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# TABS



O. L. A. D. E.

# TABS

Published by The Strand Electric and Engineering Co. Ltd.  
in the interests of the Amateur Theatre

## CONTENTS

Editorial .. .. .	1	Branch Addresses .. .. .	14
Colour in the theatre .. .. .	2	Far East Diary .. .. .	16
Footlights .. .. .	6	A New Floodlight .. .. .	19
Lighting Effects for War Training .. .. .	7	"Cinemoid" .. .. .	21
Meanderings of Monty .. .. .	9	New Publications .. .. .	22
Branch News .. .. .	11	"And the Lord said . . ." by Hilton Edwards .. .. .	23
Our Associates .. .. .	13	Colour Media Prices .. .. .	26

## EDITORIAL

After a lapse of seven years "TABS" again makes its appearance. It will find many new readers and will, alas, have lost some pre-war ones. From the correspondence received when publication was suspended we judge the resumption will be welcome.

The journal is published primarily for the amateur groups and we shall give news of developments in stage lighting equipment and technique with occasional glimpses of past history. To widen the appeal, however, we propose to include items of interest connected with the Theatre generally, but not necessarily concerned with lighting. Contributions will be accepted from anybody who has something of interest to say about the Theatre and stage lighting.

"TABS" will be published three or four times a year in future and issued free to all on our mailing lists. Owing to paper restrictions we must, for the present, confine circulation to one copy per society or school. We are, therefore, asking you to be good enough to arrange for this copy to be circulated amongst interested members. If any reader knows of another dramatic society or school which has not received this issue of "TABS," and cares to ask the secretary or master concerned to write in to us giving the name of the society or school, we shall be pleased to arrange to supply in the future.

We greet both old and new friends once again, with the hope that we may never again suffer such a rude interruption as that of 1939.

## COLOUR IN THE THEATRE

In recent months the press has been displaying a surprising interest in colour and colour lighting in the Theatre. This would be all to the good if the statements and claims made were always accurate and well informed. Unfortunately, such has not always been the case. In the first place, colour lighting is not *ipso facto* good modern stage lighting. Colour is an accessory and a very useful one, but it can be overdone. More productions are spoiled through being over-coloured than under-coloured.

Colour is an accessory to form, and whereas we can go far with form minus colour (as in black and white photography), colour minus form is quite meaningless. Certain exponents of colour lighting would do well to remember that the most colourful scene in nature turns out to consist largely of soft neutral colours, when reproduced as a painting. The greenest of Spring scenes gives the artist little chance to use green paint neat and undiluted.

It follows that at a pinch, we could dispense with colour filters altogether in our stage lighting, relying on directional modelling from our stage lanterns and variations in intensity to give expression; the installation required being a collection of individual spots and floods with dimmers. On the other hand, a stage with magazine battens and footlights, giving an even flood of all-over colour in any of a hundred or more hues, would be deadly monotonous even if an exciting colour such as yellow, magenta or peacock were used. As a matter of fact, without suitable contrast there would be difficulty in appreciating the colour at all.

### Colour Properly Applied

No one has suggested that provided the various colours used by Turner were issued ready-mixed in carefully labelled tubes, the ordinary mortal could paint a Turner sunset. For a man to suggest such a thing would give us leave to doubt his sanity. No one surely seriously imagines that the mixing of colours is the real difficulty—it is what to do with them when mixed.

The wide range of filters available is a great boon to the Theatre but, whatever we might like to claim they are certainly not going to enable an unskilled man to produce colour masterpieces. There is precious little virtue in No. 20 Deep Blue or No. 7 Pink other than that brought by their proper application to the right place and in the right amount. In the same way a chart of dimmer settings or an automatic dimmer to enable an unskilled man to produce sensation matches for the colour range will not have got us any nearer the solution of the real problem.

### Principles of 3 colour mixing . . .

We propose to run in TABS a series of articles on colour which will give explanations of the basic principles together with a few

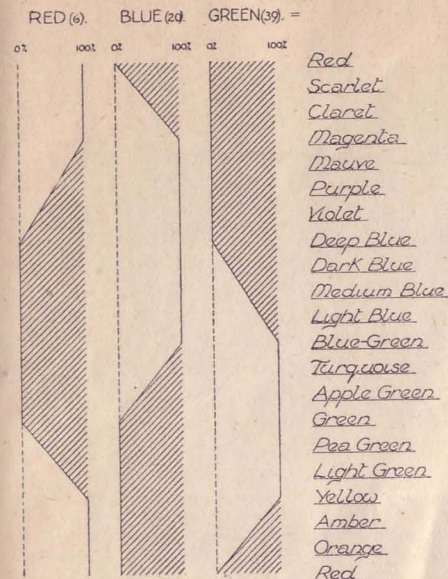
practical experiments that can be performed. The first subject to be tackled will be colour mixing using the three primary colours—not because this is a logical starting point for the study of colour, but because there seems to be a great deal of unwarranted mystification surrounding it. The primary colour method of mixing will be treated in detail in our next issue of "TABS," but meantime a beginning will be made. It is important to realise that this is not a new discovery, the principle being announced by Thomas Young as long ago as 1803. It is not new to the Theatre either, having been in use for cyclorama lighting for many years. We have lit the largest cycloramas in this country on the three-colour principle (The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, in 1933, and Covent Garden Opera House in 1935); also the two smallest cycloramas (we think)—Citizen House Bath, and Toynbee Hall. We have also used the system in numerous installations at home and abroad, two notable ones being the New York World's Fair in 1939 (with automatic dimmer control) and the National Opera House, Lisbon in 1940 (with light console control).

The system is mainly restricted to cyclorama work, since on the acting area the trend has been away from magazine battens to spots, floods and acting area lanterns. These units do not permit the adoption of three-colour mixing due to the coloured shadows thrown, shadows which are not noticeable when a multiplicity of low power sources is used, as in battens—for example, amber lighting of the acting area would give distracting red and green shadows. Nevertheless, there have been many occasions when the batten and footlights *have* carried the three-colour system on the acting area in addition to the cyclorama lighting, as for example the Saville Theatre, London, in 1936. The colour mediums employed are No. 6 Red, No. 39 Green and No. 20 Blue. As gas-filled lamps are deficient in blue, double wattage is preferable in the blue circuit. If, however, this double wattage is not available or convenient then a lighter filter (No. 19 Blue) is used.

### Experiments with 2 Primary Colours . . .

Simple experiments can be carried out which will show how easy the technique is to acquire, in fact we claim that anyone who is not colour blind or mentally lacking can become proficient after two or three hours' practice. Two floods (baby floods will do) connected to dimmers and directed one over the other on to a white screen are all that are required.

