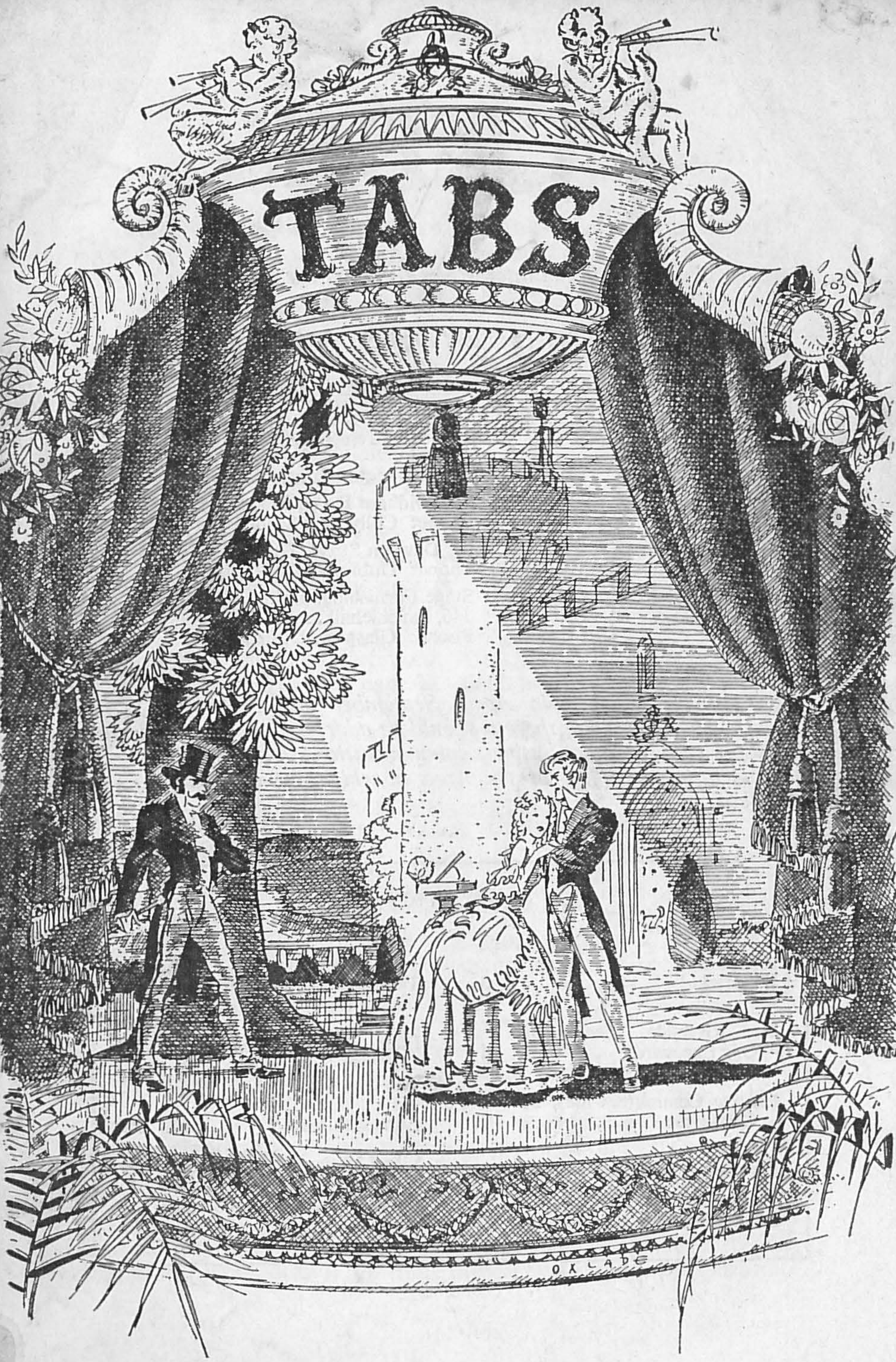

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TABS

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

With this issue we welcome to the ranks of our readers quite a number of people from the professional theatre. If they find within our pages less of an instructive nature than do some of our amateur readers, we hope that we may still interest them from time to time.

TABS was started in a modest way in October, 1937, and circulated purely amongst members of the Amateur Theatre. It appeared monthly and in those days we even printed it ourselves. The war years not only meant the cessation of publication but involved the loss of all our mailing lists and records. Starting again from scratch in September 1946, our circulation is now in excess of 8,000 per issue, and continues to grow steadily with each number.

* * *

Regular readers will notice a change in the format of the page opposite. We propose repeating our branch addresses in all future issues as a reminder that such places exist and that in the interests of not only ourselves but our customers, the appropriate office should be used. Time and money will be saved thereby and the errors of duplication or omission minimised. A map showing the areas served by each branch is given on page 32. Each branch and agency carries its own hire and sales stock and so no better deliveries can be obtained from London than from branches. If ever it is necessary for a branch to refer a customer to London they will do so—on occasions for example in the case of decorative hire fittings—but otherwise the nearest branch should be used on all occasions.

* * *

We must apologise not only for the lateness but also for the somewhat untidy appearance of the last issue of TABS. This was of course due to disputes within the printing trade and over which we had no control. Strangely enough our appearance about seven weeks late was the occasion of a positive spate of congratulatory letters, to the writers of which we offer our sincere editorial thanks.

* * *

The lateness of our last issue did, however, involve two less desirable happenings. One was that the 300 reconditioned Pattern 43 1000w Spotlights which we mentioned were available at reduced cost were in large part disposed of before TABS reached its readers. Now unfortunately there is not a single one left, nor indeed do we know when we will have any other secondhand or re-conditioned equipment to offer. The second minor tragedy that occurred was that we had to start work on this present issue of TABS before the last one had even appeared. Seeing that pliers rather than pens are the tools of our trade this seemed rather an imposition.

THE RIVERSIDE THEATRE

By GUY SHEPPARD (Its Designer)

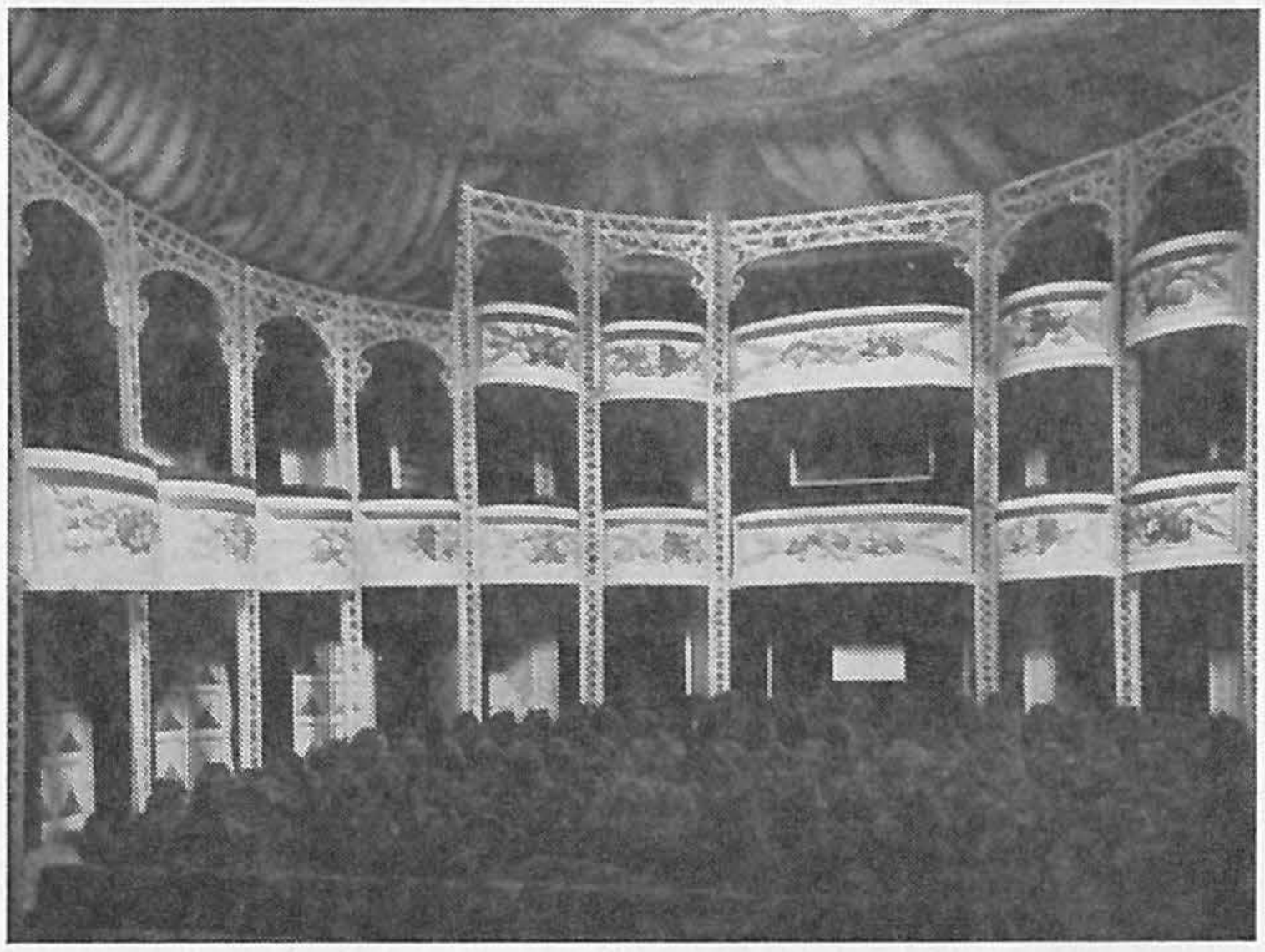
In the initial discussions it was established that the theatre was required to house not only evening performances in the traditional manner of the Vauxhall Cremorne entertainments during which light refreshments can be served in the auditorium, but also excerpts from Opera, Ballet and, during the day-time, Puppet Shows. In fact it must fulfil all the requirements of a true theatre together with a few more, have an especially intimate atmosphere, be reasonably proof against the assembled noises of fun fair, dance hall and concert stage, but at the same time be simply constructed and easily demountable.

A method of construction in tubular steel scaffolding with prefabricated panels of fibrous plaster was suggested, and the resemblance of tubes welded with rings into stanchions, to Georgian ironwork was made a feature of the architecture. When rough sketches and plans along these lines had been accepted the development was carried out by the organising architects who have produced an enchanting building. My own job was the conception—not the execution.

These evening shows with Chairman and backchat between actor and audience require the intimacy of contact that was best established in the encircling boxes and apron stage of the Georgian theatre; and such a plan was therefore used. But the individual boxes have been run together to form a promenade. At the sides this treatment obviates the tiresome problems of sight-lines for a possible second or third row, and at the same time allows easy access for the service of those liquid refreshments which are part of the Tradition. At the back of the auditorium this circle has further rows of seats, but the centre block has been given over to a control room for the B.B.C. which had not been envisaged in the original specification. Above this floor there is even a gallery, to gain the elegant height the building needs, or to make it pay, or to serve Tradition yet again.

The plan is translated into a double horseshoe of stanchions supporting circle, gallery, roof, and with the sides of the shoe raking downward till they meet the stage tower, it becomes a free-standing steel skeleton already defining the shape of the building and demonstrating its purpose. In construction this skeleton, the stanchions welded with rings and the beams with rods is put together in the usual manner with scaffold clips, and these stanchions and beams are displayed wherever possible: inside the building as decorated columns supporting the boxes, outside between the panels of cladding. These panels which make up the exterior wall will be prefabricated of wood framing and have the outer surface of fibrous plaster, the inner of stretched wire mesh later to be covered with fabric. Shuttered windows with individual balconies on circle

level above a series of exit doors on the ground floor provide for the opening up required in the specification. The decorative style is a deliberate pastiche of classic and contemporary idioms; but bound together by the functional display of the steel frame and the significant shape of the structure, it dramatises the theatrical purpose of the building and its surroundings.



