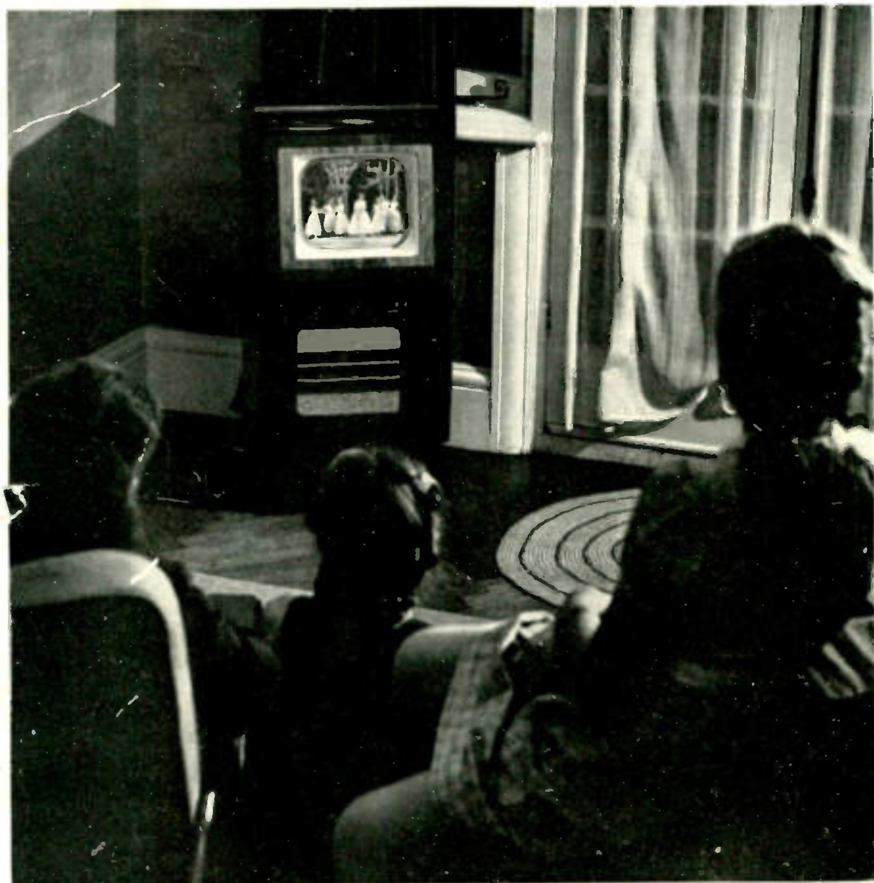
TELEVISION Behind the Scenes



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Chapter 1

SO THIS IS TELEVISION

THERE is magic in the air, the magic of four hundred and five lines of tiny dots dancing invisibly through space and then sorting themselves out on silvery screens in thousands of homes—continuously moving dots which form themselves into the images of living people, brought so realistically into the intimate family circle that they are soon regarded almost as personal friends.

Most of us now take radio for granted. Perhaps we are not at all sure how the voices travel from a microphone in a broadcasting studio to the loudspeaker in our lounge, without any interlinking wires. But we are so used to it all that we accept it as a normal part of our lives.

Television, however, is still a mystery and still a thrill. It has passed out of the novelty stage, but even long-standing viewers regard it with awe, as something of a miracle which is a long way beyond the realms of normal understanding, just as space itself is.

Television can be explained, of course. The technicians will delight in telling you how it all happens. I am not even going to attempt to do so, except in brief reference for the ordinary viewer who is interested to know how it works without going into complicated details.

There are books for those who are interested in delving into the full technical details of this modern scientific wonder; but this is intended as a book for the enthusiastic viewer and

would-be viewer who would like to be taken behind the scenes of a twentieth century fairyland and to see how television shows are put on and what it is like in the studios, and to meet the people who provide this newest and most fascinating form of entertainment.

Radio is essentially an intimate form of entertainment. Its success is largely due to the fact that it comes right into the homes of listeners and is part of their daily private life. Television is even more intimate, for it brings not only the voices of its broadcasters into the home but their faces, mannerisms and their individual personalities.

It does so more frequently than the cinema. You can see your favourite film star three or four times a year at the most. Television announcers and many of the players enter your home several times a week, month after month, year after year. You get to know them almost as well as you do your own friends.

When you see a film, you know that it is only a canned reproduction. The events occurring on the screen took place months before. The players might even be dead by the time you are seeing them.

Television is a living, vital thing because you see events as they are happening. The announcer who smiles at you in that friendly manner—and you feel that he is smiling at you personally—is actually smiling at the moment you are watching him on the screen. There is no director to order retakes so that the entertainment you watch comes to you only after it has been cut and edited and polished. If accidents happen, as they often do, the viewer participates in them: the television screen cannot blot them out. And this, curiously enough, instead of being irritating, increases your affection and makes you feel that you are part of that family in the television studio.

If an outside sporting event is being relayed, you are watching it before the results are known. A horse comes racing round the bend. It looks a certain winner. When you are watching a news-reel, you know already what is going to happen next and that he is going to be beaten by a short head after all. You don't know this when watching it on television. You share the full excitement of the onlookers who are on the spot.

There you have the strongest appeal of television. It is life while it is happening. That is why it is wrong to associate it with the cinema. It is a different medium entirely, although much of the presentation technique may be similar to that of films.

Nor is it ever likely to oust the cinema, any more than radio killed the gramophone industry, as many people thought it might. Television is an addition to the forms of entertainment provided for your pleasure.

It has already found its feet, though many years of experiment and trial and error lie ahead. One day we shall have larger screens, stereoscopic pictures and colour; but they belong to the future, although experiments have already brought them well within the bounds of possibility. For the next few years the leeway of the war period has to be made up. The primary consideration is to bring television to all parts of the country.

This lusty infant of the television world had its career rudely shattered by Hitler's war, which brought its transmissions to a complete stop for nearly seven years. The screens went dead at nine minutes past twelve on 1st September, 1939. Viewers had their last glimpse of television when a Walt Disney cartoon film, *Mickey's Gala Première*, flickered to an end, with a caricature of Greta Garbo exclaiming 'I t'ink I go home.'

Alexandra Palace switched over to a vital wartime job. The transmitter went into use for the R.A.F. on the hush-hush task of 'bending the beam' to intercept enemy bombers.

The television screens remained dark until Friday, June 7th, 1946, just in time to transmit the Victory Parade. Pre-war receivers flashed into life again. New sets made their appearance. And, in ever-increasing numbers, the H-shaped television aerials sprang up on houses, a few here and there at first, then one or two in every street within the reception area. Now the television aerial is becoming almost as familiar as that of the ordinary sound-receiver aerial.

* * *

It seems a long time since an amiable, bespectacled Scot named John Logie Baird informed a somewhat sceptical world that he had perfected a means of transmitting moving pictures through the air.

He submitted his invention to members of the Royal Institution in 1926, when he sent out a special transmission. Its star was the famous actress Dame Sybil Thorndike. The pictures were unsteady and streaked, but they could be distinguished. Television had arrived!

Television was born before this, however. Its birth, in fact, can be traced back to a discovery made in 1817, when Berzelius discovered selenium, a non-metallic element. Over half-a-century later, in 1873, an accidental discovery at the Valentia Cable Station paved the way to television, when it was found that some selenium rods which were being used as resistances altered in value under the influence of strong sunlight.

Before long, scientists were working on the possibility of converting light waves into electric impulses. Nipkow found

a way to divide a picture into elements when he invented a scanning disk in 1884.

Other scientists had meanwhile demonstrated the effect of a magnetic field on polarized light, but not until 1908 was a means found to amplify the small currents available. Then A. A. Campbell Swinton filed a patent for a device which was the forerunner of the 'Emitron'—and the Emitron is still the basis of present-day television.

Television, as such, was still a long way off, however. Nothing very much happened until 1923, and in that year Baird began his experiments which led in 1925 to the successful transmission of shadows and simple outlines.

Two rooms in Soho provided the setting for one of the most dramatic developments in the radio world. Baird set himself the task of transmitting a picture, recognisable in detail, through a wall from one room to the other.

A young office boy from downstairs helped him. He stood before the revolving disks while Baird went into the other room. The dazzling light and heat made him feel dizzy and caused his nose to bleed. He was losing interest in the proceedings when from the other room came a shout of excitement from the inventor. He could see the boy's movements, in spite of the wall between them. It was a tiny picture, just about the size of a cigarette card—but the movements could actually be seen.

The American scientist Jenkins was also carrying out experiments at this time, but Britain managed to keep just ahead. Baird's first transmission of real images to the Royal Institution was followed three years later by facilities for experimental transmissions through the B.B.C.'s medium-wave London Station transmitter in Oxford Street, London.

Vision only was transmitted at first. Sound was added the following year when the transmissions were switched to the

new London Regional Station at Brookman's Park, and the B.B.C. equipped a studio in Broadcasting House with Baird apparatus, which came into use in 1932.

This first television studio opened on August 22nd, 1932, and during the first year well-known figures in the world of entertainment agreed to take part in this new scientific novelty. The great and distinguished ballerina Adeline Genee gave her world farewell performance in this most modern of mediums. Karsavina, Markova, Anton Dolin and other famed ballet stars danced in front of the television cameras. Delysia, Nina Mae MacKinney, Carl Brisson and the late John Tilley appeared in programmes.

But these transmissions were not for the general public. They were seen only by that small group of enthusiasts, most of whom built their own receiving sets. Reception distance was restricted, but I well remember the excitement I experienced when I actually succeeded in identifying characters as far away as Redhill, in Surrey.

Developments on the ultra-short waves, which are used now, were still in very experimental stages. Commercial sets on any sort of scale were out of the question because no definite wave-lengths or 'lines' had been decided upon.

The first concrete step towards establishing television as a serious form of entertainment came in May, 1934, when the Television Committee was inaugurated by the Postmaster General to examine the position of television in various countries and find out if the time had come to start a public service.

It reported on the relative merits of the various systems which had sprung into being since Baird had started his experimental transmissions. One strong rival was the Marconi-EMI system, a product of the powerful Electric and Musical Industries, part of the huge gramophone combine

at Hayes, Middlesex, which includes HMV and Columbia.

The gramophone industry leapt into the television sphere with a system which differed considerably from Baird's. His was a mechanical system at that time. The Marconi-EMI system was non-mechanical.

The Television Committee issued its report in January, 1935, and recommended that a high-definition public service should be established at an early date and that the B.B.C. should be responsible. Alexandra Palace was suggested as a suitable site, and a recommendation was put forward that both Baird Television and Marconi-EMI should be invited to tender for the supply of apparatus for their respective systems.

Thus both systems went on the air for experimental periods until the formal opening of Alexandra Palace on 2nd November, 1936, when a public service of two hours daily came into being. The two systems were used during alternate weeks.

Ironically, the Baird system is no longer used by the B.B.C. Both systems were given a fair trial. The choice eventually fell in favour of EMI, with its higher definition and what is known as inter-laced scanning.

And so, on 5th February, 1937, the B.B.C. Television Service emerged from its testing stages and opened its regular public service with the one system, and manufacturers of receiving apparatus were able to go ahead in the knowledge that the sets they made would be usable for some years ahead.

How quickly television has really come upon us can best be judged by comparing its rapid growth since the return of transmission to the situation as it was in the last few years before the war. Very few people, even in the reception areas ringing London, had even seen a television set in action. There were only about 14,000 sets. Within eighteen months of Alexandra Palace's reopening, viewers had grown to well over 45,000, and progress since then has been limited only by the

sheer inability of manufacturers to keep up with the ever-increasing demand.

Television was largely a newspaper sensation during the early 1930's, somewhat on a par with rockets to the moon and other Jules Verne-like fantasies, except that there was a hard core of fact. The country thrilled to colourful, exaggerated stories about the new wonder.

Now its birth pangs are over. Television is here to stay.

* * *

How does television work?

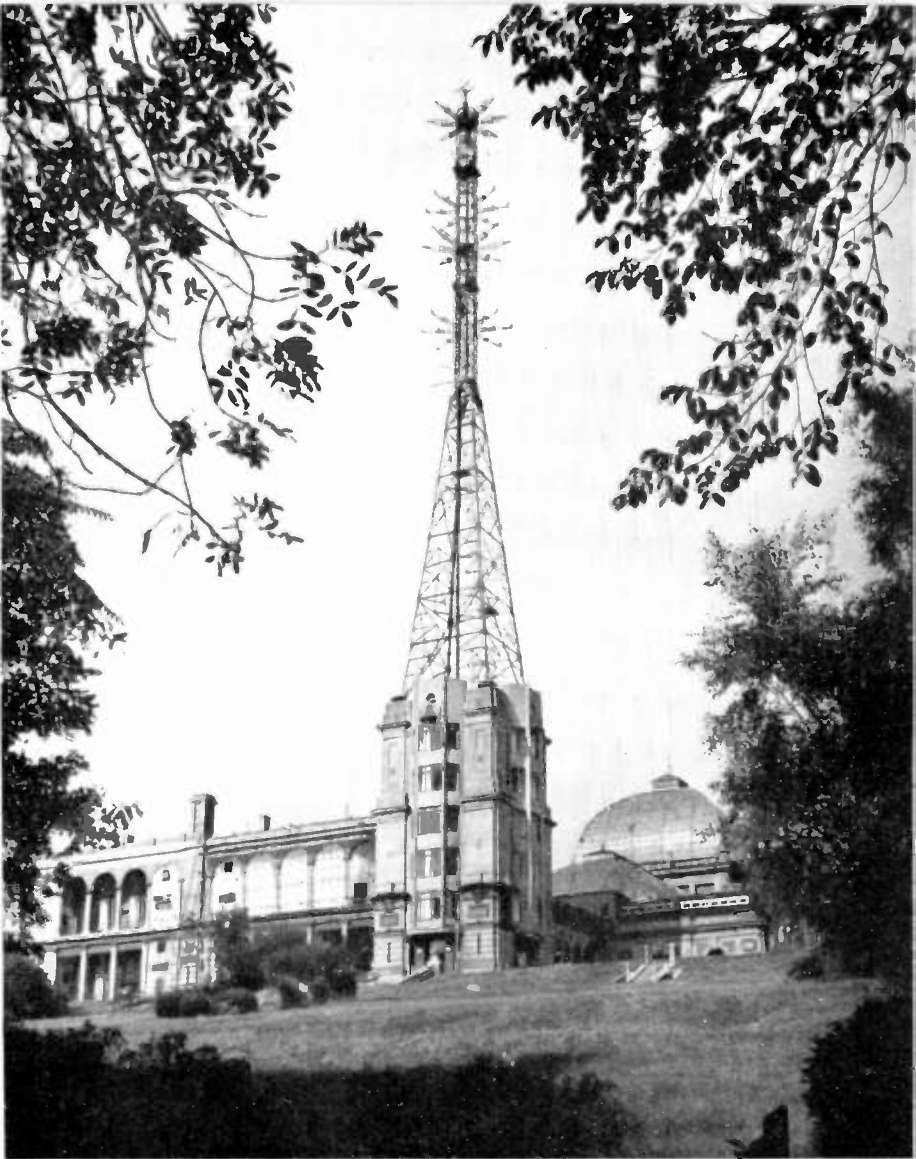
I have assured you that this is not going to be a technical survey. The technical aspect of television is a long and fascinating subject, but only for those who are scientifically minded.

A brief explanation, however, will help you to understand how you receive the transmissions on your set. Or, at any rate, it will give you a very rough idea.