Try a red filter in one and a blue in the other, switch the red full on and gradually bring in the blue: scarlet, claret and magenta will result. Dim out the red and we shall get mauve, purple, violet and blue. Change the red filter for a green and bring in gradually; medium blue, light blue and blue-green will result. Dim out the blue; turquoise, apple green and green are obtained. Change the blue to red and bring it up; pea green, light green and yellow will result. Dim out the green; amber, orange and



red are achieved. Of course, between the primary hues mentioned there are as many intermediates as you care to give names to: Note for instance, how many shades of amber and orange can be produced by mixing the red and the green in varying proportions or how many useful blues result from the mixture of blue and green. Note also that we have so far been dealing with only two colours simultaneously. The further effect of diluting with a third primary colour will be discussed in a further article on this subject.

Meanwhile the results of our experiments so far can be expressed as in the accompanying diagram. To read

F.P.B.

### Make no delay; for, Lords, tomorrow is a busy day—Richard III.

Those responsible for the return of hired equipment are requested to pack reflectors, lenses, lamps and any other fragile equipment with considerable care. Test cases have shown that although breakages on outward journeys are rare, they frequently occur on the return journey. With costs high and supplies scarce these losses are serious to your organisation and ours.

And remember, if ever we disappoint you on a hire order, it almost certainly is because someone else has not returned the equipment promptly.



## FOOTLIGHTS

*"Let us meet and question this most bloody piece of work."*

*Macbeth*

The question, gentle reader, is not as to whether Footlights are sanguinary. Certainly there have been torrents of abuse hurled at these defenceless objects for generations, nay, centuries. A controversial discourse on the matter will, in fact, appear in a future issue of "TABS" and a note to that effect has already been duly recorded on the Editorial blotting pad.

No. For the moment we want to raise the question of "who done it" and when, rather than why anyone done it at all.

A succession of theatre historians would lay the credit (or blame) for the introduction of Footlights to these happy, happy Isles at the immortal feet of David Garrick. On the one hand, authorities of varying authenticity have stated categorically that Garrick introduced Footlights to England on his return from the Continent in 1765. Others have dodged the issue (whether wittingly or otherwise) by saying that he introduced them to Drury Lane at that date, without going further. It is, we think, a reasonable presumption that if Garrick installed Footlights in Drury Lane (as he did) the matter would not have been worthy of note unless they had been considered an innovation by the historians concerned. Our sources of information are numerous but as yet none are actually contemporary.

We now venture to toss our little Editorial spanner into the works by showing opposite a reproduction of an illustration from Kirkman's "Drolls" with Footlights installed in the Red Bull Theatre. The date of the original print is 1672 which implies that Footlights must have been in use at that date or earlier, but in any event a hundred years or so before Garrick's return to Drury Lane from abroad.

To what extent can such visual proof be considered irrefutable? Some aspersions have been cast by historians on the accuracy of theatrical prints and they quote in support a number of theatre prints subsequent to 1765 which show no Footlights. This surely, however, proves little or nothing. An innovation such as Footlights may well have taken years to become generally adopted. Right from the start Footlights had their antagonists.

The difference to-day is that the antagonists are the innovators; at the start they were resisting innovation.

The progress of yesterday will always be dubbed retrograde to-morrow.

H.M.C.



From Kirkman's Drolls

Published 1672

Inside of the RED BULL Playhouse

The Red Bull Playhouse stood near the upper end of St. John Street, Clerkenwell. In the Civil Wars it became highly celebrated for the presentation of Drolls. This engraving which formed the frontispiece to a collection of Drolls published in 1672 by Francis Kirkman portrays the leading actor in each droll.

## LIGHTING EFFECTS for WAR TRAINING

Theatre lighting equipment was fully mobilised for war service, not merely for its conventional use on numerous stages from which the troops were entertained, but for the more exacting purpose of training for battle. Numerous devices were produced for instruction of the Services in the use of much specialised equipment with which they had to become familiar in the shortest possible time. This was generally known as synthetic training; one of the most important requirements of such training is that the conditions shall be sufficiently realistic to enable the pupil to accept them without question. The essence of all training is the need to provoke the sub-conscious to automatic action. If the synthetic trainer is intrusively "phoney" the pupil is merely learning to use a gadget and the stimulus to the sub-conscious is lost.

In many of the synthetic trainers a considerable degree of realism was achieved, particularly in a series of Torpedo Attack Teachers for instruction of the Service personnel of aircraft, destroyers, submarines and M.T.B.s. A large cyclorama was constructed about 44 feet in diameter and 23 feet high, curved inwards at top and bottom and completely circular in plan. The lower portion was painted to represent the sea. In the centre was a machine representing the aircraft or the bridge of the destroyer, etc., capable of being operated realistically. In the case of the destroyer, for instance, the bridge would pitch, roll and yaw and be capable of correct response to the helm and the assumed direction of the sea. All the movements of the bridge were transmitted electrically to a remotely situated recorder so that the course of the ship was correctly plotted.

This recorder was linked to another recorder which plotted the course of the target ship. All movements of the latter were transmitted to a magnascope epidiascope projector suspended in the centre of the cyclorama. A scale model of the target ship was illuminated by high intensity lamps and a realistic image projected through a system of moving lenses of a size and appearance indicative of the correct range and bearing to the observer on the bridge. The target ship's speed and course were under the control of the instructor so that in addition to the automatic movement of the image relative to the speed and bearing of the attacking ship, evasive or aggressive action was practicable, and in the case of aircraft attack, the image of the target ship was inclined to give a deck view as the 'plane "dived" towards the object.

A number of smaller projectors suspended round the cyclorama gave realistic movement to the sea, and others projected clouds of various formations to the upper portion of the cyclorama. Banks of cyclorama flood lanterns with appropriate colour media gave the general diffused lighting and it was possible to represent, with realism, a variety of effects such as sunny day, dark night, sunset, moonlight, etc. At "night" the ship appeared as a silhouette, an effect obtained by automatically bringing into use a screen behind

the model and altering the angle of the lighting; additional night realism was provided by projection of an artificial horizon.

The lighting effects were operated by means of a remotely controlled motor-driven dimmer bank with magnetic clutches as used on the Strand Light Console. The effects were pre-set and operated by a series of single push-buttons which would automatically bring the dimmers into the required positions.

Numerous other effects were provided, such as a breeze above the wind-screen, the noises of wind, sea, gun-fire, etc., and various signal and other lights.