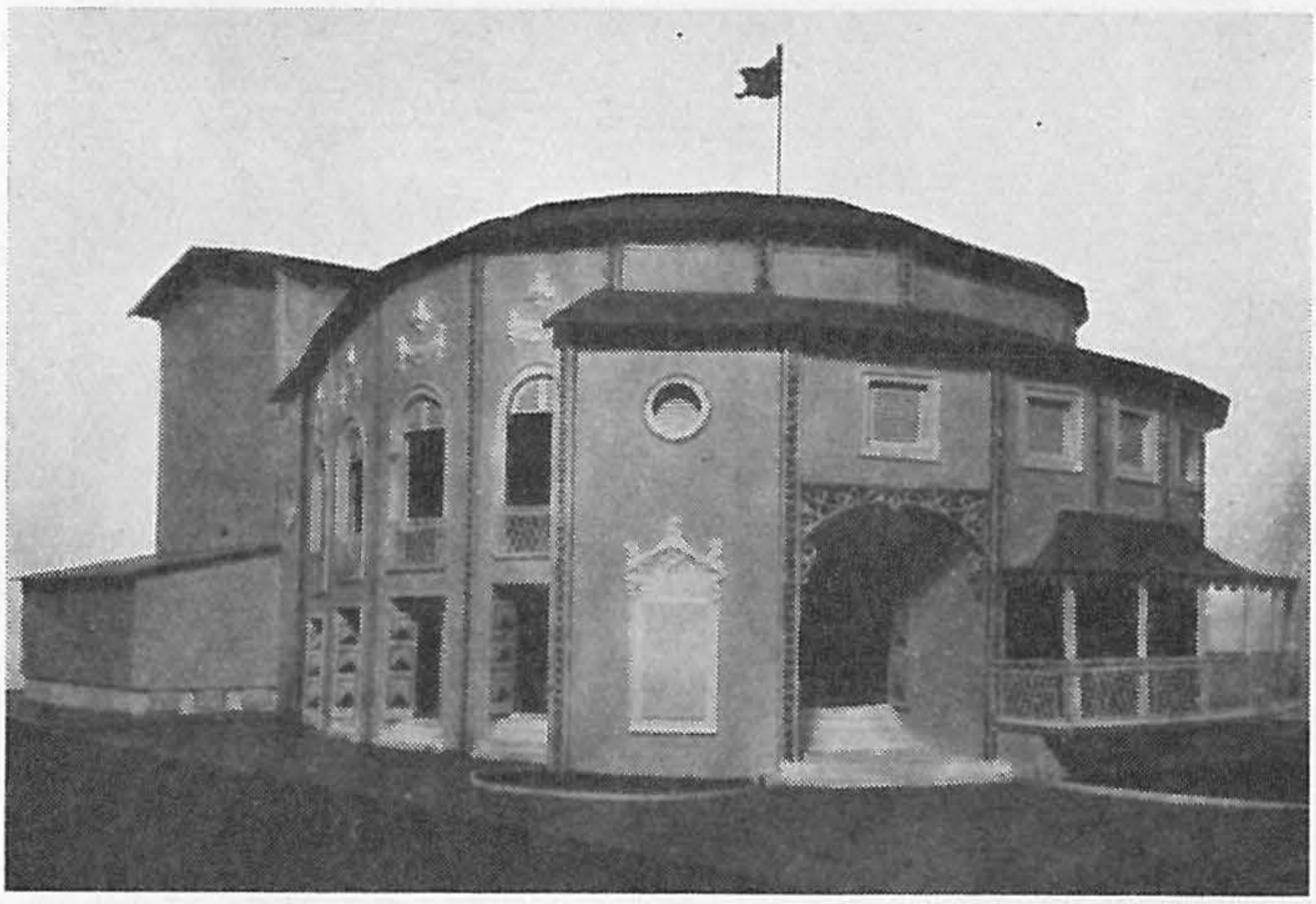
An interior view of a model of the Riverside Theatre as it will appear when completed.

The Georgian plan gives a forestage with proscenium doors through which actors may enter to play a quick front cloth scene while some magnificent change is taking place on the full stage, and above these we have placed oval windows from which either actors may lean or spotlights shine. Through the left-hand door comes the Chairman, who is on that side provided with his own little stage, at a lower level so that he will not break too far into the main picture. Here are his table, his chair, and his tankard of beer.

But since it is not only for the evening performance that this theatre has been built the forestage floor is made removable to disclose a small orchestra pit, sufficient for the requirements of the short opera or ballet recitals. And immediately behind the theatre proscenium is a special mask for puppet shows, adjustable to the various dimensions of the different stages. The stage curtain falls behind this and can therefore be used with it if required.

The stage itself behind the proscenium opening of twenty-four feet width and fourteen height, is also small but adequate for any demands. Thirty-eight feet overall width and twenty-one feet depth, it has a grid of thirty-one feet, which provides eighteen sets of hemp lines for hanging scenery. The stage floor being at the same height above the ground it is possible to unload scenery straight off the

lorry-floor through the dock doors in the back wall. In view of the overhanging trees this should obviate many drip-marks in wet weather. Electricians, Properties, Stage management are housed in rooms around stage level and dressing rooms, two for two stars each and chorus rooms for fourteen ladies and eight gentlemen, are provided under the stage. These are as comfortable as their small space will allow and modern research into such problems can give. They are insulated from the orchestra pit by a corridor giving access to either side of the stage. The wardrobe room is also on this level.



Model making par excellence. A view of the exterior of the theatre. Even those who are not interested in theatre architecture must admire the detail in this model.

Stage lighting equipment will be straightforward. Spotlights housed in the ceiling of the auditorium will light the forestage at an angle of forty-five degrees, and together with three perches in a position down stage of the apron either side should ensure all down-stage action is sufficiently brilliantly illuminated whatever the full stage lighting. On stage there will be the usual spotbar and battens, cyclorama bar, and dip positions, in all forty-eight ways controlled from an electronic desk situated in the circle. An interesting result of the steel tube construction of the building frame is that it is possible and a simple matter to clip a lamp onto any part of this frame as for instance the proscenium stanchions or the side members of the stage tower, in many cases obviating the use of tall stands or booms.

Closing the vista along the river front the theatre stands at an angle which shows off its best proportions. The mass of the stage tower against the trees is led up to by a progression of canvas-green roofs, capping walls on which wedgewood blue is relieved with

white devices and golden-yellow doors. Inside, the tall thin columns spring up, elegant, cream coloured breaking into what might be wrought-iron arches at the head of each bay. These arches are, however, of cane, whose lightness and tractability has been featured also in the orchestra rail, loudspeaker grid, and the window fan-lights and their external balconies. The swagged curtains behind these arches are both decorative and sound-absorbent as is the draped ceiling of pale-blue glass fabric which surrounds the central sounding board. This last continues the pale blue as a painted sky with gentle clouds and disporting amoretti as a final gesture to the Tradition. The projecting box fronts, painted in golden-yellows are as ever capped with red plush; and the dark green of the perimeter walls throws up these brighter colours into a gay relief which is given its final brilliance by the glitter of chandeliers.

It could be that we come to the theatre to be entertained by the stage, but that is not to say that the entertainment should not be continued during the interval. To that end an elegant little bar is provided which juts out in a balcony between the entrances, from which upon a fine night there should be the most pleasant views across the river and down the riverside vista. Upon the walls of this bar will be found those tinsel prints which were contemporary with the Toy theatre of the Juvenile Drama, which has inspired much of the treatment of this theatre.

And now the lights are fading, the Chairman comes before the red curtain: Ladies and GentleMEN . . .

CASTING COMMITTEES MUST BE CASTIGATED

It matters little whether such a committee has been constitutionally created in conformity with the rules of that popular game of noughts and crosses known as democratic franchise, or whether they have coagulated by some other less obvious exercise of the laws of attraction and repulsion. They are, in any case, the people who invariably select the wrong plays and cast the wrong people to play parts for which they are least suitable, so that the right people, for whom the parts were obviously written, may be given a nice sense of grievance. It may be taken as axiomatic that whenever three or four are gathered together in the cause of dramatic art, sooner or later somebody will produce a perfect scheme for selecting and casting plays; a scheme, that is, for ensuring that there will be fair shares of fat all round. Any general meeting or conference can be guaranteed to spontaneously combust as soon as some frustrated nark (who has probably tired of discussing the higher aims and objects of Little Theatres) can seize on an excuse, however flimsy, for expounding his criticisms and ideas on the subject of casting. His frustration has nothing whatever to do with the fact that he was

offered Fortinbras when practically everybody expected him to play Hamlet; or that his wife (whose Judith in "Hay Fever" made people who had seen Marie Tempest's effort gasp in amazement) had not been given the part that was made for her in the last show: he merely wants to see fair play all round. He provides a welcome cue for all the other narks, of varying degrees of frustration, who wade in with their vigorous condemnation of the current method and at least six alternative methods of casting plays will be suggested, with varying degrees of vehemence. Somebody is bound to point out that the Burbleton Players have the perfect system, little suspecting that in the Burbleton Little Theatre, at that very moment, the chairman of the Players is wondering whether to close the meeting to prevent the casting director from either an attack of apoplexy or becoming the victim of assault and battery.

The truth is, of course, that every system has been tried and every method has been found wanting. Few actors, if any, are as good as they like to think they are. But however bad an actor may be, assuming he has acquired something more than an elementary technique, he can always find somebody who thinks him marvellous, and others who think him the ultimate end. If both schools of thought sit in committee together, casting a play can be quite an exercise in give and take. The result will depend on the forcefulness of the give and the acquisitiveness of the take.

". . . quite an exercise in give and take."

Those who believe most firmly in the British social system of government of committees, by committees for committees would shed their blood (and their opponents') rather than see any weakening of democratic control by popular voting. Others, who doubt whether the voice of the people is, *ipso facto*, the voice of the gods, are inclined to favour more selective methods. They seek the best of both worlds by having popular voting for a General Committee which then selects and appoints the people who are to do the jobs. But those who regard individual responsibility (dictatorship to the opponents) as the ideal way of getting perfect organisation, insist on the appointment of a director whose word is law; or they might avoid general dictatorship and merely make sure that the producer of each particular play shall be empowered to choose his own cast.

There is plenty to be said in favour of each method; and it is said both in and out of season. There are also plenty of arguments against—and no difficulty in getting them voiced.

It is, of course, quite possible to evolve a perfect system. But as a perfect system demands perfection from those who operate it, where are we ? The production of a play is a work of art. Ideally, the author, producer and actor would each be a perfect artist. But they alone cannot create this work of art. Perfect artists must create the decor and the lighting—and the play must be performed for an audience of perfect artists. Appreciation is, perhaps, the most universal and most difficult of all the arts. In such a perfect production the players would be chosen by the producer who is the organising artist, responsible for the whole. But what is a "perfect production," anyhow ? Perfection is not possible in this very imperfect world but if any group possesses an individual with the ability, integrity, charm, leisure and inclination necessary to qualify him for the position of Director, they should whoop for joy, give him *carte blanche*, do as he tells them and ask no questions. He would be that rare bird, the right man in the right job and he would need the self-protection of an impenetrably thick skin. If he exists at all he will probably do the job whether he is called a director or not. Even if he is chairman, secretary or simply a member of an authentically elected committee, he will be automatically accepted as the leader of opinion. All corporate bodies whatever their purpose and however democratic their ideals, always clamour for leadership. Without it, they dither about in a muddle of mediocrity—the lowest common denominator of " democratic " government. In practice, no matter how popular the franchise or widespread the voting, no matter how complete may be the cross-section of society that becomes a committee, its decisions will be mainly, if not entirely influenced by the opinions of one, two or three persons. If the number is one, the committee will usually arrive at unanimous decisions; if more than one, each person will have his or her own faithful followers, party or clique and unanimity will be difficult to achieve.

. . . appreciation . . . the most universal and most difficult of all the arts."

If the one ideal person is not available—and he usually is not—the arduous job of selecting the right plays and making the most reasonable choice of players is best left to a small committee—the

smaller the better. There are few people who have (*a*) the ability to judge, from reading a play they have not seen on the stage, its theatrical merit; (*b*) the capacity to appreciate the acting ability and limitations of the players available; (*c*) the time to spend on carefully and critically reading lots of plays and attending interminable meetings; (*d*) a conscientious regard for the obligations of (*c*), and (*e*) a capacity for being completely impartial. Yet all these qualifications are essential to the job. It is often shrewdly argued that if the producer is chosen because he has the necessary qualifications, the casting should be left to him. He should certainly be co-opted, but it is a fairly safe bet that even when the producer has an unfettered choice and obtains his ideal cast, the members of the cast won't all be satisfied with the distribution of the parts and will regard the producer himself as anything but ideal. And they might even be right!

As ideal conditions are always impossible, some compromise is inevitable—and compromise in any art is dangerous. Not all who help to sustain the amateur theatre could justly claim to be good artists. Probably not even the majority are. Most of them are doing the job mainly for the fun of it—even those who take themselves and their art so frightfully seriously. Obviously there won't be enough fun to go round if only the best actors are always chosen for the best parts. And it doesn't often happen that any casting committee, dim-witted or otherwise, has a surplus of candidates to fill all the parts in a large cast. It happens not infrequently that gratitude for a willingness to " have a go " has to include a long-suffering tolerance of the limited ability of somebody who is reluctantly doing his pathetically inadequate best. There is a surprisingly large number of workers in the amateur theatre who were originally dragged in unwillingly to fill a gap and have remained to become competent if not inspired enthusiasts. Yet, it is safe to say that the appearance of such a performer provoked caustic comments about fatuous casting!

" . . . dragged in unwillingly to fill a gap."

To elect a large unwieldy committee for any job is unwise. In the case of a casting committee it is also shockingly bad tactics. A committee of three is certainly more efficient—and is undoubtedly

an easier target to be shot at. Members of large committees can always disarm the marksman by blaming fellow members (always carefully not named) for unpopular decisions. A smaller body can only rely on the doubtful protection of an appeal not to shoot the committee which, like the proverbial pianist, is doing its best. But the most " best-doing " committee in the world is a sitting target when its job is casting. There will be no dearth of eager shooters; after all, that's part of the fun. Payment of a membership sub. automatically confers a permit to get a gun.

P.C.

EARTHING

For some years now electrical apparatus has been fitted with three-core flexes and three-pin plugs instead of the twin flex and two-pin plugs once common. Yet table standards and other lighting fittings still usually retain the twin flex.

To judge by many of our hire customers' distaste for three-pin plugs the third wire is regarded as a nuisance probably devised by the cable manufacturers to help them sell more wire. The object of this article is to show the layman that for stage work the third wire is essential and that even in his own home it is a good thing.