Imagine the television camera as a human eye (they actually call it the 'magic eye' in the television world; it looks like an eye and operates on the same principle). The cornea of your eye casts an image on to the retina at the back of the eye, and this retina consists of over a million tiny elements, all of them quite separate. Each of these tiny dots picks out a different detail, and the individual details in turn are transmitted to the brain, forming the one complete pattern.

The Emitron camera is somewhat similar to the human eye. Its lens has the same function as the cornea. The retina is represented by a photo-electric plate covered with innumerable tiny nodules.

The lens transmits the image of the scene on to the plate through a scanning process which splits the picture into tiny fractions. Photo-emission takes place and the nodules act in



Television mast on top of the south-west tower of Alexandra Palace

In the television studio during the broadcast of a variety show with Jack and Daphne Barker

the same way as the dots in the retina of your eye, gaining a charge of electricity which varies in intensity according to the amount of light falling on them.

Practically simultaneously, an electron gun fires a stream of electrons on to the plate, moving across the surface in a series of lines. The whole of the surface is explored, and the charges that have accumulated are carried away by the electron stream to form the vision signal.

Electrical vibrations at a rate of 2,500,000 a second take the signal to the transmitter, via the control room, and out they go on to a carrier wave which is rather like an invisible conveyor belt radiating in all directions through the air.

The transmitter is the brain. The picture it receives is split up into lines. On the B.B.C. service, 405 of these lines constitute one picture, or frame, and successive frames are built up rapidly to give the impression of continuous movement, similar to that of the cinematograph film.

Fifty frames are projected every second. They are interlaced by the scanning of all odd lines first, and then returning to scan the even lines required to complete the frame. This reduces the flicker.

Left at that, you would receive nothing but one long, continuous line on your receiver. What actually happens, however, is that the transmitter sends out synchronizing signals to indicate when each new line should start and when each new frame begins.

Now look at your receiver. The whole process is reversed. The receiver's job is to pick up those lines and sort them out. The synchronizing signals are picked up. The 'line' synchronizing impulse tells the receiver when to start each new line, and the 'frame' synchronizing impulse indicates when to start the process over again with a new frame.

Now look at the controls on the receiver, and you will find

these line and frame adjustments. If the receiver is not correctly tuned the picture will break up into unrecognizable rows of lines or revolve round and round. Adjustment of the controls brings it back into synchronization with the transmission.

Just as an electron gun fires electrons which collect the electrical charges in the transmitting camera, so a similar gun in the receiver restores the charges on to the receiver screen, which consists of a thin layer of mineral salt at the bulbous end of your cathode-ray tube. The little dots of varying intensity form themselves into a complete picture—and the scene being enacted at Alexandra Palace is reproduced in your home almost immediately.

As I have said, 405 of those lines form one complete frame in this country. Other countries have decided upon similar or slightly higher standards, such as 525 in America, and there is a definition of nearly 1,000 lines on one French experimental station.

The number of lines used determines the definition of the picture received by the viewer: the more lines, the more detailed the image. The definition of black and white films is said to be the equivalent of a television picture composed of 1,000 lines.

The 405 lines used by the B.B.C. are considered to be adequate for a reasonably detailed picture and overcome the main objections to the use of a higher number of lines. The more lines there are, the more complicated and expensive both the transmitters and receivers become, and another drawback is that the range decreases.

The importance of the fixing of the B.B.C. standard is that it has been set for some years to come, and purchasers of current television sets are therefore assured that their receivers will not suddenly become useless because of a change in transmission.

The average-sized screen of a little under 10 × 8 ins. is unlikely to be expanded for many years. This is the ideal size for the present transmissions. If the screen is too large it is apt to reveal the lines which are now invisible to the human eye at any distance from the receiver. A larger screen would also show up blemishes which now get by without being noticed.

But there are also methods by which the reception can be magnified in such a manner that the picture can be thrown on to a full-sized cinema screen. Cinemas are slowly being equipped for this purpose. Television in the cinema has a big future, but it will always be mainly entertainment for viewing in the comfort of your own home.

Chapter 2

ALEXANDRA PALACE

EVERY morning at 9 o'clock, and then at intervals throughout the day, a private bus drives off from Broadcasting House, London, W.1. Its passengers form an assorted and interesting medley of actors, actresses, producers, writers, technicians and others associated with television.

The bus goes northwards, leaves the West End behind and wends its way through the suburbs. After twenty minutes it reaches the foot of one of the highest hills in London. Its speed drops as it climbs steadily towards the summit. A pleasant greenery takes the place of the over-built suburban streets and you look down to see what is probably the most striking view in the metropolis.

You are as high as the dome of St. Paul's. London lies below you like a vast model, with the Thames twisting its way towards the sea: in fact, on a clear day and with the assistance of field glasses you can see as far as Southend.

The bus pulls up in the spacious parking ground at Alexandra Palace, postal address Wood Green, London, N.22.

It is a large, sprawling, rather dilapidated building flanked by two towers, the south-eastern of which is dominated by a 300-foot steel aerial mast looking something like Eiffel Tower, its highest point 606 feet above sea level.

'Ally Pally', during its long and varied history, has seen a good many different entertainments within and outside its walls. It set out to be the Crystal Palace of North London.

Today, large parts of it are in a sad state of disrepair. Footsteps echo hollowly as they cross deserted halls of broken windows and rotted floors.

Parts of it, however, have survived. Life tingles anew in the south-east tower with the newest of entertainments, television. Dance bands play for hundreds of young couples in the ballroom. Skaters whirl round on the rink.

Adjacent is a race course. In its undulating pleasure grounds from time to time noisy, excited children flock to the fairs which pitch there, and the jangle of roundabouts and the shouts of the barkers threaten to penetrate even through the well sound-proofed walls of the television studios.

A large pleasure lake gleams in the sunlight. A beer garden, built by nostalgic German internees during the 1914-18 war, adds a Continental atmosphere and at the right times of the day you will inevitably find plenty of television's celebrities drinking under the leafy trees which burst into pink, red and white blossom in the spring.

But Alexandra Palace was not chosen as the headquarters of television because of its pleasant surroundings. Television transmission needs height. The hill itself is 306 feet above sea level and offers the best television site in London.

Other studios may eventually make their appearance elsewhere, but 'Ally Pally', even when the television crews have moved away, will still be haunted by the ghosts of the pioneers.

The portion of the Palace used for television has been leased by the B.B.C. from the Alexandra Palace Trustees and covers an area of something like 30,000 square feet; a further area of 25,000 square feet has also been leased for future development.

The south-east tower has been converted into offices; the pylon above removed to make way for the aerial. Structural

alterations have made it possible for the transmitters to be installed on the ground floor, with the control rooms immediately above and the studios next to the controls. A shaft has been put in to enable scenery to be hauled up—scenery constructed in the old theatre which is part of the Palace and now has its auditorium cluttered with old sets which have been used for past shows and may be converted for future productions.

You take the lift to the studio floor and find yourself in a long, seemingly-endless corridor, very high but narrow, with the wardrobe, make-up and dressing-rooms on one side facing large hangar-like entrances to the studios themselves.

Entering one of the studios, you find that the similarity to a film studio is striking. Cables trail everywhere. Microphones swing from booms. Powerful lights glitter brilliantly.

All around are sets, some small, some large; sets for perhaps two or three different programmes. At the back of them all is the orchestra, out of sight of the cameras. Up above, a glass panel enables the control room staff to see what is happening.

The Palace has two studios, both approximately the same size—70 feet by 30 feet in diameter and about 30 feet high. The floors are thickly padded with a rubber substance to reduce noise.

In this relatively small space, all the splendour of a super-elaborate presentation can be, and is, achieved. There is scarcely room to move when everything is ready for production. Almost every available inch is occupied. If the show calls for large sets, an average of four of them will jostle against one another, but if there are a lot of changes and the sets are small, up to eight will be found. And there have been times when a production has called for even more tiny sets, and all have been accommodated in one evening.

The cameras fit themselves in almost miraculously. There

are four of them in one studio, three in the other. Of the four, two are dubbed 'Iron Men', and they are semi-static; one is on a mobile, rubber-wheeled trolley, which they call the 'Crab'; the fourth is on a movable Vinten crane.

Although the television camera is technically an Emitron camera, few call it that. Most prefer the apt description of 'the magic eye'. And how like an eye it is. It stares at you. It almost looks through you. And for close-ups it comes right up to your face—far closer than any film camera for a movie close-up. Newcomers to television usually find it terrifying at first, but after a time it has the advantage of blotting everything else out, in an almost hypnotic way.

The four cameras can all be trained at the one broadcaster if necessary, the producer cutting from one to the other so that different angles can be shown; or they can all be lined up in varying directions, ready to switch to different scenes smoothly and without a pause in transmission.

Television calls for teamwork more than any other form of entertainment. The staff work together in such closeness of contact that one false note in the harmony of the whole would throw everything out of gear.

It takes thirty-five people to put on one production such as a play, and the B.B.C. has two complete television teams, working on alternate shifts of two days at a time. While one shift is working, the other shift is off duty. The two rarely meet. Old friends who have been separated by being put into different teams become almost complete strangers to one another unless they pay a visit to Alexandra Palace during their off-duty hours.

Who are these thirty-five 'back-room boys'?

The production personnel consists of the following specialists:—

1 Lighting engineer (the equivalent of the film studio

lighting cameraman).
4 Camera operators.
3 Camera assistants.
1 'Sound-floor' (the man who operates the microphone boom).
2 'Sound-floor' assistants.
6 Scene staff.
2 Studio attendants.
1 Foreman and 4 electricians.
1 Studio-manager, and 1 assistant studio manager.

They are the men actually on the studio floor, just out of the view of the camera. Up above, looking at them through the glass panel of the control room, just off the gantry, there are:—

4 Vision operators.
1 Vision 'mixer'.
1 Sound 'mixer'.
1 Gramophone operator (the 'effects' girl).
1 Senior engineer.
1 Producer.

In addition to this production staff there is, of course, the announcer, and there are many others working behind the scenes such as the make-up experts, scene designers and the wardrobe.

A little later on, we will meet some of them personally, and see exactly what tasks they perform, but before doing so let us consider television a little more closely and find out what production entails.

One must inevitably compare television with the cinema, for it takes much of its technique from this source as well as from the theatre and radio itself.

A feature film will cost anything from £100,000 to £500,000, and even more, to produce. It will take from seven

weeks to four months to complete, after all the preparations have been made and before it gets into the cutting rooms and has its music, its sound effects and its editing. Nearly a year may pass from the time a film goes into production and its release to the public.

A television play will rarely cost more than £1,000. Its usual length of rehearsal is from two to three weeks. And, once it gets on to the studio floor, the whole of the action must be completed in its allotted time of from one to two hours. Just compare this with the production of a film. A day which results in three minutes of completed negative is considered to be exceptionally good.

A film director will spend more than two hours on one scene alone, and will usually photograph the scene at least four or five times. Lighting the set itself will often take hours, and if the director is not satisfied with the first 'takes' he can carry on filming the scene over and over again until he has got it exactly as he wants it.

Film actors can fluff and have another go. The cameraman can reject shots; so can the sound recordist. And even after all this, the producer can order the scenes to be taken again if, on seeing them on the screen, he feels that they are not right.

The television staff has no such time to play with. Everything must be cut and dried before the show goes on the air. No-one can repeat scenes. The cameraman must get everything as nearly right as possible; so must the sound operator. There is no margin for error.

Players must know all their lines off by heart. They can't read them, as they do on ordinary radio. They can't learn them bit by bit as they do for films. And they don't have the advantage of long rehearsals, try-outs and runs as they do in the theatre.

Accidents do happen, of course. There was the time an

actor fainted clean away in the middle of his scene, collapsing head first towards the camera. There have been occasions when the camera has 'panned' to an actress just a trifle too quickly and the viewers have seen the make-up girl putting the last touches to the player's lips.

Such things are bound to happen. The amazing thing is that the television teams get through the continuous action of a show without more accidents.

Generally speaking, players find television one of the most trying forms of acting. It is more tiring than either stage or screen. The heat of the studio becomes almost unbearable after a time. The cramped space is difficult. There are those long feats of memory. But television has one great advantage over films: the action is continuous and it is easier to get into the atmosphere of the show.

'Never again!' players will often swear; but they are at 'Ally Pally' once more when the opportunity comes:

Now let us see the television boys and girls at work.

Chapter 3

THE ANNOUNCERS

MORE than any others, the announcers have the affections of most viewers. They are the first to be seen when the television programmes begin; the last to be seen before the close-down. They are on the air regularly. Their approach is direct to the viewer.

Television announcing varies considerably from sound announcing. It is more informal and it calls for personality as well as a good voice.

The most successful Alexandra Palace announcers have all come from the stage. The most famous of them all, and chief announcer for a long time, was actress Winifred Shotter. Her resignation, to return to acting, led to the appointment of brunette, Scottish Mary Malcolm, an actress in her own right who has been seen on the stage and films, and in private life Lady Bartlett, wife of author-playwright Sir Basil Bartlett, and the mother of three daughters.

Mary Malcolm was a B.B.C. sound announcer before going to Alexandra Palace, and before that had had quite a considerable amount of broadcasting experience. She was not new to television, either, when she took over her new job, for she had already taken part in several television programmes dealing with women's fashions.

Relief announcers appear before the television cameras from time to time, but there is always a nucleus of permanent announcers. For a long time, Jasmine Bligh held sway, until

she married and went to Ireland to live. She was followed by Gillian Webb, who married an American and now lives in the States.

Two of the longest-runners are McDonald Hobley and Sylvia Peters. They, too, are from the stage.

'Mac', as both viewers and television staff always call McDonald Hobley, is tall, fair-haired, with blue eyes. His friendly manner in front of the camera is perfectly natural—and, according to one viewer: 'You can't help feeling sorry for him when he is making a solemn announcement and puts on a suitably serious expression. He doesn't look right without a smile on his face.'

Mac was an actor before the war and toured under the name of Val Blanchard. Then came six-and-a-half years in the Army, finishing up as chief announcer for the Forces' Radio Station in Ceylon, which stirred his interest in radio, and he joined the television staff in May, 1946, as interviewer for the magazine programme *Kaleidoscope*. This led to announcing.

He is married to a tall, blonde ex-mannequin who watches him on their television receiver at their Pinner home, and mercilessly criticizes his appearances.

Sylvia Peters is the baby of the Alexandra Palace announcers. She is a slender, extremely pretty brunette with a dimple and a smile that come over the television screen particularly well. In real life, she is even slimmer and more petite than you might expect (she claims to be 5 ft. 3 ins., but she has to stretch to her utmost to reach that) and her hair is a lighter brown than it appears on the cathode ray tube.

Sylvia is in her early twenties, single, was born in Highgate and lives not far away in Finchley. Trained at the Royal Academy of Dancing, she danced, sang and understudied in several shows, including *The Night and the Music* and *The Night and the Laughter* at the Coliseum, before her mother

spotted a newspaper paragraph reporting that the B.B.C. was searching for new announcers.

One of the reasons for her getting the job was because she was completely at ease, with no trace of nervousness. Quiz her closely about that, and she will confess that it was simply because she wasn't taking the audition at all seriously and didn't think for a moment that there was the slightest chance of getting the appointment.

One of the things they asked her to do was to tell the story of *The Three Bears* in her own words. She rattled it off quite happily until she got to the point where the three bears faced Goldilocks in bed. She had no idea what came next, made no attempt to create an ending, and finished up naively with: 'And I can't think what happened to her next!'

She got the job!

The announcers rarely meet one another. They take their turns of duty on a rota system which is quite flexible. As far as can possibly be arranged, the rota is worked out so that the announcers are on duty for the programmes to which they are most suited.

