

Televising the Coronation Procession

I SUPPOSE this is the first time in the history of the BBC that we are committed to an enterprise with apparatus of which we shall have had practically no experience before the event. This, added to the importance of the occasion, would have been a cause of some anxiety had we not had great faith in the admirable technicians responsible for the equipment. Personally, that confidence goes with a conviction that our activities on May 12 may well be a landmark in the growth of one of the greatest inventions of all time.

The Post Office engineers have already connected Hyde Park Corner (just west of the lodge), Broadcasting House, and Alexandra Palace by means of special co-axial cable. The section from the control position in Hyde Park to Stanhope Gate is actually an offshoot from an underground circuit of cable planned to link up the maximum number of likely sources of programme material within Central London.

Thus, we are relying in the main upon direct co-axial cable connection with the Alexandra Palace transmitter. But as a stand-by there will also be a van equipped with an ultra-short-wave transmitter for feeding the programme to Alexandra Palace. Neither the control van nor the transmitter, however, is complete at the time of writing, but we are counting upon delivery in time for experiments some days before May 12. Down at Hayes, at the moment of writing, work is proceeding furiously, so that the equipment can be given a try-out; and when Alexandra Palace 'goes over' to Hyde Park Corner there will be no need to apologise for some lapse or other.

Since the television service started last November, we have transmitted a number of outside broadcasts in the grounds of Alexandra Park, limited to a range made possible by comparatively short lengths of Emitron cable connecting the site with the station control room. Television addicts (and believe me, you will soon become an addict when you have a set) have already seen demonstrations of golf, archery, sheep-dog trials, horses, model aeroplanes, locomotives, a boxing match, and anti-aircraft guns in action. Much useful experience has been gained. They were successful as experiments.

But May 12 is quite another thing. Apart from the importance of the event, television will be on trial. The unknown factors make it all the more exciting as a prospect. It will be far more than an experiment.

To return to the equipment, I have mentioned the main connecting links. There are also the separate Emitron cable connections from the control vans to the camera positions at the arch of Apsley Gate, and the separate sound circuits for the spoken description and tele-set communications.

Three Emitron cameras will be used. When I say 'cameras', please remember there is no film about them. Emitron cameras are optical-electrical devices which make possible direct (and practically instantaneous) transmission to

spoken description quickly and accurately has not yet been devised, but we have arranged for them to hear the description on headphones. Speed and accuracy in synchronisation of description and picture will depend upon the initiative and technique of the camera-men, in whom we have very great confidence. There will, by the way, be few visible signs of activity at the Gate.

Viewers may be interested in the reasons which prompted the choice of Apsley Gate. A position had to be found which would combine several characteristics. The afternoon sun had to be behind the cameras, and preferably upon the objects to be televised. The selected site had to allow close-ups because of the small receiver screen, so that at least one camera would be within six feet of the procession, and as nearly as possible on a level with the windows of the royal coach. The cameras had to be close to the control van and stand-by transmitter, not further than a hundred yards. We had to be remote and safe from a huge crowd so that the apparatus could not be put out of action inadvertently. And, finally, the view had to be as extensive as possible to do justice to the occasion. Had we, for example, been at the northern face of Wellington Arch, the sun would have been directly in the eye of the cameras.

Will the televising of the Coronation procession mark the beginning of a new era in television? In my opinion, much of the fascination of television, and to a great extent its future, is bound up with actuality, a virtue which it alone possesses, and which the news reel, with its time-lag, misses. In direct television, the viewer will learn and appreciate that the picture he is watching in his home is the picture he would be seeing at that very moment, were he with the camera, and not one that has already taken place.

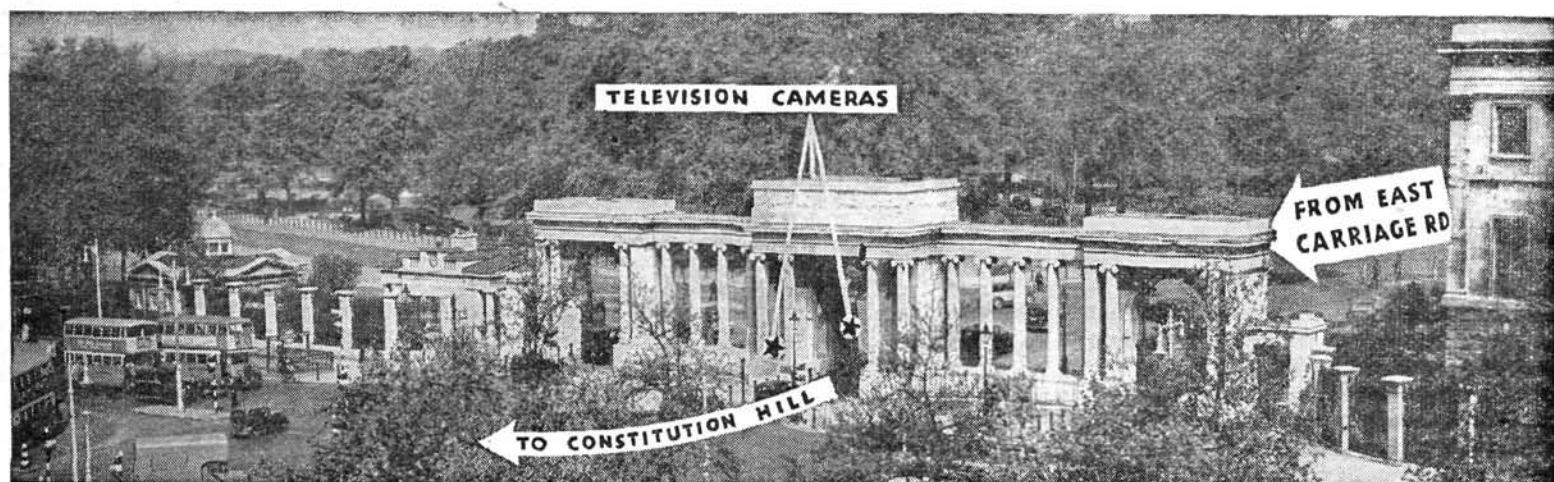
Whatever anxiety may be felt as to the success of this particular transmission, with the risks of brand-new apparatus and unknown conditions, it is surely compensated by the probability that a new step forward, the remote relay, will be inaugurated at the most historically important event of the year. I do not believe that the result will be disappointing.

GERALD COCK, Director of Television, reveals his plans

your sets at home. They are the miracle workers which never fail to grip the imagination even of a hard-bitten staff whose business is continually with them.

One will be on the pavement level on the north face of, and close up to, the main arch, at a height of about five feet. This is to televise Their Majesties and the whole of the Procession in close-up (about six feet away) as they approach the arch. The second, about ten feet above ground level, on the plinth of the main arch, will be used for 'setting the scene', for mid-shots of the crowd and the Procession until the latter approaches up to about ten yards. The third, on the opposite plinth on the south side, will also be used for 'setting the scene', and afterwards for 'following' the Procession as it disappears into the Wellington Arch on Constitution Hill.