By now most people realise that an electrical circuit *must* consist of a feed from and a return to the power station generator. Without the complete loop of Fig. 1 the lamp cannot light. We have in the diagram the condition of the old Direct Current leaving the generator at high potential, passing through the lamp and emerging at low potential and thence back to the generator. (But see caption to Fig. 1.) Nowadays, in order to simplify generation and distribution the current changes direction fifty times a second and we have alternating current (A.C. 50 cycles).

This means that both the wires in Fig. 1 are in effect at high potential since for 1/100 of a second the current flows from top wire to bottom then changes over through a zero when no current flows till the current flows from bottom wire to top and back through zero until the next 1/100 of a second is reached, when the cycle is complete and things are back where they started 1/50 of a second previously.

In electrical distribution with immense distances over which to transmit the power and complicated networks of wiring, much of it flexible and temporary in nature, in buildings of all kinds there is always a risk of leakage from either wire. To isolate the lamp under the conditions in Fig. 1 a double-pole switch is necessary.

It is obviously preferable to have only one wire at high potential, consequently the practice is to connect one of our two wires permanently to earth at the power station. Now only one wire can be at high potential in respect of earth. In practice it is not sufficient to earth at the power station but at various distribution points including, in the case of large buildings such as theatres, at the main intake for those premises. The supply to a theatre or a district of many streets of shops and houses is brought to a transformer where the generated electricity of very high voltage small current is turned into moderate voltage large current for use. This then is a convenient place to earth one side of the supply and in so doing, all the wires connected thereto. At least two connections are used for safety's sake.

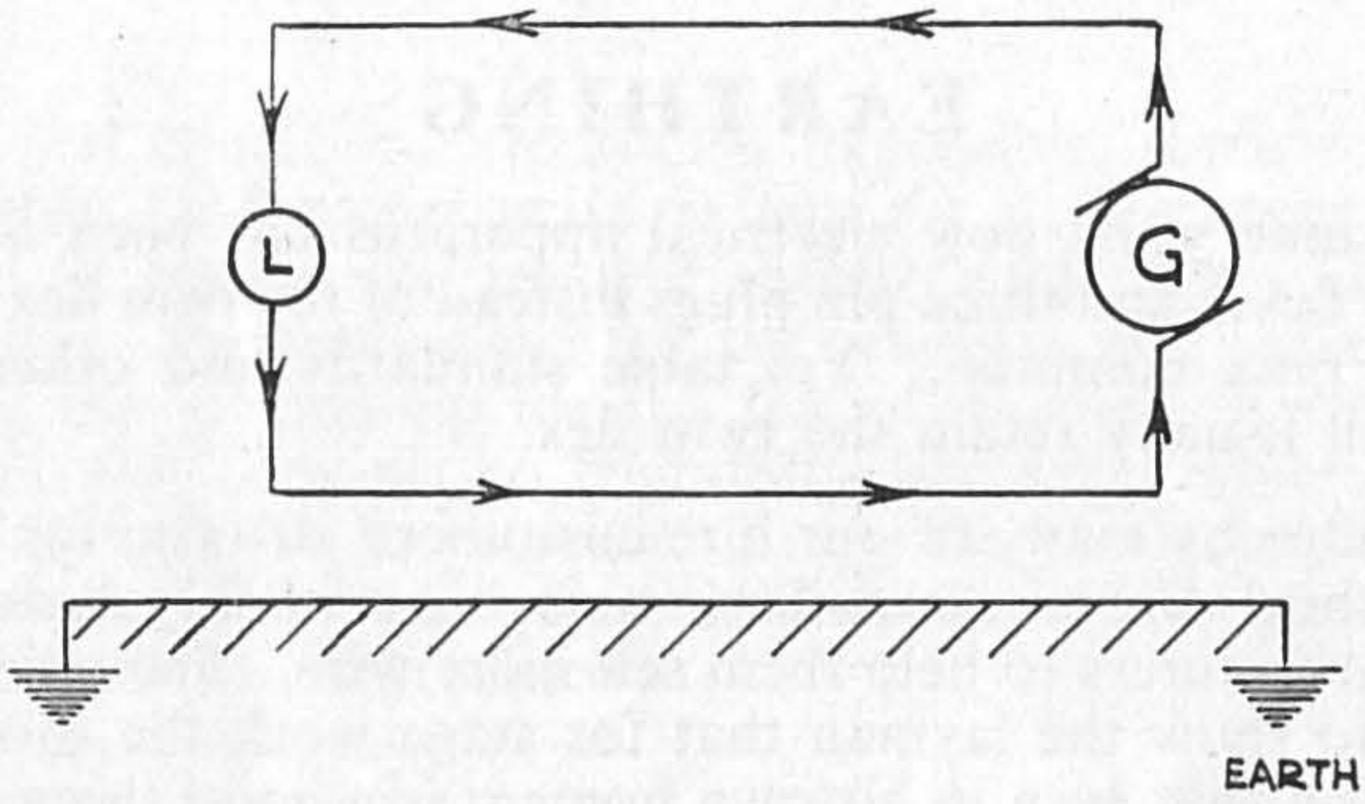


Fig. 1. *In an elementary* (*D.C.*) *circuit current leaves the generator—possibly at some remote supply station—passes to the load at high potential, voltage, or pressure, and returns to the same generator thereafter at low potential. This state of affairs is only true as long as the return wire* (*lower one in diagram*) *is unbroken. If the circuit is broken in the return, current will cease to flow, the resistance in the load, etc., will have no effect and full* (*mains or generator*) *potential will be momentarily available to shock the unwary.*

This side is known as the " neutral " and the wires connected to it are labelled N and/or coloured black. The other side is known as " Live " labelled L and its wires are coloured red. Any person coming into accidental contact with the Live side is liable to receive a shock. How painful or serious will depend on his contact with earth: on a dry rubber or hard wood floor the risk is nil; on a damp or cement floor the shock can be no joke; while in a bath a perfect path to earth is provided via water and plumbing and the result may well be fatal.

The golden rule is never to touch the Live side under any circumstances whatever. To make sure apparatus is properly

disconnected the switch or dimmers, now only single pole, *must* break the live wire. This is very important because breaking the neutral would put the lamp out leading us to suppose the lantern or fitting were safe when at the time the peril of a path through us to earth, when changing the lamp for example, is as great as before. It will also be clear why in the article on lampholders in the last issue of " TABS " it was stated that the centre contact of a prefocus or a screw holder must be connected to the live lead. Obviously in taking out a lamp there is a risk of touching the outer metal surface of lamp cap or even holder, whereas the centre contact is inaccessible. Of course the switch ought to be off and the lantern unplugged when changing the lamp but this may not always be possible during a show and in any case wiring this way is a simple extra precaution.

As the neutral is earthed it might be supposed that the wires connected thereto need not be insulated—a bare wire would do. This is not the case for a variety of technical reasons which need not concern us here. Therefore we shall find two insulated wires run everywhere—a " live " and a " neutral "—*the wise man treats both with equal respect and touches no bare metal or wire belonging to either*. Where the neutral is properly earthed on the premises, fuses are inserted only in the live side of the wiring: if earthed only at a distant point then fuses are included in the neutral as well. The first condition is becoming more and more common and can of course be recognised by the fuse arrangements. In the event of a " short circuit " occurring between the " live " and " neutral " then extra current will flow in the circuit, the fuse blow and disconnect the live wire. A short circuit may be caused by a defective lamp, fraying of the insulation between the live and neutral wires, or even a down-right blunder in wiring up.

Wherever possible it is a good thing to shroud all electrified metal with insulating material. For example, modern switches and lampholders are of bakelite, lighting fittings of bakelite or some other non-conducting material such as wood and so on. Under these circumstances the chance of the electricity taking any path except via the live and neutral leads is remote indeed.

However, many kinds of apparatus can only be made of metal: an electric iron, an electric fire, and of course stage lighting apparatus. A bakelite spotlight would be ill fitted to stand the strains of stage life.

A piece of electrical apparatus carried on a metal frame or encased in metal presents a new danger. Suppose the frayed flex does not make contact from live to neutral but from live to the metal case of a spotlight. The flow of current to the earth may be insufficient to blow the fuse, the particular piece of floor or hanging support being a non-conductor. If someone holding on to a metal cat-ladder or steadying himself by one hand on to a metal pipe tries

to focus the defective lantern with the other hand, then the live case will be for that moment connected to earth via the poor devil who has hold of it. (Fig. 2.) Current passing from one hand across the body to the other, as in this case, will be serious if not fatal. Even if the circuit is not as good a conductor as this, a burn or an electric shock however small is unpleasant; especially when balanced on the top of a ladder.

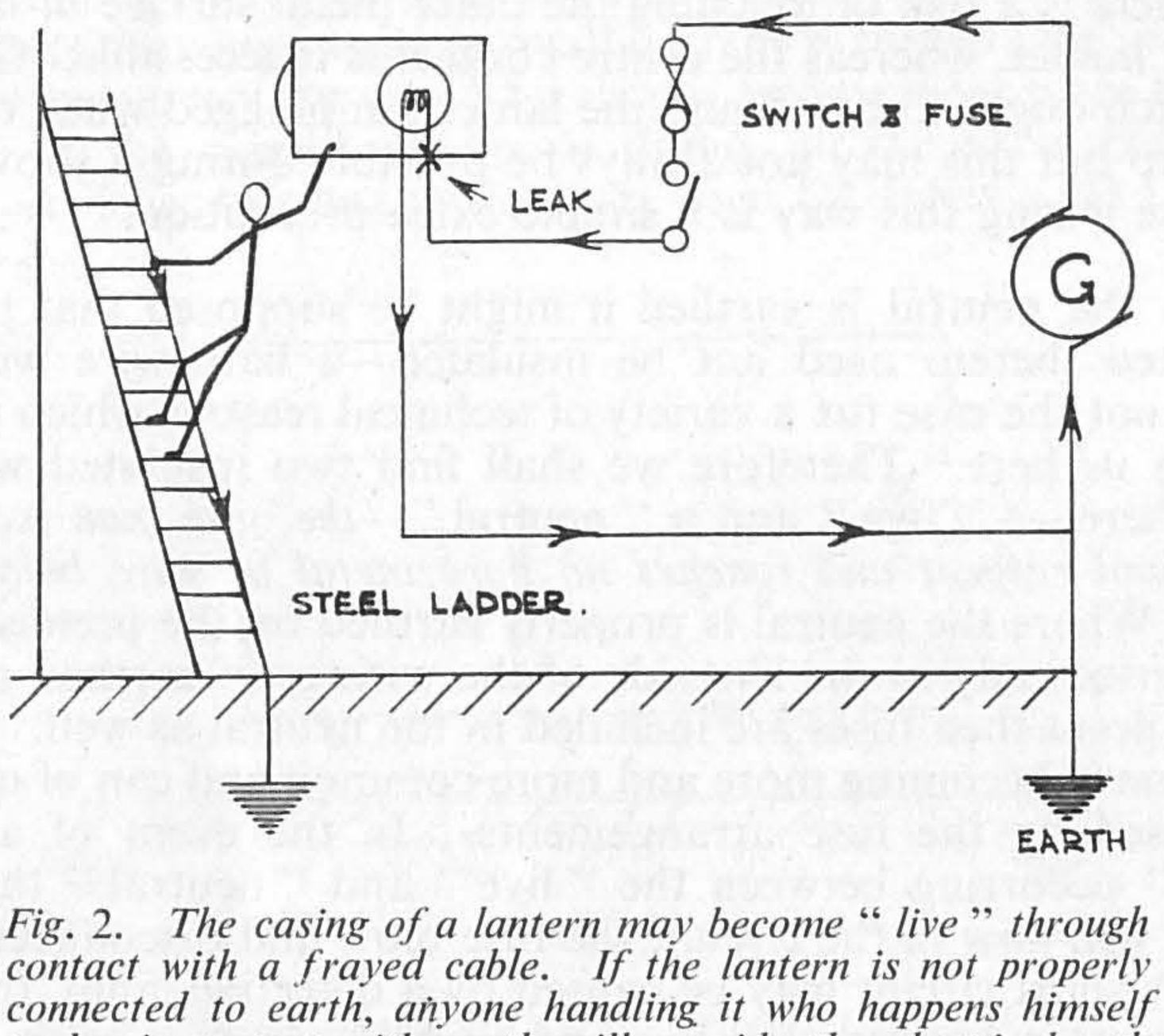


Fig. 2. The casing of a lantern may become "live" through contact with a frayed cable. If the lantern is not properly connected to earth, anyone handling it who happens himself to be in contact with earth will provide the electrical path to his own discomfort or danger.

To avoid these risks we must ensure that any leakage from the live side to the metal work of an electrical installation and its metal cased equipment will blow the fuse for that circuit. This is simple. Instead of waiting for a chance connection to earth to do this, we connect all metal permanently to earth. (Fig. 3.) The metal conduits, trunkings, etc., in which the wires run, are bonded together and run to an earth connection in the intake where the supply company's mains and meters are placed.

Permanent apparatus is also bonded to the system of earthed metal work. Portable or temporary apparatus is connected by three-core flexibles to three-pin plugs. The red wire to the L (Live) pin, the black wire to the N (Neutral) pin, and the green wire to the E (Earth) pin. Notice the large and distinctive earth pin of a plug (Fig. 4) also the green earth wire, symbol of safety contrasted with the red live wire representing danger.