A predominantly masculine or sporting programme, for instance, will usually be announced by McDonald Hobley, and the rota is always arranged so that Mary Malcolm is on duty for the *Designed for Women* series.

The greatest difference between television announcing and sound announcing is that the announcements have to be memorised as far as possible. They have a script readily at hand in case of emergency, but it is more than a point of honour not to have to refer to it: having to do so is liable to put them completely off their stroke. One of the tricks of the human mind is that if you are trying to find a paragraph quickly on a written page, the eye refuses to pick it out.

There is more to the job than merely announcing. The

announcers are there to give the television broadcasters a helping hand, especially the many non-professionals who take part in discussions and give talks.

And some do need a lot of encouragement. Their nervousness has to be eased away, and a great deal of mental agility is needed when interviewing them in front of the camera. 'You've got to be one jump ahead', Mac Hobley explained to me. 'They've got a habit of answering your next question before you've even asked it, so you have got to have another question ready to fire at them. There are also those who rarely say more than "Yes" or "No", and you have to fill in all the information yourself and just get their confirmation or denial. And that, believe me, is a strain.'

One of the greatest attractions (to my mind, at any rate) of television is that it shares with the Third Programme that blessing of timelessness. No-one worries over-much if the programmes over-run their scheduled length, and they often do so quite considerably. Nevertheless, a certain amount of time-keeping is necessary, even if only to allow the announcers and staff to catch their last buses or trains home. Keeping one eye on the clock is part of the announcer's responsibility.

This is not always easy. The only way to indicate to a leisurely broadcaster that he has got to speed things up a bit is to hold a placard behind the camera pleading: 'Go faster!' The untrained tele-broadcaster's reaction to this is liable to be disturbing, for as often as not he will forget the camera and microphone by nodding his head, speeding up his delivery and glancing up to ask, either verbally or by means of a raised eyebrow, whether the new speed is more satisfactory.

Announcing, however, is not restricted to appearance before the camera inside the studios. A lot of outside jobs come along, and from the point of view of the announcers, these outside broadcasts provide the job with much of its appeal.

One of the earliest tasks that Sylvia Peters found herself doing was to fly in a helicopter at Northolt Airport and describe her sensations. It was the first time she had been in the air, and she confesses to a sinking feeling in her stomach, which was not helped in the least when the two-way conversation that she was carrying on by means of walkie-talkie apparatus became a matter of guess-work because of the breakdown of the apparatus.

Mary Malcolm actually prefers these outside broadcasts. The Sunday afternoon Children's Hour provides her with a lot of opportunities in this direction. She was out in the Alexandra Palace grounds when thick snow fell and children—and not a few adults—were skating, sledging and ski-ing. She chatted with the children and shot down the hill on a sledge herself, though not for long: she came a most undignified purler.

She has been out there when the fairs have been pitched. Her most embarrassing moment in this particular announcing job was when she mounted a roundabout and the enthusiastic showman put it into top gear and kept it going round and round. Viewers got brief glimpses of their announcer as she whizzed past the camera every few seconds rather like the petrol advertisement and yelling vainly at the man in charge to bring the wretched thing to a halt.

McDonald Hobley has had even more of these experiences than the women. Not all of them have taken place actually outside, though they have been beyond the range of normal announcing.

One of his more hazardous ventures was when he took part in a series of Judo demonstrations in the studio. He had not quite anticipated that job. It came about because of his passion for sport. The B.B.C. was planning a series of sports demonstrations, and he volunteered to appear in them. The first was golf. He hadn't expected the second to be wrestling.

These Judo lessons took place for several weeks. Flung around unceremoniously, his legs twisted, arms pulled, head almost wrung off, he completed each programme with aching muscles and a profusion of bruises and had scarcely recovered by the time the following week's demonstration took place.

One wrestler in particular gave him a rough time. The wrestler in question felt that an amateur should be given 'the whole works' and not let off with demonstration holds. The wrestling that took place when he was in the studio was entirely unrehearsed and realistic!

Another of Mac Hobley's less pleasant tasks was a zoological programme in which animals from the Zoo were taken to the studios. One was a rattlesnake, which was put into a tray. Mac interviewed the keeper for the benefit of viewers, and was perturbed to notice that the keeper was looking worried and was jigging away at the rattlesnake with a stick. The reason for the keeper's agitation was that Hobley had one hand hanging over the side of the tray, well within reach of the snake.

'And,' the keeper remarked, afterwards, 'I'd got a syringe in my pocket ready to give you a jab if anything bit you—but I remembered suddenly that I hadn't got anything for a rattlesnake bite!'

That programme, incidentally, finished by one of the keepers coming up behind the announcer and winding a python unexpectedly round Mac Hobley's neck. It was quite harmless—but the exhibition and the announcer's reactions were quite spontaneous.

* * *

Mary Malcolm, chief television announcer

Announcer McDonald Hobley with his dog 'Kiltie'

Announcer Sylvia Peters

Clothes for the announcers are provided by the Alexandra Palace wardrobe. They vary as much as possible, both for the women and for McDonald Hobley, and they are chosen to suit the programme.

Mac Hobley usually wears evening dress for normal evening announcing, but it is a lounge suit if it is an informal sort of programme, or a sports jacket if it is a sports transmission.

So far as the women are concerned, feminine viewers would soon get tired of seeing their announcers in the same dress time and time again.

'And it would be bad for our morale', is Mary Malcolm's comment. 'It would be rather like going to tea with friends and wearing the same dress every time—which is something no woman would ever dream of doing.'

Every effort, in fact, is made to present the announcers differently every time. The camera will alternately present them in close-up and medium shot, and they are given special sets which are designed as far as possible to suit their personalities. The announcer's set is usually in one corner of the studio from which the programme is taking place, unless there is insufficient room, in which case the announcements may be made from the other studio.

The announcers usually arrive at Alexandra Palace about one o'clock, in time for lunch before dressing and making-up. And, by the way, they do their own make-up. They have to study the announcements to be made and be in the studio half an hour before the programmes are due to begin.

From the afternoon close-down until the evening programme their time is their own. They can go out if they wish, but usually remain at the Palace. It gives them a chance to deal with their rapidly-increasing mail from viewers—and they answer all letters personally—and for the women to do that necessary knitting and darning.

Although they all come from the stage, the announcers are obviously unable to carry on with their theatrical work while at Alexandra Palace, but they are often given the opportunity to take part in feature programmes and television plays. So they are frequently seen doing other jobs in addition to their announcing—and these are about the only times they ever meet their fellow-announcers.

They all agree on one thing. They would not like to return to 'blind' broadcasting.

'Television is so much more fun and more intimate and friendly', is Mary Malcolm's summing-up. 'In some ways, it's more difficult; but it's certainly much more satisfying.'

And one thing they never forget is that they are the closest contact between the viewer and Alexandra Palace.

Chapter 4

THE PRODUCERS

THERE is a popular belief in the show world that stretcher-bearers are always waiting just outside the Alexandra Palace studios to bear away the unconscious figures of television producers at the end of a show.

It is an exaggeration, but not such a wild stretch of the imagination as you might suppose. Producing a television show is the most nerve-racking task in the whole realm of entertainment, a sustained period of nervous tension calculated to leave anyone in a state of complete exhaustion.

Most producers, in fact, are so utterly spent by the end of a play that they need a week's rest before they can start work on anything fresh.

Although you see a play for only 90 minutes or so, it represents very much more work than this. It takes a long time to put one play on, yet a very short time indeed compared with the production of a film or a stage play.

The subject has to be found first, then a cast chosen. When these necessary preliminaries have been completed, two to three weeks of hard and concentrated rehearsal take place before the play goes on the air.

The television producer has a lot of problems to worry about. He has got to rehearse the players in the normal stage manner and get the play presented to his satisfaction, and that in itself is no easy matter in a short period of three weeks or so.

He has also got to visualize the play as the viewer will see

it and he has got to remember that he will have four cameras at work. This is where his real television skill counts.

He has no camera to assist him during these rehearsals. He has got to be the eyes of the camera himself, and he will usually grasp some object—as often as not a music stand—to represent that apparatus.

He knows what the cameras will do. Two will be more or less static. He has to ask himself what the best positions for them will be. That decision takes a lot of working out. Then comes the 'Crab'. This can be wheeled backwards and forwards, showing the players at full length and then moving in for close-ups. The camera on the movable crane can achieve a lot of other positions.

When shall these cameras move? Which cameras shall be used for each scene? When shall close-ups be used?

All these angles and movements have got to be planned, and the initial planning is done at the script stage, with writers and producers working closely together. A comprehensive plan of the sets is drawn, with all the suggested camera positions marked and also the positions for the microphones.

The script enumerates, too, the technical requirements, a property list and a scenery list for the information of the departments concerned.

The script itself is set out in the following style. The example is that of a play called *The Bunyip*, by Henry C. James, which was transmitted towards the end of 1947.

This is the lay-out:—

Announcer Set
Gray Pleats. Horabin Set-Up.

Grams: Btm. End studio	Introductory music . . . in minor key . . . 'Waltzing Matilda'.

Cam 3 on map

Television control room

Girls from the Windmill Theatre rehearsing at Alexandra Palace

Margaret Lockwood studying costume designs for her part in the television production of *Pygmalion*

Mix to caption Cam 3 on photo	*The Bunyip*, a story by Henry C. James.
Cam 4	Announcer (Sitting at table): 'As an introduction, let me remind you that for . . . probably more than a hundred years, men have argued for and against the existence of the fabulous . . . and fero-
Preview Cam. Cam 2.	cious . . . creatures called the Abominable Snowmen of the Himalaya mountains . . . .' A map of Australia. South East corner where the chain of mountains called the Australian Alps is situated. Announcer's voice continues over scene. Announcer:

The announcement then continues over a series of further pictures, with the camera taking in panoramic scenes, tracking up towards a photographic view and then closer views and other scenes until it reaches a bar. The script then continues:

Mix to Cam 2. Cam 2: Pans on piano playing *Three O'clock in the Morning*, round room and across to bar	To where Jack Duncan . . . a hairy old bushman . . . and Jim O'Connell . . . the owner of the pub and a typical bush publican . . . are playing cribbage. Jack is dealing the cards . . . Over the scene a harsh voice is heard . . . It is the voice of old Harry Maclure . . . . Harry M.:

	'Shut that dam' music orf . . .'
	(As the music stops)
	The bar itself . . . .
	If we saw the whole of it, we would see it is horse shoe in shape but we need only one side of the horse shoe . . . .
Preview Cam 1	Alice, the barmaid, who is blousy and hard-faced though with an underlying softness, if one has the subtlety to see it. Her hardness is the result of this tragedy that has come into her life.

The script continues in the same manner, with the camera instructions in the left-hand column. There are instructions such as 'Pan R.' (pan to the right); 'C.U. of Cards' (close-up of the cards), 'Cam up to table', 'Cut Cam 2 across shoulder one head at a time', and intimations of the type of shot, whether medium or long.

These script suggestions, worked out on paper, may not materialize as anticipated. There will usually be a number of alterations decided upon after practical experience at rehearsals.

Watching the producer at rehearsals is as entertaining as watching an acrobat. He rushes from position to position, moving backwards, forwards, sideways. He leaps abruptly from one side of the set to another, to take the place of each of the cameras in turn. The sheer physical energy expended is enormous, and all the time his brain has got to be working several steps ahead.

There is a great deal of trial and error, of course. That's the only way he can get what he really wants.

Rehearsal with the cameras comes only on the day of the

transmission, when the camera crew takes over and the producer no longer has to engage in gymnastics.

He has his scenery now. He has the music and sound effects to contend with. He can see the effect of the lights. And he can watch it all from the control room and see how the previous ideas have worked out.

A number of changes will probably be made, not in the actual presentation of the play but in the positions of the players and the use of cameras.

His voice comes from the control room over a loudspeaker.

'Diana. I think we'll keep you in the camera during that scene, after all. So we'll need your reactions clearly. Michael, instead of No. 2 camera tracking with you, we'll hold you and Diana on No. 1. Let's try it.'

They try it that way. The producer watches partly through the glass panel and partly on a television screen, which shows exactly how the viewers will see it. He will no doubt make a lot of further adjustments before he is satisfied.

And so to the broadcast itself. The producer is up in the control room. In front of him are two television receiver screens, one marked 'Preview', the other marked 'Transmission'.

Control knobs operated by the girl vision-mixers enables him to switch to any of the three or four (whichever the case may be) of the cameras on the set, and the scene in the lens of any of these cameras can be flashed on to either of his screens.

The show is ready to begin. The announcer steps in front of the camera. The producer sees him on his 'Preview' screen. Satisfied that everything is all right, he gives the signal for the announcer to go on the air, and the announcer's image flashes on to the 'Transmission' panel. On to 'Preview' comes the picture of the opening set for the

play. The producer can see his players standing there ready.

The opening titles come up. The producer speaks into his microphone. Down on the set, the studio manager and cameramen, wearing headphones, give a nod.

The cameras are numbered. No. 1 has shown the announcer. No. 2 is on the opening titles. No. 3 is on the players and No. 4 is ready to show them from a different angle.

'No. 2 camera', the producer orders. The vision controller brings it to life. The producer can watch the action on his 'Transmission' panel, and at the same time the 'Preview' screen tells him that Camera No. 3 is ready to take over when he gives the word.

The play is opening in long shot. The producer wants the camera to track forward slowly, until the head of one of the players fills the screen entirely. He gives his instructions through the microphone to the cameraman.

Then, at a signal from the producer, No. 4 camera takes over—probably recording one of the other players. The pictures on his screen flash over. He is now seeing the action through the eye of No. 4 camera, and on to his 'Preview' screen he brings up the next angle from whichever of the cameras he has decided on.

Thus the producer is always seeing two things at once—the scene that is taking place and the setting for the one that is to follow. His ingenuity will make or mar the show. Clever cutting from one camera to another makes for smooth and interesting action.

He has also to brief the staff working on the floor. However much rehearsal there has been, the unexpected is bound to happen. There may be a microphone shadow right across the picture. 'Sound-floor' is tipped off, and the boom is adjusted to get the microphone out of the way. Or perhaps the camera is not quite at the right angle: a word of instruction over his

microphone from the producer to the cameraman puts that right.

Producers have likened this part of their work to the playing of an organ. Every note must be perfect. The combination of notes brings forth the tune. One false note, and the harmony is ruined.

The producer of a play normally keeps away from tricks. His transmission must be straightforward. His task is to make the production as smooth as possible without distracting the viewers' attention from the action.

The producer of variety or revue can have much more private fun and can let his imagination run riot with the cameras under his control. He is by no means restricted to one camera at a time. With the use of two cameras simultaneously he can make one artist dance with himself. With three cameras, he can put the same performer on to the screen in triplicate. He can bring in all sorts of effects.

He can, for instance, have one camera focussed on to a glass bowl. Then another camera, focussed on to a dancing couple, can superimpose their image on to the other picture, giving the impression that they are dancing inside the bowl.

This trick-work is not particularly difficult. All the cameras can be put on the air at the same time. The skill is in the use of them.

Such trick-work is amusing, in small doses, both for the viewer and the producer, but now and then it can also be used for dramatic effect. *Hamlet* is a case in point. The television camera was able to produce a far more effective ghost than the stage could ever hope to attain. Dramatic effect, too, was gained in a Priestley play, *Jenny Villiers*, in which a portrait was made to come to life and in which the past and the present repeatedly merged.

The producer can also make use of films. Such scenes are

filmed beforehand and are inserted into a play at the appropriate times. The manner in which films are used is elaborated in a later chapter dealing with television and films.

