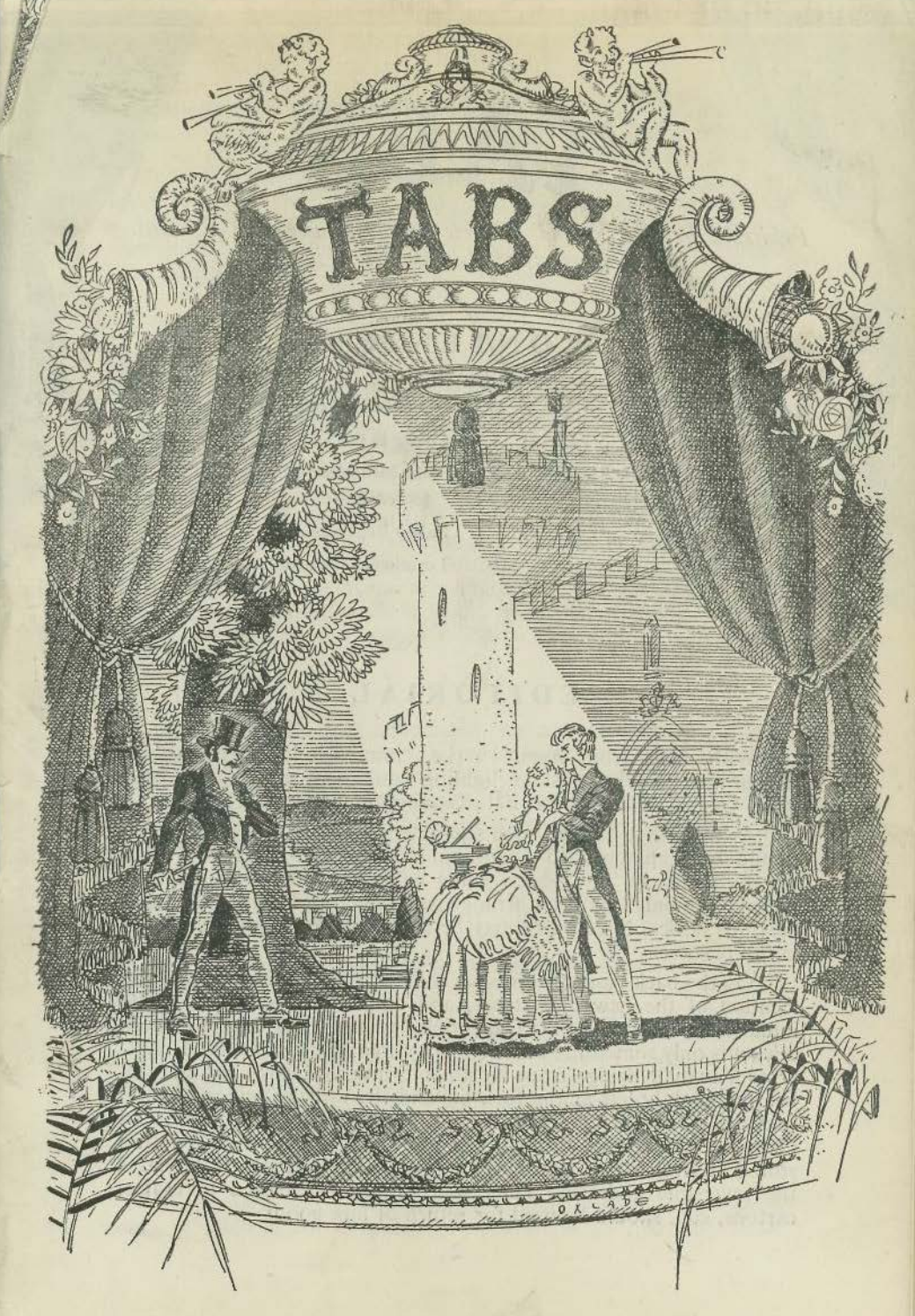
TABS

TABS

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

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EDITORIAL

Mr. H. L. Mencken is reported as having once said that if a number of big business men got round a table to talk about service, it did not need a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that somebody was going to get robbed. This cynicism puts us in rather an awkward position because we can think of no better word than " service " to cover the supply of equipment with the advice, "know how", punctuality, pleasantness, etc., which are our constant endeavour. It may be, of course, that Mr. Mencken is wrong and we are not robbers. How otherwise can one account for the fact that we have remained undetected for upwards of 30 years. Perhaps on the other hand, we are presumptuous in considering ourselves to be " big business men ". Certainly by ordinary commercial standards we are not, but so far as our specialised business goes we have been led to believe by visitors from home and overseas that we are quite probably the largest single theatrical contractors in the world. At any rate whether daylight robbery or painless extraction are involved, we ourselves consider that we might just as well put the shutters up and seek some other form of livelihood the day that we consider service to be superfluous.

Certain of our customers are, incidentally, rendering us a most unwelcome kind of service, unwittingly though it may be. On an average we find two head of rats or mice enclosed each week in the crates and cartons returned to our Hire Stores at Kennington. Our canine and feline ratcatchers (rodent operators to the Ministry) are due for their annual holiday and readers are, therefore, requested to remove livestock from containers before repacking hire goods.

* * *

Although beyond the needs and requirements of most amateurs, readers will be aware of our Console type and Electronic type stage lighting controls. In connection with the former it would seem that we have quite overlooked a selling point in our publicity. The following paragraph appeared in print earlier this year.

> " We understand that the new organ at the Parish Church has all-electric action, and that the organist, by touching a button, can change his combinations without leaving the seat ".

It would seem that both elastic and zip fasteners are out of date already!

* * *

It is regretted that stocks of our publication " Some Advice on Stage Lighting " are exhausted. Two editions each of 5,000 copies have been disposed of, and it is not proposed to reprint the booklet in its present form, but to incorporate it in a new and more comprehensive publication later in the year.

We are sometimes asked whether it is possible to take photographs of scenes lit solely by black light (Ultra violet effect). The answer is that the camera sees more than the human eye in these cases, and the photograph will reveal not only those things which are fluorescing but also the rest of the black-lit scene. When it is desired to photograph only those things which the human eye can see, we understand that this can be achieved by using a Kodak 2A Ultra Violet Lens filter.

* * *

What's in a name ? Much indeed sometimes. In the article on page 10 on prefocus lamps and projector lamp positions generally, the author refers to Mirror Spots and elsewhere mentions that the ordinary lens type of spotlight is normally equipped with a mirror or reflector. The reason for calling certain spotlights " Mirror Spots " is that they use a special optical system wherein the mirror or reflector is not just a useful auxiliary but the very essence of that optical system. Thus, on an ordinary 1000w Spotlight Pattern 43 the diameter of the lens is 6 ins. while that of the reflector is only 5 ins. On a 1000w Mirror Spot, Pattern 73 the diameter of the lens is again 6 ins. but that of the mirror is 8 ins. The Mirror Spot is, therefore, not just any ordinary spotlight with a mirror or reflector but one using a completely different optical system in which the mirror is the *sine qua non.*

BORDERS ARE A BORE

Let it be understood that borders are the lengths of velour, cotton twill, scenery canvas, discarded black-out cloth or other material, suitable or otherwise, which are suspended more or less untidily above the acting area. The laudable intention, so often imperfectly achieved, is to mask from the view of the front rows of the audience the roof or ceiling above the stage and anything that may be suspended therefrom. Borders. They are *not* flys, skies, pelmets or any of the other names (excepting the unprintable ones) by which they are sometimes called. The flys are (or is) the space above the stage beyond the height of the proscenium head, or more particularly, the fly gallery or galleries. Skies are what are sometimes blue in other countries. A pelmet is a more or less decorative border suspended on the auditorium side of the proscenium curtains. If it is suspended on the stage side it is known as a proscenium border.

Borders complicate the lighting of any stage. They make a nightmare of lighting a small stage with little height above it. Almost always they receive more light than anything else on the stage and need less. This is particularly true when the lighting is supplied by battens and unless a batten is placed between each border the resultant shadows on the setting are tiresome in the extreme. Because so many amateur groups are compelled to play on stages never intended for such use by anybody who had any knowledge whatever of the needs implicit in stage productions, it is quite frequently the case that the height above the proscenium arch is so restricted that borders are necessary every two or three feet if there is to be complete masking. It is then almost impossible to keep stray blobs of light off the borders even if floods and spots are used to light the stage, as they should be.