The bridge was fitted with all the actual instruments appropriate to the type of vessel represented, and when carrying out the attack the instructed officers readily accepted the conditions as real and found the experience both stimulating and exciting. Cases of "sea-sickness" were not unknown.

The exercises could be carried out from long before the target became visible until after the torpedoes had been fired and the evasive action taken. The assessors could then quickly plot the courses of the torpedoes which would be transmitted to the cyclorama as thin lines of light and it could be demonstrated whether a hit had been scored and if so, where.

Numerous other types of synthetic trainers were devised, Bombardment Tables, Flare Dropping Apparatus, Visual Flying Trainers, Crew Trainers, Ship Recognition Trainers, etc., and in almost all there was a considerable use of a theatrical lighting to give realism.

Strand Electric designers and technicians devised much of the specialised equipment used and Mr. Corry, Manager of our Manchester Branch, was responsible for organising the development, production and installation of these various types of synthetic trainers. This involved making exciting trips over, under and on the sea in aeroplanes, submarines, destroyers and M.T.B.s—to study the actual conditions to be produced. Strand Electric engineers were kept constantly engaged on the production and installation of the equipment; this necessitated the travel of thousands of miles to many parts of the British Commonwealth. It is not possible to estimate the effect on actual operations of the use of the trainers, but such evidence as was obtained was particularly gratifying to those responsible.



## MEANDERINGS OF MONTY

An awful lot of fun can be got from making things out of other things, if you know what I mean—and frightfully cheaply, too. Which is terribly important to lots of amateur theatres. For instance, stage lighting equipment! If you ask the Treasurer for permission to buy a new Flood Lantern he is quite liable to be rude or even violent. He's probably the sole support of a widowed mother and has a weak heart, so to upset him would be a Bad Thing. Given a little ingenuity, a spot of faith, an accommodating grocer and lots of time, it is possible to work wonders with the odd biscuit tin. I mean to say; look at a Stage Flood! Absolutely nothing to it. You can have lots of fun and games fabricating one from the old Peek Freat. One can't be too choosy these days, but it's most frightfully important to get the right sort of tin. I mean you simply *must* not get a container supplied by one of those fearful firms one has never heard of. And you definitely must see that it's labelled "Crackers." A few tools are helpful, but practically nothing will do; just the odd axe, a spanner, a nail file and a pair of secateurs. A soldering iron would also be useful.

Ventilation is really the great thing. With a 500 w. lamp tucked away inside, the old tin can get most frightfully hot, and even the best makers' tins aren't built for maximum temperatures. I mean, biscuits in tins always look terribly cool and collected and don't need any heat resisting nonsense. But let's face it—a 500 w. lamp *is* a 500 w. lamp, if you know what I mean. You simply must ventilate. A few well directed jabs with a red-hot poker will soon perforate the top and let out the hot air. It might also let out some of the light, of course, but you'll tell the producer bloke the cunning idea is to light up the borders. If he doesn't see eye to eye with you on the point you can cover the holes with sticking plaster.

Another thing. You definitely must make it possible to fit those terribly amusing colour frames in front. A bit of neat axe work with the lid and a spot of skilfully applied solder will take care of that. Then all you have to do is to fit a lampholder thing and wire it up. It really *is* as simple as all that, I give you my word. Of course, you mustn't expect gratitude. That old fossil Lear had the right gen on man's inhumanity to man. I know. I was handed a most fearfully over-ripe raspberry. The synthetic flood I made was absolutely perfectly wizard. But one of our members—a frightful electrician sort of type—insisted on testing it with a fearsome kind of instrument called a photometer.

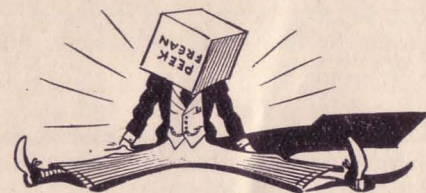
He said he got a reading of 60 foot candles which I thought sounded pretty good. Then he had the appalling nerve to say he got the same reading without McVitie and that my Flood was not only useless but a menace. Of course, the cad was bribed. He produced a Strand Flood and said he got 180 foot candles from the same lamp at the same distance, and that with a 150 w. lamp in their Baby Flood he got over 50 foot candles—nearly as much

as McV. with 500 watts. An absolute racket of course. What are foot candles, anyway? What I mean to say is—are they dependable? I doubt it, but I couldn't care less.

In the end McVitie was definitely washed out. The knowing boulder started beefing about fire risks and whatnot, and everybody got fearfully jittery. Most frightful tripe as nobody ever takes the slightest notice of that fire regulation nonsense. It isn't as though it was a professional theatre anyhow.

Definitely a bad show and definitely discouraging. But as far as I am concerned they've *had* it. I am now toying with the idea of making a refrigerator. It should be frightfully simple if one can locate a really large biscuit tin.

P.C.



## HIRE EQUIPMENT CATALOGUES

Leaflets giving hire prices of Stage Lighting equipment have now been reprinted and Societies who have not dealt with us recently are advised to obtain a copy as there are a number of price variations. Colour media are no longer included in the hire charge and must be purchased outright. Prices will be found on page 26 of this issue.

The booklets which we produced before the war dealing with the hire of decorative fittings and properties have not been reprinted as yet, owing to the difficulty in obtaining photographs, blocks and paper.

## EXPORT ONLY

Because of paper restrictions we have had to confine our 124-page catalogue to the Export Market. A sixteen-page abridged catalogue known as *The Position Now* has, however, been published. Although only a shadow of our pre-war catalogue it is well illustrated and shows one or two interesting recent installations with pictures of new and forthcoming equipment.

Copies of all available literature can be obtained from your nearest branch or agent.

## BRANCH NEWS

### LONDON Head Office

Our Demonstration Theatre and three floors of Offices were demolished by enemy action in May 1941. Adjacent premises have been acquired to enable us to carry on until such time as rebuilding becomes possible. Readers who remember the Console Control of the lighting in the Demonstration Theatre will be interested to learn that after renovation it was installed in the London Palladium where it is still rendering sterling service after a varied and eventful career.

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In April last Mr. L. G. Applebee read a paper entitled "The Evolution of Stage Lighting" before the Royal Society of Arts. Interested readers may wish to acquire a copy of Volume XCIV, No. 4723, dated August 2nd, 1946, of the Journal of the Society in which Mr. Applebee's lecture was reported and illustrated. Obtainable from the Secretary of the Society, 6/8, John Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.2, price 2/-.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. L. Stokes-Roberts, of the Strand Electric, has been elected a Governor and Member of the Executive Council of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon.