The use of film, of course, adds another facet to the producer's task in the control room. He not only has his four cameras to deal with, but the film as well. Instead of switching from camera to camera, he switches over to the transmission of the film sequence, operated from another control room, and then back again to one of the cameras on the floor when the studio action takes over from the movie.

How cameras and films are used is entirely up to the producer. He is not bound to use them all. He can use only two of the cameras if he wishes. One producer, in fact, insists on using only one camera throughout the whole of the action of the play. He maintains that this is more natural from the viewer's aspect, putting the viewer into the position of watching a stage play from a seat in a theatre instead of watching a film in a cinema.

* * *

In charge of the drama section, with ten producers working for him, is a keen-eyed young Irishman named Robert MacDermot, who migrated from Broadcasting House to the film world and then returned to radio on the television side.

His task is to find two plays a week, and he usually has as many as fifty plays lined up in advance. There will be slight variations, of course, but generally speaking he can tell you what plays will be on the air for approximately six months ahead.

'Between 80% and 85% of them', he remarked, when I tackled him, 'are adaptations of previously produced stage plays. At present, only 10% are originals written especially for

television. The balance consists of adaptations of stories.

'My aim is to increase the number of original works up to about 25%, and I am going all out to encourage authors to write direct for television.

'Plenty of people are trying. I get anything up to thirty original plays submitted to me every week, and they are all read. One or two have been accepted and produced. Not many of these unsolicited plays are suitable, however. Television is a new form of play technique, and at the same time any play suitable for televising has got to be at least good enough for stage production.

'Television plays will always be more similar to the stage than to the screen, but we are gradually introducing more mobility by the increased use of pre-filmed scenes and new cameras. New deep-focus cameras are helping us considerably. For a long time, our producers were up against the serious difficulty of shallow focus cameras which made it impossible to have proper grouping of players. It was necessary to get all the artists in a row in order to keep them in focus.

'But even with these new cameras it is never advisable to have more than three or four people on the screen at one time. The average screen simply isn't big enough to take more without looking hopelessly overcrowded. For the same reason, large-scale milling action scenes which look so good in the cinema are not suited to television.

'Where television varies from films so much is that dialogue holds up better than action. That's why, although, there is a similarity to the cinema in the use of cameras, the actual production is more akin to the stage.'

* * *

THE PRODUCERS

Television producers have still a lot to learn. They are all fully aware of that. Television is still so new that years of experiment in production technique lie ahead, and there are fascinating opportunities for newcomers to this sphere of entertainment.

No two producers, in fact, put on their shows in the same way, and most of them have their individual styles. The keen viewer soon learns to pick them out and, just as the experienced filmgoer learns which directors make the pictures that appeal to him most, so the viewer can learn which of the television producers are worth following from his point of view.

Thus you will find Michael Barry specializing in straightforward drama; Harold Clayton on the adaptation of existing plays; Eric Fawcett on comedies; Jan Bussell on straight thrillers; George More O'Ferrall on classical and historical plays, such as 'Hamlet', which won him the first television 'Oscar'.

And all producers are developing their own particular use of the cameras. Studying their different styles adds very considerably to one's interest in watching television.

The confined space in the television studios is shown in this close-up during the transmission of a play

Televising a play. Two cameras are used here, and also two microphones

Chapter 5

FACING THE 'MAGIC EYE'

FACING the television camera is one of the most trying ordeals imaginable, but fascinating for all that. It calls for a technique all of its own, both for the speaker and the actor.

The ordinary sound microphone presents enough horrors, but the speaker has the comforting knowledge that although every inflection of his voice, every slight stutter or mistake, echoes in millions of homes, no-one can see what he is looking like. He can twitch his face how he likes, mop his brow, and not worry if there is a glazed look of terror in his eyes.

The television speaker has no such comfort. Every expression on his face is being seen by viewers, and he has got to imagine that he is talking to each one of them personally.

It needs imagination. That soulless 'magic eye' of the camera has got to change itself into a mental picture of human beings. The secret of success is complete naturalness and self-confidence. The camera magnifies nervousness. It also magnifies the speed of movement. A speaker who moves his head about rapidly is going to cause a disturbing effect at the receiving end. Just as he has to remember that his words should never be gabbled, he has to remember that his movements should be unhurried.

One of the important things to be remembered by all television broadcasters, whether actors or speakers, is this control of movement. Actors, in particular, must never take long paces

If they do, they will disappear out of the picture very quickly.

Many of the sets are built in perspective, to give impression of depth or length. A room, for instance, may be twenty feet wide at one end, but it will taper off to a width of seven or eight feet at the other end. The viewers will see what appears to be a very long room.

To cope with this, the actor has to reduce the length of his steps as he walks towards the rear, and must remember not to go too far. If he does, his stature will appear to increase enormously, and he will soon look as wide and as tall as the room.

'Tracking shots', when the camera moves with the player, also require short steps. I watched one long tracking scene, in which two players appeared to be walking something like thirty yards. In actual fact, they were covering only about a third of that distance. Each step measured only a few inches. Yet their movements were perfectly natural on the screen.

Ballet dancing in the studios is especially difficult. There just isn't the space for the normal movements as executed on a full-sized stage. All movements and steps have to be reduced.

I had a chat with Stephen McCormack, producer of the magazine programmes such as *Kaleidoscope*, in which a lot of non-professionals appear. Men and women from all spheres are lured to Alexandra Palace to face the cameras for the first time, and it is a perpetual source of amazement to me, as a viewer, to see how self-composed the majority of them appear to be.

'The secret', McCormack assured me, 'lies in the people in the studio. You must have a friendly crew if you are going to put amateurs at their ease. The atmosphere they create counts for nearly everything.

'I always have a long talk with the tele-broadcasters and give them as many hints as I can.'

The first thing he has to do, of course, is to overcome

camera-consciousness. McCormack's advice is: 'Just imagine that you're talking to a friend in a pub. The camera is your pal. Talk to him naturally and in your own words'.

The important thing for the tele-broadcaster to remember is that he is not addressing hundreds of thousands of people, although there may be three or four hundred thousand actual viewers. Those viewers are usually in twos or fours, little groups who are completely remote from all other viewers. The broadcaster is talking to these small groups, which is very different from facing a big meeting in a large public hall.

Realization of this fact has a comforting effect on the amateur.

Most amateurs are being interviewed when on the air, so they are not left completely on their own. An interesting point of technique here is how to use the camera. Should the broadcaster turn to the interviewer when answering questions, or should he look directly into the camera and at the viewer?

McCormack's technique is to regard the camera as a third person in a conversation. When three people are chatting, the man who is doing the talking glances from one to the other. McCormack believes that this is the best method to adopt with the camera, and he persuades the broadcasters to regard the interviewer and the camera as two people, and to address his answers to both, some of the time looking into the magic eye and some of the time looking at the interviewer.

Summing up these amateurs, he says: 'Considering what an ordeal televising is, it's amazing how good people are. The best are usually those who are employed in some form of public service and are used to talking to strangers. Bus conductors, barrow boys, newspaper boys and others of those types are ideal subjects for television interviews. Nothing ever disturbs them'.

My own experience of viewing confirms what he says. The

professional orators are equally cool and clear but never so natural; and they are so used to untoward incidents that an accident in the studio rarely puts them off their stroke. The classic 'Ally Pally' example of this is of a very famous and distinguished overseas Prime Minister who faced the camera with such coolness that even when an electric bulb crashed on him he was not in the least put out.

News of this accident reached the highest quarters at Broadcasting House, and a request went to Alexandra Palace for a full report. No-one, it appeared, had officially recorded the incident. Reports of all those concerned with the transmission were studied, and it looked at first as though the affair was deliberately being kept quiet. The record of it was eventually found, however. The studio engineer had made a note of it. He had recorded, truthfully but with delightful understatement: 'Lamp fell on artiste'!

* * *

For the professional actor, television is a brand new technique to be learned, differing from all other forms of entertainment yet combining them all. The player with experience of stage, films and radio starts off with a big advantage.

Television incorporates the theatre qualification of a good memory, for the actor has to play his part without the aid of a script, as in radio, and without the help of a prompter—although, in an emergency, the studio manager can whisper the words. Prompting, however, is far more difficult in a television studio than on the stage, for if the actor is going to hear the words, so are all the viewers. Forgetting lines is liable to put even the best of players off their stroke. One well-known actress dried up. The studio manager did his best to help her, but her mind had gone blank. The actress with her saw her

Ballet was one of the earliest of the arts to be televised

One of the outside-broadcast vans relaying opera from the Cambridge Theatre

swaying and realized that she was about to faint. She acted promptly and, so to speak, took viewers into her confidence. She leaned forward and took the other's arm. 'Don't worry, dear,' she said, 'Let's try again. Your line is . . .'

It eased the situation. The other actress quickly regained control of herself. And not one viewer had a word of criticism to make.

Film experience is invaluable, however. Film actors soon forget the presence of the camera, and they also learn that theatrical gestures are taboo: they *look* theatrical.

Television actors have to remember that all actions and dialogue must be played down when they are in close-up or medium shots. Gestures must never be exaggerated and there must never be any ranting.

They have to change their technique, however, when in long shots. When well away from the camera, they are very much smaller in proportion. Their technique, therefore, has to switch rapidly from that of films to the theatre, and the further back they are the more they have to exaggerate in order to look natural.

Thus an actor flinging a cloak over his shoulder in a close-up must do so as slowly and undramatically as possible. In a medium shot, he must do so with a little more flourish. In a a long shot, he must use the extravagant gestures so beloved by the villains in melodrama. All three actions will look precisely the same on the television screen.

Television, therefore, has added a fourth dimension to the art of acting!

Chapter 6

OUTSIDE BROADCASTS

OUTSIDE broadcasts, or 'Actuality' productions as they are called in the television world, are undoubtedly among television's strongest attractions and they surpass any other form of bringing these events to the public.

In some respects they are even better than being an actual spectator because they provide you with several extra pairs of eyes. This applies particularly to the relay of a function such as a Royal Procession. However good a position you might find yourself, you can see the pageantry only from that one spot. Television cameras give you several different vantage points as well as telephoto close-ups such as those of the Royal Family on the Buckingham Palace balcony.

Television has the obvious advantage over sound radio that it shows what is happening; and an advantage over news-reel in that it is transmitting the events as they are actually taking place.

In charge of this side of television is keen-eyed, tall, energetic Philip Dorte, whose experience of broadcasting and films dates back nearly a quarter of a century. He worked for the General Electric Company's broadcasting stations in New York and the Trans-Canada Broadcasting Company in Canada. He then became a radio publicist and after this deserted the wireless field for films and joined Ealing Studios and then Gaumont-British. Returning to radio in 1937, he took charge of Television Outside Broadcast Production and became

manager of this section in 1939. He is also in charge of television films.

There are two methods of relaying outside events. One is by cable to Alexandra Palace. The other is by ultra shortwave televising from the site in question to the studios.

London has a 'magic circle' of Post Office cable permanently wired to all the places from which television broadcasts are frequently made. It is a co-axial cable of the type designed by the Post Office for multi-telephone calls, capable of dealing with 200 conversations simultaneously. A lucky chance led to the discovery that this cable would carry television frequencies.

The magic circle cable runs from Alexandra Palace to Broadcasting House and then to all parts of the West End's theatreland, southwards to Whitehall and Buckingham Palace and Wimbledon, eastwards to Holborn and the City, northwards to Wembley.

With very little difficulty, therefore, television can be relayed direct by cable to Alexandra Palace from any London theatre and main vantage point in the metropolis.

The radio link can be used for all other spots for a radius of something like 30 miles, and this unit is a mobile, small-scale television transmitter on its own sending a direct television picture to a special receiver at Highgate, from where it travels to Alexandra Palace by cable.

The aerial is in the form of a specially made fire escape which expands to a height of 70 feet, and the unit has its own scanning van from which the producer controls the broadcast and switches from camera to camera in the same manner as the producer in the studios. It also has its own generator.

The producer—frequently Philip Dorte himself—keeps in touch with his cameramen and the commentator by means of the inter-com system, but the difficulty is that the commentator cannot reply without being heard by viewers.

Rapid strides on the technical side have been made, and the greatest drawback of all has now been overcome. Bad light was always the worst menace, and many an exciting game used to have to be faded out because the field became too dark for the cameras.

Darkness has now been defeated. New, almost incredibly sensitive cameras, are able to pick out objects which are almost invisible to the human eye. They can beat fog. And they can transmit with ordinary room lighting, although extra lighting is usually advisable for relays from theatres and indoor sporting arenas.

The special television lighting has been bitterly criticized by some of the contestants in events such as boxing matches and table tennis tournaments and there have been complaints of eyestrain (usually, let it be added, from the losers!). The B.B.C., investigating these complaints, had an expert medical inquiry into the whole situation and came through with a completely clean bill and the assurance that the extra lights were harmless.

Three cameras are usually used for O.B's, one for long-shots, one for mid-shots, and one for close-ups. The technique, however, is very different from that of news-reel photography. News-reels have their cameras at various vantage points for a sporting event: television has all three cameras stacked together.

'The reason for this', Philip Dorte explains, 'is that we have found it better for the viewer, who is usually going to see the whole of the event, to watch from one position, just as he would if he were actually there. We discovered that having cameras at different points resulted in a confused picture of the game as a whole. The viewer had to change his position mentally so abruptly and so many times that it was difficult to follow the game properly. Now he sees the whole game as

if he were sitting in one of the best positions, with the advantage of telephoto lens, and no sense of physical transposition.

'It is rather like a man watching a game with two pairs of glasses. When the ball is close to him, he relies on his own eyes. When it is some distance away, he uses his opera glasses. And when play is at the far end of the game, he picks up his field glasses. The three cameras are the equivalent of the normal eyesight, and magnification through the opera glasses and the field glasses.

"There is no fixed ruling about the distance of the cameras from the field or the boxing ring, whatever the case may be. The camera lens overcomes distance difficulties. But with relays of indoor events it is always better to move in as close as possible because if you're well to the back a haze of tobacco smoke usually fills the hall before long—although here again, our new cameras are overcoming even that menace.'

The most difficult events to transmit are those which are widespread, such as football, cricket and racing. Producer, cameraman and commentator must all have a thorough knowledge of a game. The cameramen are always selected from those who are most sports-conscious.

Naturally, the commentator is always a specialist; but if the producer and cameraman have no knowledge of the sport they are liable to make a complete mess of the broadcast. For intelligent anticipation and quick decisions are the secrets of a successful transmission.

Take, as an example, the relay of a cricket match. The cameraman has got to be prepared to follow the ball, in whichever direction it might go. He has got to have a good idea what the batsman is likely to do. He can judge this from the batsman's play, from the bowler and from each ball. If the batsman is a hard hitter, then the cameraman must be prepared to swing his camera quickly to catch the ball on its way to the boundary.

The producer's job is to give the viewer the most interesting aspects of the game. The main interest, perhaps, is in the batsman, and he has him in close-up. And it is the producer who has got to decide whether to follow the ball to the boundary. He may consider that the ball is not likely to go as far as that, in which case there is a chance that the batsman may be run out. If he thinks this may happen, quick instructions to the cameraman keep the batsman in the picture instead of the ball.

Quick decision is also required as to which of the cameras shall be in use at a particular time. At one period it may be more interesting for the viewer to see the whole scene from a wide angle; at another period, to have one camera concentrating on one of the particular players. The bowler may be of special interest because of his style, but if a camera is concentrating on him some outstanding field work may be missed.