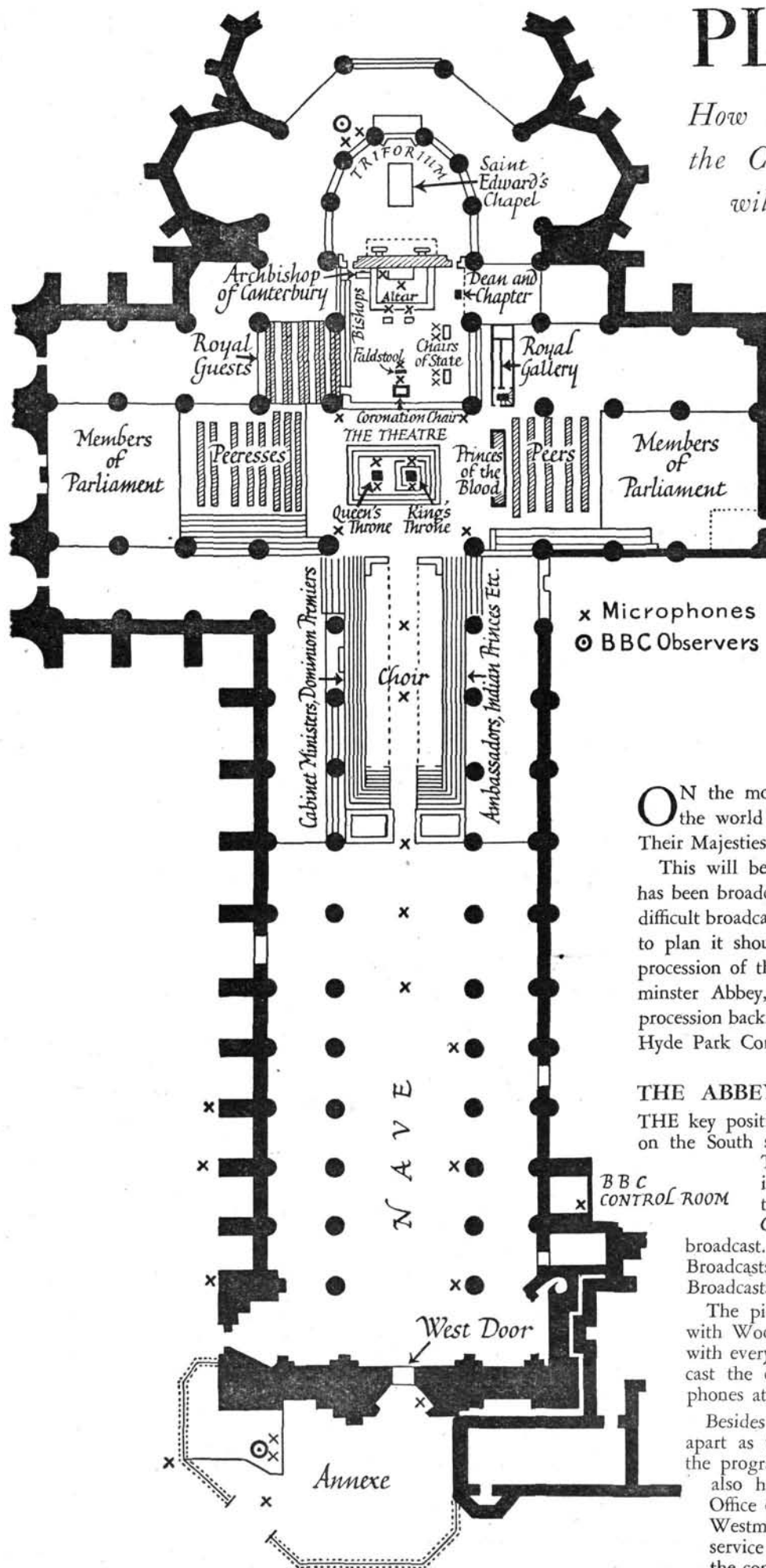
A microphone will be there for a commentary by Frederick Grisewood. We believe that description should be restrained, the pictures and incidental sounds playing the chief rôle; that, in fact, quick-fire commentaries have no place in television. A cast-iron method of ensuring that the camera-men can follow the



This view of Apsley Gate at Hyde Park Corner, looking northwards towards the Park itself, shows the strategic positions that will be occupied by the television cameras. The positions of two cameras are indicated here: a third, on the far side of the plinth of the main arch, about ten feet above the ground, will televise shots of the crowd and the procession as it approaches down East Carriage Road.

PLANS *for the*

How the broadcasting and televising of the Coronation ceremony and procession will be carried out by the BBC



The plan on this page shows Westminster Abbey as it will be arranged for the Coronation Service, with the Thrones of the King and Queen, their Chairs of State, and King Edward's Chair, in which the King is anointed and crowned.

The plan shows also the positions of the BBC observers in the Triforium and Annexe, and the positions of all the microphones by means of which the Service will be broadcast. All these microphones, as well as the many other microphones along the route, are connected with the Control Room in the Abbey, shown in the picture on the opposite page.

The position of the television cameras at Hyde Park Corner is shown on the plan on page 12. A pictorial plan of the route, with the positions of all the BBC observers, and a description of the Coronation Service, will be found in the Supplement in the centre of the paper.

The full programme of the Coronation broadcast is on page 59.

ON the morning of Wednesday, May 12, not only Britain but the world will be awaiting the broadcast of the Coronation of Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

This will be the first time the Coronation of a British sovereign has been broadcast, and as far as organisation goes it will be the most difficult broadcast ever attempted by the BBC. But if all goes according to plan it should be easy enough for listeners to follow it all—the procession of the King and Queen from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, the historic ceremony in the Abbey, and the great procession back. Viewers will also see the Royal procession passing Hyde Park Corner, and the State Coach only a few feet away.

THE ABBEY CONTROL ROOM

THE key position to the whole broadcast is the BBC Control Room on the South side of the Abbey, shown in the plan on this page.

The control point is situated in two small rooms belonging to the Dean's Verger, between the Abbey itself and the Dean's House. Here, from early in the morning of Coronation Day, two men will control the complicated broadcast. They are S. J. de Lotbinière, Director of Outside Broadcasts, and R. H. Wood, Engineer-in-Charge of Outside Broadcasts in the London area.

The picture on the opposite page shows the Control Room with Wood at work. As you will see, lines connect this room with every one of the 58 microphones that will be used to broadcast the ceremony, except the television commentator's microphones at Apsley Gate.

Besides handling all the BBC broadcasts from places as far apart as the Embankment and Constitution Hill, and sending the programme to Broadcasting House, this Control Room will also have the task of supplying the loudspeakers for the Office of Works stands along the route; the loudspeakers in Westminster Abbey itself, which will make the words of the service audible all over the building; and the sound track for the companies authorised to make talking films.

CORONATION BROADCAST

A radio transmitter will be in readiness on the roof of the Abbey to provide a wireless link with Broadcasting House in the unlikely event of an emergency arising through the failure of other means of communication.

There is another Control Room, in Middlesex Guildhall, opposite the Abbey (*see plan in Supplement*). This second Control Room, where H. H. Thompson, Outside Broadcasts Superintendent Engineer, will be in charge, will be responsible for all the broadcasts by foreign commentators to their own countries, arrangements for which are also being made by the BBC.

There will be ten foreign commentators at the Guildhall, each in a sound-proof box, and four more opposite Buckingham Palace; they include representatives of the Argentine, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Yugoslavia, and the United States. Their commentaries will go through the Foreign Control Room in the Guildhall before passing to the International Trunk Exchange of the G.P.O.

But even for the foreign broadcasts, the sounds that give life to the commentaries—including those from the Abbey itself—will come through the one small Control Room in the Abbey shown in the picture below.

As for television, the television control room is on wheels. A control van will be drawn up some 400 feet West of the cameras at Apsley Gate (*see plan on p. 12*), linked by special cables to the cameras and microphones on one side, and on the other to Broadcasting House

and Alexandra Palace. Alongside the control van will be a second van containing an ultra-short-wave transmitter capable of sending the visual part of the programme by wireless link to Alexandra Palace if for any reason the special television cable should fail.

