

The B.B.C. Rejects Television

Yet in Experimental Stage



WITHIN the last few months notable developments in television have taken place in England in connection with the Baird system. Mr. John Baird, a Scottish inventor, recently floated a company to finance his inventions in television. The shares were rushed, and in a few days all were absorbed by a gullible public.

It was claimed that the system known as the Baird System was a revolution in the science for which extravagant claims were made. For some time the developments were kept a close secret, till at the Olympic exhibition the first demonstrations were given. As, by the regulations of the exhibition, demonstrations were not allowed to be given in the exhibition buildings, a small room near by was chosen for demonstration purposes. Some three-quarters of a mile away were the subjects to be televised.

The First Public Demonstration.

AN eye-witness of that memorable event tells the following story of the first public demonstration of television in the British Isles:—

"I was taken to what looked like a fairly large vertical radio set, with a screen in the centre. The operator then tuned the picture in—turning a knob, just as one does in ordinary tuning in—and gradually from a blur came up the image of a man who was seated. As the picture was tuned in, so did the man's features become clearer and sharper, until his hair, his eyebrows, and eyelashes, and the curves of his mouth were easily discernible.

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"He opened his mouth and said 'Good afternoon.' The voice sent over the ether by wireless was clear, and one would have believed the speaker to be in the room.

Voice and Action Synchronised.

"QUITE easily and quite naturally he began talking about the weather and what he intended to do. At my side was a telephone connected

TELEVISION, or should it be more correctly termed radiovision, that is the transmission by radio of moving images, has been deemed by the British Broadcasting Corporation unworthy of trial from their stations. This is not to be confused with radio photography, about which another article appears. This is an important decision and reflects the opinion of a world authority on this new science.

with the studio in which he was sitting.

"If you want to talk to him, speak into the telephone," said the operator at my side to me.

"I can hardly believe this is true," I said. 'Sing me a song.'

"Without a moment's hesitation I heard the reply, 'Sure, I will sing you a song. What would you like?'

"I looked at the man as he passed his hand over his forehead as if thinking of a tune, and then, with a pleased expression, he said; 'I know,' and began a negro song.

"That song had none of the disadvantages of the 'talking' film, where the voice sounds as if it was passing through a husky gramophone. Imagine listening in to the B.B.C. when atmospheric are absent and you will know how clear it was.

"And I could see him all the time. I noticed the way he turned up his eyes when trying to look pathetic, and I had to smile with him when he suddenly ended and broke into a hearty laugh. He must have guessed this, for he added: 'I did laugh, did I not? You must have laughed too.'

"The best way of describing what the picture looked like is to compare it with a kinema film taken some ten years ago. Now and again there was flicker—small lines would run up and down the glass and little pin pricks would appear, and the whole was slightly red in colour like the first proof of a studio photograph—but from beginning to end the face was always clear and the features easy to recognise."

The Effect of Distance.

A FURTHER demonstration took place and the result remained the same. Concluding his remarks the writer says:—

"The performance had taken place in semi-darkness, although the performers were in daylight.

"I asked permission to pull the curtains aside and expose the screen to the light. This I was allowed to do, but the picture remained just as clear.

"Has distance any effect on reception?" I asked Mr. Baird.

"None at all," he answered. "This experiment at three-quarters of a mile distant could just as easily be done across the Atlantic. Of course, if there was much atmospheric, the voice would be affected in precisely the same way as any radio voice thrown across the Atlantic would be affected."

"It was a memorable afternoon. I had taken part in a performance which is probably to be the forerunner of

an achievement that will soon take its place in our everyday lives."

Opinion of the English Press.

THE event had been given a leader in an English paper, and it seemed that television had come to stay. Receiving instruments were offered for sale provisional to the Post Office granting the necessary license. One of the leading scientists, Dr. Ambrose Fleming, Emeritus Professor of Electrical Engineering at University College, London, in a foreword to "Television," by Alfred Dinsdale, published recently, stated:

"Television in 1928 is very much in the same stage of progress as wireless telegraphy was about 1900 or 1901; but it may not take nearly so long to bring it to practical perfection, because many of the problems involved have already been solved."

Dr. Fleming has been intimately associated with the development of all the great applications of electric science in the past 25 years. He was the inventor of the thermionic valve which made wireless telephony possible.

"What the public chiefly wish to know," Dr. Fleming continues, "is whether it will ever be possible for us to receive and see in our own homes the reproduction of distant events, such as the King going to open Parliament, or the exciting finish of the Derby race, just as we can at present hear by wireless the description by speech of such events.

"It may be said at once that there is no inherent impossibility in it; all inventions require time for their ultimate development and perfection.

"The great obstacle to wireless television lies not so much in the television apparatus itself as in the disturbances caused by fading, Morse signals, atmospheric, and other causes, which also mutilate wireless broadcasting of speech or music.

"The overcoming of these obstructions is, however, largely a matter of the amount of power employed in the

transmitter. The subject of television may now be said to be a 'live' one. It has passed out of the region of merely imperfect or curious laboratory experiments into that of practical demonstration. Hence it has begun to interest the general public who attach no great importance to purely scientific investigations, but only to that which possesses in their view a practical value—by which they mean contributing to the convenience of life, or to its amusement or the dissemination of information and news."

Another Baird Invention.

DR. FLEMING discusses another invention by Mr. Baird of a gramophone with two needles—one for the ordinary reproduction of sound and the other giving the "living" picture of the people performing—which was first announced in the "Morning Post." He says:

"Just as in the modern electric-cut gramophone records the electric current from a microphone is made to actuate the cutting chisel on the soft, or master, record and yield the records on which we can reproduce the music or the speech, so also we can use, as Mr. Baird has done, the amplified current from the photo-electric cell of a television transmitter to move this chisel and so impress on the disc a record of an image instead of a sound.

"By means of a suitable televisor this record can then be reproduced as a visual image. Also, we can at the same time record a sound or speech."

The View of the General Post Office.

BY this time public interest had been properly aroused and as sets had been ordered at the Exhibition provisional to the agreement of the Post Office and the B.B.C. a demonstration was arranged in order to gain the consent of the Post Office before the matter was taken to the B.B.C.

A special television experiment was performed before two representatives of the Post Office. Mr. Baird sent the image of the director of the Television Press which publishes the official organ of the Television Society, from his office to a club, where it was reproduced with success.

"As a result of the demonstration, our engineers decided that the Baird television system had reached a stage where further experiments of a more practical nature might be worth encouraging."

This was the verdict of the British Post Office.

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