This applies especially to horse racing. The horses are coming into the last lap. One horse leads the field, but there is an exciting struggle for second place. Which is the producer to do—have a camera trained on the leading horse, on the two following him which are providing so much excitement, or use the wide angle lens which will show everything but not in sufficient detail to bring out the best points?

Making decisions of this sort calls for sound judgment and experience and soon reveals whether a producer is good at his job or not.

A similar problem faces him when something untoward takes place, such as an accident on the field or an accident among the spectators. Which is going to interest the viewer more—to keep the camera on the scene of the accident or follow the game? The news-reel people can make their decision afterwards. The O.B. producer has to decide on the spot.

'And luck counts for a great deal', comments Philip Dorte. 'You have got to have luck at this game. For instance, when I

was televising the Oxford-Cambridge boat race in which Cambridge caught a crab, sheer luck decreed that I should have the camera on the Cambridge crew at that precise moment. I might easily have been trained on Oxford at the time. But there it was—viewers got a clear picture of one of the most important incidents in the race.

'Again, during the two minutes' Remembrance Day silence at the Cenotaph in 1938, I had my camera on that section of the crowd when a man ran amok and caused the disturbance which made headline news in the papers. That again was absolute luck.'

In the latter case, the television picture actually provided Fleet Street with its first intimation that something unusual was happening, for the disturbance was seen on the television screen in a news-agency long before any reporter could get to a telephone.

Close co-operation between the producer, hemmed in the confined space of his scanning van, and the commentator is essential. Communication is maintained by means of intercom, and the commentator has a monitor screen to show him exactly what the viewers are seeing.

It's no good the commentator describing something which is not being shown on the screen. In this respect, the sound has a great advantage. He can talk about anything that is happening; but if the television commentator wants to talk about an incident that is taking place out of camera, he has got to give the producer and cameraman the cue. He can lead them by some such remark as: 'Now, over on the north side of the ground . . . .'; hesitate long enough to give the producer time to make the necessary switch in that direction; and then comment on whatever it is that is attracting his attention.

He has got to be very much quicker on his commentary than the sound radio commentator. The latter may appear to

be so quick-firing that no-one could beat him for speed, but in actual fact there is often a time lag between the action that he is describing and his actual comments on it.

This was found before the war when the B.B.C. experimented with the idea of taking the sound commentary for television instead of having a special television commentator. The commentator was often as much as half a minute behind the action shown on the television screen.

The television commentator also suffers from the fact that viewers are seeing just what he is describing. The sound commentator often lets his imagination run riot and he is apt to exaggerate the excitement of a game simply for the sake of giving colour to his commentary—as listeners have often discovered when reading the newspaper reports afterwards or seeing the news-reel of the event. But it's useless for the television commentator to tell his listeners that so-and-so is putting up a terrific performance when viewers can see for themselves that he is doing nothing of the sort!

Television commentaries are therefore bound to be completely accurate and unbiassed.

The best sports for television are not necessarily those which demand the biggest following. Rather unexpectedly, table tennis is one of the most ideal subjects for televising, in spite of its speed and the smallness of the ball. The ball, in fact, comes over the television screen particularly well because of its whiteness. Billiard games are also very good subjects and ice hockey is well up in the list of games that televise well.

The suitability of stage plays performed in theatres is open to some argument. You come up against their obvious staginess compared with the technique of television in the studios, which speeds up action considerably. The fact that close-ups can be obtained with tele-photo lens helps, but the ideal relay from the theatre is when the theatre itself is taken over by tele-

vision and cameras can be placed at suitable vantage points and used in much the way they would be in the studios. This was done with one of the most successful relays, when *La Boheme* was televised from the Cambridge Theatre.

All in all, the O.B. is one of the most fascinating and exciting aspects of television and is in no small way responsible for winning over those who have hesitated before giving this new medium their support.

It has only one great drawback: the limited areas it can cover because of the restricted distances of transmission from the mobile transmitter. This explains why events such as the Grand National have yet to appear on the television screen. But one day this drawback, too, will be overcome.

Chapter 7

TELEVISION FILM UNITS

THERE will always be argument in the television world over the extent to which films should be used. Too much pre-filming of scenes, some hold, will rob television of its technique and make it rely on the cinema. The other school holds that the more film can be used, the wider the scope of the producer and the further he can get away from the limitations of the stage.

Expense is one controlling factor, of course. It is more costly to film a scene than to act it in the studio. On the other hand, if a television play can be filmed in its entirety it can be repeated over and over again without any of the attendant difficulties of gathering the cast together once more—and, no doubt, at less cost, despite the fact that some sort of agreement would have to be reached in regard to fees for the artistes for each repeat broadcast.

There is, in fact, one school of thought which favours the prefilming of all plays before they are put on the air. The argument in favour of this is that the standard of presentation would be raised. Plays would become more polished. There would no longer be fluffed lines or unfortunate mishaps in front of audiences. Unsatisfactory scenes could be shot again.

More than this, it would overcome the great difficulty of casting. Many of the actors appearing in television plays are also busy on the stage, which restricts their television appearances to Sunday evenings and mid-week afternoons. This is

why so many plays get Sunday and afternoon showings only: the players are not available for evening performances during the week.

There is danger in this complete filming of plays, however. Psychologically, it would rob television of one of its greatest appeals: that it is *live* entertainment. There is also the objection that the tendency would inevitably be for a television play to take on more and more the technique of the motion picture. There would be a call for the removal of studio limitations. Producers would want to spend more time on each scene, to use more sets, to go out on location—in fact, to make full-blooded movies and come into direct competition with the film world.

The obvious difficulty—and brake—is that the average film takes at least three months to film and costs anything between £100,000 and £500,000, whereas television could never afford that time or money.

However, these problems apart, films have their place in the television scheme of things.

It would be easy enough to transmit the ordinary commercial Hollywood or British film, and such pictures often do go out on the air. They are not new ones, however, and one can scarcely blame the film world for refusing to co-operate to this extent. Producers have got to get their money back and the only way they can do that is by showing their pictures at as many cinemas as possible.

Once a film has been televised and seen by a wide section of the public (as it would do in the future), its earning power is obviously reduced. No-one is going to pay to see a picture if it can be seen at no extra cost on the television screen.

The film trade has therefore decreed that films shall not be televised. The only exceptions are where a few companies have granted permission for the transmission of very old pictures

which have already earned their money in the cinemas. There is little likelihood of any major change in this attitude.

The transmission of films does not take place from an ordinary cinema screen. Alexandra Palace has two special projectors, which can be used in conjunction with either studio. The standard Emitron cameras are used in these machines, but the method of projection is different from that of the cinema projector. Instead of the film being transmitted intermittently, with rapid movements of shutters, it is drawn through the cameras continuously. The film movement is counteracted by a system of rotating and rocking mirrors.

And these cameras are put to full use. Television, although getting little co-operation from the film world, has its own film section which provides a sufficient number of pictures to justify the existence of the projectors. They are, however, films with a difference. They are made for a special purpose.

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Philip Dorte, chief of Outside Broadcasts, is also in charge of the film section, which is divided into two distinct departments. One is the news-reel unit; the other is primarily concerned with the making of special documentaries and 'pre-filmed' scenes for plays.

The Television News-reel is an answer to the film world's refusal to allow the commercial news-reels to be televised. The B.B.C. decided that it would have its own news section, and today the Television News-reel compares favourably with the commercials reels. It has its own staff men in Britain, its own correspondents in various parts of the globe, and an interchange system with the American television companies.

It operates on the same system as the ordinary news-reels, except that it is longer and the contents are not restricted ex-

clusively to news but veer towards the film magazine. It is, in fact, a news magazine, something of a combination of the *Movietone News* type of production and the *Pathé Pictorial.* It contains topical news and also items of general but not necessarily newsy interest.

Television News-reel varies from the ordinary news-reel in that it usually devotes more time to each of its subjects. With the fifteen minutes at its disposal, compared with the eight minutes of the commercial reel, it can elaborate on the items. There are also more frequent changes. The original twice-weekly editions are to be expanded into a new edition every day of the week, except Sunday, as soon as possible.

The extreme difficulties of rapid processing, cutting and recording do not usually make it worth while to rush news items into the reel on the day of their occurrence; but it can be done, and has been done. Film news has been on the television ether within a few hours of the event being photographed. This, of course, is where Alexandra Palace can score off the cinemas. However fast the commercial companies may work, they cannot cover a wide area in anything like the time television can. Wide distribution means the printing of so many copies and the time lag in delivery of the prints to the cinemas.

There are some pretty exciting races, all the same!

* * *

The pre-filming of scenes for plays is probably the most interesting aspect of the television film section, for skilful use is made in the combination of studio presentation and motion pictures.

Studio production obviously has its limitations. It cannot include genuine exterior scenes with rolling countryside or street traffic or an aeroplane taking off or landing and a

thousand and one other types of action seen in films but never on the stage.

But with the aid of pre-filmed sequences, all this is possible. If the action calls for one of the characters to be seen walking down the road, then the actor concerned enacts that sequence in front of the film cameras a few days beforehand.

When the scene is reached in the action of the play, the producer, instead of switching from one camera to another, turns his controls from the players in the studio to the film projector, and the pre-filmed sequence comes smoothly into the picture. The viewer is not conscious of any change of medium.

Film is sometimes used, too, when an actor has to make an impossibly quick change of costume, as, for example, when there is a sudden flash-back to an incident which has occurred sometime earlier. No producer will make use of film if it is humanly possible to get the actor to change in time, but when this is impossible the scene in question will be filmed beforehand, and then cut into the production during transmission.

Film is also used for 'establishing' shots, especially in the opening of a scene when the producer wants to establish the fact that, say, the action is taking place in a house on the riverside. So he gets in touch with Philip Dorte, explains what he wants, and a cameraman is sent to photograph riverside sequences. These are transmitted by the projectors, and then the producer fades in to the players on the studio floor.

This pre-filming of scenes gives play producers much wider scope and also serves to speed-up action, and it is a technique which is going to develop considerably. It makes possible the televising of subjects which could not otherwise be successfully produced.

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TELEVISION FILM UNITS

While we are talking about television films, let me express my own opinion on the widely discussed topic of whether television will ever replace the cinema.

Quite a number of people think there is a strong chance of this, though not for some time. Few television people seriously think so, however; nor do I. For the tendency is for television to win its own place as an addition to existing forms of entertainment, just as radio found its own place without seriously affecting the cinema and, in fact, just as the cinema did so without killing the theatre.

Television is a form of entertainment (and, the B.B.C. likes to believe, of education) well able to stand on its own feet, offering its own special attractions but at the same time unable to compete with films in many resepcts.

The man who buys a television receiver in the hope that it will take the place of the cinema is merely cutting out films and getting something quite different, rather like a person who stops spending his money on cigarettes and takes to chewing gum. Both appeal to the palate, but their flavours are not in the least alike.

The film can always be more spectacular and extravagant, and the techniques themselves must always be different; but what is even more in its favour is that it gives people the chance to get away from their homes for a brief spell, and not too expensively. People will always be gregarious; and housewives in particular will always want to go out in search of complete relaxation.

Think of television as something quite different from any other form of entertainment. You will get more enjoyment out of it that way.

Most of the television people themselves, enthusiastic as they may be about their work, are keen filmgoers!

Chapter 8

THE REGULAR FEATURES

As WITH sound radio, television has its regular features, but they are fewer in number. Transmission hours are far more restricted for television than for ordinary radio and analysis of viewers' reactions tends to show that they are not too keen on an excessive number of weekly features. The call is for as great a variety as possible, and this reduces the air-time available for series or serials.

Regular features are therefore spaced out, usually at fortnightly intervals and sometimes with a month or even six weeks between each edition.

Features have come and features have gone. It takes a good one to last. One of the most consistently popular is undoubtedly the *Kaleidoscope* magazine programme, edited and produced by Stephen McCormack and consisting of a number of varying subjects from short playlets to factual instructive items.

Few of the regular features within this feature continue for very long, but one that has succeeded in doing so is the *Memory Man*, burly genial Leslie Welch, who has an uncanny memory for anything associated with sport—and many other subjects, for that matter.

Discovery of his particular talent was made accidentally. He was serving in the Army when he overheard a couple of soldiers indulging in one of those familiar arguments over a sports point. One was wagering the other over a football result of several years back.

Television from a theatre

The outside-broadcast camera at the Royal Wedding

An outside unit at work

Televising a race meeting

Welch butted in, and amazed them with every detail about the match, including the names of the players who had scored. Later on, they were able to check up. He was right in every detail.

'Can you do that every time?' they asked him.

He had no idea.

'I've never tried', he said.

They fired a string of questions at him, and as much to his own surprise as theirs, he answered them all, even to giving the names of complete teams that had played in important games in all spheres of sport. News of his extraordinary memory soon spread, and before long he was on loan to Ensa, who put him on tour to answer any sports questions that Forces audiences cared to put to him.

His programmes are unrehearsed. There is no need to go through the questions beforehand. He doesn't claim infallibility, but only a good memory for anything that has attracted his interest. Proof of his readiness to give replies without advance notice was provided when he stood in the Albert Hall and answered queries from a 6,000-strong audience.

The *Kaleidoscope* compère is announcer McDonald Hobley. Regular viewers will be familiar with the black Scottie that he introduces in every programme. The dog's name is Kiltie. He was presented to Hobley as a pup, with the suggestion that he should be shown in the *Kaleidoscope* programmes regularly so that viewers could watch him growing up. The simple, human touch seems to have captured the imagination of viewers, and Kiltie has become one of the most popular television artists.

Something of a mystery to many viewers, however, is the regular appearance in this programme of Marjorie Whelan. This very pretty blonde gives McDonald Hobley a hand, but otherwise seems to have very little to do, and there have been

many letters asking if she is there simply because she is Hobley's wife. She is not his wife, however, and her main task in the feature is not merely helping in front of the cameras but acting as hostess to the many guest visitors who appear in the programme.

Kaleidoscope looks like being a permanent television institution. So does *Picture Page,* which is another magazine programme, aimed as far as possible at introducing people who are in the news.

Picture Page is also produced by Stephen McCormack, and is edited and introduced by Joan Gilbert. Miss Gilbert is blonde and vivacious and restlessly energetic. She set out originally on this programme as editor, but when there was some difficulty in finding a suitable compère she took over the additional job herself. Her easy, conversational manner of announcing scored an instant success, and she admitted afterwards that she used no script but 'just talked'. She has followed the same pattern ever since.

Announcing however, was not exactly a new venture for her. She had learned to address people *ad lib* when she was war-time hostess at the Overseas League parties. She was then a member of Cecil Madden's Overseas Entertainment Unit operating from the Criterion Theatre, giving radio entertainment to the Forces serving overseas. Later on she became radio 'girl friend' of the Gibraltar Garrison in the programme *Calling Gibraltar.*

Although *Picture Page* is on the air only once a week, preparing it is very much of a full-time job. One of the most difficult aspects is finding the subjects. Joan Gilbert says that she reads every newspaper and every magazine in her search for stories which might provide a television follow-up. She also studies all diaries of forthcoming events, and is in touch with the press officers of every organization likely to be of assistance

to her. Viewers themselves send in a lot of suggestions as well.

The next task, of course, is to persuade the people who interest her to come to Alexandra Palace to face the cameras. She has a number of free-lance journalists working for her. They first of all interview the prospective subjects and report whether the 'story' is likely to be suitable for the programme and whether the person concerned is willing to co-operate. Two things have to be borne in mind: whether the subject has an interesting personality and whether his story is strong enough. If Joan Gilbert gives the O.K. to go ahead, the journalists have a further interview with the person concerned and write the script.