THE PROCESSION SETS OUT

The broadcast begins at 10.15 a.m. By that time seat-holders in the Abbey will have been there for hours. Most of the processions to the Abbey will have arrived. (Remember that there are numerous processions to the Abbey; coming back, there is only the one grand procession escorting the newly-crowned King and Queen.)

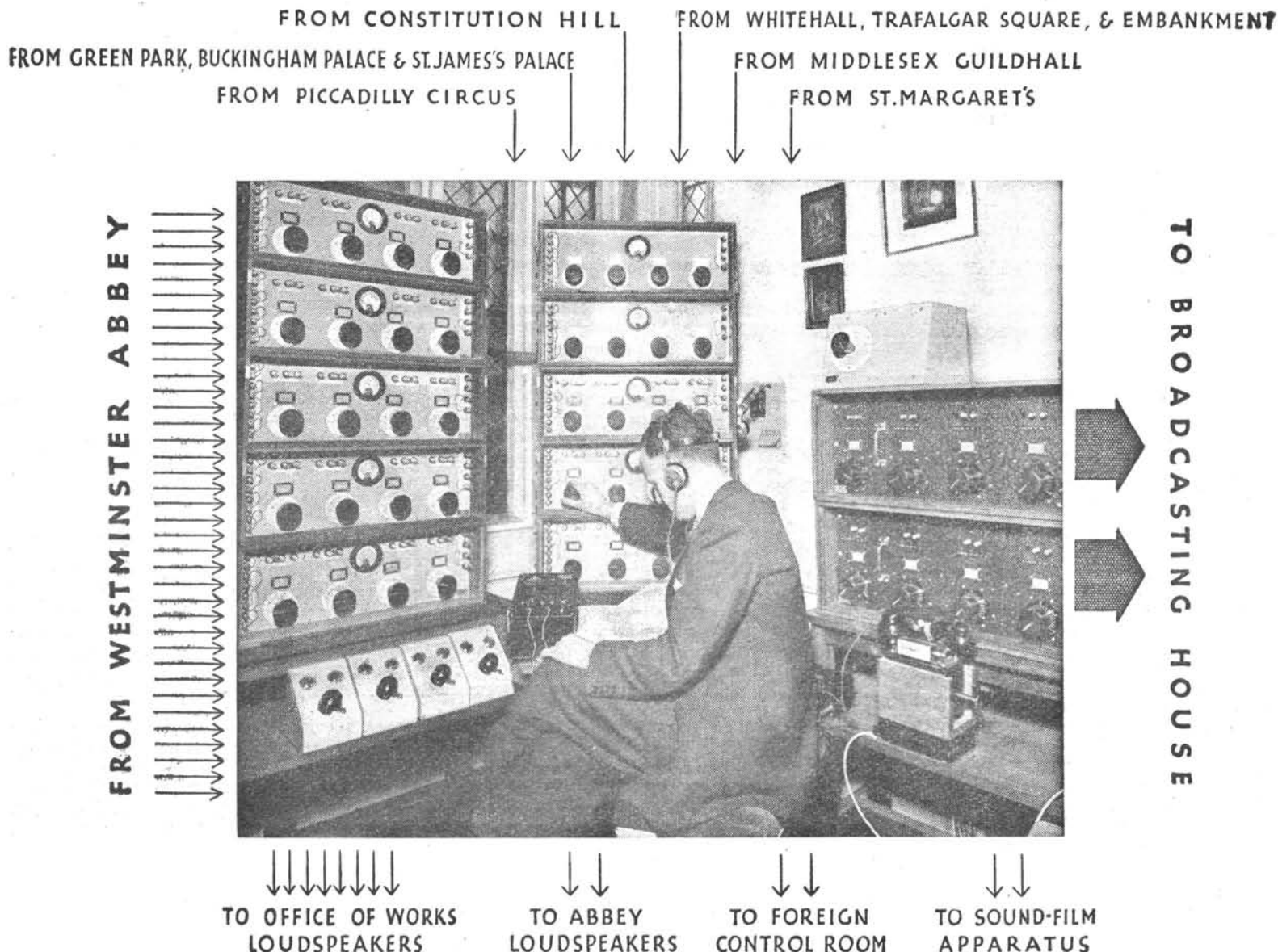
By 10.15 the procession of Queen Mary will be on its way. The procession of the King and Queen will not yet have set out.

The first broadcasters will be the BBC observers outside Buckingham Palace (John Snagge) and at Middlesex Guildhall (George Blake). They will describe the scene as the crowds wait for the King.

10.30 a.m. The broadcast switches back to the Palace; and to the inside of the Palace this time. The next BBC observer, A. W. Dobbin, will speak from a room looking on to the inner courtyard where the King and Queen enter the State Coach. It is from this room that the King himself will broadcast at night.

As soon as the Royal procession leaves the Palace, Snagge will see it and report. As the procession starts down the Mall the broadcast will shift to the Abbey, where Howard Marshall will set the scene

[continued overleaf]



PLANS FOR THE CORONATION BROADCAST (contd.)

and give listeners an outline of the solemn service that they are to hear. He will be stationed in the triforium, high up beyond the altar, and with him will be the Rev. F. A. Iremonger, Chaplain to the King and Director of Religion in the BBC.

Before 10.45 a.m. the procession should have reached the Cenotaph in Whitehall, and from the observation point in the Ministry of Labour building fronting on Whitehall, Harold Abrahams will describe its passage through the street that has been called the Heart of Empire. So into Parliament Square and the entry to the Abbey, described from Middlesex Guildhall by George Blake.

The next broadcast comes from the Annexe, built out before the West Door of the Abbey. From the position shown on the plan on p. 10, looking down on the Hall of Assembly, Michael Standing will have the difficult task of describing the Great Proceeding into the Abbey until the Service begins with the Anthem 'I was glad when they said unto me'.

THE ABBEY SERVICE

There will be no broadcast commentary on the service itself. As the plan shows, 28 microphones will pick up everything that is said and sung, and the majestic rubrics of the historic service will be read by Mr. Iremonger from his position in the triforium. There will be one break in the broadcast; at the most solemn and intimate moment of the Communion Service—after the Sanctus, during the Prayer of Consecration and the Communion of the King and Queen—the microphones in the Abbey will be shut off, and singers in St. Margaret's Church will broadcast a Communion hymn. Apart from this, listeners will hear everything in the service from the Recognition of the King by the People and his taking of the Oath until the final 'Te Deum' swells out triumphant, and Howard Marshall describes the scene as the King and Queen move down towards the West Door.

THE PROCESSION FROM THE ABBEY

Here comes another change in the broadcast. By now it will be, probably, 1.45 p.m. When the procession leaves the Abbey on its long journey through the streets, the BBC will not attempt to describe events in detail. But listeners need not be afraid of losing touch. There will be microphones along the route—on the Embankment, by



Television cameras will be at Hyde Park Corner, as shown on the plan, transmitting direct pictures of the procession as it passes through Apsley Gate only a few feet away

the statue of King Charles in Trafalgar Square, at St. James's Palace, and at Piccadilly Circus—and the arrival of the Royal coach at these points will be told in sound, with any necessary comments by de Lotbinière in the Control Room at the Abbey, still the nerve-centre of the broadcast.