The large earth pin in a plug ensures that this safety connection is made before any other when plugging up. In most plugs provision

is also made that the connection of this all important wire is visible. For the system to be a success, the earth connections everywhere must obviously be beyond reproach. Only in the flexible parts of an installation need an earth wire be used. Elsewhere screwed contact to conduit or metal frameworks is sufficient provided they are bonded to give continuity via the conduit or other means to the proper earth connection in the intake. This will mean that paint or other insulating material must be removed at all joints to ensure continuity.

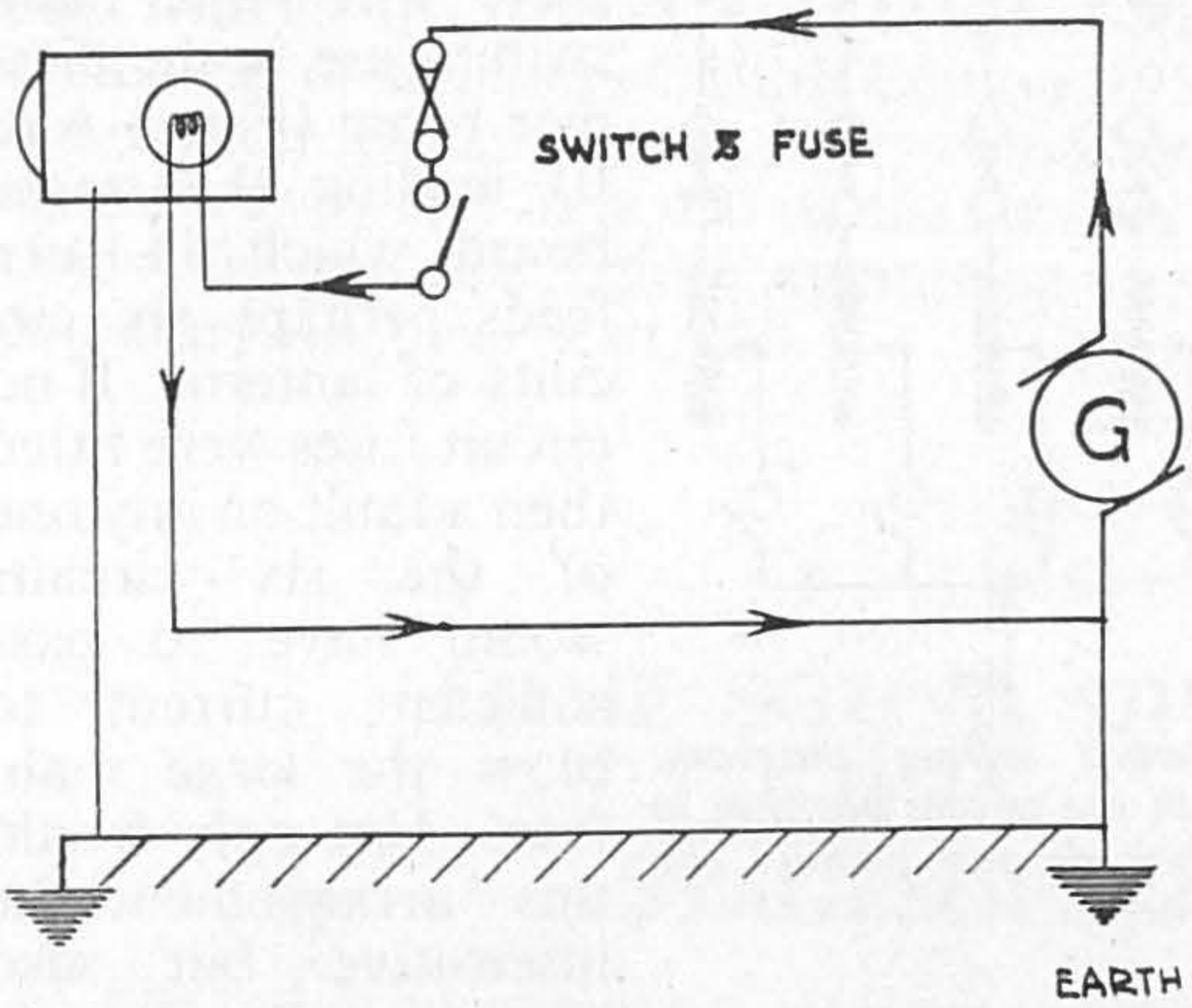


Fig. 3. The lantern has been connected to earth by means, for example, of the 3rd conductor of a three-core cable. The fuse should blow but even if not, anyone handling the lantern would only provide an alternative and not the only path to earth.

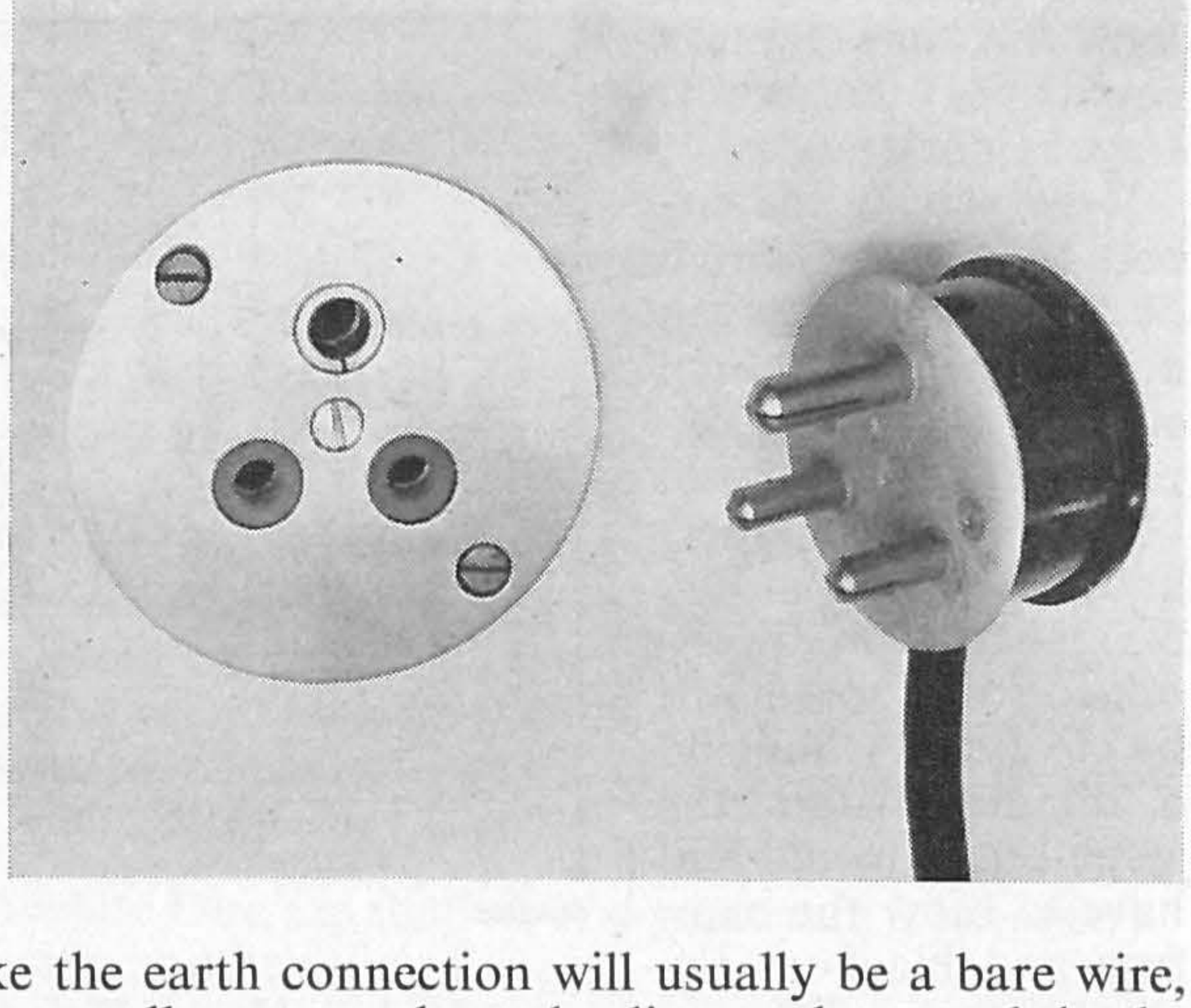


Fig. 4. Three-pin plug and socket. Note the ample dimensions of the earth pin which prevent the plug being wrongly inserted and ensure that anything connected is earthed before the current-carrying pins make contact with live sockets.

At the intake the earth connection will usually be a bare wire, and may be very small compared to the live and neutral leads. This is because the earth wire only has to carry the fault current of one or two circuits simultaneously whereas the other mains may have to carry the whole load of the building for long periods at a time.

The importance of the continuity of the earthing system will by now be clear, but it is necessary to stress the part of the fuse in this safety circuit. The earthing system operates by blowing the fuse and consequently there must be a fuse in the proper place in the circuit and it must be loaded to a suitable capacity. The fuse must be in the live side in such a position that the whole of the circuit or apparatus likely to cause the fault is isolated.

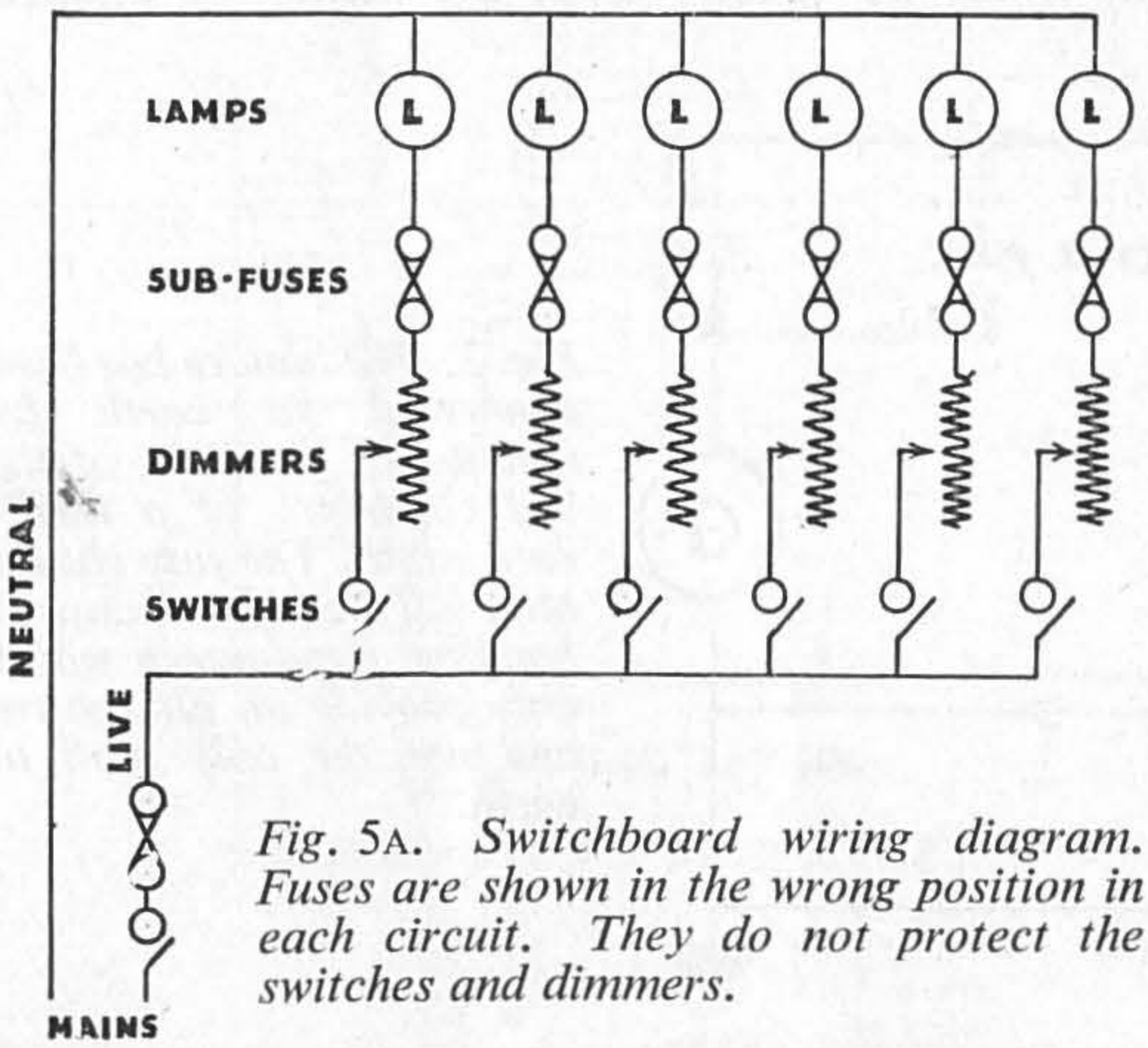


Fig. 5A. Switchboard wiring diagram. Fuses are shown in the wrong position in each circuit. They do not protect the switches and dimmers.

Assuming a stage-board is in question there will be a main switch-fuse in the dimmer room (Fig. 5 A & B) feeding the stage-board which in turn feeds perhaps six circuits of lanterns. If no circuit fuses were fitted then a fault on any one of the six circuits would have to pass sufficient current to blow the large main fuse. Not only would this arrangement be insensitive but also inconvenient because a fault on one lantern could put the whole stage in darkness.