Borders belong to the period when practically all stage settings consisted of drop cloths and side wings. It was then possible for the borders to be fixed so that they passed between the wings and extended beyond them and so provided adequate masking at the sides. The borders were painted to match the setting and were comparatively unobtrusive except for the fact that they were more strongly illuminated than the rest of the stage and made footlighting much more important.

It is not altogether surprising that borders usually have a cast-off clothing shabbiness when imposed on a modern box set. They fit but awkwardly into a rookery-nookery bedroom or the garret of a third floor back, no matter how convincing may be the solidity that is south of the border. If an interior box set *must* have borders, the flats should extend well above the effective proscenium opening if untidiness is to be minimised. It is fairly certain that any borders

available (unless designed for the set, or the set for them), will be too long or too short to fit neatly within the side walls of the set. If too long they must either be trapped between flats (which will doubtless be inconveniently sited), or folded back into a wad that defies concealment. If too short, either the set must be narrowed or a desperate attempt made to extend the border without it being too obvious.

In the professional theatre the ceiling-cloth has almost completely superseded borders for interior sets. Many amateur theatres use ceilings equally successfully for both interior and exterior sets. But for a satisfactory use of such ceilings it is necessary to have sufficient height and suspension gear to make the quick adjustments that are necessary, and also to have a stage-staff who are willing to take the trouble that it involves. The ceiling makes it possible to light the setting from the No. 1 batten and the perch positions, with assistance from F.O.H. spots. If floods and spots are used exclusively from No. 1 position the lighting can be properly modulated and shadows reduced to a minimum. The cyclorama or back-cloth lighting can be concealed above the up-stage edge of the ceiling.

The use of a ceiling, of course, involves the use of flats (if flats are used) that are neatly finished at the tops, which should present an even line. If some misguided person who has not studied sight lines has decreed that the stage floor shall be raked, life for the stage staff will, of course, be still further complicated. If curtain settings are used with a ceiling it is equally necessary that the tops of the curtains should conceal their fixings.

Borders that are in fixed positions, without any possibility of adjustment up and down above stage, or up and down across stage, are the greatest bore of all. Except when used with a permanent curtain or scenery setting for which they have been planned, they almost invariably intrude and fail to give effective masking of the sides.

To secure perfect masking by means of borders, they should be suspended so that the bottom edge of each is level with the bottom edge of the proscenium arch or pelmet, and each border should be sufficiently deep and long to obviate any gaps through which the occupiers on the front and extreme edge seats can see. Obviously, the side curtains have to be planned in conjunction with the borders if the masking of the sides is to be completely effective. Only too frequently it will be found that unless the side curtains extend three or four feet above the level of the proscenium arch the borders will be too many and too near each other, or there will be ineffective masking.

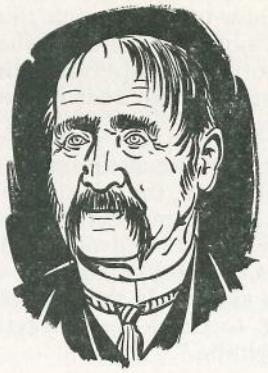
When so little height is provided above stage that borders

are completely ineffective it is often better to omit them altogether and paint the ceiling black or a tint that matches the curtains. Alternatively, the No. 1 border should be a canopy over the front portion of the acting area, with the up-stage portion falling as a vertical border to mask the top of the rear curtains and the lighting equipment used for the cyclorama. This canopy is, of course, a ceiling of sorts. It would normally be made of the same material as the stage curtains to be least intrusive. Some masking of the sides would be also required. This is best obtained by side valances or borders, running from front to back of stage, either fastened to the side edges of the canopy-ceiling or on independent tracks. Instead of the leg curtains at the sides being suspended from above they are more suitable for such a setting and considerably more flexibly useful if they are fastened to scenery flats or frames, hinged together in pairs (booked-wings). When the leg curtains are on suspended battens, swivel arms or side-tracks, the shape and size of the setting is fixed; with the curtains on booked-wings, settings of a great variety of shapes and sizes can be obtained. Even for settings made up entirely of scenery flats the most effective way of minimising the border menace is to have a complete drapery surround suspended at a height of about 7 feet from the stage floor; the sides of the surround would be a foot or two off-stage of the side setting lines. The scenery, which could best be restricted to 8 feet to 10 feet in height, would stand in front of the draperies. If all the lighting is directional and is lighting the stage area instead of the upper part of the stage, it might even be unnecessary to attempt any masking of the stage roof. If, however, the roof is such an eyesore that it must be masked, the draped canopy treatment is recommended—the canopy being as high as it can possibly be fixed. This sort of use of cut-down scenery is usually much more effective than the laboriously achieved scaled-down setting which pretends to reproduce the setting used on a large stage for the professional production of the play. On the small stage in particular, the intelligently used suggestion is usually more convincing than pseudo-realism.

It is fatally easy, when designing a set on paper, to overlook the diabolical intrusiveness of borders which can ruin the whole effect when the scenery is set on the stage. They must be taken into account as unless the borders are carefully designed for the particular setting with which they are to be used they are almost certain to be ineffective and to interfere with the lighting. The lines of dirty, crumpled " washing " suspended above so many amateur stages bear witness. But even when borders are really effective as stage dressing and masking, they can still be a confounded nuisance in so many ways. It must be repeated that borders are a bore; an alliterative bore, in fact.

P.C.

A TORCHBEARER



We called him Mr. Culver because his name was Culver but more so because the quick glance under his shaggy eyebrows and over a droopy moustache hinted darkly at the fate which awaited one rash enough to call him " Cully " or any such diminutive.

His duties consisted of directing a flat-bottomed Ford car which housed the auxiliary lighting unit and as many of the gee-gaws that go to make up a Stage Manager's kit, and any reference to it was always " Mr. Culver's department ".

He came to us because we could find no-one to whom the Ford would respond with any degree of certainty and the auxiliary became an obedient servant in his hands. It was years after his death that we learned of his previous association with drama which had come by way of mundane tasks connected with the Circus ring. His knowledge of the auxiliary had been gained by cycling twenty miles to the makers of the plant to obtain a two hours' briefing by one of the fitters. He got away with the bluff, and the job, by his quick appraisal of any situation and the manner he adopted to deal with emergencies—and there were many of them in a travelling stock company.

He had little time for trouble-makers or for those unfortunates who could not adapt themselves to condition and circumstance. His value to the company was evidenced one wet Sunday afternoon in late October, when drawing up before a country barn, which did as a village hall, we disconsolately surveyed what was to be our theatre and home for the next seven days. " Ah, good ", said Mr. Culver, " the more ornate the theatre, the less significant the drama. We will do justice to Othello this week ". Within two hours the stage was set, his two battens and float were in position and his new and greatest glory—a three-lamp cyclorama kit was in position to meet whatever problems of illumination to-morrow morning's rehearsal would present.

Mr. Culver gave little thought to simple pleasures and none to excess; allowed himself but two glasses of stout a day—one after morning rehearsal, and one when the auxiliary had been subdued and covered. It boded ill for the village unable to supply this want and his description was at once terse and final. " Degenerate and dead, my boy. No place to stage Sheridan or the Bard. Shaw is good enough for 'em. The department will suggest to the Manager that the bill is changed ".

Lights were his great joy, and in one of his rare lugubrious moments he would recount stories of his father's share in the illuminations at the Crystal Palace. " They knew how to show people things in those days, young fellow. So different now—gloom everywhere, with producers fearful of lighting their actors' faces advertising their lack of expression. I let my people be seen by the audience, and I picks my celluloids with this end in view ".

Mr. Culver's " celluloids " were kept in a biscuit tin under the front seat of the Ford—and if, after a month's run, the midnight blue hinted more at grey sunrise, it still had to serve some useful purpose until the season was ended. " I places my orders in advance to last the whole run, so that the Manager knows what the department will cost. The department does not let him down. If the wardrobe followed my example we would be able to carry another set of dimmers and then you would see some lighting ".

The Travelling Spot was anathema to Mr. Culver who insisted on having good reason for any form of illumination and saw none for chasing a " star " round the stage from a perch. He demanded that the actor found the three acting areas he always provided, and refused to budget for any additional " extra " required. " If she is a star she should carry her own light; she ought to suffuse the theatre with the rays of her own influence . . . " No producer survived an unequal battle with Mr. Culver's interpretation of the nuances of stage production. " Break all the rules you like my boy, but be sure you know 'em ".

Infinite care was bestowed on beginners by Mr. Culver who would show them how his " lights " affected their make-up. In the end, however, you realised that he made sure you used no grease paint which reacted badly to the " celluloids " he had chosen for the play. " Keep off reds " he would say, " till I tell you when to use 'em. And come and see me before you play about with these new-fangled liners ".