\* \* \* \*

Our Works address is now Power Road, Gunnersbury, W.4.

\* \* \* \*

Readers who knew them will learn with regret of the deaths of Jack Bennett (Engineers' Dept.) and Norman Casty (Showroom).

### MANCHESTER

This branch is operating once again at 399/411, Oldham Road, as effectively as restricted supplies will allow. During the past year many customers have been supplied with the equipment they wanted; others have accepted substitutes; some have been disappointed. Slowly hire and sales stocks are accumulating and it is hoped that all needs may be satisfied this season.

\* \* \* \*

The Branch is still under the management of Mr. P. Corry. His new assistant is Mr. J. T. Wood, who was formerly with the Western Electric Co., Ltd., Glasgow. During the war "Woody" won rapid promotion to Lieut.-Commander, R.N.V.R. as a naval expert on Radar, and had an exciting time in England, France, Belgium and Germany. His interest and experience in the Theatre and Stage Lighting is not only technical. He has a long and close association with both amateur and professional productions and is a valuable asset to the Branch.

Cyril Whitter who was with us pre-war has taken up permanent residence in South Africa, lured by the sunshine away from the Manchester cold grey skies. During the war he visited South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Ceylon and Malta, supervising secret installations for the Navy. He was given honorary rank of Lieut.-Commander. His cheerfulness and energy will be greatly missed but all who knew him will wish him the best of luck in his new venture. He will still be carrying the Strand Electric banner in South Africa.

\* \* \* \*

Many requests for lectures on Stage Lighting are being received. Several groups were visited last season and it was obvious there is a general eagerness for assistance and advice all over the area. As soon as circumstances allow it is hoped to resume the exhibitions and demonstrations that were so popular before the war. In the meantime, lectures to individual groups are being arranged as far as restricted leisure allows.

\* \* \* \*

The limited staff at the Branch is dealing with a spate of enquiries for every type of equipment, large and small, temporary and permanent, for almost every type of stage. Delays are often unavoidable and should be allowed for in planning.

### DUBLIN

This Branch was opened in 1938 under the management of Mr. Lorcan Bourke, well known figure in the Irish Theatre world. Prospects looked pretty gloomy a year later when war placed restrictions on supplies of every kind. Thanks, however, to the energy and ingenuity of the local staff, this branch not only sat up and took notice but arose and set up a flourishing business that not only catered for the theatre proper but installed lighting equipment of every conceivable type in hundreds of cinemas, parish halls, etc., throughout the country.

It is one of the Branch's proudest boasts that the stage of the Capitol Theatre, Dublin, was equipped and the theatre enabled to re-open its doors during the darkest days of the war.



Mr. Lorcan Bourke,  
Manager, Dublin Branch.



New Dublin Branch of Strand Electric Ltd., 62, Dawson Street.

Now, proudly expanding, the Irish Branch has opened the above spacious new premises at Seecol House, 62, Dawson Street, Dublin. Here, in addition to Showrooms and Demonstration Theatre, there are also installed an experimental laboratory, a hire service and an advice bureau, Mr. Lorcan Bourke and his staff being determined that the Irish Branch shall rival the London Head Office in its industry and public service.

### OUR ASSOCIATES

**Fitups of Manchester.**—This firm of stage engineers and suppliers, which works in close association with our Manchester Branch, has now been formed into a Limited Company with the name Watts & Corry Ltd. The policy and active personnel are not changed and the association is continued.

\* \* \* \*

Opened by the Right Hon. Lord Inverclyde in November, 1945, the showrooms and services of **Stage Furnishings Ltd.**, of 417/9, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, are filling a long felt theatrical want, both professional and amateur, throughout Scotland. Here, indeed, is a "theatre centre" which is unique in Scotland and probably in Britain. By virtue of their being the **Scottish Distributors for Strand Electric** one would expect to find theatrical electrics well to the fore in their premises. However, in the same spacious display windows, showrooms and Demonstration Theatre, are to be found virtually every other theatrical requisite. Costumes, tabs, draperies, complete theatrical fitups, and even stage make-up, not to mention seating and the mechanical aspect of the theatre, are all fully represented.



Mr. John E. Martin, Managing Director, Stage Furnishings Ltd., Glasgow—Sole distributors for Strand Electric in Scotland.

The Managing Director is Mr. John E. Martin, who is widely known in theatrical circles, both professional and amateur, in the North. He has wide experience of production work, professional and amateur, for example "Desert Song" with Harry Welchman, "Showboat" with Jules Bledsoe (who created the part of Ole Man River with Zeigfield in America), and the annual Ralph Reader Gang Shows. Purely on the lighting side he has been engaged to light numerous professional shows from time to time.

Departmental heads assisting Mr. Martin in Glasgow are Mr. Francis G. W. Tree, A.M.I.E.E. (Technical Manager), Mr. A. B. C. Wood (General Manager), Miss S. Mackay (Costumes), Miss L. M. Stewart (Cosmetics).

It is the set purpose of this firm to fulfil the intention of Strand Electric in appointing them their Scottish Distributors—to produce Strand Service (whether by way of giving expert advice or supplying materials on sale or hire) for the whole of Scotland from Glasgow. When universal material and manufacturing difficulties are overcome, amateurs in Scotland can expect to receive the same facilities in every direction which those in England enjoyed pre-war from London and Manchester. Delivery delays and costs will be avoided and technical advice on all aspects of the theatre forthcoming in a manner which would have been virtually impossible to organise from the South.

Prices of goods are of course the same, whether purchased in Glasgow or direct from Strand Head Office.

Stage Furnishings have already collected the necessary expert staff, and we wish them every success. In fact *lang may their lum reek*.