In placing the circuit fuses care should be taken that they can cover the whole final sub-circuit. For example if they were placed between the dimmers and lanterns (as in Fig. 5A) then only faults outside the board will be covered. A fault on a dimmer within the stage-board would still have to blow the main fuse and blackout the whole stage. The proper method is (as in Fig. 5B) to put them between the main busbars and the dimmers and then a fault anywhere in each final sub-circuit will cut off the live supply to that circuit only.

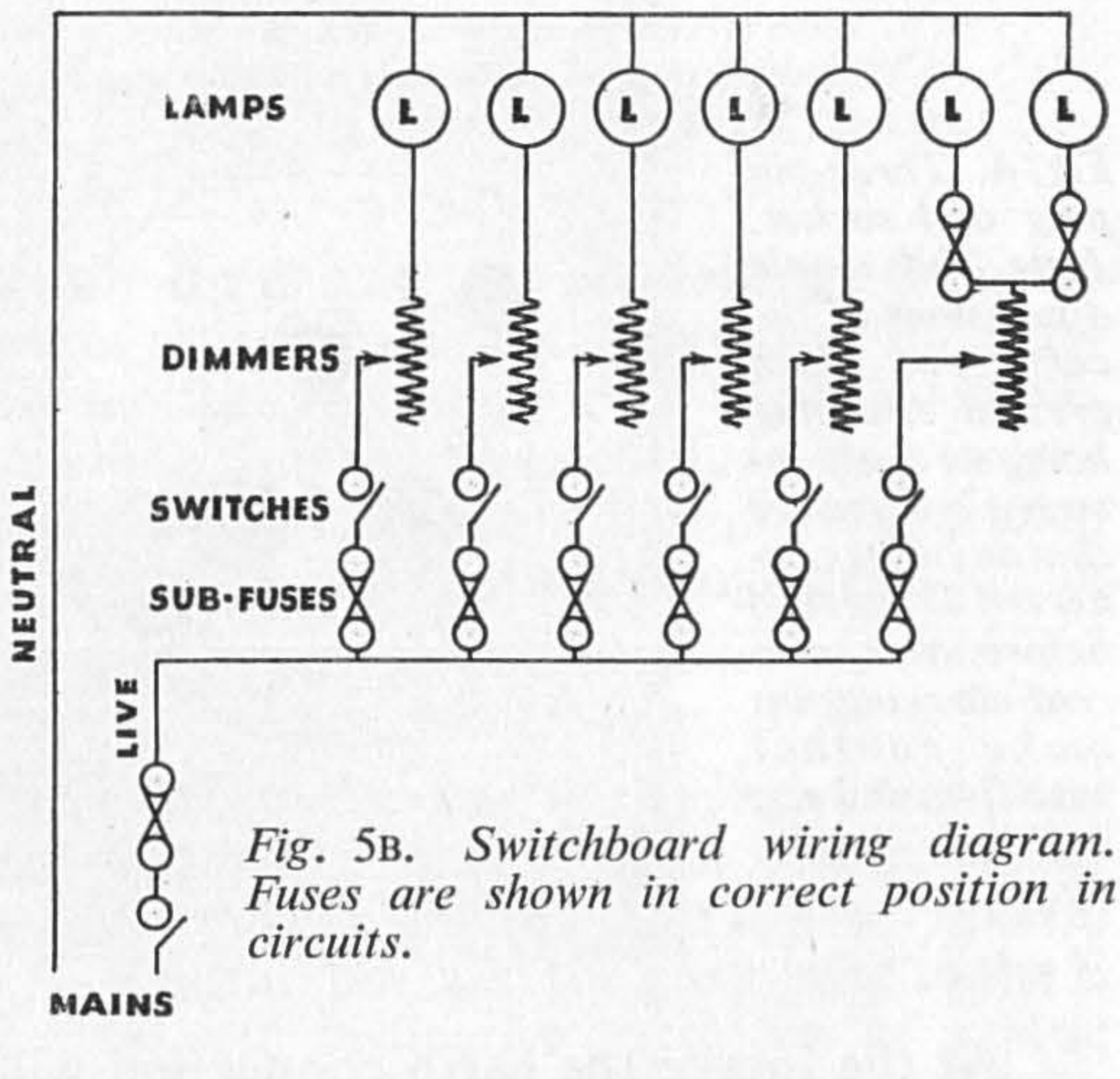


Fig. 5B. Switchboard wiring diagram. Fuses are shown in correct position in circuits.

Even now care will have to be taken to load the fuses correctly because if the wire in a final fuse is too heavy and the main too light then a fault in that circuit may tend to bring out the main, which may be in greater stress, feeding as it does six circuits together. There may be cases where a dimmer has to feed a larger load than the regulations permit on one sub-circuit fuse. Then there will be a fuse between dimmer and busbar and two between dimmer and lamps, as shown in the last circuit in Fig. 5B.

The whole subject of earthing, fusing and allied matters is dealt with in the current issue of the " Regulations for Electrical Equipment of Buildings " (12th Edition, 1950) issued by the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Every company, amateur or not, should possess a copy and have call on the services of someone who understands the contents before attempting any wiring, permanent or temporary, in theatre or hall.

F.P.B.

SOME SOUND ADVICE ON STAGESOUND

The following summary of important considerations is squeezed in as it is vital.

1. We must have a clear description of the sounds required including their timing—their volume—their pitch and their purpose. A written order for " sound of footsteps " or " door slams " is obviously capable of too many personal interpretations to be successful.

2. In the past we have suggested that trailer needles should be used unless a light-weight pick-up is obtainable. It would appear, however, that very few light-weight pick-ups are available to amateur societies and that confusion exists as to their nature. We would, therefore, re-word our ruling on this question to " A Trailer Needle should be used unless it will *not* fit the pick-up being used." A light-weight pick-up will not take a Trailer Needle, and one can, therefore, be certain of the type of pick-up in that way.

3. Grooves in an Acetate Disc are shallow and great care is necessary in levelling the table and handling the pick-up.

4. Auto-change Gramophones are not suitable owing to the brake.

5. Marking the disc with a Chinagraph pencil is not so easy as it sounds. It needs a lot of practice.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

An interview granted to the Editor of TABS by Kenneth Rae, Secretary to the Joint Council of the National Theatre and Old Vic.

Q. In the minds of many of the public, the Old Vic and the National Theatre have become one and the same thing. The office which you yourself hold as mentioned above does little to dispel what may be a wrong assumption. The Old Vic has, of course, now re-opened. Are we still to expect a National Theatre, and if so why ?

A. To take the latter question first. In this country, which has the greatest heritage of dramatic literature in the world, there should surely be one ideal theatre in which that heritage can be displayed under perfect conditions ? The other arts are represented by such institutions as the National Gallery and the British Museum. Why not the theatre also ? Thanks to the higher education which everyone now receives there is, every year, a far greater public anxious to see played and presented as well as possible, the best of our dramatic literature. This public is no longer content with mediocre production and performance, thanks I may say, to the standards set by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford, Company and by the Old Vic.

Q. Very well. Let us admit the case for the best possible production of plays from what you call "our heritage". I should like to return to this point later as it seems from your last answer that you are not interested in the contemporary dramatist. You agree that the Old Vic has set a high standard of production. Is this not in itself an adequate " shop window " for the British Theatre ?

A. Admirable as the Old Vic Company may be, and admirable as the reconstructed Old Vic Theatre may be, they do not in the opinion of the Joint Council, provide a complete answer in themselves. Our aim is to make it possible for the visitor to London to see as many different productions as possible during his probably brief stay. That is to say we are aiming at a company doing Repertory work. Of necessity the types of production will vary very considerably and no single size of stage or auditorium can be regarded as being ideal for the whole range. After seeking the advice of those who have had most experience in such matters throughout Europe, the Joint Council has decided that two theatres on the same site will be necessary, the one having a seating capacity of 1,250 and the other accommodating 400 to 500 people. As building costs have risen considerably since preliminary estimates were drawn up, the smaller of the two theatres will not be built at the outset and the Old Vic Theatre will be used as the second theatre, in the same way as the Odéon serves the Comédie Française in

Paris. It is obvious that this is not as ideal as the ultimate project of two theatres under the same roof.

Q. But surely, without going to the expense of putting up a completely new building, two adjacent theatres having approximately the required seating capacities could have been found in the West End of London ?

A. While that may be so, those existing theatres would not, in our opinion, have given us all we seek. In the first place we want two " ideal " theatres meaning by that ideal from the point of view of architecture, acoustics, mechanics, electrics and so on. The great point is, however, that we require storage and workshops for scenery, props., costumes and so on together with dressing rooms which will be common to both theatres.

If the National Theatre is to provide the London visitor with a different play every night this can of course only be done on a kind of Repertory system with the nucleus of a permanent cast, accustomed to working together, visiting " stars " being engaged season by season, it not being possible or reasonable to tie them down permanently. Such a programme is both technically and economically impossible without such self-contained services as I have mentioned. If we can not only store but also make both our own scenery, props. and costumes on the premises we shall obviously save both time and money. If we can have a dressing-room block which is common to both theatres an actor can use the same dressing room, although he or she might be appearing on alternate nights in our large and small theatres. It is really just a question of economics.

Q. You are aiming then at not one but two National Theatres ?

A. No. You must not regard " The National Theatre " in terms of bricks and mortar. The National Theatre is to be an organisation first of all to carry out the aims I have already mentioned. That organisation must have an ideal home in which to present in the capital city of the Commonwealth and Empire its programme in those two theatres. Moreover from that same home the National Theatre must be able eventually to send out a second company on tour in England and yet a third overseas. This latter point is all essential—we will be a National and not a Municipal Theatre.

Q. Once you have created this elaborate set-up just what will the theatre-going public get that they don't get now ? Why in fact don't you leave all this to existing commercial managements ?

A. I have already told you what they will get—first-class casts in first-rate productions put on under ideal conditions. We shall not only undertake the works of British dramatists of yesterday

and to-day but also English translations of foreign ones. No commercial management could undertake this programme of repertory without such a set-up as I have outlined. It would not be possible physically, technically or financially.

Q. Ah! I have been waiting for the question of finance to crop up. It has certainly been very much in my mind and is no doubt also in the minds of commercial managements throughout the country just how you are going to achieve all your ideals on an economic basis. The answer is, I suppose, that the National Theatre will be state-subsidised ?

A. Parliament has already passed an Act empowering the Government of the day when building permits are available to advance up to one million pounds to construct and equip our building. So far as running expenses are concerned there will be, I imagine, a State subsidy paid via the Arts Council as is already done in the case of Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and the Old Vic. We should qualify for such a grant, seeing that we will be non-profit-distributing. I hope that it will be possible to arrange that our prices of admission are reasonable, that is to say somewhat less than those at present current in the West End, but I cannot see that commercial managements should allow this to cause them any concern as the very nature of our productions will be such as not to compete with them. Incidentally, whilst on the question of competition, I should perhaps have mentioned earlier that we will leave Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells to look after Opera and Ballet interests while we confine our activities to the spoken word.

Q. Seeing that the National Theatre will be backed by the State, to what extent will the Treasury for example dictate the policy ?

A. No more than now at the Old Vic, Sadler's Wells or Covent Garden. As long ago as 1940, when the principle of State Aid to the Arts was first accepted, the Treasury agreed to give its support, but it has never attempted to administer. The State is represented by the Arts Council, who are entitled to send an "Assessor" to all Committee meetings; the Assessor only advises and never attempts to control.

Q. Thank you Mr. Rae, you have certainly cleared up several points and we shall hope to hear further details later. When do you hope to start building ?

A. Assuming of course that the international situation and this country's finances warrant the expenditure—when the Festival of Britain buildings are removed from our site between the new Concert Hall and Waterloo Bridge. H.M. The King has graciously consented to lay the foundation stone of the National Festival Theatre on July 13th, 1951.

EFFECTS FOR EFFECT

If one were to judge just by the number of optical effects reserved for the Christmas season one might think that the British theatre-going public was going to be treated to an orgy of moving flames, snow, waves, sand storms and all the rest. To him who thinks that effects automatically make for " clever lighting " we would say " restrict your activities to musicals, pantomimes and similar productions where it is permissible to please the eye consciously without ruining the dramatic effect by distracting the ear."

One of the great attractions of the columnist Beachcomber of the *Daily Express* is that when he is not writing with his tongue in his cheek he is making extremely good sense albeit usually in his own somewhat flippant way. Here is an example.

> " *Poor old Opera is going the way of poor old Shakespeare. It is the hour of the technician, whose head is full of gadgets. His motto for a production of Shakespeare is ' Take care of the lighting, and the poetry will take care of itself.'*
>
> " *And now he has got his false teeth into Opera. Take care of the moon and the music will take care of itself. We shall soon be having ' Tristam and Iseult ' in modern dress, with a running commentary by a B.B.C. news or weather man, and with difficult bars left out of a score edited by a novelist, and one or two new numbers added to ' bring the thing up to date '.*"

As we said, however, one may expect and get almost anything in pantomime. It certainly looks as though a certain Dublin audience may get even more than they expect this Christmas for we have received an enquiry from our Dublin Branch for a " flying saucer " effect. Just like that. Had your editor had to cope with this latest example of Eirean eccentricity he must confess he would have replied, " Insufficient technical data available in this country. Request photograph and full working drawings! "

Seriously though, we should like to close with this advice. " Take care of effects or they may take charge of your production, possibly with disastrous results." Take care of them too in another sense. Mica is used in the manufacture of most of them and supplies of this commodity in the grade and size required for our class of work are at present virtually non existent. Anyone who has an optical effects disc on mica has something which is rapidly approaching the value of its weight in gold. They should be handled with great respect and it should always be ascertained that the disc is moving before the lamp in the effects projector is switched on, if damage by blistering and burning are to be avoided.