Not that he turned a blind eye to new invention or a deaf ear to the voice of progress—he based all visual stage presentation against its reaction to illumination—held the view that a bad play could be made presentable by effective lighting and that a good play could be as easily killed by its inappropriate use.

The car accounted for him in the end. Cranking it on a cold morning with one hand pulling the choke wire proved too much for a heart already giving him trouble. He took to his bed and was found resting with his collection of cigarette cards neatly bound with elastic bands, close at hand. The sets of cards were reproductions of the paintings of old masters and of famous scenic photographs. Not for him the series devoted to animals, flags or battleships. Perhaps he tried to bring to the stage by means of his celluloids the luminosity and reflection which the brushes of the mighty imparted to canvas.

He saw to it that anyone who passed through Mr. Culver's department became sensitive to the picture framed in the proscenium.

Here and there, but all too rarely one sees touches which could have allowed Mr. Culver to voice the one note of approbation saved for a very special effect: " This pleases the department my boy ". One wonders, however, if some of the present London shows would not have earned his withering: " The department could do better with two candles, my boy ".

Asp.

BARGAIN BASEMENT

We are often asked by impecunious but nevertheless very deserving Amateur Societies whether we have any second-hand lighting equipment for disposal. Unfortunately our reply must almost invariably be in the negative, but just for a change at the present time " a unique opportunity presents itself " as one reads in certain advertisement columns, as we have a quantity of 1,000w Pattern 43 Spotlights available for disposal at reduced prices. These lanterns are not new. They are reconditioned as new and are repainted inside and out and are complete with reflector, lampholder, lens, etc. To all intents and purposes they *are* in fact new, but as we cannot sell them as such they are available at the reduced price of £7 each. It should be understood that these lanterns are in no sense obsolete and this particular type is likely to continue to appear in our lists and catalogues for a considerable period. The opportunity is, therefore, offered to readers of TABS to acquire these lanterns and to show themselves a saving of £3 a time. We must, however, point out that we have no other second-hand equipment on offer.

GELATINE BOOKLETS

Those of our readers who have been unfortunate in the past when applying for Gelatine booklets are advised that further stocks are now available and that renewed applications may meet with more successful results.

* * *

In their " Theatre and Stage " series, Messrs. Pitman have recently published a book entitled " Stage Lighting," by F. P. Bentham—a member of the Strand Electric. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to review this book in the present issue of TABS, but we should like to make it clear that applications for same (35/-) should be made either to Messrs. Pitman or to a bookseller but *not* to the Strand Electric. We should like to be able to sell this and other books dealing with the technical aspects of the theatre but for obvious reasons we are not recognised as dealers by the book trade any more than we recognise them as dealers in electrical equipment or accessories.

PREFOCUS LAMPHOLDERS

These lampholders will be making their presence felt this autumn and since they represent a change from standard practice it is as well to consider the reasons for their adoption and the advantages they bring.

A lampholder has two purposes to serve: the first to supply electrical connections, a feed and return; the second to provide a rigid support for the lamp. The latter explains why the normal domestic bayonet cap (B.C.) holder is not used in stage equipment. Depending on two small spring plungers the lamp fixing is not firm enough to withstand the rough and tumble of theatre use. In the larger lamp sizes the first purpose becomes important; a lamp taking 5 or 10 amps needs a very good connection, if over-heating and even arcing are to be avoided.

Edison Screw Lampholders

The lamps in common use in the theatre to-day have screw caps which fit what are known as Edison Screw lampholders. These are in four sizes, Miniature Edison Screw (MES) the smallest one, and familiar in battery torches, small Edison Screw (SES), Edison Screw (ES) and the largest, Goliath Edison Screw (GES) for 500 watt lamps and over.

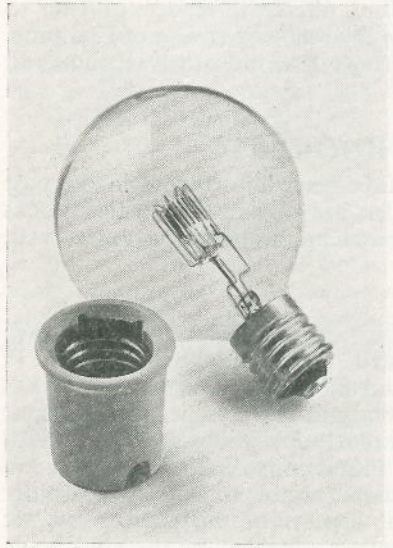


Fig. 1

The screw surface provides one connection and a centre contact the other (Fig. 1). The lamp is screwed into the lampholder until the bottom contact compresses the corresponding spring contact in the latter.

The lampholder *must* always be wired so that the feed or live side (red wire) is on the centre contact and the return (black wire) is via the screw connection. This will lessen the risk of shock if the fingers accidentally touch the metal cap when inserting or removing a lamp. The heat resisting wiring of a Strand lantern is not coloured but is labelled L for live, N for return and E for earth. The third wire E will be dealt with in an article on "Earthing" in the next issue of "TABS".

Lamp Filaments

The shape of the light source has an important effect on the light of a spotlight. What is really needed for spotlights is a nice solid incandescent source about the size of a sixpence, but since the limelight was replaced by the more convenient electricity this has not been available. What has to be done is to make the filament wire into a small bunch with a gap on one side as in Fig. 1, or into a grid as in Fig. 2 (below). The former is the more robust and is enclosed in a round bulb; the latter is preferable optically as it is more regular and nearly resembles a solid source, and because it is enclosed in a tubular bulb which allows the lantern's optical system to be brought closer to it, to collect more light.

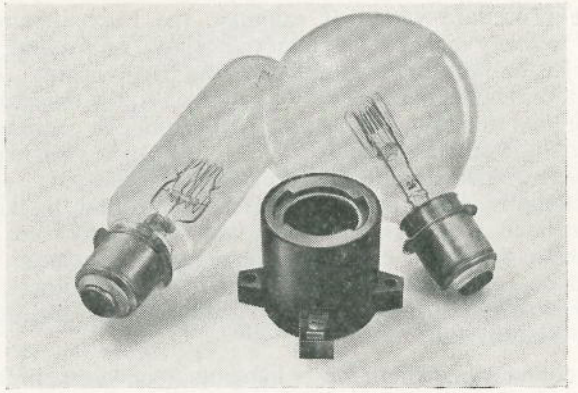


Fig 2.

However, the round bulb assembly known as the B1 lamp is to be recommended for most theatre purposes as it gives a reasonable lamp life of 800 hours and may be burnt in all positions except within 45° of the vertical, cap uppermost. The better filament shape, higher light output and optical efficiency of the tubular A1 lamp are too dearly bought at the cost of a life of 50 hours and a restriction of burning position to only a slight tilt from the vertical, cap down. The life can be increased somewhat by using a lamp of a voltage slightly higher than that of the mains, but in general most stage users would be wise to reserve the tubular A1 type for cases such as optical effects or long throws where the extra light output is essential.

Projected Image

The simplest type of spotlight (Patts. 43, 44 and 45 for example) consists of a lens with a lamp movable behind it so that various enlarged images of the filament are projected. There is usually a small spherical reflector behind the lamp to divert back through

the filament light that would otherwise be wasted. Now it is obviously desirable that the lens, lamp filament and reflector shall be in line and also that the bunch filament shall not present part of its gap to the lens, making thereby an irregular shaped object to be magnified.

The more efficient but more critical Mirror Spots (Patts. 73 and 83) depend on collecting the light in a large reflector and redirecting it back over the lamp through an adjustable gate which is focused by an objective lens. In this lantern it is *essential* that lamp, mirror reflector, gate and lens are all in line if results are to be clear, even and bright. Much the same applies to the other complicated lantern, the Optical Effects Projector, in which lamp, reflector, lens, condenser, slide and objective lens have all to be lined up.

The procedure with, for example, the Mirror Spot will be familiar to many readers. The lantern is placed on a stand, the lamp screwed in the holder, lit up and then the battle begins. The lamp may be too low, the filament may be edge on to the reflector and the resulting light dreadful. Everything is adjustable in order to provide as many short cuts as possible. First the lamp is switched off, the gate shutters opened wide and the reflector removed. The lamp-holder clamp is eased and the flex slackened so that the lampholder can be rotated as necessary. When lamp and holder are correctly positioned as far as one can judge, the reflector is replaced, the lamp switched on (on check through a dimmer for comfort!) and the reflector is then adjusted and screwed down in the position giving the best visual results.