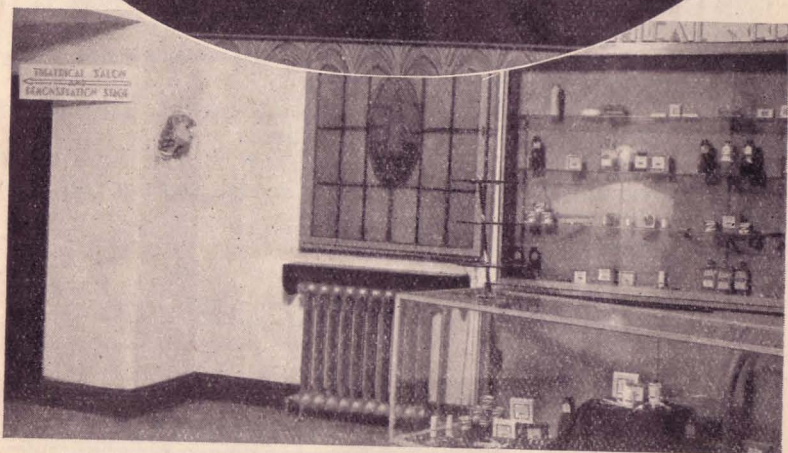
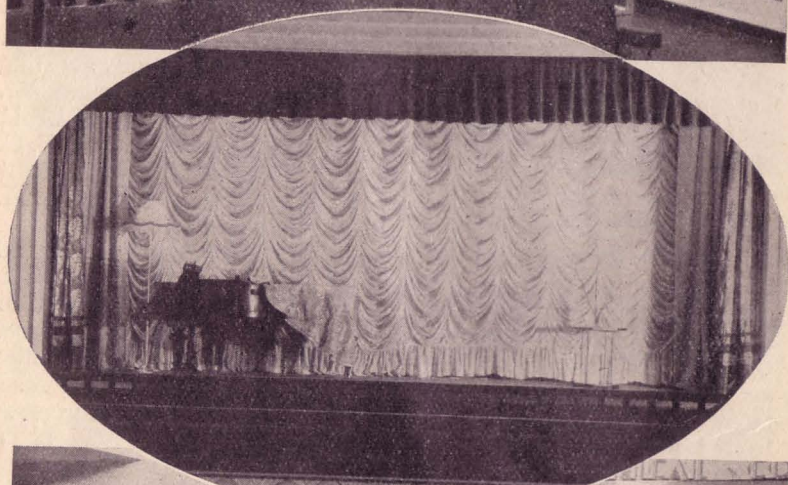
### BRANCH ADDRESSES

**Manchester.**—399, Oldham Road, Manchester, 10. Telephone: Collyhurst 2736.

**Dublin.**—62, Dawson Street, Dublin. Telephone: Dublin 74030.

**Scottish Distributors.**—Stage Furnishings Ltd., 417/9, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, C.2. Telephone: Glasgow Douglas 6431-2.





Scotland's theatrical centre—the premises of Stage Furnishings Ltd. (Top) Costumes, etc. (Centre) Demonstration Theatre. (Bottom) Cosmetics Dept.

## FAR EAST DIARY

(Until he rejoined the Strand Electric, the author was O.C. Live Entertainment for Troops in S.E.A.C.)

A few hours after a second atom bomb was dropped we knew at S.E.A.C. H.Q. that the end was in sight. Over-night the operations of Zipper and Flashlight were temporarily shelved and a new operation, Tide Race, came into force. This was to take effect immediately Japan agreed to surrender. This name was very apt as it was indeed with the speed of an incoming flood tide that we had to make our plans to cover the Far East. In one night in Colombo we planned the organisation of the largest entertainment circuit the world has ever known. Burma and Rangoon were already in operation but now we had to cover Malaya, Singapore, Java, Sumatra, Siam, Indo-China, Hongkong and Japan. It all looked very small on paper but when I consulted the "gen" boys of the R.A.F. I was told that it would take three days flying (if I was lucky) to get from Ceylon to Hongkong alone. I planned to run 22 shows with a pool of artists and a production centre in Singapore.

In England we all found what it was like to be short of vehicles and trains. Visualise an area fifty times as big as England and with great gaps of sea in between. Again, were there going to be hotels or houses available in all areas? Everything for use outside towns had to be mobile.

Columns of four vehicles had been constructed for use in the forward areas in Burma and also for the proposed invasion of Malaya. These consisted of a travelling coach for the artists, a truck carrying the stage, a generator truck, a coach with sleeping, washing and lavatory accommodation, also a motor cycle for the N.C.O. i/c Party. The stage could be used either internally or externally and consisted of a platform 20 feet by 12 feet with screens 9 feet high forming a surround behind a beaver board proscenium. We found that curtains were useless externally owing to the wind, and the screens were constructed instead, consisting of pleated curtain material on wooden frames. Each stage had float, strip-lights for batten and two spot lights. The generator gave sufficient current to cater for dressing lights as well. A microphone and amplifier were also carried.

We had a column shipped direct from Rangoon to Singapore to form an advance base while further columns stood by in Calcutta for Penang, Bangkok and Saigon. Preparations were put in hand for cutlery, linen, furniture, stage equipment, etc., to be shipped to Singapore for redistribution.

I managed to get a skeleton staff phased in on the first Singapore convoy and then flew to Delhi to tell the Staff what I was doing.

Transport ex India was almost impossible but I arranged with the R.A.F. to fly a nucleus of artists in, at the same time cabling Australia to send "Gracie" via the Cocos Islands.

The first show in Singapore, Pat Gaye in "Keep Moving," played in huts and verandahs to over 25,000 P.O.W.s in the first week. I received this news on my return from Delhi and was now sitting champing for my own air passage to go forward. At length I obtained a priority 2+ and set off to fly direct ex Ceylon on a Short Sunderland returning empty after bringing back stretcher case P.O.W.s. We got to within 200 miles of Malaya when, owing to weather and a faulty gyro, we had to turn back. Our total flight on this attempt was over fourteen hours. The next night we made it in 8½.

Arrived in Singapore I found it in surprising condition with some really beautiful houses. There is a European tendency to this town which is very marked after the dirt and squalor in India.



Transport was at a premium and we had a fleet of old crocks literally held together by pieces of wire. My Welfare Supervisor (Mrs. Ireland Smith) who went in on the first convoy, had obtained these by standing on the Bukitima Road with a tommy gun and turning out the Japs who were still trying to leave the city; a novel feat indeed for an Englishwoman.

The day after I arrived, three shows came in on a man-of-war from Colombo, which meant that we had six parties on Singapore Island. Food was none too plentiful and this combined with the

intense heat began to tell on my young girl dancers. The Army was still on "Bully," but a friendly admiral took pity and supplied us with fresh meat and butter.

Singapore Theatre\* was in excellent condition. As always, "Strand Electric" equipment, all in good order with a 36-way board and—most wonderful luck of all—four front-of-house mirror spots.

We floodlit the Theatre and the Clock Tower which made Ensa the landmark of the town.

There was no modern scenery available but a lot of old Gilbert and Sullivan sets were painted over producing passable results. The Japs had hardly used the theatre and the building had been left open to the winds. The place was infested with swifts which made such a noise that Leslie



Singapore Theatre

\* Readers may remember a photograph in TABS Vol. I, No. 4, showing Strand Electric gear arriving at this Theatre in 1938.

Henson was practically inaudible. I was petrified what might happen to John Gielgud's Hamlet so I declared open war on the birds. Every single window in the building was wired up and we killed over 4,000 of them.

