

TO A BEGINNER

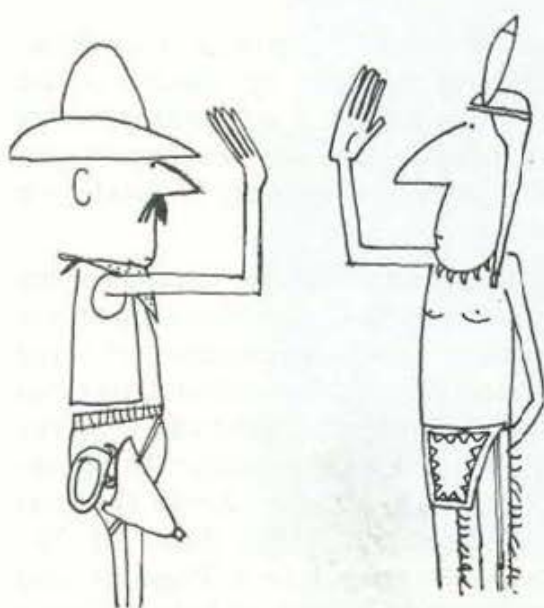
by B. E. Bear

*"The difficulty is not to write, but to write what you mean,
not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish."*

—R. L. S.

So is it with lighting for the theatre. Knowing and using lighting equipment and its associated gear can be likened to knowing and writing a language. A very limited vocabulary will get you by, but the greater the range known and the ability to choose each constituent for a purpose will make the result more expressive.

Thoughtful considered use of lanterns "sans colour" in such a way will give shape and significance to what you light, for light and shade alone set the form of the picture. Colour then comes in like great writing to heighten the statement.



"... a very limited vocabulary."

Neither vocabulary nor grammar will of themselves produce great writing nor will knowledge of the physical effects of colour grant to you the key to its use artistically. This will come only from a well-developed sense of colour—well developed by continual study of cause and effect in nature, in painting and in the theatre.

Just as each written word must do a job, so must each lantern—quantity alone will achieve nothing but a swamping chaos and indicates slipshod thinking. In the same way the lantern, like the word, must

be the one for the job. Pursuing the parallel you will find that complicated lighting plots, like complicated sentences, are not the aim. It should be no source of pride to claim sixty cues in one act even though it may be technically exciting to achieve the expertise. In production lighting, the fewer cues you plot the better your lighting is likely to be and the more certain in operation. A lighting designer is responsible *to* the production, not *for* the production. He must so light the actors and the scene that the imagined situation becomes credible; that is not real, but believable.

Changes are then necessary only to suggest some change in the situation or possibly to express a change in mood.

What is your vocabulary? It is essentially knowing intimately all the lanterns available to you. Knowing, that is, what the shape of