Of course when the lamp is hanging somewhere, perhaps in a cage over the front of the upper circle the performance when a lamp needs replacement gets even more exacting. The lantern may be very hot, there may be a guard rail as well as the circle front to lean over. As one does this the contents of the breast pocket—fountain pen, pencil and what not—shoot out into the abysmal depths of the cage. The recovery of these, the physical impediments, and giddy position put one out of the mood for adjustment finesse and the tendency is for the lamp to be screwed in with not more than a hope for the best.

All these troubles arise from the form of lamp cap used. The lamp is made—filament supports, bulb and all—as a unit to which the cap is applied as the last process. Accuracy is difficult with glass work of this type and the result is that the cap never bears an exact enough relationship to the filament. In any case the screw holder introduces another risk—variation in the number of turns made in screwing up.

The Prefocus Cap

The P.F. cap provides the answer to the problem and it is an answer that has been just round the corner for many years. The

lamp cap and holder have been there but the exact standardisation of dimensions could not be agreed upon. Home cinema projectors have used lamps with a form of prefocus cap but the theatre has had to wait.

However, we of the Strand Electric are determined to delay no longer and from now on our lanterns with the more critical optical systems, viz., Patts. 83 and 73 1000 watt Mirror Spots, Patt. 51 Effects Lanterns and a new 250 watt Baby Mirror Spot (shortly to appear) will have prefocus holders fitted as standard. It will mean that lamps used in these will be " specials " in that they must have prefocus caps, but this is an essential measure to get, always with no trouble, the best light from these efficient precision lanterns.

The G.E.S. cap is replaced by the size known as Large Prefocus and the E.S. by the Medium Prefocus. The cap is shown in Fig. 2 and consists of a cylindrical body with a bottom contact for the live feed. The top is formed as two flat rigid fins. The lamp filament is located relative to the top of these fins. The bulb assembly is already completed with an inner metal cap and this is placed inside the prefocus cap, the filament lined up correctly in an optical jig and the latter soldered on.

The Prefocus Holder

This is of bakelite and has an inner metal lining, a bottom contact and a lamp location ring at the top. The ring is cut away where the cap fins are to enter. See Fig. 3. The lamp is inserted in the holder, pushed firmly against the bottom contact and rotated a half turn clockwise until a stop is reached and this traps the fins under the ring. To remove the lamp it is depressed slightly, rotated anti-clockwise until the fins come under the gaps whereupon the lamp jumps upwards and clear. The whole affair is deliberately made rather stiff, but there is no need to be afraid of using a firm hand. No screwing motion is needed.

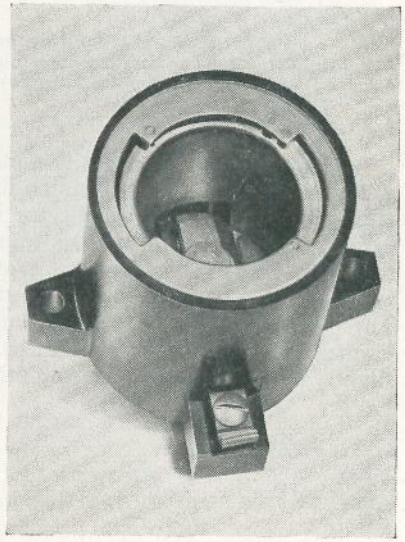


Fig. 3

We can now preset the lantern at our factory and be sure that lamp replacements of the same or another make will fit exactly into the optical system. No adjustments for height or rotation will be fitted

to the lampholders and reflectors of the lanterns already mentioned. All that will be necessary is to insert the lamp and adjust for beam spread and focus; or, if the lamp is a replacement in a lantern already set, then no adjustment whatever will be needed.

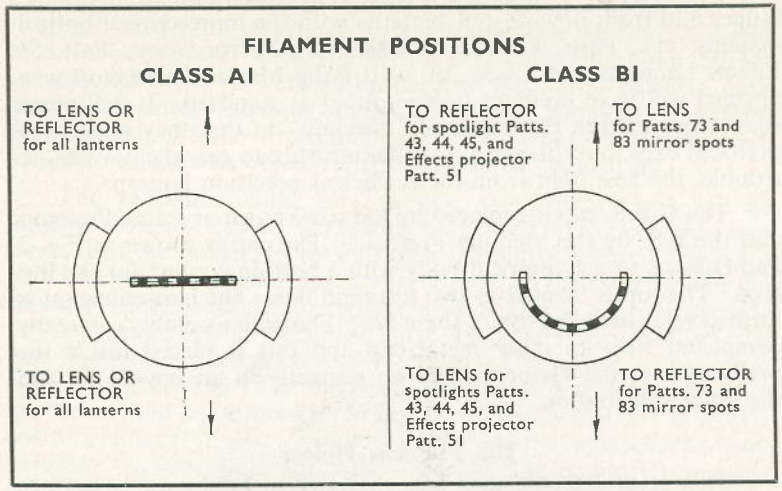


Fig. 4. Using the A1 tubular lamp (See Fig. 2 left), the filament should be square on to lens and reflector but the filament supports (not shown) should be away from the lens in Patts. 43, 44, 45 and 51 while they should be away from the mirror, i.e. *towards* the lens, in Patts. 73 and 83.

Using the round bulb B1 projector lamp (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 right) the gap in the filament should be away from the lens in Patts. 43, 44, 45 and 51, and away from the mirror, i.e. *towards* the lens, in Patts. 73 and 83.

There is only one point to watch; the lamp must be put in the right way round. Using a bunch filament B1 lamp the gap must be away from the principal collector of light. In a Mirror spot away from the reflector, in a lens spot and an effects projector away from the lens. See Fig. 4. Using a grid filament A1 lamp the filament supports must be turned away from the principal collector of light. These supports will be easily seen as rigid wires from which the filament is hung. These wires cause one face of the grid to be slightly less acceptable than the other.

MORE GROUSE

By PETER QUINCE

To-day is the Glorious Twelfth, and, though there is a characteristic English drizzle to celebrate it, my thoughts naturally turn to Grouse. First I think of what a particularly succulent bird it is; and then, by its verbal association, I remember the similar word, which prevails all the year round, and is limited by no Close Season.

Theatre Grouses are my speciality, and I have already aired some of them. Here is another, very dear to my heart. I am old enough to remember when the more expensive seats in the Theatre were filled by people in Evening Dress, a custom which has passed into common speech in such words as Dress Circle and Opera Hat.

War-time habits have led to a dreary change. Theatres raise their curtains at an inconveniently early hour, and present the dilemma of Dinner and No Theatre, or Theatre and No Dinner. To overcome the food difficulty, and to change into Evening Dress as well, are problems indeed. There is the further complication of the price of Glad Rags, and " Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy " has acquired an unfortunate topical meaning that I am sure Polonius never intended. Still, there are increasing numbers of brave folk who continue to Dress as Theatre Audiences should, and the dreary desert of lounge suits and " two-piece " rigs is more and more relieved by oases of masculine Black and White and feminine Evening Frocks.

Now comes a statement in an Australian Publication that " the Theatre in Australia would be healthier if the snob element were eliminated by an unofficial banning of evening dress ". Two leading British Men of the Theatre are quoted as being in support. One " wants no evening dress at his productions, because it tends to make theatre-going an occasion instead of a habit ". The other, a Dramatic Critic, " has declared for its abolition, because it preserves the snob element, which is bad for Theatre ".

So there's my Grouse. I *like* evening dress. I like to wear it myself, and I like to see other people wearing it. I like the humble Dinner Jacket and Black Tie, and I like the more glorious Tails and White Tie, which is Evening Dress with Capital Letters. What is more, when I am in Evening Dress I do not feel that I am the least little bit of a Snob Element. It gives me a nice, clean, comfortable feeling of well-being, and puts me in the mood to enjoy " all that ever went with evening dress ".

It all helps to make a visit to the Theatre " an Occasion ". Why a Producer should want to reduce Theatre-going from a gay adventure to a habit I cannot imagine! The price of admission is a pretty good insurance against Theatre-going becoming a habit, anyway, and the distance most of us live from West End Theatres, and, indeed, from any Theatre, is as the Economists say, " a concomitant circumstance ".