THE OLD VIC

London has at last regained its playhouse on the South Bank of the Thames—The Royal Victoria Hall, or, as it is now affectionately and universally known, The Old Vic.

Before we describe the refurnished building let us delve into some of the history of this Playhouse.

It first opened its doors in 1819 as the Royal Coburg Theatre being named after Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg (afterwards King of the Belgians).

Its builder was a French carpenter named Cabanelle who was the inventor of a peculiar kind of roof which was called by his name. The foundations of the Theatre are extensively composed of the stones of the Old Royal Palace of Savoy which stood in the Strand. In its early days it specialised in melodramas and pantomimes.

The neighbourhood was at this time somewhat dangerous to pedestrians after dark and after the first season the proprietor announced that it was his intention to have all the roads leading to the Theatre well lighted and additional patrols provided for the safety of the patrons.

Many are the famous artists of the Victorian age that have graced its boards. Amongst them were Edmund Kean, Booth, Buckstone, Benjamin Webster and Joe Grimaldi.

On the opening night in 1819 amongst the items on the programme appeared the following:

> " A Splendid Harlequinade with new machinery, mechanical changes, tricks and metamorphoses."

In 1833 the name was changed to The Royal Victoria in honour of the Princess who was the heir to the British Throne.

In 1834 Paganini the great violinist made his last appearance in this country at a special performance at the theatre. At the time the act drop was a huge mirror and the theatre was often referred to as the " Looking Glass Theatre ". It also numbered amongst its scenic artists Clarkson Stanfield the great marine painter.

It then experienced a run of misfortune and opened and closed a number of times, the type of performance not being of the first order. Charles Matthews wrote of its audience:

> " The lower orders rush there in mobs in shirt sleeves, applaud frantically, consume ginger beer, munch apples, crack nuts, call the actors by their christian names and throw orange peel and fruit by way of bouquets."

In 1871 it was renovated and renamed The Royal Victoria Palace but in 1874 it closed its doors again and at the auction sale the following appeared in the catalogue:

> " It is lighted by 500 Gas Burners, fixed to the roof by a ring of 96 feet in diameter."

It also stated that the seating capacity was 2,800. After a very checkered career it was again opened by Miss Emma Cons as the Royal Victoria Coffee Music Hall for the presentation of wholesome Variety and Ballad Concerts. Miss Cons' aim was to provide good and cultured entertainment for the people of South London, a change from the conditions under which they worked and lived.

She was succeeded by her niece Lilian Baylis and there then commenced 39 years of marvellous endeavour that was to put the Theatre and its Company of " His Majesty's Servants " on the very top pinnacle of Thespian Art. Lilian, as she was known and will always be remembered, gradually improved the presentations on more and more cultural lines. Her work and zeal was such that Oxford University conferred on her the Honorary Degree of Bachelor of Arts and her passing in 1937 was a deep loss to the Company and the South London patrons whom she dearly loved.

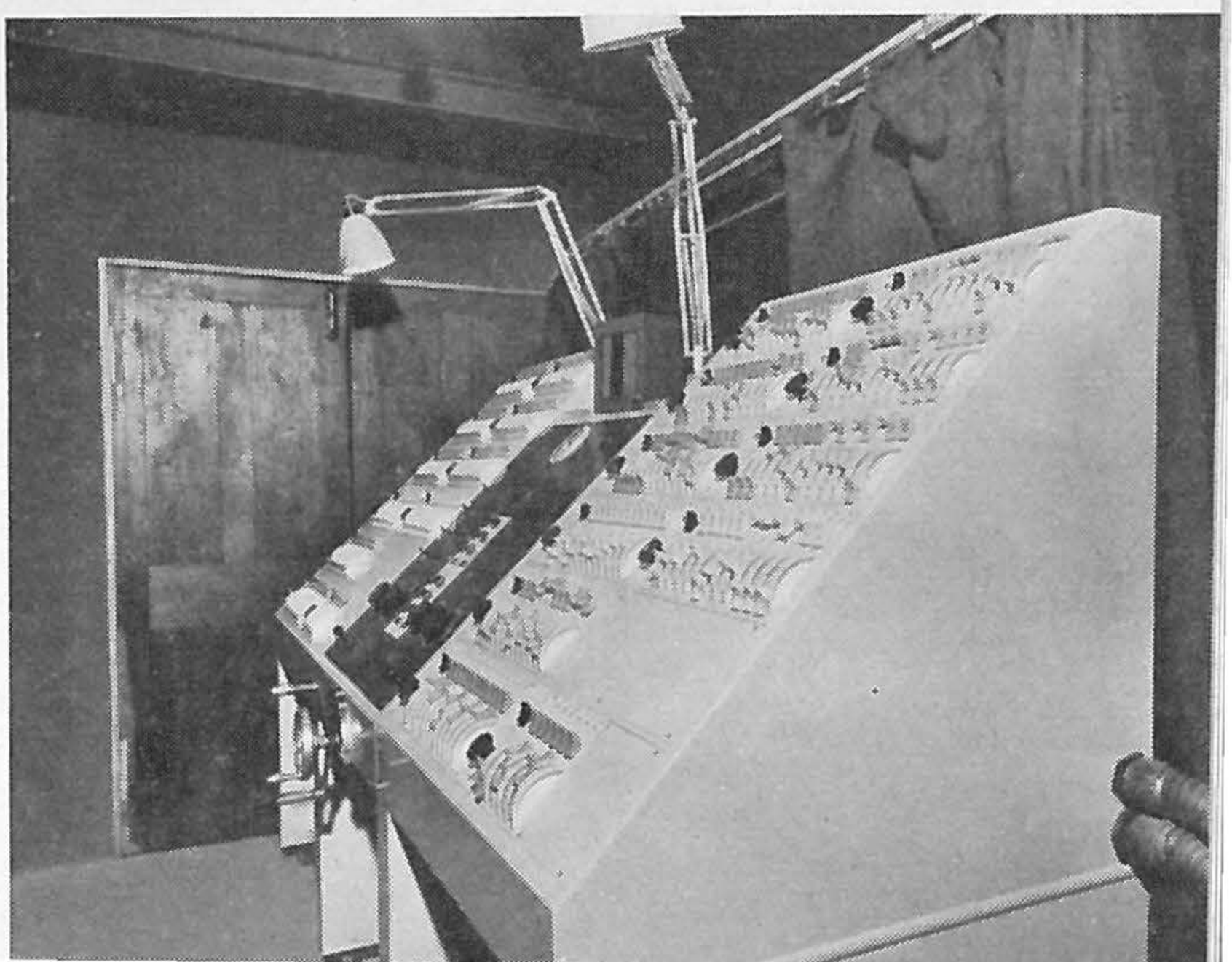
During the last war the Theatre suffered severe damage in 1941 by enemy action and was closed until November 14th, 1950, when it re-opened having been entirely re-furnished in its traditional Victorian style under the guidance of the architect Douglas W. Rowntree, F.R.I.B.A.

To Dame Edith Evans fell the honour of speaking the first lines, a prologue by Christopher Hassall and we quote some of the lines.

" This is Lilian's day,
From war time wreck, refresh'd with paint and brick
Rises no Phoenix but the fabl'd Vic,
The new Vic yet the same Vic as of old
Resplendent in her plush and native gold "

There is little alteration to the Auditorium save with the pro-scenium which has been cleverly designed by the French architect Pierre Sonrel, D.P.L.G., which gives to the extensive forestage a pleasing surround and introduces the two side doorway entrances to the forestage so beloved of the students of the early English theatre.

As in 1819 it again has its " extensive machinery and mechanical changes " for there is an ingenious oval-shaped lift in its apron stage.



The lighting control room at the Old Vic is situated at the back of the dress circle. The observation port may be seen over the centre section of the desk.

It was our pleasure and privilege to be entrusted with the Stage Lighting (as well as the remainder of the Electrical work) and there are many modern innovations to the use of the extensive forestage.

The roof of this is provided with a sky dome to provide " Cyclorama Sky Effects " and which also carefully conceals a lighting bridge where are accommodated such things as Mirror Spots and Acting Area Lanterns to give " down light " to the stage in front of the Tableau Curtains.

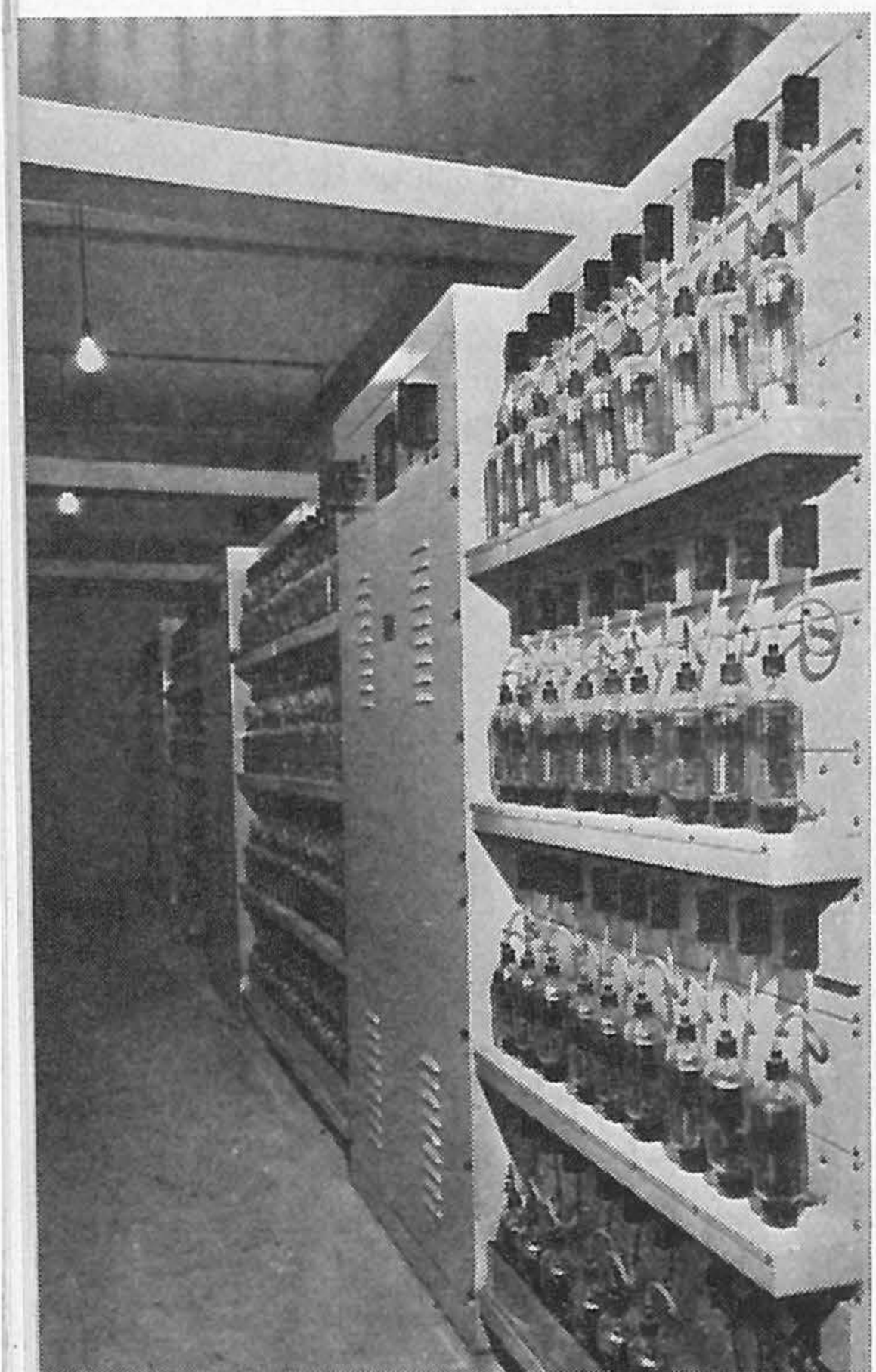
There are no footlights and therefore there are in the Auditorium, carried in special housings under the ceiling of the stalls and circles both in the centre and at the circle ends, Mirror Spots and Pageant Lanterns, the former having remote colour change.

Provision is also made over the side entrance doors at each side of the apron stage for several lanterns which are concealed from the audience by architectural louvres, thus forming a forward type of " Perch."

There are, in all, sixty odd circuits that can accommodate lighting units in front of the act drop. The stage, back of the act drop, is equipped with the usual spotbar, two Magazine Battens, a very full Cyclorama flood bar and a multiplicity of stage " Dips " and Fly Plugs.

One of the most revolutionary items is the placing of the lighting Control Desk in the Auditorium at the back of the Dress Circle in a glazed observation room thus enabling the operator to obtain a full view of the stage.

The Control is the new Strand Electronic System which was fully described in TABS, Vol. 7, No. 2. It controls 120 circuits of two kilowatts each and capable of future extension to 144 ways. Amongst the assets of this type of control is the advantage of being able to pre-set the next cue or scene which includes the pre-setting of the dimmer positions.



The Old Vic Electronic Valve room is situated under the stage. Full capacity is 144 circuits with 3 valves to each.