If *Picture Page* has a weakness it is that its items are sometimes inclined to consist of too much talk and too little action. This is Joan Gilbert's big headache. It is not sufficient to interview a person who has only an interesting story. The person must, if possible, have something to show or do. This often means bringing an amazing array of objects into the studios, ranging from home-made cars to livestock.

A distinguished Jewish actor was in the programme one night. So was a man with four performing sheep. Need I go further? The sheep were put into an annex leading from the studio; but, of course, right at the most dramatic moment in the actor's performance loud 'baas' penetrated into the studio.

One has to be prepared for this sort of thing in a programme like *Picture Page*. Joan Gilbert arranged for a number of football referees, in London for the International Conference of Referees, to take part in the programme. They were of all nationalities, including visitors from Brazil, Argentina, Iceland and the Channel Islands.

When the programme went on the air, only two of them had arrived: the referees from Iceland and the Channel Islands. The Icelander was unable to speak a word of English, so the

Channel Islander had to carry the whole of the talking himself. The others turned up later—at quarter-past ten. They had lost their way. And when they did arrive, they found Alexandra Palace in darkness.

Mary Adams, one of television's senior producers, is in charge of talks and also produces—among other programmes —the Children's Hour, which now occupies the Sunday afternoon programme from four o'clock until five o'clock. It used to begin at three o'clock, but it soon proved to be so popular with children that protests poured in that the programme was keeping them away from Sunday school.

Eventually, there will be a daily Children's Hour. It is undoubtedly one of the most successful of the Alexandra Palace ventures, and of the regular items in it the most popular is equally undoubtedly the puppet *Muffin the Mule.*

Muffin is introduced by Annette Mills, John Mill's songwriter sister, and manipulated by Ann Hogarth, wife of producer Jan Bussell, director of Hogarth Puppets, the largest troupe of marionettes in England. Watching Ann Hogarth is even more entertaining than seeing Muffin himself. As she works the wires, she acts the part that Muffin and the other puppets are playing. Her face is a delightful study of expressions.

Children's programmes probably require even more thought than those for adults. The viewers' ages have to be considered, and in that very short space of time something for children of all ages has got to be introduced—children of both sexes, too. A cricket demonstration is not going to appeal to young girls, for instance. Roughly speaking, the producers attempt to divide the items into suitability for children under ten and above that age, and to give both a fair proportion of transmission time. Even more satisfactory, of course, is when a programme can be devised which appeals to children of all ages at the same time.

'Muffin' the mule. A favourite of child viewers

Televising Puppets

Jack Warner and Richard Hearne at Alexandra Palace

Boy Scouts from New Zealand

The B.B.C. policy is to keep the Children's Hour on a high plane, but any form of education must be avoided, or at any rate very carefully wrapped up. Children look to television for entertainment. No attempt must ever be made to talk down to them; and, oddly enough, experience has shown that they are not too enthusiastic about children in the programme. They prefer their entertainment to be provided by adults.

One of the most successful of the items in Children's Hour is the illustrated feature on Birds of London, with James Fisher talking about them, 'Fish-Hawk' (David K. Wolfe-Murray) drawing the illustrations and Percy Edwards imitating the bird calls. Educational? Maybe. But it is of widespread interest, and provides an excellent example of the type of feature which is both entertaining and informative.

Children are appreciative viewers with strong minds of their own. They never hesitate to write in and praise or criticize, or defend criticized, programmes. A newspaper radio critic, taking part in a television discussion, questioned the suitability of introducing a feature on a doll's hospital, saying it was psychologically wrong to show broken dolls. Children expressed their own opinions in no uncertain voice, roundly criticizing the critic!

The Children's Hour programmes have a big future, not only as sheer entertainment but as an educational programme for schools.

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One obvious and striking difference between sound-only broadcasting and television is that the former can draw on the imagination of the listener whereas the latter must actually show what is being described.

Gardening talks, another of the popular features, provide

an example of this. That delightful character Fred Streeter chats away to people on sound radio and also on television, but for television he not only talks about plants but shows them, and shows them growing, too.

There is no faking here. The Television Garden is a real garden and not a specially prepared set. It is laid out in the Alexandra Palace grounds, just opposite the entrance to the studios.

Fred Streeter grows his plants and flowers there and viewers watch them as they take form throughout the seasons. Cables trail from the Palace to the garden for the camera and microphone and the only concession to the camera is that the garden has paths which are wider than they would be normally and are laid with concrete. These special paths are for the benefit of the camera trolley, which needs a hard surface.

This garden feature has an intimate atmosphere. Fred Streeter really takes you into the garden, just as if you were an actual visitor. And, just as the enthusiastic gardener will offer his visitors cuttings from his treasured plants, so Streeter often offers cuttings to viewers who care to write to him for them. This is the sort of thing that brings Alexandra Palace and viewers very close together. In any case, whether you are interested in gardening or not, Fred Streeter is such a thoroughly entertaining personality that it is impossible to watch him without thoroughly enjoying his remarks.

Just as the Television Garden is real, so is the Television Ballroom—except that, in this case, the ballroom is created in the studios. The dancers are genuine visitors; and Victor Silvester's dance lessons are far more effective when the steps are being demonstrated than when they are being merely described.

No chapter on regular features would be complete without some reference to one of the best of them all, the cabaret show

Café Continental. Few viewers, I imagine, realize that this programme consists of turns which have actually been brought from the Continent especially for the Alexandra Palace transmissions.

The acts are not English turns impersonating Continental-style artists; nor are they Continental turns which happen to be in London, though when luck has it that such turns are in town they are included.

The producer, Henry Caldwell, scours Europe for them, paying personal visits to Continental cities and spending half his time on long-distance telephone calls to all parts of Europe. His energy is tireless.

The acts are brought from Brussels, Paris, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and the Riviera, sometimes arriving only just in time for the transmission and staying in London for only two or three nights. Few of them even speak English, but fortunately Henry Caldwell speaks French fluently and has a strong smattering of several other languages. Alexandra Palace on the nights when *Café Continental* is being produced, is something like a Tower of Babel, and the cosmopolitan atmosphere that comes over the air is the real thing.

Caldwell is a young Glasgow Scot who was one of the Scottish National Players before the war. He went into the Army in 1939, was drafted to the Intelligence Corps, served in Norway, and later became officer in charge of ciphers with General Eisenhower at the time of the North African landings. He afterwards switched to the Psychological Warfare Branch, handling the entertainment side of radio 'music hall' in Algiers, and then joined Ensa on the radio side and later as stage producer.

It was while in Cairo that he produced one of the most successful of his Army shows. He called it *Café Continental.* He enjoyed producing it so much, and it was so popular, that

he produced a similar show in Germany, and then remembered it when he became a television producer. The feature has become as deservedly popular with viewers as its predecessors did with the Army in Cairo and in Germany.

Chapter 9

TELEVISION COMEDY

COMEDY is undeniably one of the most difficult forms of entertainment in every branch of the show business. It is difficult to write and even more difficult to perform. It is the despair of stage and film producers alike.

Television comedy is probably the most difficult of all. It demands a technique of its own. Very few comedians have successfully mastered it.

They used to say that the Windmill Theatre was the graveyard of comedians. Alexandra Palace has now taken over that doubtful distinction.

Audience reaction is more important to the comedian than to any other type of performer, and the absence of an audience terrifies most comics who face the television cameras.

But there is one comedian, more than any other, who has successfully conquered 'the magic eye'. Richard Hearne has established himself a well-deserved reputation as television's leading laughter-maker.

Sound radio has developed the comedian who relies on his funny lines. Put him on to television, and as often as not you can switch off the vision and gain almost as much of his entertainment value from hearing him alone. This does not necessarily detract from his appeal, but it means that he is not essentially a television artist.

Richard Hearne has reversed the process. You can almost turn off the sound, and still get the full benefit of his perform-

ance. His technique is based on that of the silent screen comedian, dependent far more on action than on words. He has much in common with the circus clown and those great screen comedians who learnt their job in the silent days—Chaplin, Keaton, Harold Lloyd. As Hearne has been a clown himself, this is not surprising.

When studying television comedy, therefore, you can find no better example than 'Dickie' Hearne, the first man to give serious study to this form of comedy in the very early television days, when television was still in its experimental stages before the war. He was on the air the day that the B.B.C. switched from the Baird system to that of EMI. He was back again on the air after the wartime shut-down the moment television returned.

'You have got to be "tele-genic",' is his explanation. 'And that is a conglomeration of various things. One is a complete confidence in your material. You have got to know exactly what you are going to do, and you have got to know that you can do it. The only way you can achieve this is by writing your own material. I don't think anyone else can do it for you.

'The basis of my television work is slapstick. It is, perhaps, the hardest form of comedy, and maybe that's why so few comedians try it.

'Television comedy is very different from stage comedy. In the theatre, you play to the audience. Your timing varies from night to night, according to the different types of audience.

'A good comedian plays with his audience just as an angler plays a fish. I like to compare an audience to the notes in a piece of music. Mix up those notes, and you get different tunes. You get a different mixture of audience notes every time, and the comedian has got to play the tune represented.

'This is why a comedian can make a big hit one night yet, without varying his act one iota, can fail hopelessly the next

night. And it explains why people who go to see a comedian several times will often tell you that he has been different every time. Danny Kaye, who scored the greatest personal success ever known in London, is an outstanding example of this. He is never the same twice running.

'It comes down largely to a question of timing, and after a while you do it instinctively, just as a musician instinctively follows the notes written by the composer, without consciously thinking of their different formations.

'A comedian who is used to audience reaction feels lost when he faces the television camera. He doesn't know whether he is going over well or not. Silence in a theatre means that you are failing to get over; and the silence in a television studio is apt to make you doubtful about yourself. You lose your nerve —and you're lost.

'That's why I say you have got to know what you are going to do, and know that you can do it. You must have confidence in yourself. You have got to arrange your work so that you are not expecting any audience reaction, and you have got to rely on experience to know how you are likely to go over with the majority. I always conjure up an invisible audience, and I play to that audience.'

Rehearsal is more important to a comedian than to any other television performer. With only one rehearsal before the cameras prior to the actual performance, he has to have his act fully prepared before he arrives at Alexandra Palace.

Dickie Hearne has his own studio at home. He does most of his rehearsing there, timing his actions, and particularly the falls, to a split second.

One of his main difficulties is that the studio provides very little space for the spectacular gymnastics in which he indulges. Flinging yourself about all over the place requires plenty of room. Many of his falls give him literally only inches to spare.

He was hobbling about for a long time after one performance, in which he had to tumble off a falling ladder. This stunt is not normally so difficult as it looks: the performer hangs on to the ladder until the last minute, and then jumps. A well developed sense of timing enables him to do so in comparative safety.

In the television studio, however, with the cameras close to him, Dickie Hearne had to leave the ladder before it had taken its full toss. If he had waited until it had reached its normal position for jumping, he would have been out of camera.

He was using a step-ladder. The fall was made successfully, but there was not quite enough room to clear the ladder. As it reached the floor, it closed over one of his legs. It was a miracle that the leg was not snapped in half, and an even greater miracle of self-control that he restrained himself from crying out. Viewers had no inkling that anything had gone wrong.

Tumbling has its natural hazards. Not even the most careful rehearsal can prevent mishaps from time to time. Watching Dickie Hearne on the television screen, one frequently wonders how on earth he gets away without being hurt. The truth is that he very often does get hurt.

During one of his broadcasts, in which he was tearing up material in a shop, he had to fall over the counter. He misjudged by a split second, and hit his elbow on the counter so heavily that he had to have an operation afterwards. The scar is there today.

There is no faking in his work. Back in the good old days, when eggs were plentiful, television audiences were treated to the sight of his being covered with the contents of two dozen eggs. They were real eggs and he really was covered.

For a Children's Hour programme, he had to get feathers stuck all over his face; in another programme, he was covered

Miss Jeanne Bradnock and her assistant, Mrs. David Manderson, at work in the make-up department at Alexandra Palace

Mr. Norman Collins

in paste. Viewers may have wondered how these things were done. The answer was that what they saw was actually happening.

Unpleasant? Certainly. But Richard Hearne believes that if a stunt is worth doing, it is worth doing well. He doesn't mind how much he suffers. The important thing is to make viewers laugh.

Those who like slapstick adore him, but his own family is divided in its opinion. He has two daughters. Sarah Louise looks-in with the greatest enjoyment, and loves everything happening to him. The other, who has the odd name of Cetra (inspired by a telegram from Cyril Ritchard after her birth, reading 'Love to Dickie, Yvonne, Etcetera') is not nearly so enthusiastic. She bursts into tears every time she sees her father getting into trouble.

'So you see', Dickie remarks, 'you can't please everyone'.

But he undoubtedly pleases the majority of television viewers, who have come to regard him as their own particular 'discovery'. He has, of course, made his name on the stage and films as well. That curled-up moustached, rather pathetic character was born in a Leslie Henson show at the Gaiety many years ago. Since then, he has made television his speciality, and no other comedian has developed the technique in quite the way he has done.

The strange thing is that television audiences react to him exactly as if they were in the theatre. It is by no means easy to burst into roars of laughter when sitting in an arm-chair in your own home, especially if you are on your own. Richard Hearne has plenty of evidence to show that this happens, however. Breaking down that natural reserve is the surest way to the hearts of viewers.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Chapter 10

THE 'back-room boys'—and girls—in any sphere of entertainment rarely get the credit they deserve, yet without them no show could ever be produced successfully, no star could ever be seen at his best, no producer could hope to achieve his desires.

This applies to television just as much as it does to the film studio and the stage.

The people behind the scenes in television all have specialized jobs and all, in their own ways, are equally important—the men who design the sets and make them; the cameramen; the engineers, both sound and vision; the studio manager; and those many other members of the Alexandra Palace staff.

The superintendent engineer is Douglas Birkinshaw, who who born in Sheffield and worked for five years in a Sheffield steel works. He joined the Research Department of the B.B.C. in 1932 and was concerned with the development of television from that date, and he became Engineer-in-Charge of the London Television Station at Alexandra Palace in 1936.

The engineer in charge is Herbert Baker, who was born in Holt, Norfolk, and received his first engineering experience for eight-and-a-half years with the Marconi Marine Educational Company. He joined the B.B.C. in 1926 as maintenance engineer at Daventry and Brookman's Park. He transferred to television in 1936.

Such people have vitally responsible jobs but they are jobs

which, although they affect the viewer's reception to such a very great degree, do not bring them into direct contact with viewers.

In very much closer contact, although not actually seen, are the men and women in the wardrobe and make-up departments. Jeanne Bradnock—'Johnnie' to everyone at Alexandra Palace—is in charge of both departments. Her previous experience was in the theatre and film world, and she was originally trained on the beauty side, which included hairdressing.

Television make-up has its own particular problems, and the make-up itself is in the form of two tints, known as Television No. 1 and No. 2, made especially for television after months of research.

Bad make-up will look hideous on the screen. A natural sun tan televises excellently, and the shade for make-up is a warm sun-tan. Though too heavy for outside wear, it gives a natural colour when televised.

Lips are usually slightly darker than natural colouring, but which lip-stick is used depends not so much on the player but on the camera. For one of the greatest complications for the make-up specialist is that every camera reacts differently, and she has to know beforehand which of the cameras are going to be used.

This eccentricity of the cameras applies to clothes as well, but there are certain general rules which always have to be remembered. Dead black and dead white have to be avoided at all costs, for black absorbs light, whereas white reflects light.

Reds, too, are dangerous. There is an apocryphal story which has lasted since the very early days of television that the danger of red was first discovered when a girl in a red bathing costume was being televised and surprised viewers thought they were looking at a completely nude young woman.