Of course I realize that leading Men of the Theatre understand things Theatrical much better than I do, but I sometimes wonder if they really know what the Ordinary Member of the Audience thinks and feels. After all, it is this Ordinary Member who provides most of the finance, and it is his enthusiasm which will keep the Theatre alive. To him Theatre-going will continue to be An Occasion, and as such he feels it deserves all the ceremonial trimmings he can give it. In return, he does not expect to be called " a Snob Element ", nor is he likely to agree that his Gala Black Tie or White Tie, as the case may be, is " bad for the Theatre ", or that even, if his exuberance of spirit should carry him so far, his Opera Hat will do much harm to anyone.

So, Producer and Dramatic Critic notwithstanding, let us celebrate the Twelfth of August by shooting this particular Grouse, and making the Visit to the Theatre what it used to be,—a Dress Occasion.

THE BACK ROOM BOYS

Research and Development

It was recently suggested by a theatre engineer that we should hold occasional meetings to review the merits or otherwise of our various types of equipment. With what we hope was a very good show of righteous indignation, we told him of the formation some years ago, not only of our Research and Development Department, but of the R. & D. Committee, which meets regularly twice a month, or more often as necessary, for the very purpose he was suggesting. It occurs to us, therefore, that our less professional readers might also be interested in this back-room aspect of our activities.

Although on the face of it one should be able to differentiate between what is Research and what is Development—the former sounds like looking backward so to speak, and the latter forward—we can make no such distinction. Much of our R. & D. work involves doing both simultaneously—a form of scientific squinting so to speak. We must always try to reconcile new lanterns or control gear with existing theatrical standards, and equally, with a minimum of commotion, modify existing equipment to conform with changes in theatrical technique.

Theatre lighting is a matter of illusion and consequently of improvisation, so it follows that a very high degree of interchangeability is to be desired. This applies particularly in such cases as lamps, lampholders, plugs, connectors, colour frames suspensions and the like. On the other hand the development of a new type of lamp or lampholder cannot be lightly disregarded simply on the grounds that its adoption would involve a departure from existing standards. To do so would simply be to turn one's back on progress. It does

not, however, follow that some new development which has proved its worth outside the theatre is necessarily suited for universal adoption within it. So far as we are concerned, therefore, R. & D. work involves not only looking backwards as well as forwards but also to right and left before deciding to take a particular step or even to " stay put ".

How then are these various interests and aspects looked after? The design and practical side of the work is carried out by the Research and Development Dept., which is staffed by engineers and draughtsmen who are wholly employed on this work. They are armed, of course, with the usual paraphernalia of the drawing office, and also gadgets for the investigation and measurement of such things as light, heat, colour, electric wave forms and even draughts. It is their job to carry out the instructions of the R. & D. Committee, the majority of the members of which represent some independent interest and who are, therefore, on a part-time basis so far as R. & D. work is concerned.

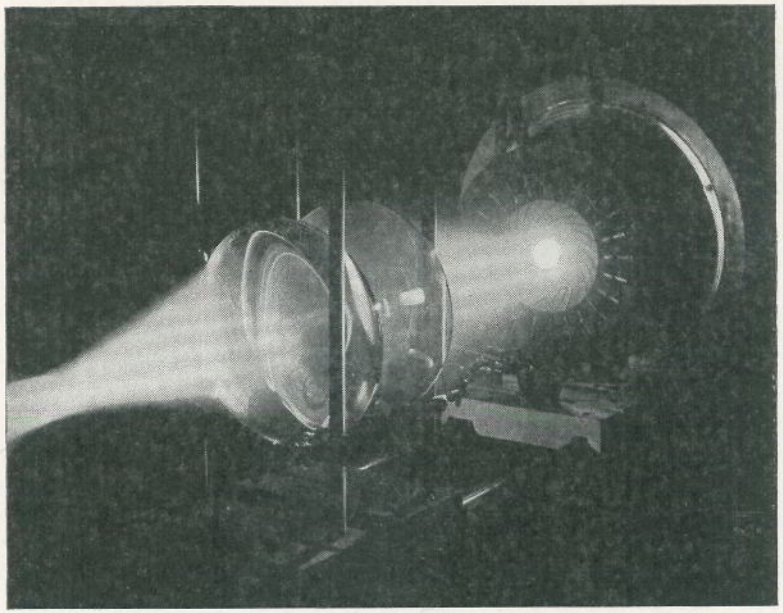
The constitution of the R. & D. Committee is as follows:—

Four Directors.
A Branch and Works Manager.
Representatives of Hire and three Sales Depts.
Three members of R. & D. Dept.

Within this team are represented the interests of policy, design, manufacture and user, and the best way probably to see how the machinery works is to take one or two specific examples.

Supposing a department considers that it requires a new type of lantern to carry out a particular job. The matter is raised at the next R. & D. meeting and it is discussed whether this would form a useful addition to our range or whether it should be regarded as a special or non-standard article. If the Meeting agrees the former, the project is given an R. & D. Reference Number, a member of the department is deputed to the job and given such details as wattage, type of lamp and lampholder, maximum and minimum beam angle, required intensities and any other essentials which will affect his design. So far as the Committee is concerned, that is that for the time being.

Next, R. & D. Dept. investigates the availability of electric motors, gears, lenses and any other special accessories which may be involved and which are not to be of our own manufacture. They then produce preliminary drawings which are studied at a subsequent R. & D. Committee Meeting and are open to comment from all points of view. The Works Manager, for example, may suggest certain different materials or alternative methods of construction for ease of manufacture. A Selling Dept. may criticise the shape or size while the Hire people may have something to say about



The optical system of a new spotlight being tested on the optical bench.

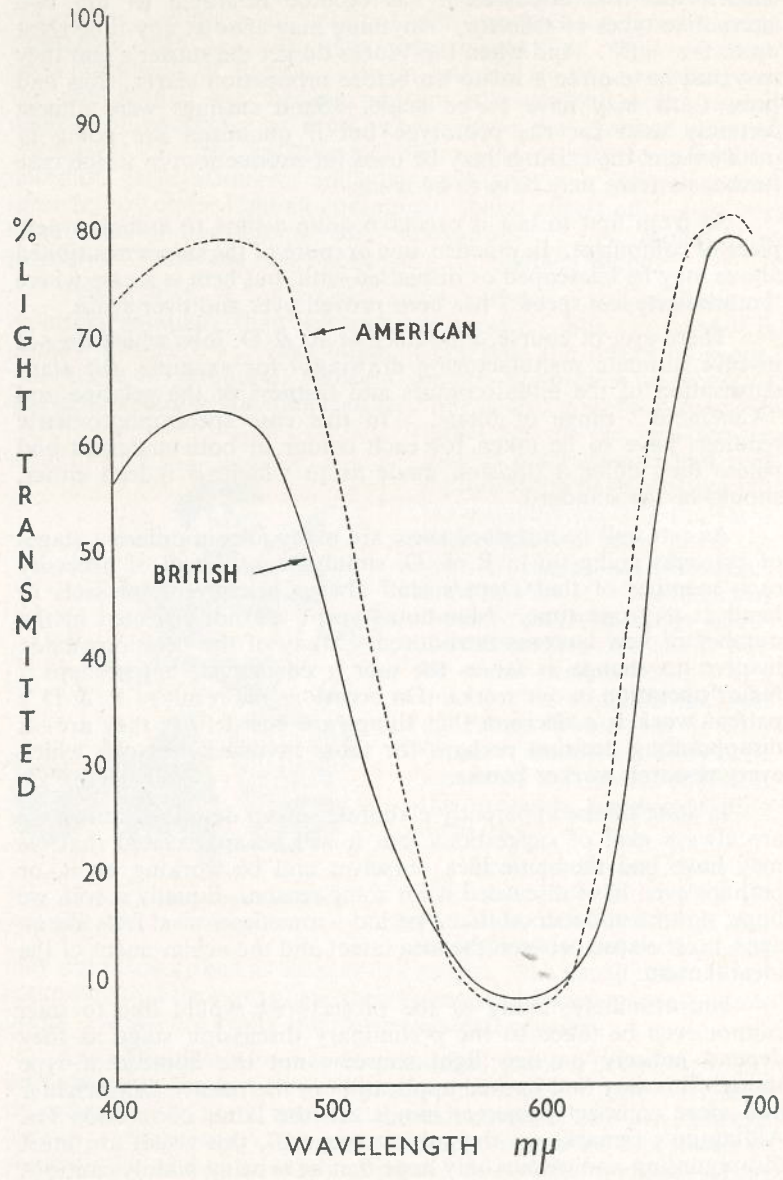
robustness or weight. Of course, anyone may have second ideas about the performance requirements. If and when any necessary compromises or alterations are agreed the job goes back to the Research Dept., so that they can satisfy all concerned in a more practical manner that theory is borne out by practice. Any necessary non-standard reflectors or lenses required are obtained—this incidentally often involves waiting for special moulds or chucks to be made—and the optical system (only) is set up on an optical bench for examination. Alternative materials and finishes for the reflector may be tried and different grades and types of lenses. Assuming that such requirements as beam angles, cut off, intensity, smoothness and sharpness or softness of the edges of the beam prove to be met to the satisfaction of the Committee, final drawings are prepared, approved and sent to the works for the manufacture of a prototype.