Some time after 2 p.m. the head of the procession will reach Hyde Park Corner, and here it will run the gauntlet of the television cameras, for the first time transmitting a historic event. With them at Apsley Gate will be Frederick Grisewood, whose task it will be to supplement the television images that are going out.

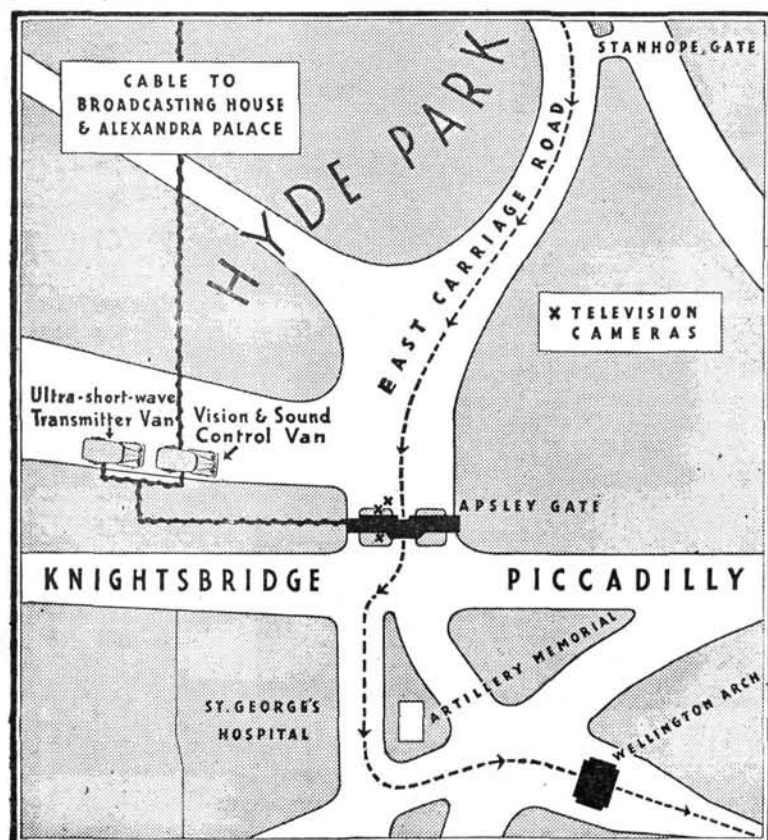
The plan on this page shows clearly what televiewers will see. Before the procession comes in sight the cameras will give views of the crowds and the stands inside the Park, and across Hyde Park Corner to St. George's Hospital and Wellington Arch. When the procession reaches Stanhope Gate, on its way down East Carriage Road, the telephoto lens will give viewers their first sight of it. Then as it nears Apsley Gate the cameras will come into close-up, until the State Coach passes through the gate, within a few feet of the camera. Finally, television will follow the procession, by means of the camera on the South side of the gate, until it passes through the Wellington Arch leading to Constitution Hill.

BACK TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Grisewood's commentary will be broadcast only to televiewers, but listeners will come into touch with the procession again when it crosses Hyde Park Corner and passes down Constitution Hill. Here is another broadcasting point, and Thomas Woodroffe will review the whole cavalcade. It will be nearly two-and-a-half miles long and take three-quarters-of-an-hour to pass, but he will not attempt to talk all the time. The sounds of the marching troops and the bands will help listeners to make their own picture of what he sees.

Now the last stage of the journey has been reached. Snagge, outside the Palace, will have been listening to Woodroffe's broadcast, and he will supplement it as the procession circles the Victoria Memorial before it enters the Palace gates. So listeners will be able to follow the King and Queen back into the inner courtyard, and even—perhaps—to follow the progress of the King as he goes to the balcony to speak to the crowds outside.

This plan shows the positions of the television cameras at Hyde Park Corner, the television control van, and the portable sound transmitter ready for use if transmission by cable fails



THE SUMMER EIGHTS AT OXFORD

A commentary on the racing in Division I will be broadcast on Monday evening

LIKE so many traditional English institutions, Eights Week at Oxford has developed out of a limitation. The summer races between the crews of the different Colleges have become a picturesque social occasion.

The narrow rivers of Oxford and Cambridge produced the bumping race. As the boats cannot start abreast, they start at intervals and pursue each other over the course, each trying to overtake and 'bump' the boat ahead. Bumping races mean plenty of action, and on the narrow, winding river the spectators can be almost within reaching distance of the boats. And besides seeing the boats they can see each other. The charm of intimacy pervades the show.

Given good weather (and the weather can be glorious at Oxford in May), Eights Week is a colourful show. From the University Boat-house, from which John Snagge will broadcast, you look up the river, lined with College barges bearing the College arms, their decks crowded with people, all gaily dressed—though the vivid hues of rowing blazers put the gayest summer frock in the shade.

The crowds have changed in the last few years. Now that women have their own place in Oxford life, Eights Week is no longer the festival of 'the sisters, the cousins, and the

aunts'. But there is still an air of romance about those teas and ices on the barge between races, watching the shifting crowds on the towpath, the river crowded with punts and canoes, and the hopes of the College mustering on the float below.

There are four Divisions, and four processions of the boats to the start. From the top of the barge you see your own crew push off from the float, and you raise a cheer as they go. The procession is as colourful as a cavalcade of blazoned knights. Each College has its own colours for singlets and oars, and only the most knowledgeable spectators know them all. But there are some things anybody can recognise, like the lilies of Magdalen, and the men of Christ Church in the blazers and straw hats in which they row down to the start.

There are thirteen boats in the First Division, and they start at intervals of two lengths. The last boat in the Division starts a mile and a quarter from the finish; the first boat has a shorter course to row. It is quieter down there at the start, and more business-like. Coaches with huge revolvers, tiny coxes holding the bung that keeps the boat in its position, counting off the quarter-minutes and the last ten seconds between the minute gun and the start.

