

THE FRUITFUL VALLEY

IT is not for nothing that a valley can be called a cradle of civilisation. Mountain tops are inhospitable, and deserts have nothing to offer; it is only where a river has run that there is shelter and arable land, the essentials of human existence. But the cradle leads to the grave, in more ways than one. The natural process of erosion goes on—helped by the artificial stripping of the hillsides for timber—floods become more frequent, top-soil scours away, until all that remains to support life is silt and barren clay.

This was the situation in the Tennessee Valley in the early 1930's. The area was becoming poorer every year, the erosion being aggravated by obsolete agricultural practices. To prevent it becoming a worthless dustbowl, the United States Government formed the Tennessee Valley Authority—known as TVA—and started upon one of the most controversial social experiments that the country had ever known. A programme on TVA will be broadcast in a series of *Modern Marvels* programmes, and will be heard from 1ZB at 6.0 p.m. on Tuesday, January 22.

The principle behind TVA was simple. The Authority was a corporation created by Congress and financed by the U.S. Government. It was to move the impoverished farmers out of their river valleys and reinstate them on higher land, compensating them, of course, for the buildings and equipment they were forced to leave behind. The valleys would then be dammed. These dams—there were to be 28 of them—would act first as reservoirs for irrigation of the newly-settled land, then as barrages for flood control, as water storage for hydro-electric schemes, and as locks in what would be a system of river shipping in the lower reaches.

There were, however, some people who would not accept TVA without a struggle. Its Government control and

ownership was a clean break with the American tradition that public utilities, such as electric power and transport, should be privately owned. Consequently, there was no small quantity of criticism aimed at the Government for its "movement towards Totalitarianism." This criticism, though, had little effect, except in a way that the critics did not want. It merely added to the determination of those involved in the valley scheme to make it work.

But there was more in TVA than large-scale engineering projects and spectacular mountain-moving. The scheme was essentially a social one. The farmers who were moved from the valleys on to new farms had to learn to work them in new ways. They had to learn to rotate their crops instead of weakening the land by growing the same crop continually, to use top-dressing, and to plough in contours instead of up and down the hills. At first there was opposition, but gradually a few farmers saw the point of the new methods and adopted them. Others followed. The scheme used in making these changes was that of "demonstration farming." At a meeting of the farmers of a community, two or three farms were chosen, their owners being willing, to serve as school-rooms for the rest. On these, the new ideas were tried and, when they were proved workable, were applied to other properties.

The result has been a considerable growth in community spirit. There is more money, of course, but there is more to be done with it. Schools and churches have been built, and some 16 national parks founded. Electricity has made it possible for communities to own and run co-operatively such things as freezing lockers and dehydrators, and the more expensive pieces of farm equipment are held in common. A new civilisation has, in fact, been built up out of the old, but oddly enough it still depends upon its valley for its existence.

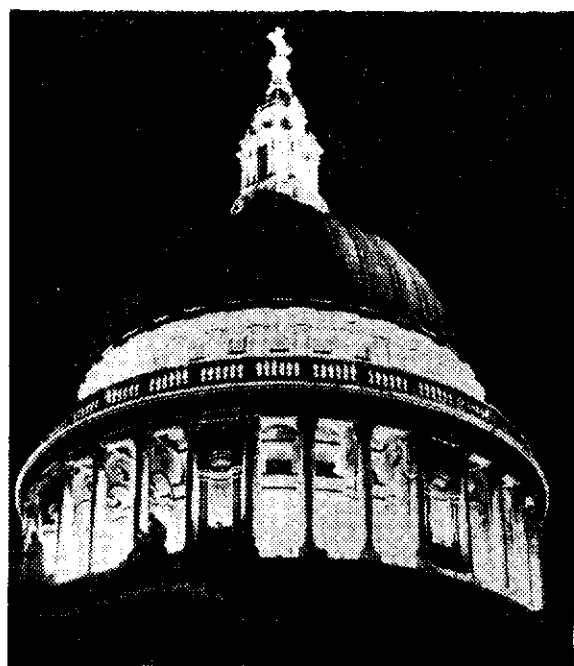
Other programmes to be broadcast in the *Marvels of Science* series, which



DIAGRAM of the Tennessee Valley Authority water control system

is heard from 1ZB at 6.0 p.m. on Tuesdays; 2ZB, 6.30 p.m. on Mondays; 2ZA, 10.0 a.m. on Saturdays; and 4ZB, 7.45 p.m. on Wednesdays, will be "Samuel Goodyear, the Story of the Vulcanising

of Rubber," from 2ZB on January 21; "The Magic of Machines," from 2ZA on January 26, and "The Cinderella of Science," from 4ZB on January 23.



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON, Wren's greatest masterpiece

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 18, 1952.

DICKENS, WREN AND OTHERS

COULD anything be more peculiarly English than Mr. Pickwick? Probably not. So it's appropriate that the first talk in a series *British Masterpieces*, originally broadcast in the General Overseas Service of the BBC, should be about "The Pickwick Papers," and that it should be given by a very English writer, J. B. Priestley. He says: "Pickwick, it seems to me, is the expression in English literature of that youthful ecstasy of high spirits, and that is why it is—and will remain—a masterpiece, easily the best of its kind in our language, and probably in

any other, too." Yes, all the rumbustiousness of the youthful Dickens went into "The Pickwick Papers" (which established his fame as a writer), as Samuel Pickwick, Esq., and other members of the Pickwick Club gallop merrily in and out of situations that had teemed in the mind of their creator.

The Fifty Churches

After getting off to this merry start, *British Masterpieces* builds up very solidly with a talk by John Summerson on "Wren's Churches." Sir Christopher Wren built fifty churches in London on the ashes of the Great Fire. All too many of these perished in the element that gave them birth when London endured more great fires from 1940 to 1945, but twelve of them still stand.

British Masterpieces was designed to introduce overseas listeners to British masterpieces of art, literature, architecture and the like, and other talks in the series and the speakers are about the

village (John Moore), landscape painting (Eric Newton), portrait painting (Professor Thomas Bodkin), madrigals (Sir Stuart Wilson), the English country house (Vita Sackville-West), English furniture (Gordon Russell), the Authorised Version (J. Isaacs), King's College Chapel (Sir John Sheppard), Mill's "On Liberty" (Bertrand Russell), and Shakespeare's Plays (Alec Guinness).

Some of these programmes have been heard from time to time over the past few months from NZBS stations in the four main centres, but twelve of them are now to be heard as a series from XZ and X stations. They will start from 1Y2, which will broadcast Priestley's talk on "The Pickwick Papers" at 7.0 p.m. on Tuesday, January 22. Other stations will start playing the series during the following six months.



Shakespeare