The time taken for this last step varies of course considerably, depending as it may do on the use of castings or other materials requiring patterns or moulds. In due course the prototype is delivered and tested and the Committee have yet one more chance

Opposite:
Spectrophotometric transmission readings are plotted for the purposes of comparison and maintenance of colour standards.

THE STRAND ELECTRIC & ENG. CO., LTD.,
29 KING STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

MATERIAL **GELATINE** COLOUR **SPECIAL LAVENDER**



TESTED BY..... DATE .....

to make any alterations before production commences, and it is strange how often alterations have to be made even at this late stage. Perhaps the ventilation requires improvement. Perhaps since the lantern was first discussed it has become desirable to use two alternative types of reflector. Anything may arise at any time right up to the "off". And when the Works do get the starter's gun they may still have quite a lot to do before production starts. Jigs and press tools may have to be made. Sand castings were almost certainly used for the prototype but if quantities are going to justify them, die castings may be used for production, in which case further patterns may have to be made.

So from first to last it can take quite a time to launch a new piece of equipment. In practice, one or more of the stages mentioned above may be telescoped or dispensed with, but here is a case where " more haste less speed " has been proved over and over again.

There are, of course, a number of R. & D. jobs which do not involve ultimate manufacturing drawings—for example, the standardisation of the initial colours and fastness of the gelatine and " Cinemoid " range of filters. In this case spectrophotometric readings have to be taken for each colour in both materials and where they differ a decision made as to which, if indeed either, should be the standard.

As can well be imagined there are many jobs in different stages of progress going on in R. & D. simultaneously, and of necessity each member of that Dept.'s staff always has several projects in hand at any one time. Man-hours spent are not reflected in the number of new lanterns introduced. Many of the decisions made involve no change as far as the user is concerned, but perhaps a major operation in our works. On occasions the result of R. & D.'s patient work is a decision that things are best left as they are—a disappointing decision perhaps for those involved, but one which every research worker knows.

In spite of the apparently elaborate set-up described above we are always glad of suggestions, but it will be appreciated that we may have had the same idea ourselves and be working on it, or perhaps even have discarded it for some reason. Equally it will, we hope, now be understood that a period—sometimes what feels like an age—must elapse between the idea latent and the achievement of the ideal lantern.

Unfortunately, many of the projects we would like to start cannot even be taken to the preliminary discussion stage as they depend entirely on new light sources—not the fluorescent type though this may find limited application in the theatre, but brighter and more compact projector lamps. In the latter connection Dr. Aldington's remarks on the subject (page 27, this issue) are most disappointing and we can only hope that he is being unduly cautious if not just a little pessimistic.

PROPS. MUST FIND PROPS.

Of all the dauntless thousands to whom participation in the activities of the amateur theatre is a fascinating part of the social life of Britain, there are few who sacrifice so much with so little reward as the hero—or heroine—who provides the furniture and properties that are absolutely essential to any show. These personifications of British fortitude and gift for improvisation are the unhonoured and unsung martyrs who respond with varying degrees of reluctance at dress rehearsals to the agonised cries of " Props."! In the programme, below the credits to producer, designer, stage-manager, and the multitude who have supplied scenery, costumes, lighting equipment, sound effects, etc., etc., one might read if one gets so far, " Properties . . . A. Bloggs", or possibly: " Assistant Stage Manager . . . Anthea Bloggs ".

The A.S.M. is, of course, more native to the professional repertory company than the amateur society. She . . . and it is usually a " she " . . . has often to combine the duties of props. with those of prompter, assistant dresser, tea-brewer at rehearsal and general lackey for the producer. She is also a usefully available target for all the bad temper that its possessors daren't vent on those who have provoked it. Occasionally she has the thrilling reward of being given the part of the maid, with three lines in Act 2. The amateur theatre has never really popularised the job of A.S.M. but, by some curious means, still manages to populate the post of Props. whose sex is also usually female. Only the female of the species possesses the necessary bargain-hunting mentality.

". . . prompter, assistant dresser, tea-brewer . . . and general lackey for the producer ".

Props. must beg, borrow, steal or otherwise acquire all furniture, soft furnishings and everything in the setting that may not be described as scenery or costume. She usually has also to make sure that the actors have their essential and appropriate " hand-props " which are really their own personal concern.

Any enthusiast who may be persuaded, cajoled or press-ganged into assuming the heart-breaking responsibilities of Props. requires the courage of an arctic explorer the seductiveness of a siren and the hide of a rhinoceros. It is quite a simple matter for a producer—assuming his ability to write and spell—to produce a props.-list on

which he specifies a Chippendale table, true in ball-and-claw, or a what-not of Victorian vulgarity; but provision of these essential period pieces is no piece of cake. Props. may reasonably expect an exhausting expedition lasting hours and hours. Her task might be comparatively light if the local dealers in antiques have not yet learned from bitter experience that some actors who smoke on the stage have an unerring instinct for placing their lighted cigarettes on any surface with an unblemished polish, or for embedding the glowing butt-end into a choice Persian carpet with a little expert foot-work. When the dealers are wise to the incendiary habits of such insensible clots, it is only somebody with the boldness of a Boadicea or the cunning of a Cleopatra who is able to face the fierce antagonism of the retail antiquarians at all. Even if the dealers have a quite unique standard of long - suffering angelic tolerance, it is practically certain that whatever furniture is available, if of the appropriate period, is altogether inappropriate in size—or vice versa. When, in a final fit of despairing resignation, Props. accepts a piece that is at least four kings, two queens and an odd ace out of period, and grimly resolves to tell the producer what he can do with the offending furniture . . . and the job, she will be quite shattered to find that the anachronism is passed unnoticed or, worse still that the setting has been altered and it won't be required at all. Sycophantic politicians prattle smugly about the hardships of the harassed housewife, patiently queuing for her " fair shares " or " miserable rations " (according to point of political view). The housewife's struggles are a mere rest-cure compared with the sacrificial penance endured by the average Props.

" . . . the fierce antagonism of the retail antiquarians . . . "

When the players have triumphantly departed to their roistering last-night supper party, all wreathed in smiles and sheaves of chrysanthemums, the humble back-stage Cinderella must stay behind to begin an exhausting search for the props. that have been discarded in most unlikely places and to examine the borrowed furniture, in an agony of apprehension, for the inevitable evidence of ruthless usage.

Just occasionally, fate presents Cinderella with opportunity for the exercise of a little malice aforethought. The props.-list has called for a decanter of Scotch, to which the leading man must have frequent recourse with avid enjoyment. Unless he has previously

disarmed Props. with a little humanistic treatment he will find that the unsweetened dregs of the tea-urn, diluted to give a No. 3 Straw transmission curve, can produce an incomparably foul decoction which, whether mixed with soda or taken neat will test any actor's ability to breaking point. And that can give quite a lot of silent satisfaction in the wings.


" . . . a lot of silent satisfaction in the wings ".

The perfect Props. should have mastered the craft of property-making—a craft that is a declining one in the professional theatre. It is often possible to find in our Little Theatres those wizards who perform miracles of ingenuity with wads of newspaper, pots of glue, bits of three-ply and lumps of plasticine to provide the varied assortment of articles demanded by inconsiderate playwrights.

It is seldom realised the extent to which Props. can make or mar the stage setting. The scene designer might take great pains to make certain of the accuracy of his architectural representations on the stage, but quite frequently he leaves it to somebody else to see that the furniture and dressing of the set are appropriate. How often is a good set completely ruined by tasteless and incongruous furnishing ? Yet the furnishing can be of more stage value than the scenery. It is possible, with a simple set of neutral tinted stage curtains, to provide a completely satisfying scene by selective choice and tasteful arrangement of furniture, carpet, cushions, flowers and the like. Any audience will use imagination and see whatever scene is intended if the visual suggestion is competently and subtly presented. The painted set, be it never so perfect, is equally dependent on the furnishing; when it is ever so pseudo . . . and it frequently is . . . the scenery becomes a distraction, no matter how well selected and carefully arranged the furnishing may be.