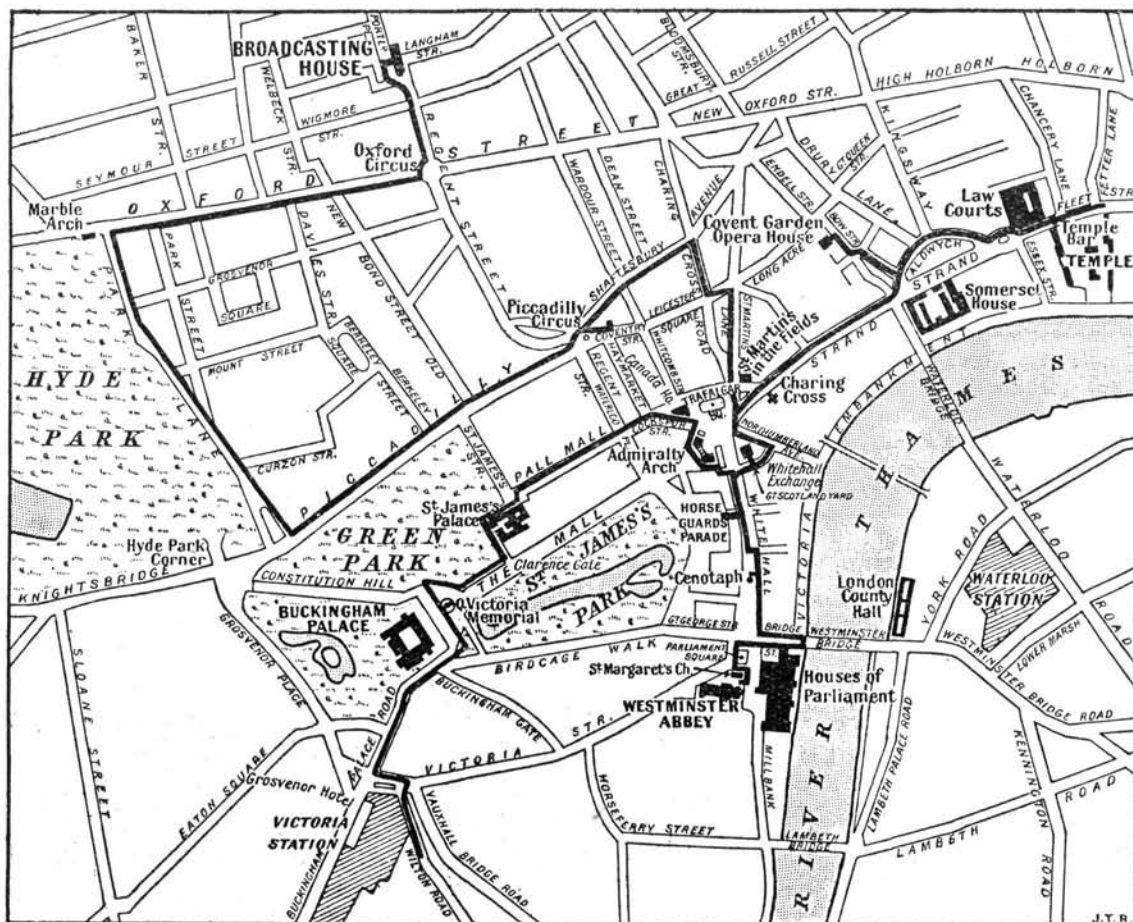
The gun goes again, and they're off. Every

nerve strained to catch the boat in front of them before they are caught by the boat behind, every man in the boat listening for the revolver-shots from the bank that will tell them they are going up (one shot means they are within a length, two, within half a length, three, within a canvas, four, overlapping). Round the bends of the river in 'the Gut', past the bridges to the Green Bank and the barges, till the running supporters and even the coaches with their revolvers are lost in the cheering crowds... And so to the finish, unless they have the joy of bumping or the bitterness of being bumped. When that happens, both boats pull in to the bank and let the rest go by.

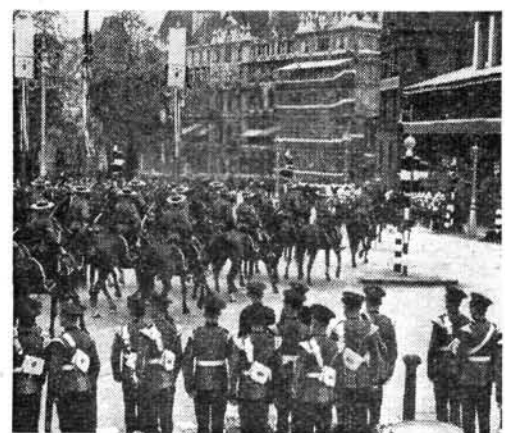
Eights Week has its humours too. There are the vigorous bumps that sink their victims, the College second boat that threatens to bump its first, the canoe that cannot be got out of the way just before the racing eights are due. (There was a canoe once in the middle of the river with two girls in it, after the booms had closed; they were paddling frantically with their backs to each other, one in the bow, one in the stern, and both on the same side, so that the canoe didn't even go round and round.) But the chief thing we have to hope for on Monday is that there will not be too many early bumps, and that some boat will be considerate enough to bring off a bump under Snagge's very eyes. A. C.

LONDON'S NEW TELEVISION CABLE

Hard on the heels of the special arrangements for the televising of the Coronation procession come the permanent arrangements for further important outside television broadcasts. This plan shows the route of the 'balanced television cable' that it is proposed to lay in London for regular use in the televising by the BBC of all kinds of events of public interest. It will be noted that the route followed by the cable includes several familiar points from which it is anticipated that important outside television broadcasts will be given in the future.



TELEVISION GOES OUTSIDE



CORONATION TELEVISION

The first great landmark in out-of-doors television was the transmission of scenes on Coronation Day by the television cameras on the plinth of Apsley Gate, Hyde Park, one of which is seen in position in the picture on the right. The three photographs above show how the television camera saw the procession, in spite of bad weather conditions. The first two are views looking northwards up East Carriage Road, the third is southward, toward St. George's Hospital.

NOW that television has its own outside broadcasts, the present range and future possibilities of the Alexandra Palace programmes have increased immeasurably.

Originally when outdoor scenes were being transmitted the television camera had to be connected with the control room at Alexandra Palace by a heavy cable containing 22 conductors throughout its length.

The camera was thus 'tied' to the control room and for technical reasons the length of the cable could not be made greater than one thousand feet. The scope of the programmes was therefore restricted, but a temporary solution was provided by bringing into the Alexandra Palace grounds as many interesting events as possible. Sheep-dog trials, riding lessons, new cars and old corks, demonstrations of every sport from golf to archery; all these provided excellent opportunities, but always within the confines of Alexandra Palace.

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With the advent of the Coronation, an innovation in television outside broadcasts came into being. Emitron cameras and a van containing control-room apparatus similar to that at Alexandra Palace were installed at Hyde Park Corner and the pictures were conveyed to the television station by a 'balanced' cable linking Hyde Park Corner, Broadcasting House, and Alexandra Palace. This cable connects with an underground cable system, linking several of the most important points in central London, which has been laid by the General Post Office. A plan of the route followed by this cable was reproduced in the RADIO TIMES on May 21.

Leslie Mitchell, who, apart from his duties as announcer at Alexandra Palace, has been closely associated with several of the most important outside broadcasts in the grounds, offers some interesting comments.

'One of the great advantages of outdoor television', he says, 'is working by daylight. Instead of having to set the lighting arrangements well in advance, as with indoor programmes, we can devote the time before the broadcast to straightforward rehearsals and the placing of our artists and subjects in relation to the scenery.'