It is undoubtedly true, however, that the television camera

is more sensitive to red than the human eye and red, whether for settings or clothes, never televises well. Pale colours are therefore the stand-by.

'A broken-up pattern on printed material is best', Johnnie Bradnock told me. 'If the clothes are plain, then we have to use pastel shades. They should certainly never be darker than navy blue.'

Horizontal stripes also have to be avoided. Through some technical quirk, they apparently get mixed up with the scanning lines.

Care also has to be taken with shirts and collars for men. They should never be white. They are usually provided with cream-coloured material.

A great many of the clothes used at Alexandra Palace are hired, but as many as possible are made on the premises by Johnnie Bradnock's staff and, after use, are adapted again and again, 'Make and mend' has been brought to a fine art.

Hair, too, is an important aspect; but luckily the television cameras are quite impartial. Blondes and brunettes come over the air equally well. Neither needs any special treatment except that in the case of very dark hair a light dusting of gold-dust is to be recommended.

* * *

No show is complete without its music.

The man with the baton at Alexandra Palace is burly, black-haired, genial Eric Robinson, brother of Stanford Robinson, who has been conducting the television orchestras since the autumn of 1947. He has been associated with television for much longer than this, however, and was with the old permanent television orchestra as far back as 1936.

When the war broke out, he served with the A.R.P. for a

time and then went into the Army, and became leader of the *Blue Rockets* band, conducting for the original *Stand Easy* programmes.

Up at Alexandra Palace, he has one of the most difficult jobs in the musical world. The old idea of a permanent orchestra has been scrapped. The composition of his orchestra varies with the different types of music that he is called upon to produce, and he has a pool from which he draws the players.

In one period of a few days, for instance, he had to provide music for opera, variety, revue and a dress show. Anything, in fact, from ballet to burlesque, or from jive to symphony.

The main difficulty, however, is not so much in the music itself but in the fact that, as often as not, the conductor cannot see the artists he is accompanying. Robinson and his boys are located at the far end of the studio, with sets and studio crews separating them from the actors. On some occasions, in fact, a complete back-cloth cuts off the orchestra from the rest of the studio.

Robinson evolved a somewhat complicated mirror affair to overcome this, but it was not entirely satisfactory. So today, he watches the artists on a television screen. The set is an ordinary commercial receiver, switched on to vision only. He hears the actors through the headphones.

The artists, in turn, are up against the difficulty of not being able to see the conductor, and there is a curious time-lag that puts them off. Robinson, thanks to his television screen, knows that he is on the beat; but a tap dancer, for instance, will often find himself a trifle behind owing to that slight time-lag caused by the orchestra's distance from him, and without having the benefit of the conductor's movements to guide him.

Sound control also has its problems in balancing the music with the performers. The orchestra has a separate microphone, but the artists are always moving about. The task of bringing

up the artists' sound and keeping the orchestra in proper proportion calls for a mental agility on the part of the sound mixer which has no parallel in any other form of recording or broadcasting.

Add to all these difficulties the fact that the heat in the studio causes variations of intonation, and one can see that the musical side of television is by no means a straightforward job.

Eric Robinson may rarely be seen by viewers; but he is certainly one of the most important of the 'back-room boys'.

Important, too, though they are never seen, are the set designers, who are up against the extremely difficult task of getting several quarts into a pint bottle. Tribute must be paid to these men—Peter Bax, Barry Learoyd, Stephen Bundy and James Bould.

The film art director has space and time. The television set designer has neither. He is given, perhaps, three weeks in which to get his sets ready, but the greater time element difficulty is that all the sets must be in place at the same time. He cannot strike one set and then build another. All sets for the evening's programme must be set up before transmission begins, and there is rarely an opportunity to change them.

One essential point to be remembered the whole time is that sets must be designed in relation to the movements of the players. Thus a man has to walk out of a lounge and then be seen immediately, through the lens of another camera, in a hall. The designer has got to place these two sets close together; if they were far apart, the actor would have to dash from one end of the studio to the other.

Sets are therefore erected in grotto fashion, all around the walls. Sometimes, however, honeycomb sets are built, so that when a player walks from one room into another he is, in fact, doing so.

The use of perspective is one way of overcoming the limita-

tions of space. The designer needs all his skill for these sets. He can use them with great effect if the players are keeping to the foreground, but if the script calls for them to move backwards and forwards, the perspective set is liable to throw them out of all proportion.

Back-clothes and cut-outs have to be used to a great degree, and an eye for colour has to be tempered with knowledge of colours that are suited to the cameras.

One of the most interesting of the set designer's devices is the 'Penumbrascope', designed by Malcolm Baker-Smith, who has now gone back to his original job of art directing for films. This makes use of lighting and shadows to such an extent that actual set construction is reduced to a minimum. It is particularly useful for fantasy.

Television's set designers are limited to the amount of money they can spend. Their sets must be easily transportable. As far as possible, all scenery must be designed in such a way that it can be adapted for future use.

Altogether, by no means an easy job.

* * *

And what of the man who, when all is said and done, is really the most important of these behind-the-scenes personalities?

That man is Norman Collins.

Things began to happen when Norman Richard Collins arrived at Alexandra Palace. The television boys knew him as the most meteoric of the sound-radio officials, a 'new boy' to the radio world who had made his mark in an astonishingly short time.

He had joined the Broadcasting House staff quite humbly, as assistant in the Overseas Talks Department, at the beginning

of 1941, at the age of 33. By April of the same year he had become Empire Talks Manager. Two years and one week later he was appointed General Overseas Services Manager; ten months after that, General Overseas Services Director.

His next step was to take charge of the Light Programme in January, 1946, and in December, 1947, he was appointed head of the Television Service.

He landed on Alexandra Palace something like an atom bomb, candidly confessing that he knew little or nothing about television. He promptly set about the task of learning, and in a very short time he could tell all the old hands almost everything there was to be known about their jobs—and maybe a few extra things as well.

He came to television with a fresh mind and a determination to mould the baby of broadcasting into a forceful, vigorous individual. Maybe it was a coincidence, but not long after he had become Controller of Television, more and more people began to become television-conscious.

Even those who had never given any serious attention to television found themselves taking notice of a medium that was bringing the faces of famous film stars into private homes and was breaking into the news day after day.

Norman Collins' impact on Alexandra Palace has undoubtedly been resounding. Nothing seems to be able to stop him once he gets his teeth into anything: and he has got his teeth into television.

The staff soon realized, after receiving his appointment with a certain amount of nervousness, that he was not only an organizer but a man with ideas and initiative and, above all that he was approachable. The humblest employees discovered that if they had got something worth while to suggest there was a ready ear waiting to listen to the suggestion.

And before long, Collins was not only commanding atten-

tion within Alexandra Palace, but without. He was badgering away at the Government for more and more co-operation—and getting it. He will go on badgering away until he gets everything he wants.

What is he like, this man on whose shoulders so much of television development is depending?

He is almost unbelievably energetic. He is self-confident to the N-th degree, without being an egotist. He likes a battle, and the tougher it is the more he seems to enjoy it.

He believes in getting things done; but he does things himself, and in doing so commands considerable respect. I had an example of this when I went to the Television Club's dance at Alexandra Palace one evening. Richard Hearne was giving a cabaret turn and was worried about the slippery floor. Someone suggested putting down some large mats—and Norman Collins personally got down to the task of helping to bring them in and lay them with Cecil McGivern, director of television programmes. It was a typical gesture.

He is probably better known to the public as a novelist than as a B.B.C. executive, with *London Belongs to Me* as his widest-read book. But he is a novelist in his spare time only, and it gives a clue to the man's character to know how he writes his books.

He sets himself a nightly ration of writing, and he keeps to his schedule, however hard he may have been working during the day and whatever time he arrives home. Nothing whatever can deter him from sitting down at his desk and writing his set number of words.

Despite all this, he finds time for a very happy family life, and has two daughters and one son.

A good man to have at the helm!

Chapter 11

THE VIEWER

AND NOW, away from Alexandra Palace. What of the viewers? Relationship between Alexandra Palace and its viewers is an extraordinary intimate one. Viewers are enthusiasts. They are not content to sit back and take what the B.B.C. cares to show them. They like a voice in the proceedings.

From the other end, Alexandra Palace thoroughly approves of this attitude and goes out to solicit the views of its customers. Television is new and is only just finding its feet. It has got to discover what the public wants. It can take only very broad indications from the stage, the cinema and sound radio.

This informal, friendly relationship is shown in the repeated invitations made over the air to viewers, asking them to express their opinions. The televised discussions between viewers on television are ruthlessly frank. Votes on selected programmes are carefully examined. Every letter is carefully studied and the remarks noted.

One day, no doubt, television will get too big for all this. It is a pity, but it is inevitable. The viewers' opinions will, of course, always count, but only on a far more general scale than is possible during television's early days.

The enthusiasm of viewers is proved by the striking growth of television societies. They are quite unlike the ordinary radio societies which consist mainly of people whose primary interest is the technical aspect of wireless. The members are

non-technical. Their interest is primarily on the viewing side.

The first of these societies was the Croydon and District Viewers' Society, which has expanded now to such a degree that it has become the British Television Viewers' Society, operating in close liaison with similar societies in many other areas.

This society was started in the Spring of 1947. By its first birthday its membership of actual television-set owners was 230.

These viewers meet once a month and have guest speakers from Alexandra Palace to address them—various producers, announcers, set designers and other specialists, all talking about their own jobs, and then facing the audience for twenty minutes to answer the questions fired at them. The meetings also have a technical advisor with a demonstration set to answer any queries relating to reception.

Such society members provide a strong cross-section of the viewing audience, and their attitude towards television is well worth studying. It may be dangerous to take them as being representative of the public as a whole when television has spread throughout the country, but they are certainly representative of the existing viewing force.

Most of them use their sets every day of the week, unless they happen to be out. Their approval of the programmes is by no means unqualified, but they do find that viewing provides them with a sufficiently high standard of entertainment to justify turning on the set practically every evening.

As the secretary of the British Society, Mr. R. W. Powis explains: 'You can't always go by the announced programmes. You look at the week's programmes and decide that there are certain evenings when you particularly want to look-in. But the other evenings, which may not sound so appealing, may turn out to be equally interesting. So you switch on just to

see what they are like, and invariably find yourself still sitting in front of the set when the programme closes down. Once you have switched on, it's very, very difficult to switch off again'.

This, I must emphasize, refers to the avowed television fans but, to a less degree perhaps, it applies to most viewers. The only way to resist the television lure is not to switch on the set at all.

I asked several of these enthusiastic viewers whether they still listened-in to the sound-only radio.

Few of them seem to do so, except for the morning and lunch-time news bulletins and occasionally to programmes which come on the air before television opens up. Scarcely any listen-in to sound radio when the television transmission is on.

In fact, so far as they are concerned, sound radio might just as well close down at half-past eight, when television begins. Few of these viewers even bother to see what the B.B.C. has to offer on the sound wavelengths.

Quizzing of television-set owners outside this core of full-time enthusiasts shows a somewhat similar stage of affairs, except that there is more selectivity of programmes. They have learned to switch on only when there are programmes they really want to see.

Even among these viewers, however, there are very few who listen to sound-only radio with any degree of regularity, except for news bulletins and late-night music, and occasionally the more popular programmes such as *Itma* and *Have a Go.*

I made these inquiries over a wide variety of viewers, all of them men and women in ordinary walks of life, and among viewers of long standing as well as relatively new owners of sets.

Television, most agreed, has affected their film-going

habits. They have not cut out the cinema; but they have very considerably reduced the number of their visits. The theatre has not been affected to the same degree, however. This is an interesting point, and the explanation seems to be that the theatre, for most people, is by no means a regular form of entertainment. It is regarded as a treat for special occasions. usually anniversaries, and as such suffers no opposition from television.

But whereas the televising of a film is apt to kill any desire to see that picture in a cinema (especiallly if it is a black-and-white production), the televising of a stage play appears to have the opposite effect and often inspires the viewer to go along to see the production.

Viewers can be divided into several classes. Television has come as a particular boon to elderly people who can rarely go out to the theatre or cinema, and it is equally a boon to young married couples with children who, in the ordinary way, are tied to the home unless one stays in to mind the kiddies while the other goes to the cinema.

The enthusiasts who prefer television to all other forms of entertainment are of all classes, ages and types. They are interested in television as a technique as well as entertainment.

These, of course, are the people who form the main membership of the television societies. Their avid viewing and reactions prove a useful guide to Alexandra Palace. Their comments are as good as a comprehensive listener-research investigation.

These societies conduct their own popularity polls, and the results tally with the voting cards sent to Alexandra Palace.

Plays are far and away the greatest attraction of all (they polled 94% of the votes in one poll), with outside broadcasts next and the features such as *Picture Page* and *Kaleidoscope* following, but fluctuating according to the standard these pro-

grammes have been maintaining during the period preceding the poll. The general consensus of opinion seems to be that they should be given a rest every now and then (and, in fact, *Kaleidoscope* is taken off for a spell during the summer months).

Television has also had a significant influence on the social life of the communities within the receiving radius, and particularly in out-of-town districts. It has brought back the old 'musical evening' habit, reminiscent of the days when visitors would gather at the home of a friend. But instead of little Elsie playing the piano and Uncle George singing a few songs, as of yore, the visitors now watch the television. Few television viewers keep their sets to themselves.

This in turn has been excellent propaganda for television. Visiting viewers almost invariably find it impossible to resist the temptation to purchase a set for themselves if their pockets can stand the strain—and television is not so expensive as many people imagine. Sets are no dearer than radiograms. You can get a perfectly good set for under £80, inclusive of purchase tax.

Television is also reaching a much wider public than the actual sale of sets might suggest due to the fact that, to an increasing degree, clubs and public houses are installing receivers. There is a popular television joke in America, in fact, which has it that when a man was asked if his children enjoyed television, exclaimed: 'Good heavens, no—they've never seen it. They're far too young to go into bars yet'!

Generally speaking, however, television is essentially entertainment for the family circle and the intimacy of your own home.

The fears that it might prove to be anti-social are quite unfounded. There are people—usually those who have never even seen a television set in operation—who swear that they

would never have television in the house because it means putting one room into darkness.

Not many viewers do this, however. They soon find that a dimmed light in the room is not only possible but takes off any form of eye-strain. And it does enable the housewife to get on with her knitting chores—if she can resist the temptation to keep her eyes off the screen for a few minutes at a time!

The expansion of television is, unfortunately, bound to be slow owing to the expense and difficulties of providing the necessary relay stations. But it is creeping round the country. London . . . . Birmingham . . . . Bristol . . . . Manchester . . . . Scotland . . . .

And then the habits of the whole nation will be changed.

Chapter 12

WHO'S WHO IN TELEVISION

Brief Facts about some of the Leading Lights at Alexandra Palace

ADAMS, Mary. Features Producer in charge of Talks. Born in Berkshire. Educated Cardiff and Newnham College, Cambridge, 1921, research scholar, Bathurst lecturer and tutor; later on Board of Civil Service Studies. Joined B.B.C. (Talks) in 1930 and became television producer in 1936. Director, Home Intelligence, M.o.I., 1940, then Features producer in B.B.C. Overseas Service from July, 1941, until re-opening of television.