The creation of any stage setting requires understanding co-operation between producer, stage-manager, designer and Props. And the greatest of these is . . . well it really is important to have a Props. who is qualified for the job. It is no sinecure. Whoever tackles it needs assistance. It might even be desirable or necessary to demand the co-operation of the Casting Committee. If Mrs.

Robinson-Smythe possesses appropriate examples of the cabinet-maker's craft in her home, what could be simpler than to give her a private hint that the loan of required specimens would ensure the offer of a part ? Ends sometimes justify means and it is always possible she won't be any worse than anybody else who is a candidate for the part.

A competent and enthusiastic Props. is a pearl beyond price. An incapable or indifferent one is a major menace. It is high time that this important keystone of play production was given the respect and recognition to which it is entitled. If it were, there could be more stage settings that completely fulfil the promise on the programme; and fewer that look like the white elephant stall at a jumble sale.

P.C.

PLEASE TEACHER, IT WASN'T I

Some of our more persevering readers may remember a character called DIM who made his appearance in these pages several issues ago. In case there should be any doubt, his portrait is reproduced herewith. Once again he raises his ugly head to provide as it were, a visible stigma upon what follows. We don't want to drag in the old headmaster story as to whether a caning hurts him more than his customers, but nevertheless if any of the readers of the following paragraphs find that DIM'S cap fits, we will be glad if they would not only put it on but pull it right down over their ears. And we hope it sticks.

BLOOMER No. 1

A short while ago an extremely irate type practically melted the telephone in our hands when he rang us up to say that an arc which we had provided would not work. Cross examination showed that he could indeed strike the arc but could not maintain it. Our plaintiff was both indistinct and indefinite so we carried out a rapid sweep or sortie through the various trays on our desk which are marked respectively "In", "Out", "Pending", and "Too Difficult". Our search was rewarded by the discovery of copies of requisitions, packing, advice and despatch notes and other documents without which apparently no concern including our own can function. These indicated that we had sent to our blistery voice not only an arc lamp but also a resistance and a plug board.

Wrapping the telephone in our handkerchief, as precaution against further injury, we returned to the fray and asked how the arc lamp had been connected. But straight into the plug, of course. And he didn't know why we had sent him either a plug board or a

resistance because he required neither. He hadn't asked for them and he didn't want them. The plug he was using was a perfectly good wall plug and he was jolly well going to use it. He didn't want a resistance or any of those fancy things; he just wanted an arc and it wouldn't work.

We started to tell him why a resistance was necessary, but he must have run out of coppers to put in the slot because we eventually found we were talking to thin air. Anyway to save you—or rather the other fellow—a pocket full of coppers in the local call box, this briefly is why we provided that resistance.

In the first place it must be understood that there is a certain amount of resistance in the electrical circuit through an arc. The carbons themselves are good enough conductors, but the same cannot be said for the air gap between them. The amount of this resistance depends on the length of the air gap and of course when the two carbons are touching, as they are at the moment of striking the arc, this value is reduced virtually to nil. It is a characteristic of arcs that as the current is increased so the resistance drops, this in turn inviting yet a further increase of current. We have, in fact, one of those vicious upward spirals that we are continually reading about in connection with the cost of living. On the other hand as the carbons are separated and the current flowing across the arc is reduced, the resistance is increased and this in turn reduces the current still further—another vicious spiral, but this time in the opposite direction. Consequently, unless some form of external stabiliser is used, the arc is subject to such violent fluctuations that it is unmanageable. What is done, therefore, is to use a stabiliser known as an "arc resistance", or more explicitly a "ballast resistance", which behaves in exactly the same way as the ballast or keel in a sailing boat. Not only does this stabilise things from the start, but it quickly corrects any surges in either direction. Fortunately for us before the carbons are brought into contact, i.e. before the arc is struck, there is no current passing through the ballast resistance, and we have the benefit of full mains voltage wherewith to strike the arc. As soon as the arc is struck and current is flowing, the ballast resistance takes charge of proceedings.

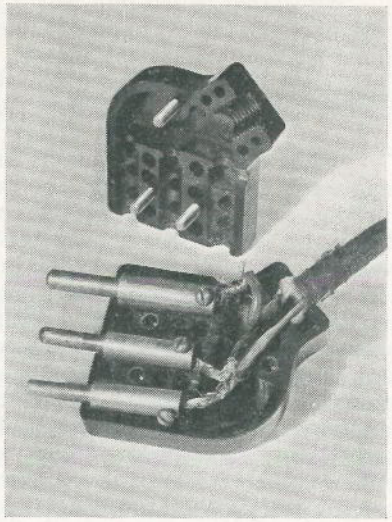
This resistance is connected in series with the arc, that is to say, one side of the electric supply is connected direct to one side of the arc, while the other is connected to one terminal of the resistance and the second terminal of the latter is connected to the other side of the arc lamp. In order to avoid cables being stripped and chopped up we always provide a plug box with each resistance so that everything can be connected for use in a matter of seconds. The plug box also incidentally provides the necessary switch and fuses.

It is not, therefore, just a little whimsy of ours to send out

resistances and plug boxes with arcs—we do it for a very definite, and we hope now a very obvious purpose.

BLOOMER No. 2

The other item on DIM'S Agenda is illustrated herewith. A hire customer removed one of our connectors from the end of a lead in order to fit his own plug. This apparently necessitated cutting back the insulation from the two conductors and earth wire. On replacing our own connector before returning the goods to us he re-assembled it in the method shown. Not only were the two conductors touching one another but they were also making contact with the earth lead. It would only have been a matter of moments to have shortened the bared portions of wire so that nothing of the kind could have occurred, but the criminal was too dim, too dumb or just too bone lazy to do that. May all his fuses blow!



CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,
TABS,

Dear Sir,

Actual adjudications are very different from the fanciful pretences indulged in by Mr. Christopher Ede in his article " Festivals must be Fair ". There is ample evidence to show that adjudicators often cannot agree as to which is the correct order of merit, let alone arrive at an average mark " that is near enough for practical purposes ".

And why should there be anything other than " complete impartiality " ? For the simple reason that adjudicators—even those experts within the Guild of Drama Adjudicators—are human, though they frequently appear to discourage us from believing them to be. They have their likes and dislikes in the matter of plays, just as the rest of us have. And, goodness me, don't they let us know it! Dramatic achievement is not the only section of the marking system that is conditioned by Choice of Play.

Yours faithfully,
RAYMOND R. G. HICKS.

AT HOME AND ABROAD

At Home

At the Summer meeting of the Illuminating Engineering Society held at Buxton, Mr. L. G. Applebee, Director and Manager of our Theatre Lighting Dept., read a paper entitled " Stage Lighting in the post-war theatre in Great Britain ". He started by emphasising the importance of avoiding " flat " lighting and pointed to the use, in recent London productions, of quantities of 150 or more directional lighting units in order to provide light and shade. He outlined the various forms of lighting equipment available with their uses and compared the various forms of stage lighting control which are at present available. As instances he quoted the number of dimmers installed in certain London theatres, viz.: Drury Lane 216, Stoll Theatre 176, New Theatre 144. In conclusion, he voiced the opinion that British stage lighting apparatus was a good as, if not better, than any produced in other countries.

Mr. Christopher Ede speaking as an actor and producer pointed out that the theatre was not a well organised industry and that, including actors, no less than 95 per cent. of the labour was casual. It was, therefore, most important that the apparatus should be simple and he made a plea for the prefocus cap (for projector lamps) which is described elsewhere in this issue of TABS. He considered the most important development since the war was the Strand Electronic Switchboard and looked forward to the time when it would be available to every theatre.

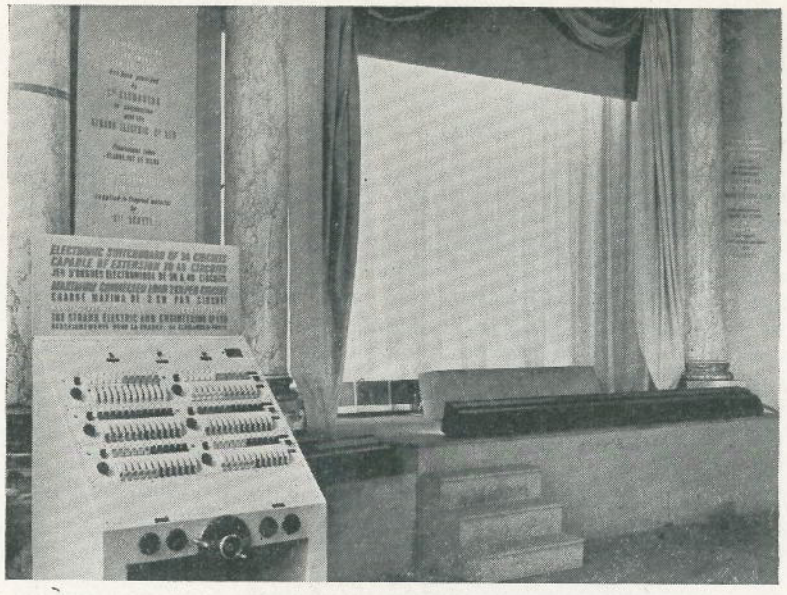
Mr. J. Hodgkinson, Regional Director to the North-West Counties for the Arts Council, also requested simplicity, as he considered the stage electrician was becoming the most dangerous man in the theatre. The task of stage lighting was, he said, to give significance to the art but the technique of the thing should not be visible at all.