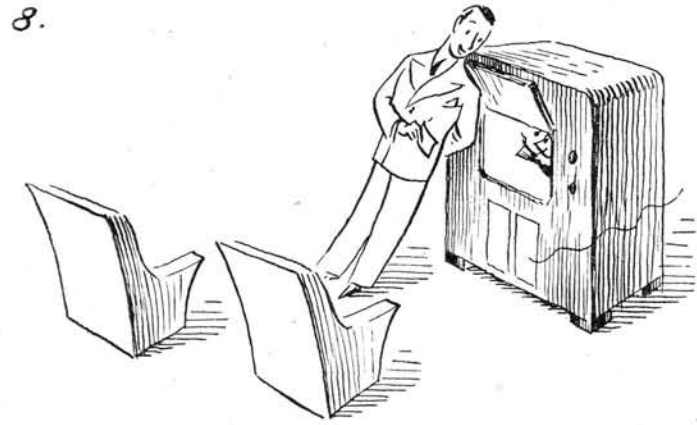
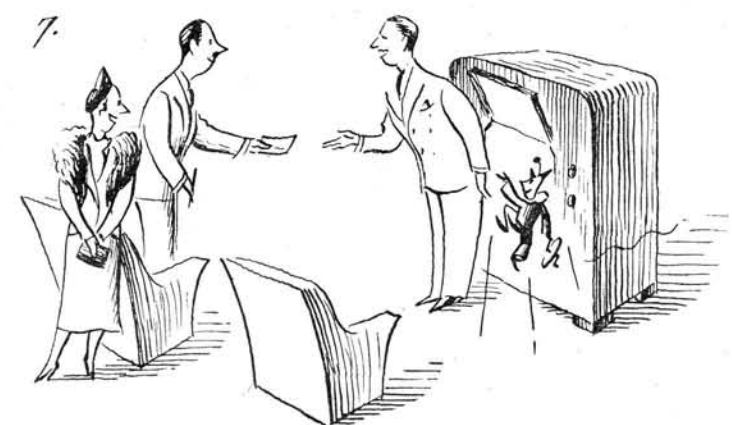
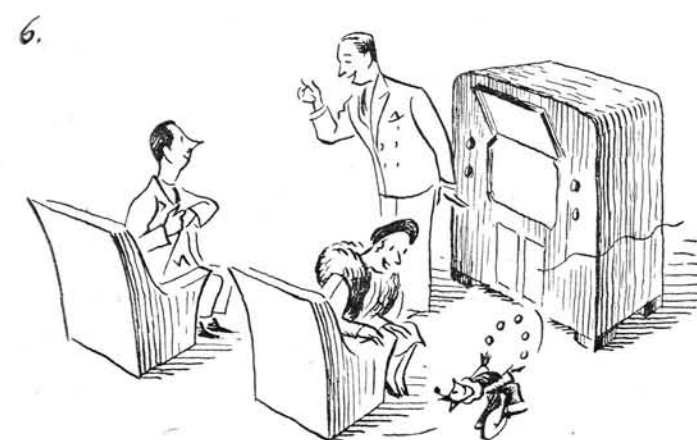
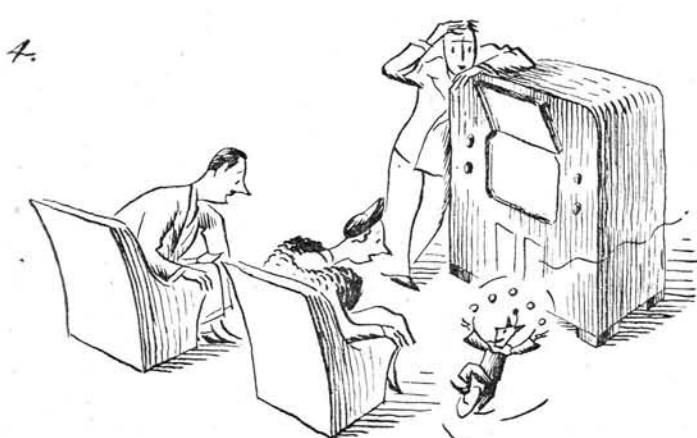
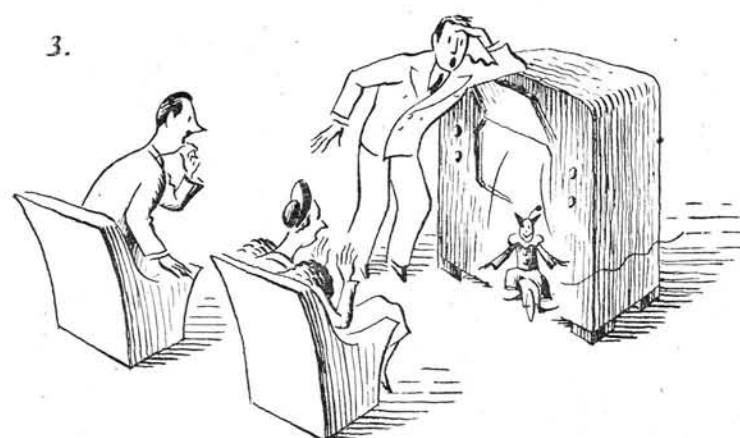
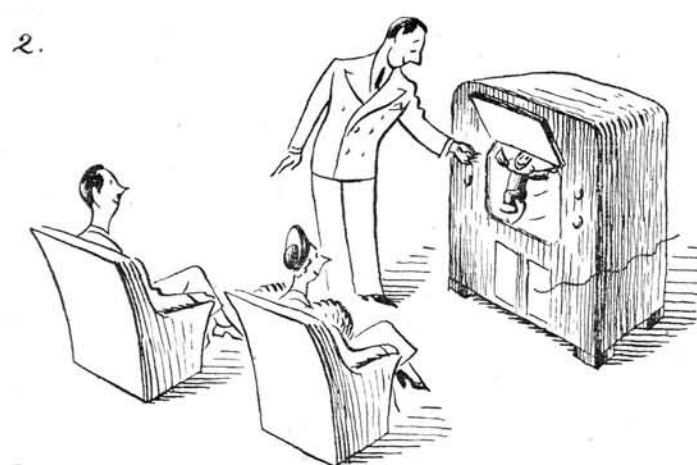
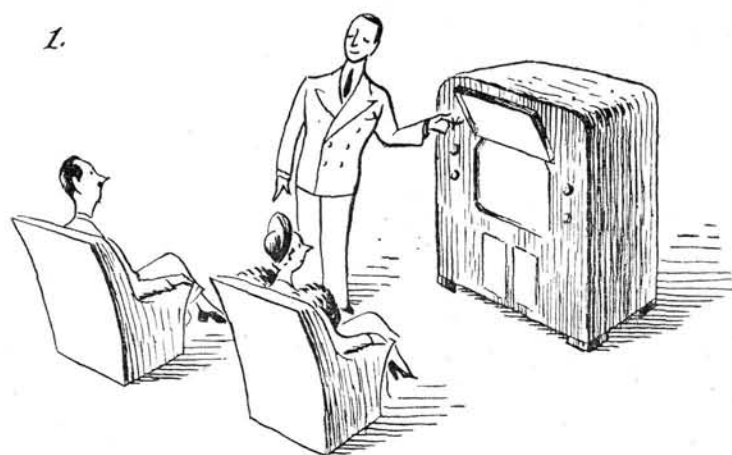
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One of the problems of television O.B.s is that of concealing the microphones from the view of the camera. 'We have the entire circular panorama as our field of vision', says Leslie Mitchell, 'so it is frequently a problem to know where to place a microphone that hangs a few feet above the heads of the speakers so that it shall not appear in the picture. If there is any wind, the difficulty is increased, as the microphone has to be protected by a hood, which makes it still more prominent.'

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Perhaps the most important point of all in television O.B.s is that of how to make it clear that the events are really being seen as they occur, particularly as the Emitrons are confusingly referred to as 'cameras'. Of course, there is no danger of this on unique occasions such as the Coronation. The televising of nationally-followed events known to be taking place at such and such a time will soon destroy the feeling that the broadcast might just as well be a film of something that happened hours ago.





'THE SUPER SET'—a fantasy of television by Mervyn Wilson

MY FIRST TELEVISION

S. P. B. Mais gives a candid account of his sufferings before the television cameras, with some impressions of Alexandra Palace and general observations on make-up and Adam's apples

MY life, I have said this before, is full of surprises. Exactly thirty years after getting my Blue I received a telegram from the President of the Oxford University Athletic Club to judge the Sports, O.U.A.C. v. England. It gave me great delight to celebrate this totally unexpected honour by awarding two new (was it world's?) records in events that I had never seen before, much less practised. The Greeks may have had a word for throwing the discus or hurling the javelin, but they were after my time. The Olympic Games had not been heard of in my day.

We ran very slowly lest we should be confused with the professionals, and we put weights and threw hammers because neither weight nor hammer could be of any earthly use to anybody.