Much as I liked Singapore I had to "press on" and after a short trip to Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok I obtained a C.47 and flew plus jeep plus staff plus spot lights, curtains and household utensils to Saigon. Here indeed was a queer position; the Japs were doing armed guards for us and even fighting side by side with the Gurkas against the Amonites. The theatre was bombed (sabotage) but we found a hall being used as a library, and after clearing all the books we opened with the "London Ballet" on a stage only 20 feet wide.

On to Hongkong where we took the Star Theatre and then back over the "hump" to Calcutta. Down to Bombay to fix up my convoy for Japan and back to Singapore via Rangoon. 26,000 miles by air in under a month and road travel in addition.

I had Doctor Eric Chisholm flown in and started the world's oddest symphony orchestra. We had Malays, Dutch, Sikhs, Hindus, French, English and Germans. All rehearsals were held by using Italian phrases as these seemed universally understood to a certain extent. The orchestra was a great success and even Solomon was impressed by their rendering of the "Emperor" Concerto.

Except for Java where fighting was still in progress, my circuit was complete, and by November I had 18 shows on the road. The Malayan climate was worse than Burma; costumes just seemed to fall to bits and the orchestra literally ate strings. Interesting from the electrical viewpoint is that conduit is almost unknown; condensation rusts it to bits and practically all wiring is V.I.R. on cleats.

We managed to unearth some better cars for my transport fleet and even obtained a Ford V.8 with an electrically operated automatic hood. Illness was a big problem and with few understudies I had to do a lot of juggling to keep shows on the road.

Unlike India Malaya has no real dry season and after "Gracie" was drenched to the skin we called off the idea of outdoor shows.

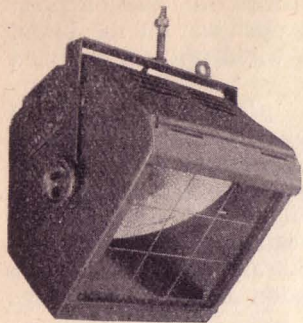
Radio was going full-swing and with Adza Vincent (ex B.B.C.) I managed to provide some good features by recording shows in the mornings. In Hongkong, too, we put out about five hours a day.

Week-ends were the dreaded period as it was on Sundays that we used to change shows over, but more than often 'planes failed to materialise and we were left sitting with two shows in one place and none in another. Unlike England, you can't 'phone up China from Singapore and even radio signals were often delayed up to three days.

Weeks went by and my circuit started to settle down, but overseas climate and travel began to tell, and the doctors said that with demob. Group 25 in the offing it was high time I returned to the relatively peaceful Theatre in England.

L.S.R.

(Any reader who is interested in details of Mobile Stages, Caravans, Generators, etc., for touring or temporary erection in halls should contact Mr. Stokes-Roberts personally at Head Office.)



## A NEW BABY FLOODLIGHT

60, 100 and 150 watts

Anyone who knows anything at all about the Theatre will understand what we mean when we say that we have been in a hurry for the last thirty years.

Whether we have been asked for standard or non-standard equipment of our own or anyone else's manufacture it always seems to be wanted to-morrow or even yesterday for preference. In time, of course, one gets quite inured to this kind of thing and the only time when we are surprised now is when somebody places an order and doesn't expect delivery in under seven days. All the same, this helter-skelter life makes planning and designing for the future extremely difficult. We have a small drove of draughtsmen in our Research and Development Department who, in spite of threats, bribes and offers of loose coupons from all sides, are whole-time employed on research and development. All our manufacturing facilities having been occupied on behalf of the war effort for a number of years it can well be imagined that we have a Research Agenda as long as a debt collector's arm. At the present time we can see about three years solid re-designing and research work ahead of us.

Among the first post-war products of our Research Department are a new Baby Floodlight, Footlight and Batten. The Footlight and Batten we will deal with at a later date; the Floodlight we propose to describe in slight detail here and now, as it is a unit which will be found of particular interest and value to the Amateur Theatre. Just how many hundreds of pre-war type Baby Floodlights we still have in our hire stock we should not like to hazard a guess and it must not be assumed, therefore, that any hire orders for Baby Floodlights will, as from this date, be filled by the new type of lantern. As and when the old patterns are replaced in hire stock the new design will come into vogue; meanwhile, all orders for sale are, of course, being filled by the new type of lantern, the old one now being considered obsolete.

This is almost the first time we have produced a really tailor-made article for the Amateur Theatre. We are conscious of the fact that in the past, only too often, the Amateur and Little Theatre has been supplied with a kind of "reach-me-down" or ready-made equipment which has often been a modified version of the professional article, adapted for use on smaller stages. Here for the first time we have a unit which, while not without its uses for the professional theatre, is certainly primarily designed for the amateur.

As will be seen from the illustrations the housing of the new Baby Flood is strong and compact being constructed mainly of steel pressings welded together. Ample baffled ventilation inlets and outlets are provided so that the lantern may be used in any position and yet the colour filter will remain reasonably cool. Two colour runners are fitted and a metal colour frame supplied with the lantern. The outside is stove enamel black crystalline finished, and the inside is painted white. A tilting fork with  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. threaded pin and nut together with locking wheels allows the lantern to be suspended or inserted in a stand or to rest directly on the floor. The whole job has clean lines and a neat finish that enable it to be hung in the public eye without a qualm.

The optical system consists of two alternative types of silvered Sunray glass circular reflectors of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in. diameter. A spring spider fixing is provided enabling either of the two reflectors to be inserted and automatically centred without adjustment. One reflector gives a wide spread of  $100^\circ$ , the other a medium spread of  $60^\circ$ . The former reflector (type W—or wide), giving an even spread, free of hot-spot, is very suitable for the lighting of backings and cycloramas or for use as a footlight. The latter reflector (type M—or medium), is ideal for lighting over a distance, for example, throwing the main reflected beam from No. 1 batten position on to the acting area (while the low intensity diffused light from the white interior looks after the neighbouring border), or to throw a beam of light on to the stage through a slit, price 30/- per copy, or 10/- per annum.

*Theatre Newsletter* is a bright new fortnightly which should be of considerable interest to all amateur dramatic societies. Space in each issue is devoted to reviews of new plays compiled specially for those interested in future production. Full particulars are given of publisher, agent, cast, scenery required and whether available for amateur groups.

The "Stage Manager's Page" deals with equipment problems, news of new ideas, costumes, scenery and play scripts. There is also a comprehensive "Theatre Diary" which includes the principal productions in London and the provinces.