ATKINS, Ian. Producer. Born London, 22nd January, 1912, and educated at St. Paul's School. Entered the film industry in 1929 in the camera department at Gaumont-British and worked as a cameraman in many studios. After an operation in 1934 was advised to spend the summer in the open air, so joined his father, Robert Atkins, as stage manager at the Open Air Theatre. Subsequently played small parts and stage-managed. Joined B.B.C. Television in January, 1939, as Studio Manager until outbreak of war. Served in R.A. and then seconded to the Ministry of Supply on Radar research. On return to the B.B.C. was made television producer, where his first production was the presentation of Robert Atkins' Open

Air Theatre Company in *As You Like It*. Is married to actress Freda Bamford. Two children.

BARRY, Michael. Born 1910 and took up the theatre at an early age, studying at the R.A.D.A. and then producing for the Croydon and Hull Repertory Companies; then assistant stage director at the Garrick and Playhouse Theatres; acted at the Embassy, Gate, Cambridge Festival and Birmingham Repertory Theatres; became a television producer in January, 1938.

BATE, Philip. Producer, known principally for production of ballet and similar presentations. Born in Glasgow of English parents and educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and University. Became President of the University Dramatic Society. After research work for the University joined B.B.C. Programme Engineering staff in 1934. Was Studio Assistant (drama) in 1935, then Television Assistant Studio Manager in 1937 and Television producer in 1938. Went to War Office in 1939 and returned to B.B.C. as Programme Engineer then announcer, followed by appointment as Overseas Music Producer and then returned to Television.

BUSSELL, Jan. Television producer and Director of Hogarth Puppets, the largest troupe of marionettes in England. Born Oxford, July 20th, 1909. Educated the Dragon School; Marlborough College; Oxford. First job with an English repertory company in Paris, playing every kind of part. Then small parts in London, and joined Players Theatre Club, starting as stage cleaner, electrician, stage manager, scenic artist, producer. Toured with marionette show run with his wife. Produced for the Sheffield Repertory Company and joined B.B.C. as North Regional Drama Producer in 1935. Television producer in

1937. Joined Navy in March, 1943, and returned to Television as producer in 1946. Is author of *The Puppet Theatre;* is a woodcarver, painter and playwright.

CALDWELL, Henry. Producer, specializing in Continental cabaret productions. Born in Glasgow in 1919. Was a member of the Scottish National Players. After serving in Intelligence Corps during the first part of the war was transferred to the Psychological Warfare Branch and handled the entertainment side of radio 'music hall' in Algiers, producing, compéring and acting. Later joined Ensa, worked on Army broadcasting in North Africa and Sicily, then produced Army shows in Germany. First produced *Café Continental* for troops. When joining B.B.C. Television on its reopening, produced his successful television version of his *Café Continental* show.

CLAYTON, Harold. Producer. Born in London, 1902. Was stage director and actor with the late Dennis Neilson-Terry. Produced and managed various repertory companies, including Newcastle, New Brighton, Swanage, and then joined Greater London Players. Acted in the West End and then produced until the outbreak of war and service in the R.A.F., after which he produced for the Arts Council, taught at the Central School of Speech Training, and then joined Television on its reopening in 1946. Best-known television plays include *The Long Mirror, Jenny Villiers, An Inspector Calls,* and *Arms and the Man.*

COLLINS, Norman. Head of Television Service. Born New Beaconsfield, October, 1907, and educated at William Ellis School, Hampstead. Joined Oxford University Press in 1926; assistant Literary Editor of *News Chronicle* from 1929 until

1933; deputy chairman of Victor Gollanz from 1934 until 1941, when he joined the staff of the B.B.C. as assistant in Overseas Talks Department. Became Empire Talks Manager, General Overseas Services Manager, General Overseas Services Director and, in January, 1946, took charge of the Light Programme until appointed Head of Television Service in December, 1947. Has written many short stories and novels, including *Anna* and *London Belongs to Me.* Married; two daughters and one son.

DAVIES, Desmond Conrad Marcus. Free-lance television producer. Born St. John's Wood, London, October 12th, 1907. Educated Bedford School. Began career as an engineer but gave it up to go on the stage as an actor in 1928. After repertory and touring, reached West End in Galsworthy's *The Roof* in 1930. Later that year became Sir Nigel Playfair's stage manager at the Lyric, Hammersmith, until 1932. From 1932 until 1938 acted, stage-managed and produced in various theatres all over the country in repertory, on tour and in the West End; also did film work and broadcasting, and played in television. Joined B.B.C. staff as television producer in 1938. Was transferred to sound broadcasting on outbreak of war and joined the Music Productions Department with Stanford Robinson, producing and writing scripts for musical productions. Also narrated and announced. Served in Army from 1942 until 1945, and has worked as a free-lance television producer almost continuously since.

DIMMOCK, Peter. Assistant Television Outside Broadcasts Manager. Born London, 1920. Educated Dulwich College. Joined Territorial Army in 1938 and served in the Army from 1939 until 1941; transferred to pilot duties in the R.A.F. in Army Co-operation Command; later became a flying instruc-

tor and then Staff Officer in the Directorate of Flying Training at the Air Ministry. Demobilized in 1945, turned to Fleet Street for a career and became a Press Association racing correspondent. Joined B.B.C. Television Service in May, 1946, as Producer and Commentator. In addition to duties as producer, undertakes horse-racing commentaries for sound and television, and other sports commentaries for television. Writes articles connected with horse-racing.

DORTE, Philip Hoghton. Television film supervisor and in charge of Outside Broadcasts. Born October 28th, 1904; educated Downside, Cambridge and Faraday House. Began career in 1926 as radio engineer with G.E.C., Schenactady and Trans-Canada Broadcasting Company, Toronto. Switched to films in 1930, with Associated Radio Pictures and Gaumont-British. Joined B.B.C. as Television Outside Broadcasts Manager in 1937. Served in R.A.F.V.R. during the war; three times mentioned in despatches and awarded the O.B.E. (military); returned to B.B.C. as Television O.B. and Film Supervisor in 1946.

FAWSETT, Eric. Producer, specializing in variety programmes. Born London, 1904. Went on the stage in Chesterfield in 1922, and appeared in several London musical shows from the following year onwards. Spent from 1925 until 1927 in America. Has appeared in several films. Appointed Television producer in 1939; B.B.C. variety producer from May, 1940; returned to Television on its reopening.

HARRISON, Stephen. Producer. Born Wick, near Pershore, 29th May, 1908. Educated Cheltenham College and New College, Oxford. Began career in films. Assistant director for Paramount at Long Island Studios (New York) 1929-31, and

then for Paramount-British at Elstree. Became editor for Paramount-British, then London Film Productions *(Private Life of Henry VIII, Catherine the Great,* and *The Private Life of Don Juan),* British National *(Turn of the Tide),* and director of *The Common Round* for Religious Film Society. Adapted an Egyptian film in Cairo, and then in 1938 joined the B.B.C. as a television producer. During the war was chief sub-editor of B.B.C. Home News. Returned to television production after the war.

HENDERSON, Michael Elmslie. Television Outside Broadcasts producer and commentator. Born Muthill, Perthshire, 23rd August, 1920; educated New Beacon, Sevenoaks; Wellington College, Berks; Trinity College, Oxford. Went straight into the Army from Oxford and served throughout the war in Armoured Division in England; in N.W. Europe with Seventh Army Div.; and finally in India. Joined B.B.C. as European Service Studio Manager in 1946, and became newsreader and announcer. Television O.B. producer in 1947. Commentates and conducts interviews on various games, particularly Rugger and hockey. Plays rugger, hockey, cricket, golf.

HILLYARD, Pat. Head of Television Programmes (Light Entertainment). Educated Dublin. Commissioned in World War I; studied medicine at age of 19, but left to take up theatrical profession. First job as assistant stage manager; acted; stage-directed; went to New York in 1924 and then to the Continent in 1926, taking a *Midnight Follies* type of show to Paris, Barcelona, Madrid, San Sebastian and Biarritz. Returned to London as stage director and producer; joined B.B.C. in 1938 and was appointed Assistant Television Productions Manager. Became B.B.C. Assistant Director of

Variety during the war, and appointed Television Presentation Director in 1947, and put in charge of all Television light entertainment the same year, working to Head of Television Programmes.

LOGAN, Campbell. Outside Broadcasts Producer. Born Glasgow, April 24th, 1910. Trained at the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. Went to Egypt with the Robert Atkins Company in 1927, followed by West End plays. Toured with the Arts League of Service; Swanage Repertory Company; further West End appearances; and then stage director for the Open Air Theatre in 1939. Joined B.B.C. staff the same year, and was appointed to Features and Drama Executive the following year. Served with the Army Kinematograph Service from 1942 until 1945, when he joined the British Forces Network as O.C. of the Programme Section. Returned to B.B.C. as television outside broadcasts producer, specializing in theatres. Has also produced television studio plays. Is married, with two children. Says his favourite occupation is lying down.

MCCORMACK, Stephen. Producer. Born Darlaston, Staffordshire, May 4th, 1911. Trained as stage manager with Prince Littler, and toured with musical shows and plays from 1932 until 1940, when he enlisted in the Irish Guards. Produced first pantomime ever produced in that Regiment, and was immediately posted to India, which he considers to be the most devastating criticism ever received. When demobilized in 1946 joined the B.B.C. Television Service as studio manager and became a producer in September, 1947, scoring success with *Kaleidescope* and *First Time Ever*. Is married with one son.

MACDERMOT, Robert. In charge of Television Drama. Born Poona, India, March 19th, 1901. Educated Stowe School and Balliol College, Oxford. Acted at Oxford Playhouse, Festival Theatre, Cambridge, Croydon Repertory Theatre, B.B.C. plays (drama, schools and Children's Hour). Joined the B.B.C. in 1934 as Home announcer and news reader. In 1939, changed to Home and Forces Programme Planning and later became Programme organiser. Appointed General Overseas Service Organiser in 1944. Left the B.B.C. to enter the film world, and rejoined the B.B.C. in 1948, in charge of Television Drama. Has written plays, revues, lyrics and popular songs. Is married to actress Diana Morgan.

MCGIVERN, Cecil. Television Programme Director. Born in Newcastle of Irish parents. Educated St. Cuthbert's Grammar School, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Armstrong College and Durham University. Was a schoolmaster before joining the B.B.C. in 1934. Seven years in Newcastle, responsible for variety, drama, talks, etc. Appointed stage manager at Manchester in 1936. Transferred to London at end of 1941 to work as feature producer. Was responsible for factual productions such as *Battle of Britain, Bomber over Britain, Fighter Pilot, Radar,* etc. Resigned from B.B.C. in 1945 to become a screen writer, and returned to B.B.C. in 1947 as Television Programme Director. Married, with three children.

MADDEN, Cecil. Television Programme Organiser. Born Morocco, 1902. Educated at Dover College. Was in the shipping business in Spain, later mining in the City, as secretary to Sir Auckland Geddes. Spare-time occupation writing reviews, and joined B.B.C. Talks Department in 1933, starting the series *Anywhere for a News Story,* which brought journalism to the microphone for the first time. Joined the Empire Service

on its formation, writing and producing many features. Became Television Programmes Organiser in 1936 until outbreak of war, when he took on Overseas Outside Broadcasts and directed the Overseas Entertainment Unit, which ran the clock round—sixty programmes a week—from the Criterion Theatre. Returned to Television when the service reopened.

MILLER-JONES, Andrew. Talks and Talks Features. Born 1910. After working for Gaumont-British he wrote scenarios for Western Electric Publicity Film Department. Became a junior television producer in 1938. Joined Army in August, 1939, and returned to television on its resumption.

MILLS, Michael. Variety and Light Entertainment producer. Born Prestwich, May 13th, 1919. Educated Westminster School, Germany, France and Switzerland. First theatre work as stage manager, St. Pancras People's Theatre. Joined the B.B.C. in 1938 as junior Producer's Assistant in the Drama department as 'effects boy'. In the Navy during the war, and returned to B.B.C. as Programme Engineer for a short spell. Towards end of the war became second in command and stage director of Royal Naval show *Tokyo Express*, touring U.K., France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Canada and the Pacific. Returned to B.B.C. as producer in the Television Service in 1947. Is son of the noted barrister and journalist William Haslam Mills.

MORLEY, Royston. Senior producer. Was a television producer before the war. In 1941, war correspondent in Middle East. December, 1942, joined Forces as private. Produced *Combat Diary*, a daily war report especially compiled for Allied Expeditionary Force Programme. October, 1945, appointed senior producer in Services Educational Unit, Talks

Division. Appointed television producer in 1946 and senior producer (with George More O'Ferrall and Mary Adams) in November, 1947.

O'DONOVAN, Fred. Producer. Born Dublin, 1889. First job in a land agent's office. First stage appearance, Abbey Theatre, 1908. Appeared in London in 1909, then returned to Dublin. Was producer and manager at the Abbey Theatre from 1917 to 1919. Later came to London as a producer. First produced for television in 1938, and joined B.B.C. Drama Repertory Company in 1939, producing and acting. Rejoined television on its resumption. Also acts in films. Latest picture: *Another Shore.*

O'FERRALL, George More. Senior producer. Born in Somerset. Educated Beaumont School. Went on the stage immediately on leaving school. Was with Sir Ben Greet for four years, then producer at the Arts Theatre Club. Was for a time assistant film director in British studios. Joined B.B.C. Television in 1936 as producer. Joined Army in 1939; returned to television as senior producer in 1946. Produced television version of Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan,* and won first Television 'Oscar' for his production of *Hamlet.*

ORR-EWING, Ian. Outside Broadcasts Manager. Born 1912. Educated Harrow, Trinity College, Oxford. Took Honours Degree in Physics. Joined His Master's Voice in 1934, and worked in all sections of their factory, including six months on television design. Joined B.B.C. in 1937 as Assistant Outside Broadcasts Manager responsible for sporting programmes. Served in R.A.F.V.R. during the war, and rejoined B.B.C. Television as Outside Broadcasts Manager in 1946. Was awarded O.B.E. for work in connection with defence of con-

voys off North Africa; is associated member of Institute of Electrical Engineers and Governor of Northampton Polytechnic and the Royal College of Horology. Adopted as prospective Conservative candidate for North Hendon in 1946; elected to the National Executive of the Conservative Party in 1947. Married to Joan McMinnies; three sons.

ROGERS, Keith Dudley Ulysses. Outside Broadcasts Producer. Born London, 27th January, 1900. Educated Mill Hill School. Radio operator in the Merchant Navy from 1917-19; from 1922 to 1935, Technical Editorial and Research Department of radio journals published by the Amalgamated Press. 1935-1940, free-lance journalist, specializing in science and sociological feature articles. 1940-1945, Technical branch of R.A.F.V.R., responsible for installation and maintenance of radar equipment. 1945-46, research staff of Marconi Wireless Co., working on television and radio. Joined B.B.C. Television Service as O.B. producer in May, 1946.

ROSS, Duncan. Documentary writer and Script Supervisor. Born Scotland, 31st May, 1908. Educated, Arbroath. Worked with Gaumont-British Picture Corporation from 1927 to 1940, as manager, publicity supervisor and variety producer for their theatres in Scotland. Organised war-time distribution for Ministry of Information in South Highland area and acted as Army Education Corps lecturer. Asked by Paul Rotha to help produce a series of production-propaganda films in 1941 and worked with him as his chief industrial film writer and producer until December, 1947. Joined B.B.C. Television in 1948. Is married with three children.

WARD, Ivor Williams (Bill). Producer. Born Plymouth, Devon, January 19th, 1916, and educated at Plymouth, Gram-

mar School. Entered B.B.C. as a junior engineer and went through the gamut of engineering jobs at the Plymouth station. Joined Television in 1936 as junior engineer, the youngest ever. Went into the R.A. during the war, doing Radar work. Returned to Television when demobilized and promoted to studio manager and then became a producer in 1947. Produces mainly light shows.