In the same week that I received this invitation I got a second telegram (two telegrams in a week). It was exactly fourteen years after my initiation into broadcasting, and the request this time was a summons to Alexandra Palace to be televised giving to the combined seeing and listening worlds my views on the future of television.

The Right Person

As I had never heard of Alexandra Palace and never seen an example of present-day television, I was obviously the right person to pronounce judgment upon its future.

Those who know me will not be surprised to hear that I accepted both invitations with alacrity. The time will come some day, if I am patient, when I shall be asked to do something that I can do. In the meanwhile I hate being idle.

It has taken me fourteen hard years to learn to treat the microphone with that confident affection that crooners use. For years I used to shy from it as from a watchful adder. It was in America that I learnt to put my arms round it and whisper into it endearingly as into the ear trumpet of my great-aunt or the auricle of my grand-niece.

Generous Interpreter

Only now that I have come to regard the microphone as a generous interpreter of my best thoughts, sifting the grain from the chaff and hiding from my listeners all my physical imperfections, only now is this perfect intermediary in danger of being wrested from me, and I am back where I was before broadcasting was invented, both heard and seen simultaneously in the too, too stolid flesh.

After fourteen years I have become acclimatised to the microphone. But not even after fifty years have I become reconciled to the camera. In all photographs I bear the look of a man who has borne all misery and is shortly to be hanged for a crime he never committed. But the pain of ordinary photography sinks into complete insignificance compared with the exquisite agony of being televised, as the pain of a fly in the eye is forgotten in the agony of upsetting a kettle of hot water on one's bare foot.

Broken Away from Blackpool?

First there is Alexandra Palace. Broadcasting House bears some resemblance to a crematorium. Alexandra Palace gives me the feeling that it has broken away surreptitiously from the South Shore at Blackpool. It is full of the kind of amusement that entails a long walk over ground barren of all but litter. Inside, Alexandra Palace becomes, to a modest, retiring man of my sort, infinitely worse.

First I was precipitated into the Make-Up Room. I have lived for fifty years without ever having had to submit to the indignity of being made up. I have always had a sneaking feeling that there was something a little 'fast', a little immodest about make-up. That is my country upbringing. I do not approve of lipstick or face powder even for women. I watched my faintly protesting pale eyebrows suddenly 'beetle', if that is the right word for blacken. Some odd concoction was rubbed over the backs of my hands to darken their lily whiteness. These efforts to make me look presentable were wholly ineffective. I stared at myself in the glass horrified.

Howling Dervish

I think little of my face as God made me, but I have, with the passage of years, got used to it. I can face it while shaving with comparative equanimity. But this howling dervish that faced me was not a thing that even I could look at for long without aversion. Was this travesty of the well-known, the comparatively genial S. P. B. M. going to face the cameras, talk to the seeing world?

Like a man going to execution I was given no time to think. I was hustled quickly across the corridor to a massive studio the like of which I had seen nowhere outside Hollywood. I was blinded by the power of the spotlights and terrified by the number of ladies and gentlemen appointed to control my movements for the next few minutes. I was not in the least reassured by the sudden appearance of a dazzling young thing dressed as if for the Dorchester, who casually told me that she was my announcer. I had bought a new soft shirt and tie for the occasion, but I couldn't be described as 'dressy' by even the most flattering critic. My discomfort was completed by her perfection.

No Memory

Then I suddenly recollected that in television you don't read as before a microphone but prophesy as from a tub, or flounder as from a pulpit. It is one of my worst shortcomings that I have no memory. It is not merely that I cannot repeat any two consecutive lines of Shakespeare or Pope, but I cannot even remember any of the arguments that I prepare so carefully every morning before my mirror.

I must confess to being seized with an appalling frenzy of fright

(Continued on next page)



'In all photographs I bear the look of a man who has borne all misery and is shortly to be hanged for a crime he never committed', complains S. P. B. Mais. He certainly looks rather unhappy with the television bogey hovering over him.

MY FIRST TELEVISION

S. P. B. Mais gives a candid account of his sufferings before the television cameras, with some impressions of Alexandra Palace and general observations on make-up and Adam's apples

MY life, I have said this before, is full of surprises. Exactly thirty years after getting my Blue I received a telegram from the President of the Oxford University Athletic Club to judge the Sports, O.U.A.C. v. England. It gave me great delight to celebrate this totally unexpected honour by awarding two new (was it world's?) records in events that I had never seen before, much less practised. The Greeks may have had a word for throwing the discus or hurling the javelin, but they were after my time. The Olympic Games had not been heard of in my day.

We ran very slowly lest we should be confused with the professionals, and we put weights and threw hammers because neither weight nor hammer could be of any earthly use to anybody.

In the same week that I received this invitation I got a second telegram (two telegrams in a week). It was exactly fourteen years after my initiation into broadcasting, and the request this time was a summons to Alexandra Palace to be televised giving to the combined seeing and listening worlds my views on the future of television.

The Right Person

As I had never heard of Alexandra Palace and never seen an example of present-day television, I was obviously the right person to pronounce judgment upon its future.

Those who know me will not be surprised to hear that I accepted both invitations with alacrity. The time will come some day, if I am patient, when I shall be asked to do something that I can do. In the meanwhile I hate being idle.

It has taken me fourteen hard years to learn to treat the microphone with that confident affection that crooners use. For years I used to shy from it as from a watchful adder. It was in America that I learnt to put my arms round it and whisper into it endearingly as into the ear trumpet of my great-aunt or the auricle of my grand-niece.

Generous Interpreter

Only now that I have come to regard the microphone as a generous interpreter of my best thoughts, sifting the grain from the chaff and hiding from my listeners all my physical imperfections, only now is this perfect intermediary in danger of being wrested from me, and I am back where I was before broadcasting was invented, both heard and seen simultaneously in the too, too stolid flesh.

After fourteen years I have become acclimatised to the microphone. But not even after fifty years have I become reconciled to the camera. In all photographs I bear the look of a man who has borne all misery and is shortly to be hanged for a crime he never committed. But the pain of ordinary photography sinks into complete insignificance compared with the exquisite agony of being televised, as the pain of a fly in the eye is forgotten in the agony of upsetting a kettle of hot water on one's bare foot.

Broken Away from Blackpool?

First there is Alexandra Palace. Broadcasting House bears some resemblance to a crematorium. Alexandra Palace gives me the feeling that it has broken away surreptitiously from the South Shore at Blackpool. It is full of the kind of amusement that entails a long walk over ground barren of all but litter. Inside, Alexandra Palace becomes, to a modest, retiring man of my sort, infinitely worse.



'In all photographs I bear the look of a man who has borne all misery and is shortly to be hanged for a crime he never committed', complains S. P. B. Mais. He certainly looks rather unhappy with the television bogey hovering over him.

First I was precipitated into the Make-Up Room. I have lived for fifty years without ever having had to submit to the indignity of being made up. I have always had a sneaking feeling that there was something a little 'fast', a little immodest about make-up. That is my country upbringing. I do not approve of lipstick or face powder even for women. I watched my faintly protesting pale eyebrows suddenly 'beetle', if that is the right word for blacken. Some odd concoction was rubbed over the backs of my hands to darken their lily whiteness. These efforts to make me look presentable were wholly ineffective. I stared at myself in the glass horrified.

Howling Dervish

I think little of my face as God made me, but I have, with the passage of years, got used to it. I can face it while shaving with comparative equanimity. But this howling dervish that faced me was not a thing that even I could look at for long without aversion. Was this travesty of the well-known, the comparatively genial S. P. B. M. going to face the cameras, talk to the seeing world?