Articles in the first three numbers have dealt with the latest developments in the Swedish and Russian theatres; the American Little Theatre, the Shaw Birthday celebrations; a survey of the theatre in Yorkshire, and the first two of a series of articles on play production.

Future issues will include surveys of the Danish, Czech and French theatres, and of the work of repertory and amateur theatres. The latter are cheaper and therefore to be preferred in the case of 60 watt and 100 watt sizes, but when using 150 watt lamps the batten type lamp only should be used as results are considerably more efficient. Clear (i.e. not pearl) should be used, and whichever type of lamp is employed Edison Screw (ES) cap must be specified.

The following table of beam angles has been compiled using batten type lamps. Slight deviations must be expected when using

the cheaper general service lamp.

B.237 Baby Flood light (weight 10½ lbs.)

With W Reflector—Wide angle even flood

Beam angle 100°

Cut-off 100°

With M Reflector—General spread but building up in centre

Beam angle 60°

Cut-off 100°

With M Reflector with Hood—Medium angle beam with cut-off edges

Beam angle 60°

Cut-off 60°

Lamps 60, 100 or 150 watt Theatre Batten or General Service with clear bulb and ES cap.

\* \* \* \*

*The beam angle of a lantern is that within which the useful light is concentrated. It is defined in the case of symmetric floodlights as the total angular width between the limits at which the illumination produced on a surface at right angles to axis of the beam is 1/10th of the maximum.*

*The cut-off angle is the angle of the direct light from the lamp and is determined by the edges of the lantern. This light is of low intensity. In some cases spill rings or hoods are fitted to the front of the lantern to mask out this stray light: thus with Patt. 56 Acting Area Floodlights the spill rings are so designed that beam angle and cut-off angle coincide.*

... can be imagined that we have a Research ... collector's area. At the present time ... solid re-designing and research work ...

Amongst the products of our Research Department ... Footlight and Batten. The Footlight ... with at a later date; the Floodlight we ... detail here and now, as it is a unit ... interest and value to the Amateur ... hundreds of pre-war type Baby Flood- ... stock we should not like to hazard ... assumed, therefore, that any hire orders ... from this date, be filled by the new ... when the old patterns are replaced in hire ... come into vogue; meanwhile, all orders ... filled by the new type of lantern, the ... obsolete.

... we have produced a really tailor-  
Incidentally, when our next Colour Books are made up we propose to use "Cinemoid" for all colours with the exception of the three named above which will still have to be shown as Gelatine. It will, therefore, be possible to compare the two for thickness, strength and inflammability. The price of "Cinemoid" in full or cut sheets will be found on page 26 of this issue.

It may be that many readers have used our colour media for

the first time during the war. We take this opportunity to point out that experience gained with the war-time colours must be disregarded. Owing to difficulties with materials and dyes the range of colours has been much restricted and those colours permitted to us were very often decidedly "off colour."

Colours like No. 16 Blue/Green have transmitted red and too wide a band of green to the detriment of the Samoiloff complementary colour effect, others such as No. 39 Green have not been accurate enough for three colour mixing using the primaries red, green and blue, while the blues 18 and 32 have been too green.

Steps have been taken to remedy this in the new "Cinemoid" range. These colours have been re-matched to pre-war standards.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

By the time this reaches our readers a new theatre magazine will have made its appearance—*The Amateur Stage*. September 1st saw the first issue of this monthly publication devoted to the interests of the amateur player, producer and playwright.

*The Amateur Stage* will concentrate on practical factual articles; special features include a new short play every month, musical and operatic productions, criticism and advice services, drama festivals, a diary of forthcoming events, religious and youth drama, play and book reviews, backed up by news and gossip. It is published on the first of every month by VAWSER & WILES LTD., 644, Forest Road, London, E.17, price 9d. per copy, or by subscription 10/6 per annum.

\* \* \* \*

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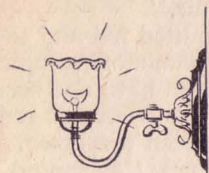
Future issues will include surveys of the Danish, Czech and French theatres, and of the work of repertory and amateur theatres in Scotland and in other parts of the country. There will be articles on Little Theatre management (including audience organisation); theatre construction; also reports of work in the rural areas by the County Drama organisers.

Subscriptions to *Theatre Newsletter* is ten shillings per annum (25 issues) and it is published from 20, Buckingham Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

## "AND THE LORD SAID . . ."

by Hilton Edwards

(Director and Producer of the Dublin Gate Theatre)



Gordon Craig tells us that the gaslit stage of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry was flecked with little motes, but nevertheless gaslighthad a glamorous softness and quality unachieved by electricity. This may be; I have no experience of it except on one occasion when, playing in South Africa behind a row of gaslit floats, I realised why there are two rows of jets in a gas oven; so that the other side of the chicken

will also be roasted brown.

It is difficult to know what to say about Stage Lighting. To a beginner, yes, one can instruct in its fundamentals; but what can I, a producer who for twenty years has lit his own plays, say that can possibly be of interest to others who have done the same and have their own ideas; and what can I say to the electrical technician who, doubtless, knows more about it than I do before we start. All I can do is to summarise my findings over these twenty years, and pray that the result may be of interest to somebody.

I have long ago discovered that when a set is perfectly lit from the pictorial point of view, it is certain there will not be enough light for the action of the play. One can be equally sure that when enough light has been added for the action the pictorial quality of the set has been in a great measure disturbed. So there is created a perpetual battle between the desire for the perfect stage picture and the desire for the perfect performance, and by performance I do not only mean that of the actors, but of the play as a whole.

I have been working here in Ireland so long in our own little Gate Theatre and at the Gaiety that I have lost touch with the outside theatre world, and I do not even remember very well how these things were done when I was a youngster at the Old Vic. I only know that very fine results were achieved by Robert Atkins with the aid of Egan, the Vic's electrician, and these effects were obtained with the simplicity of greatness.

Having lit well over four hundred shows and approached the subject as scientifically as I can with my limited knowledge of electricity and optics, and relying chiefly upon my requirements as a producer and the aesthetic sense that I have endeavoured always to cultivate, I approach each new play with a feeling of confidence, saying to myself: "Now, after all the shows you've lit, this ought to be easy"; and always I find that any experience that I am conscious of is of little use to me and that each show, each set, has its own problems of colour and form and dramatic requirements, that make it yet another individual task of lighting, to be built up *sans* theory from black-out to full-up, or where you will between; and always I return from each lighting rehearsal murmuring that this was the most difficult lighting job to date.