Dr. L. du Gard Peach, who has his own theatre, also spoke of the need for flexibility of equipment. He also took up Mr. Applebee's point about the need for giving a three dimensional effect and avoiding flatness of lighting. Producers were, he said, trying to understand the problems of the lighting engineers and he hoped that the latter would try to understand the problems of the producer.

Dr. J. M. Aldington, President of the Society, said he felt he must make it clear there was not even a remote chance in the immediate future of more intense light sources for use in the theatre world.

Abroad

Strand Electric " went International " in June when they participated in the International Theatre Institution (UNESCO) Congress in Paris. For the occasion the Congress Room was



The Strand Electronic Control occupied pride of place at the International Theatre Institution Conference in Paris.

equipped with a fully working exhibit of the Electronic Control coupled to a complete stage equipment (see above). The exhibit and the Conference have been fully reported elsewhere, but there were several interesting features which escaped the report.

The switchboard together with the various models of interest shown by the Arts Council were transported to Paris in our own van, and although it was intended to publish a photograph of the lorry suspended 'twixt land and sea at Folkestone, our staff photographer took many pictures before he discovered that there was no film in his camera. He hastily points out that it was well before " opening time " and blames the activities of his offspring.

The journey went without a hitch except for our attempt to drive down the Champs Elysées in complete ignorance of the fact that vans are not allowed except in the very early hours of the morning.

The major difficulty was presented by the power supply. The French authorities apparently dislike any voltage higher than 115 but by dint of saying nothing about it, we hired a French motor alternator to produce an English voltage of 230. This equipment was very soon known as " the monster " and needed two people to start it. Moreover, due to its size, it had to be situated outside the Conference building. The bearings too decided to run hot to add to

M. Pierre Sonrel of France, Architect for the Old Vic rebuilding, explains a model of that theatre to Mr. Kenneth Rae, Secretary of the Joint Council of the National Theatre and Old Vic, who in addition to being Secretary of the British Centre of the International Theatre Institution, acted as Chairman of its Architectural Conference and Exhibition in Paris.

the troubles, and demonstrations of over an hour's duration were definitely hazardous. In spite of all this the demonstration went with a swing, and we were besieged with enquiries from delegates of over 30 nations.

THE TRAVELLING SUNSPOTS

Over a year ago we supplied two reconditioned sunspots—the biggest arc lamp by far in our range—to a customer in Denmark, and we met up with them the other day in Copenhagen. On enquiring after their health we discovered that they had travelled with a tenting show through Norway and Sweden. During the cold winter they had journeyed to Egypt and had now returned to Denmark.

Thinking it was time they rested we suggested a brief respite for overhaul, but were told that they were now off to India. The proud owner has asked us to supply him with a third to keep the travellers company. As these lanterns—without resistances, inductors or other control gear—weight $2\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. each, they are hardly things one would tour unless one attached great importance to them. So we are glad of the unsolicited testimonial.

TIDINGS

The following fourth leader from "The Times" of the 24th June, is reprinted by the kind permission of the publishers.

This is a time of year at which a considerable proportion of the population finds itself involved in the organisation of pageants. Nobody knows at what stage in its history our extraordinary race acquired this habit of reproducing, generally in a light but wetting rain, painstaking travesties of past events; but the practice has clearly come to stay, and if it is not so rife as usual in 1950 there is every reason to fear that it will be rifer than ever in 1951. In order to stage a pageant it is first necessary to select a site on which to stage it, a task full of difficulties, upon which, however, the project all too seldom founders. The park of a gentleman's residence is still much sought after as a *venue* and, provided it is not being used for opencast mining, an assault course, or the housing of foreign workers in Nissen huts, such a setting has a great deal to be said for it.

The organiser of experience and discrimination will automatically have secured the support of an influential committee before embarking on his grand design. In addition to this volatile and often acrimonious body he will require the services of an old grey horse, such an animal being for some reason indispensable to any revival of the glories of the past. He will need—theoretically— an author and a historical adviser, but most organisers prefer to keep these vital portfolios in their own hands. In the selection of dramatic episodes from local history the main prerequisite is an open mind and a nimble imagination, for it is surprising in how many localities, all down the chequered, violent, splendid centuries of our rough island story, nothing of the slightest interest seems to have happened. Never sacked by the Danes, by-passed by the Black Death, just over the border of PRINCE RUPERT'S Friday country, religiously shunned by itinerant royalty, without even a minor poet in the graveyard, many an English village has slumbered on without acquiring the most abstruse, the most indirect claim to fame or notoriety.

This does not deter pageant-fanciers in the least. It acts, rather, as a challenge. The fact that nothing ever happened at Scribblebury does not mean that its inhabitants stood altogether aloof from the great cavalcade of English history. Far from it. They were frequently—indeed, it would appear almost incessantly—receiving news (technically known as tidings) of tremendous events. The Danes have landed! The Normans have landed! The Armada has been sighted! The Roundheads are coming! Barefooted over the ancient greensward pants the postman's son, praying that the safety-pins will hold his garment of sheepskin in its place. See how frantically he points to the eastward, see (as far as their huge false beards will allow it) the consternation on the faces of the Ancient Scribbleburians as the full import of his tidings bursts upon them!

Above the pattering of the rain upon our umbrellas we can hear them crying "The Danes! The Danes!" as, picking up their spears and their little stools and their cooking pot, they go shambling off into the middle distance at that rather furtive, gliding trot which is so integral a feature of all histrionics in the open air . . . And now several more centuries have rolled by and, just as we have congratulated ourselves on identifying the curious object on the wrist of the gentleman in a doublet as the stuffed kestrel from the bar-parlour of the Dog and Duck, the idyllic glimpse of Scribblebury under Good Queen Bess is once more galvanised into drama; for there, thundering stertorously up the lime avenue, is the old grey horse bearing a young lady from the pony club dressed as a cross between Dick Whittington and a beefeater, and again there is a great deal of pointing and gesticulating, and everybody who can draws his sword, and as they all stumble away we can hear that they are intoning "The Armada! The Armada!" in a rather aggressive way. Once more history has come to Scribblebury—or should it be the other way round ?

PRINTING TRADE DISPUTE

"Tabs" is, we regret, several weeks overdue. Our readers will no doubt appreciate that this is due to circumstances beyond our control.

THE SOCIETY FOR THEATRE RESEARCH

PROGRAMME FOR WINTER, 1950-51

Monday, October 9, at 7.30.
The History of Stage Make-up: M. ST. CLARE BYRNE.
Chairman: E. Martin Browne.

Tuesday, November 7, at 7.30.
Antecedents of the Music Hall: HAROLD SCOTT.
Chairman: Leonard Sachs.

Wednesday, November 15, at 7.30.
Reports on Paris Conference on Theatre Architecture and Congress of the International Theatre Institute:
HENRY ADLER, PATRICIA JELLICOE, RICHARD SOUTHERN.
Chairman: Norman Marshall.

Thursday, December 7, at 7.30.
The Shakespearian Production of Shakespeare:
RONALD WATKINS.
Chairman: Michael MacOwan.

Sunday, January 7, at 2.30.
Stage Clothes and Real Clothes: JAMES LAVER.
Chairman: Doris Langley Moore.

Wednesday, February 7, at 7.30.
Acting Styles: GEORGE DEVINE.
Chairman: Michel Saint-Denis.

Wednesday, March 7, at 7.30.
Theatre Riots: SIR ST. VINCENT TROUBRIDGE.
Chairman: Sir Bronson Albery.

All meetings will be held at the
British Drama League, 9, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Details of membership may be obtained from:
Sybil Rosenfeld, Bertram Shuttleworth, Hon. Secretaries,
7, Ashburnham Mansions, S.W.10.

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