The simplicity of this type of control was amply demonstrated as it was only handed over to the Resident Staff to enable them to have two or three days for rehearsal before the opening. The producer had devised many elaborate changes and lighting cues and great credit must be given to the operator who so quickly familiarised himself with the new type of control with such effective results.

The opening play was Shakespere's " Twelfth Night."

L.G.A.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,
TABS,
29, King St., W.C.2

Dear Sir,

I am moved by pity to write and try to enlighten poor Peter Quince, to whom dress and dinner evidently mean so much more than Drama.

But it is difficult to know where to begin to explain, to a man who obviously lives in a world of his own, that there are far more people who go to the Theatre regularly because they appreciate it than those who merely use it as a convenient way to enhance an occasion or as a parade ground for their socially superior evening uniforms.

While agreeing with Hazlitt, when he wrote " Those who make their dress a principal part of themselves, will, in general, become of no more value than their dress," I would not have our friend think that I object to his wearing evening dress if he desires it. My main concern is that he should not expect me, or anyone else to join him in his foible. One of the great things about the Theatre is that people—all sorts of people—can meet together and share an experience; and one of the important things about these people is that they should be themselves. They should behave and dress, or misbehave and undress (I refer, of course, to some of the ladies' evening frocks) as they like.

Thus far I am tolerant enough. But when Mr. Quince, or anyone else, suggests that a small minority who wish to dress and dine before the play should dictate a later time for shows to commence, I am adamant that it should not be so. Most people living and working in London find 7.30 quite convenient (I prefer 7.00 myself) as it gives them 90 minutes or two hours to have a meal and get to the Theatre. It also enables them to get home, to the suburbs, at a reasonable hour.

When Mr. Quince becomes an ardent Theatre-goer (I say this as one who sees an average of ten plays per month) he will not give a rap what he or anyone else wears; and he will certainly not want to be kept out till midnight and after on two, three or four evenings each week. Till then, for more reasons than one, I pity him.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL BEDFORD

SIDE LIGHTING

Everyone knows it is a good thing to have side lighting and that without its relief the stage will always tend to present a rather flat picture. However, because most of its sources are temporary and easily plugged into the stage dips not as much published attention is given to it as to the more permanent items, e.g., battens (flood and spot), circle spots and so on. Another reason perhaps is the difficulty of showing the equipment on a lighting plan unless very large in scale, and therefore difficult to print.

At no time, of course, is it possible to divorce one form of lighting from the rest and let no reader consider because side lighting suddenly gets an article in TABS all to itself, that it is anything other than an important accessory. I give this warning because I once began a series of articles in TABS on " Colour " with one on " primary colour mixing " and thereafter correspondents simply would not leave the " primaries " alone. In actual fact I had only begun with this topic because I was irritated by the extravagant claims for it then current in the national press.

To many readers side lighting probably conjures up a wing flood or a spot on a telescopic stand. In actual fact the equipment mountings include perches, towers, boomerangs and ladders. What are these and when are they used ?

For the purpose of the present article it will be best to assume that the stage will be set in the conventional legs and borders, each parallel to the proscenium and separated from one another by a 7 or 8-ft. bay and backed by a flat cyclorama cloth or a painted back-cloth. Incidentally this kind of setting is still very common; it is an essential basis of ballet décor and of most spectacular productions. An occasional set piece running up and down stage may blank off part of the wings, as for example in " Oklahoma."

Once upon a time a set like this would have been lit by a horizontal row (batten) of low-power lamps behind each border and by a vertical row (length) of similar lamps behind each leg. The footlight was an obvious necessity in this set-up as most of the lighting from the battens and lengths would reach the artists with less intensity than it did the scenery.

Directional reflectors could have put some of the light on to the stage clear of the scenery but this is still " flat " lighting and anyway they were not available at that time. Very important were the limelight spots and later the early electric arcs which could be

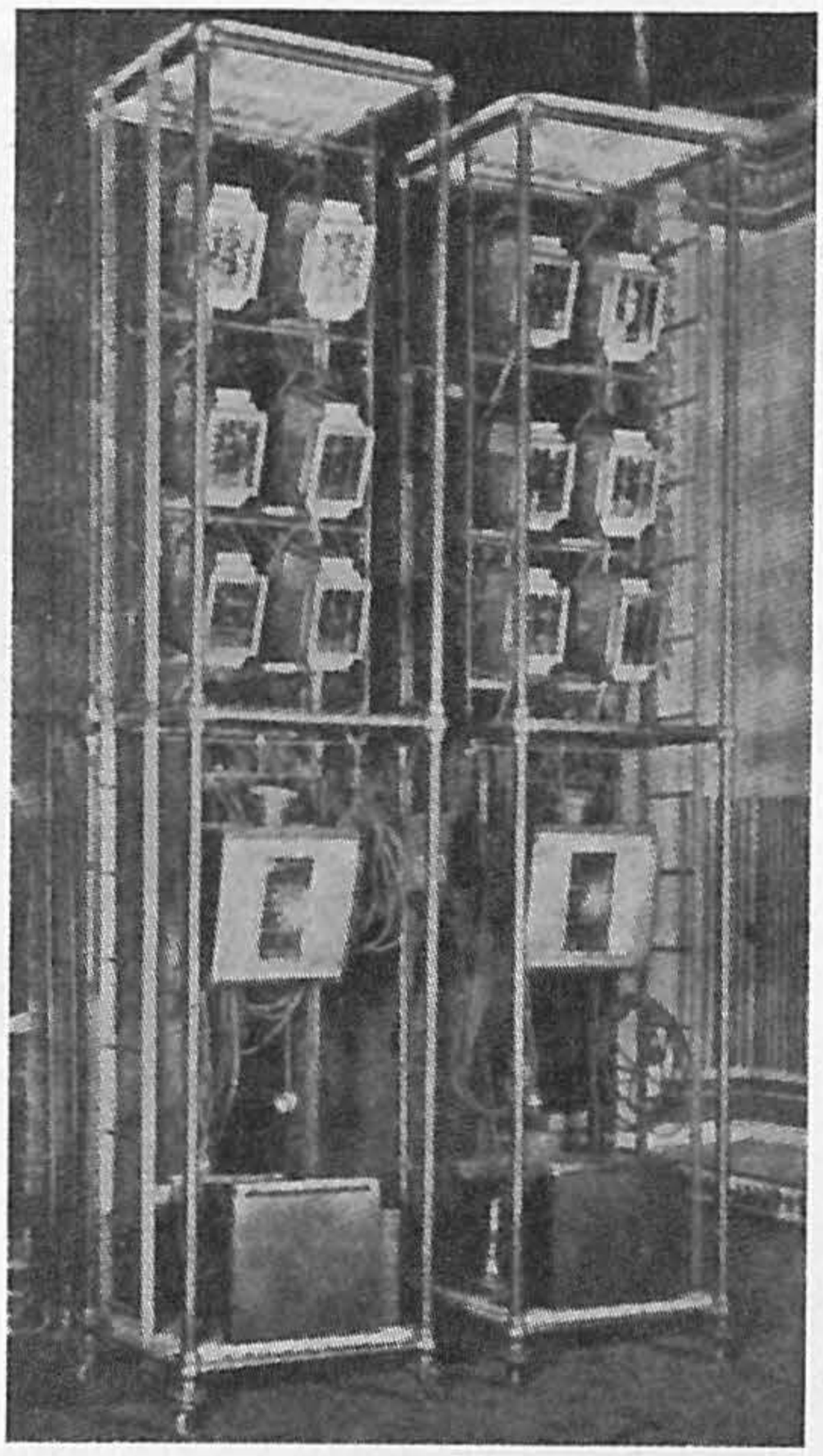


Fig. 1

placed on perch platforms on the stage side of the proscenium and out in the front-of-house. These allowed spotting or flooding beams to pick out the artists clear of the scenery and, supplemented by arcs on the stage for special purposes, opened the way for much fine lighting and many striking effects.

To-day, with the large range of high-power incandescent lamps and lanterns available, the use of arc spotlights "flooded" in the theatre is inexcusable, though still found alas! Following artists with them, or with any other lantern for that matter, is to my mind reprehensible outside music hall and musical comedy. Lighting to-day should be balanced and altered on dimmers to bring a centre of action into prominence.

Seeking pools of light in which the artists may move, an obvious method is a battery of fixed spotlights on the second tier in the auditorium and another battery immediately behind the proscenium flooding the acting area clear of the backcloth.

This lighting will come from the direction of the audience and consequently lights the important aspect presented to their eyes but carries with it the drawback of giving a flat effect. The same effect is given by car headlamps on the trees when night driving. This may be corrected slightly by angling the lanterns so that those on the right of the circle light the left of the stage and vice versa. These crossed beams also tend to light the more important on-stage aspect of the actors, and project their shadows into the wings rather than up stage where more visible.

To correct the flat front lighting and light the actor close to scenery or backcloth where the beams from Circle or Proscenium spots cannot reach without throwing bad shadows, acting area floods are used. It has now become commonplace to provide a row of these floods adjacent to each compartment batten. The latter sheds light on the borders and gives a general low intensity "wash" over the stage. The A.A. floods will put a high intensity light which can be kept clear of the décor, onto the acting area.

A natural complement to this overhead lighting is side lighting in line with each batten. Just as the overhead batten consists of

general flooding units and high intensity narrow beam units, so we may expect to find the same behind each wing. There is a complication, however, in the risk of interception of beams from the wings. It is this risk that makes a spotlight on a telescopic stand ineffective as the main source of side lighting for the acting area, except in very special instances. Not only does it light the off-stage aspect of an artist near the wings too brightly but he may also block the light from any others on the stage and perhaps provide a distracting shadow on any scenic pieces running up and down stage.

This spotlighting must come from a higher angle, clear of artists near to it, and be aimed at the opposite side of the stage. Originally the practice was to mount Pageant lanterns or spots on tall erections called towers (Fig. 1). Being three-dimensional contraptions on castors they used to take up a lot of valuable wing space and this led to their replacement by the " boomerang " (Fig. 2)—a vertical barrel usually 12 and 18 ft. high, fixed to the stage floor by means of a base at one end and suspended by a line from the other. Brackets and clamps allow the lanterns to hang on either side of the barrel depending on space available. Boomerangs have the drawback that colours and lanterns can only be changed with difficulty, whereas towers were substantial enough to have a ladder up the back and carry a man.

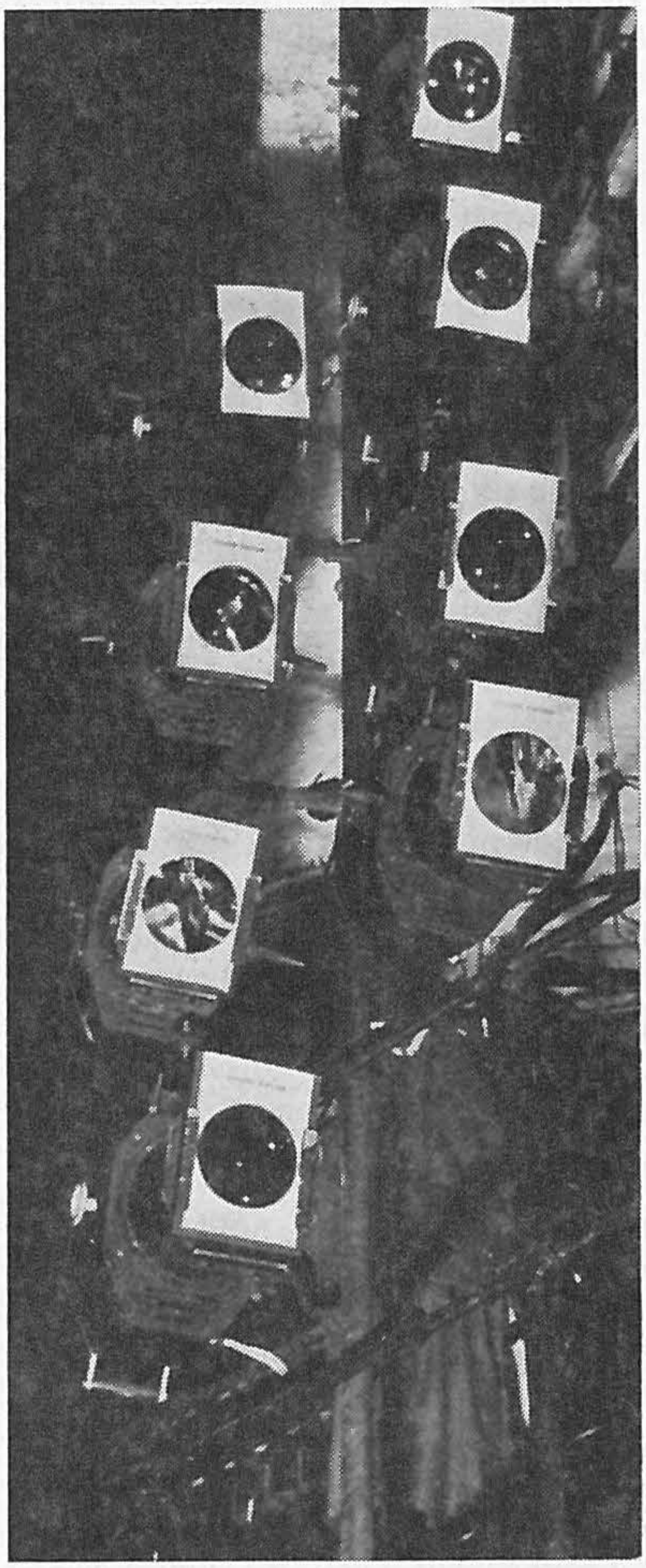


Fig. 2

However, in the form of stage spectacle and décor under discussion, lanterns in two or three colours (Gold, Blue or Pink) fixed in a general direction clear of the wings can be made to serve many purposes. Pageants are a common boom lantern but a Pattern 76 acting area flood used sideways can give more coverage using fewer lanterns.