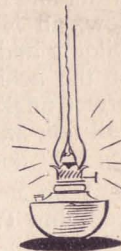
This may be a result, I often suspect, of a natural stupidity on my part, and there is no doubt that there is a certain lack in me due to uneven memory, which does incline me to go over the same ground twice. But there is also a desire to guard against working on cliché which is so inevitably a result of experience and is such a dangerous master whether it be in writing, in acting or in stage lighting—"This is a good way of doing it, it worked well before"—hence the new angle is not discovered, time is saved but another opportunity dies.

I suppose in some theatres, lighting is a matter for the designer of the set; one would think at first glance that he was the proper man to put in charge of it, until one remembers that the perfectly lit set from the artist's point of view is often dramatically inadequate. Authors so often inform you, at the end of a rattling comedy scene, during which every mobile flicker of the face is of value, that the lamps must be brought in as it is now too dark to see. Or again—in a scene in which the accent of the light is concentrated on a limited area and achieves the most exquisitely modulated chiaroscuro, that the producer has distributed the action all over the stage, or at least one important piece of action takes place in a now dark corner where even with due allowance for theatrical convention, no light could possibly fall at that time from those windows. Therefore, although he may not be as intense in his knowledge as the expert in all departments, I think it an advantage for the producer to light his sets, provided, of course, he is in sufficient sympathy with his artist. But then I am working on the assumption that if the producer is not in sympathy with the design, has not indeed passed it, he will not be working on it. This again probably explains why I prefer to work in my own theatres, for unity of design can only be obtained when it has been forged on a common anvil.

My limitations include the fact that I am no electrician, though I cannot let this statement pass without adding that I have once been known to mend a fuse, and, I would have it known—the result was successful! I have a vague suspicion of what goes on electrically—hardly more concrete than my knowledge of what goes on under the bonnet of my car. But, once the juice enters the dimmer and therefore under my control, and gives a certain promise of entering the lamp, I know where I am. This limited knowledge puts me at no disadvantage with the theatre electrician because from the moment I have decided in what way the play is to be done, I have borne in mind what effects of light I have desired to achieve, although not necessarily how to achieve them.



These first steps towards an ultimate goal, and indeed, the



ultimate goal itself, have been in my mind in choosing the sets, or in selecting the suggestions of the designer. The same target is kept in view with the costumes and the music, and the choice of these have been guided by the demands of the action, that, to the best of one's ability one believes will best serve audience and author. As these various aspects of the theatrical pattern form themselves and coalesce, additions and omissions from the original object manifest themselves, decisions are made, and upon successful selection depends the result. But there usually emerges by now a harder and more defined outline of the result devoutly to be desired. Now, all is assembled, and in the assembly, particularly in the building and colour of the set, it is to be hoped that opportunities for the achievement of lighting results have been catered for—correct angles of windows, pillars upon which the accent of light shall fall, angles that shall keep an alcove in the requisite shadow, etc., etc., and it is now a matter of practicality.

I do not know what is the usual practice—I am told that Beerbohm Tree, great master of lighting in his day, would content himself with—"More light in this corner, Dana. Tell the electrician I think blue or dirty green!" "More light on my face, Dana." And Diaghileff would murmur in the stalls of the little theatre in the Casino of Monte Carlo—"Grigorieff, Grigorieff, let me have more or less, *jambou bleu*."

I hesitate to even suggest my own methods in company with these great names, except to say that I find it necessary to be more definite, and not to leave things to any other mind, but to know the mediums by their numbers as well as to know the manual limitations of the switchboard, and exactly what is the capability of each lamp from its particular position. For this reason, if for no other (and there are many other excellent ones), I have always adhered to one type of plant, and with very rare exceptions, one colour chart; this happens to be the one issued by the Strand Electric Co. And quite apart from finding this company courteous and helpful and delightful in every way to work with, I have never yet in over four hundred productions struck a limitation that was created by their plant, and, with certain rare exceptions, their colour chart. Of these colours I seldom use more than a limited number, which I have found adequate for all my needs. The Blues, speaking in order of their density, numerically—20, 19, 32, 18 and 17; the reds—14 and 6; the purple—26. How I



"... surprise pink"

deplore the loss of 27—that magical colour, if used with discretion. The Greens—24, 15 and 16. The latter called "Moonlight

Blue," when everybody can see it should be called "Gorgonzola!"\* Why 18 is not called "Moonlight Blue" I don't know, when it is obviously Astarte herself. The Ambers—5, 4, 3 and a fascinating little primrose whose number I have forgotten. And the invaluable No. 7—Rose—dangerous mixer with amber—saviour of many a face and dress. Lastly come our friends the Frosts—which to me have all the fascination of drink or tobacco, softening those dangerous edges, while insidiously decreasing power.

The other colours I am sure have their uses; I have not found them; and so far I intolerantly class them as "delightful affectations." So prejudiced am I that when in my moments of doubt the electrician has murmured to me—"why not try a surprise pink?" I am so horrified that I order a black-out immediately and start again.

(To be continued)

\*Mr. Edwards will be interested to learn that his Gorgonzola colour has been renamed No. 16 Blue-Green in our new colour chart. It is most unfortunate that we did not see his article earlier as he has put ideas into our heads. Why not "Ripe Camembert," for example, instead of No. 3 Straw; or "Heinz Tomato" or "Spam" in place of No. 8 Salmon?

## PRICES OF CUT COLOUR MEDIA

To be purchased outright with equipment on hire. (Hire charges no longer include any colour media, except in the cases of colour wheels and rainbow wheels.)

	Gelatine	Cinemoid
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Battens, Footlights and Ground Rows (per 6 ft. length) ..	4 4	6 8
Floodlights—	(Per doz.)	(Per doz.)
Patterns 30, 60, 50A .. ..	12 6	1 8 0
Patterns 35, 49, 49A, 49B, 55, 56, 66 .. ..	1 2 6	1 18 0
Pattern 32 .. ..	5 9	9 3
Pattern B.237 .. ..	6 6	10 0
Spotlights—		
Pattern 27 .. ..	2 0	4 0
Pattern 45 .. ..	2 3	4 9
Pattern 44 .. ..	3 0	5 9
Patterns 22, 23A, 42, 43B, 63 and 73 .. ..	4 0	9 3
Patterns 70, 75, 102 .. ..	12 6	1 8 0

Smaller quantities *pro rata* to the above. If preferred, colour media may, of course, be purchased by the sheet.

# CIRCULATION

While supplies of paper are still limited we ask for your co-operation in sharing this copy of "TABS" with other interested members of your Society. Please pass it on.

The Secretary

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