Like a man going to execution I was given no time to think. I was hustled quickly across the corridor to a massive studio the like of which I had seen nowhere outside Hollywood. I was blinded by the power of the spotlights and terrified by the number of ladies and gentlemen appointed to control my movements for the next few minutes. I was not in the least reassured by the sudden appearance of a dazzling young thing dressed as if for the Dorchester, who casually told me that she was my announcer. I had bought a new soft shirt and tie for the occasion, but I couldn't be described as 'dressy' by even the most flattering critic. My discomfort was completed by her perfection.

No Memory

Then I suddenly recollected that in television you don't read as before a microphone but prophesy as from a tub, or flounder as from a pulpit. It is one of my worst shortcomings that I have no memory. It is not merely that I cannot repeat any two consecutive lines of Shakespeare or Pope, but I cannot even remember any of the arguments that I prepare so carefully every morning before my mirror.

I must confess to being seized with an appalling frenzy of fright

(Continued on next page)

BRITISH 'WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND' FUND

THE British 'Wireless for the Blind' Fund issued, during 1936, 3,263 loudspeaker sets and relay installations, making a total of 29,037 sets supplied by the Fund to blind persons throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The majority of the sets which have been supplied by the Fund are headphone receivers, the most economical type of set in first cost and maintenance. Even on this economical plan the Fund was in being for six years before it was able to supply sets to every blind person who needed them. The Fund is now making every effort to increase the number of loudspeaker sets so as to meet in particular the needs of the aged and infirm to whom prolonged listening with headphones is painful.

TO Mr. Christopher Stone, who made a remarkable broadcast appeal on last Christmas Day, the Fund owes a deep debt of gratitude. His appeal has brought in £19,770, a sum which eclipses all past records. This magnificent response has enabled the Fund to provide 5,695 loudspeaker sets and relay installations, and to distribute them to all parts of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The cost of sets delivered since the close of the financial year has almost completely absorbed the balance shown in the accounts appended to this Report. One hundred and fifty local societies and registering agencies co-operate with the Fund in distributing sets to the blind.

The Fund's Committee takes scrupulous care fairly to divide the loudspeaker sets available to the separate localities, but, notwithstanding the heavy expenditure this year, the Fund is in a position to supply loudspeaker sets only to a comparatively small proportion of blind listeners.

The local society in each area is responsible for deciding the allocation of sets according to the greatest need, and all applications from the locality should be addressed to it.

The sets supplied by the Fund have for the most part been specially designed and manufactured. They are equipped with Braille graduations to facilitate tuning, and special attention

has been paid to simplicity, reliability, long life, and economy in upkeep. This year it has been possible to make use of a standard commercial set for some eight hundred blind listeners, after embodying in it certain additional safety devices which were deemed necessary in order to protect the blind person from any possibility of receiving an electric shock.

It is regretted that a certain number of relay companies, whose installations had been supplied by the Fund on the understanding that free service would be provided to the blind, have felt constrained to withdraw this concession on account of the recent Government pronouncement, which they feel leaves them with reduced security of tenure.

The accounts of the Fund submitted with this Report give the income and expenditure for the year ended March 31, 1937, and also the cumulative income and expenditure account from the beginning of the Fund, December 5, 1929, to the end of the last financial year. The public, mainly in response to broadcast appeals, have made the magnificent contribution of £105,325 13s. 6d., of which approximately £95,000 has, up to date, been expended on sets and relay installations.

The Committee of the Fund desires in this

CUMULATIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FROM THE INCEPTION OF THE FUND—DECEMBER 5, 1929, TO MARCH 31, 1937

Expenditure			Income		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
To Provision of Wireless Sets and Accessories to Blind Persons	77,977	2 2	By Donations, Collections, etc. ...	105,325	13 6
„ Salaries and Wages ...	4,496	10 8			
„ Printing, Stationery, Advertising, Propaganda, and Postage ...	3,350	1 3			
„ Travelling, Exhibition, and Other Expenses, etc. ...	783	19 11			
„ Excess of Income over Expenditure ...	18,717	19 6*			
	£105,325	13 6		£105,325	13 6

*Orders given have since absorbed the whole of this balance

Report to express its deep sense of gratitude to the general public by whose generosity alone it has been able to help the blind.

By giving the Fund access to the microphone on Christmas Day in each of the last eight years, the British Broadcasting Corporation has made itself and listeners in all parts of Great Britain partners in the Fund's work. For that partnership the Committee is profoundly thankful.

It should be borne in mind that any registered blind person may obtain a wireless licence free of charge by presenting a certificate of registration at any money order post office.

Information and advice will be given by the local society or registering agency, the address of which may be obtained from the local municipal authority.

Any additional information which may be required by any donor to the Fund will be readily given on request to the Secretary of the British 'Wireless for the Blind' Fund, 226, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.

Signed on behalf of the Committee,

E. BEACHCROFT TOWSE

(Chairman),

W. MCG. EAGER

(Secretary).

MY FIRST TELEVISION: By S. P. B. Mais (continued from previous page)

at being called into the dazzling limelight, told not to cover my face with my hands, to hold my head up, and to be just my natural self.

As a very special concession I was allowed to hold a map in my hand. If a map, why not a script, I thought. But I had all too little time for conjecture.

I was on the air before I realised the number or vastness of the army of cameras that kept running up to me and receding from me with an inconsequence that made me feel that I was on an extremely rough sea.

Racing Cameras

I began very slowly to collect my thoughts on the subject of Television. I glared with shut mouth and glazed eye into the lenses of a dozen cameras as mesmerised as if they were the eyes of hungry lions. After several years my lips opened. 'Television', I heard myself say, 'Television, uh, has undoubtedly, yes, television uh, undoubtedly has a future.'

Cameras hurtled out of the distance from all sides at once towards me. A man popped out from under my feet and took a photograph of my chin. Cameras raced back into the far

corners of the huge hall. A dim figure waved a piece of white paper at me, a warning, I thought to come to my peroration. 'I'd like', I said in a spate of words, hurrying lest I should forget the end of the sentence half-way, 'to see the delicate feet of the dancing Step Sisters and the less delicate feet of Verity prancing down to bowl instead of just hearing them on the air. But I don't want to see the Adam's apples of full-throated tenors and tears flow down the cheeks of impassioned politicians as they tell us that their hearts bleed for their country. For myself, I have a grievance. For fourteen years my honeyed voice has been misleading you into the belief that I must be good to look at because I am good to listen to. Alas, the sight of my crooked mouth is even now taking all the honey out of my words.'

Shattered Illusion

'One more illusion is shattered. You could bear to listen to me for an hour when you couldn't see me. But now the limit of your endurance is reached in two minutes. Television will bring the farthest land into your back kitchen. You can go round the world

sitting in your old armchair. That is an advantage. But your commentator regrets that you have dragged him from the shadows behind your chair into the point of the picture. That is no advantage to him or you.'

The cameras ceased from pirouetting and I sat stolidly, vacantly staring into them, speechless at my daring. After another æon had passed I was told that I was off the air, and invited to see the television succeeding mine. It was of a dog show. The Pekinese barked beautifully. I wish that I had seen television before I pronounced judgment on it.

Lilliputian Face

For I did not know when I was performing that my voice would stay life-size while my face and form were reduced to the dimensions of Lilliput.

So I approve of television so long as they keep the screen small. You really wouldn't know that my mouth was crooked unless I had told you. I seem to be about as needlessly sensitive as Byron was about his club-foot. One thing, I shall never mind facing an ordinary camera again.