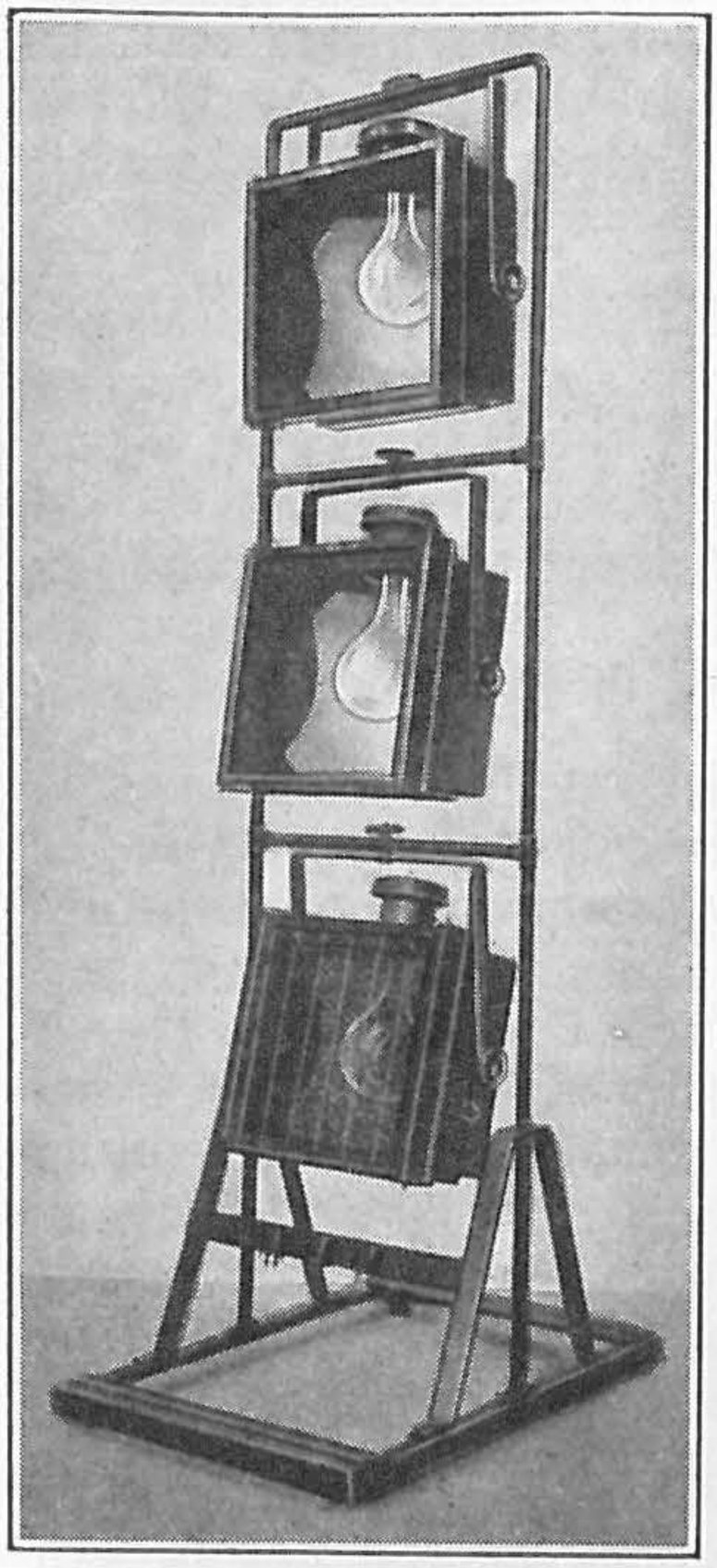


Fig. 3

The first (downstage) boomerang may be fixed immediately behind the pros. arch but some theatres still possess the old perch platforms here (or a modern descendant), and consequently fixed but nevertheless accessible perch lanterns are often found. The next " boom " will come behind the false proscenium, whatever its form, and thereafter behind each leg at positions and distances corresponding to the overhead lighting. On the stage level at these positions a wing flood can be used to light the scenery legs if required and the off-stage aspect of the actors. A wing flood being a wide angle flood never has sufficient punch to carry far and no attempt to remedy this defect should be made by doubling or trebling the number used.

There is a framework carrying three floods (Fig. 3) low down which has come to be known as a tower for some strange reason. To use such a device in the wings to light a backcloth because it looks dark in the centre with one flood lantern only, is to stress the failing. The extra splotch of light close to the wings emphasizes the darkness of the centre of the cloth and, because it will be such a bright splotch, may make the rest of the stage, actors included, look poorly lit. This type of so-called " tower " was originally designed to facilitate a change of colour on the draperies in super cinemas and should seldom stray into the theatre.

Boomerangs do not represent the last word because they still occupy wing space, consequently they are sometimes suspended completely clear of the stage. When this happens a framework known as a " ladder " is used. Here, to my mind, is perfection; all the side lighting at a good height to be effective, and at the same time the stage wings and entrances kept clear of all electrical equipment except for the occasional wing flood or special item.

That ladders are not more often found may be due to the fact that a lot of theatres carry most of their plugs in the stage floor. Anyway, it is difficult to generalise owing to the varying geography of one theatre against another. Certainly in Drury Lane where there is a special lighting bridge for all connections running up and down stage under each of the fly galleries, the ladder arrangement is ideal.

The use of very large numbers of comparatively low power

spots on these ladders as for " Carousel " is too extravagant for most purses and fewer lanterns of greater power are more usual. In my opinion the latter arrangement is preferable too, provided the Pattern 76 Acting Area lantern is used in place of the Pattern 50 Pageant.

While discussing boomerangs and ladders we must not forget the use of Pageant lanterns or spots suspended at the ends of battens and directed across stage. Very often this is the only position from which we can get side lighting when the setting is an enclosed one. For example, a house piece on the left blocks the boom and the archway is too low for more than side floods. This is where those Pageants on the end of No. 2 Batten come in.

Decisive effects such as lighting of great intensity from one side of the stage only seldom get seen, alas! Imagine a ballet set in the evening sun with all the *principal* lighting coming from the wings stage right. Wing floods to light artists close to these wings and booms or ladders to light the remainder. I fear that before very long, lights would be brought in from the opposite wings and from overhead and from the circle front and the usual conflict of lighting direction would intervene. A slight remedy for this distressing multi-lateral lighting, so common, is the use of somewhat different colours from the various directions. Thus 40 Pale Blue from stage right and double 40 stage left for example.

By this time the amateur may have become rather restive, thinking that this lighting, depending as it does on large numbers of lanterns, is beyond his budget. Not so. He will not usually be dealing with stages 40 ft. wide, and it is after all only a matter of scale. His side lighting may be a small flood and a spot on a very tall stand but the principle is the same.

But the scaling down of lighting is an interesting subject in itself and must be kept for the next issue.

F.P.B.

REVIEW

STAGE LIGHTING by Frederick Bentham

Published by Pitman's. Price 35/-

Although there are many points in this very comprehensive book with which I disagree, I cannot but heartily recommend it to everyone, professional or amateur. I was personally brought up on Ridge and Aldred's well-known " Stage Lighting Principles and

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The Strand Electric regret they are NOT in a position to supply this book which can be obtained direct from the publishers or from booksellers.

Practice " but as this was also published by Pitmans, we can only assume that the publishers consider Mr. Bentham's book as its natural successor. With this I also agree. Apart from its up-to-date information, this is a book for modern times when the equipment of theatres is not a subject limited to a few " capitalists " but embraces many public authorities and amateurs, groups who are making plans for the brave new world. For all these, Mr. Bentham's wealth of experience and his practical setting out of problems and their solution will prove indispensable.

The author is clearly a man of vision and an artist in outlook, which may be considered an exceptional but happy combination for a lighting engineer.

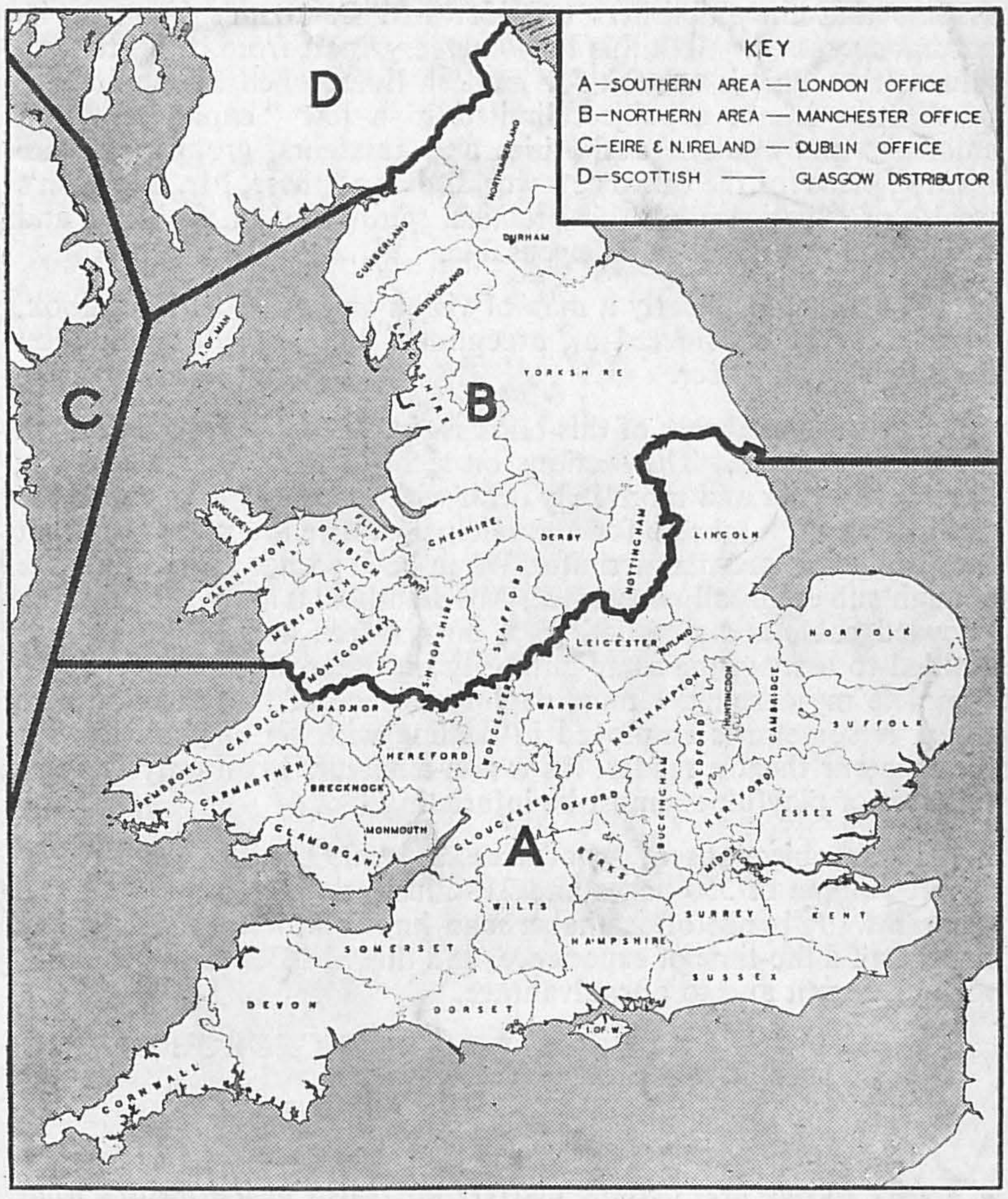
The only weakness of this book is that it touches too lightly on too many matters. The sections on sight lines and stage masking have been better and more fully dealt with in other works, while the eight pages on a scheme for a municipal theatre are so cursory that they do little more than irritate. When he is within his title, a large enough subject in all conscience, Mr. Bentham is always interesting, knowledgeable and stimulating. I do not feel, however, that he is entitled to assume the same authority on other allied subjects. To complete my carping, I must deplore a trace of that facetiousness which is sometimes employed in dealing with serious subjects for the amateur theatre reader: as a non-amateur, I can only imagine this sort of playfulness must be infuriating.

These objections must, of necessity, pale before a well set-out expert volume of 350 pages and 218 illustrations, photographs and diagrams. It is not often that a man knows how to put down on paper half a life-time of experience, and this Mr. Bentham has done, for our benefit and to our advantage.

GEORGE DEVINE.

*** *Mr. Devine first became actively interested in the theatre while at Oxford, where he was President of the O.U.D.S. On coming down, he spent two years with the Old Vic Company at the same time being associated with Motley. He then joined Michel Saint-Denis at the London Theatre Studio as Assistant Director, Manager and Lecturer inter alia on stage lighting. At the beginning of the war he produced several plays in the West End. After six years in the army he became Director of The Young Vic, again teaching Lighting amongst other subjects. He is now in addition one of the four Directors of the Old Vic.*

EDITOR.



In their own interests customers should correspond with the branch in whose area they live.

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