

NOTES FROM LONDON

Criticises "Television Lovelies!"

Dares to Say the Two Beautiful Announcers Are Not Perfect—Soon Empire Listeners May Hear Their Voices.

London, May 29.

WHAT a furore over those "television lovelies"—two slightly bewildered young women in the early twenties chosen out of about a thousand applicants for the posts of announcer-hostesses at the B.B.C.'s new television station at the Alexandra Palace! Miss Jasmine Bligh, niece of the Earl of Darnley, and Miss Elizabeth Cowell, have been the centre of an enormous burst of publicity. They have been astonished and overwhelmed. "What is all the fuss about?" said one of them. Well, the "fuss" is partly occasioned by the women's interest complex of the London Press and partly by the remarkable flair for publicity of Mr. Gerald Cock, the B.B.C.'s television director. Mr. Cock had freely advertised his determination to get two girls who embodied the quintessence of all virtues—fact, charm, beauty, etc.

NOBODY has ventured to utter a word of criticism about these two girls, but I am going to risk it. After all, perhaps they will never see these lines and if they did, would not know who wrote them. I think they need more vivacity, and though both have voices of exceptional charm and quality, there is a certain lack of animation in their tones. However, as at the time of writing each has only broadcast for a matter of 15 seconds, it is difficult and unwise to make profound criticisms. Empire listeners will hear these girls soon. They will be used freely in the sound programmes to accustom them to the microphone and consequently their voices will occasionally, either directly or by record, be wafted to the Empire.

Adonis Wanted.

AND now, marvellous to relate, publicity-minded Mr. Cock has turned the appointment of a man announcer at a modest salary of about £400 a year also into a matter of national importance. This he did in a rather subtle way. B.B.C. announcers' voices have often been called ladylike. Mr. Cock said he wanted a "he-man," an athletic type.



CAMP FIRE ON THE KARROO.—No, it doesn't look much like it, but that's the title of the Empire programme that Josef Marais (violin under arm) and his fellow artists broadcast regularly from the B.B.C.. This programme, with the South African flavour, is becoming increasingly popular.

He advertised and got 500 applicants. Then he said that none would suit. Sensation in court! Then the report spread round that, after all, Mr. Cock was going to choose his man from inside Broadcasting House and that his choice was Mr. Leslie Mitchell, the vaudeville comper. However, I believe that some of the junior announcers on both home and Empire sides are in the running. The result of all this ballyhoo was, however, that Mr. Leslie Mitchell had his photograph spread large over the "front page" as the television Adonis.

When?

WELL, when all the shouting and the tumult dies, when are we going to get television? Work at the Alexandra Palace is proceeding at a furious pace. The television mast is half completed and a great deal of apparatus has been installed. But the engineers will not "shoot" until all is perfect and they are up against innumerable snags from day to day. We have been promised, semi-officially, television programmes by July 1, but there is grave doubt whether the station will be ready. Meanwhile there is agitation among the organisers of the Radio Exhibition at Olympia. It was intended to give a big scale demonstration of domestic television, but the B.B.C. cannot give a guarantee that they will positively be broadcasting even by then—the end of August!

Naughty Sir John!

WE had a new thrill the other night: Sir John Reith, six-feet-something, Sphinx of the B.B.C., shunner of publicity, cavorting in the limelight as an amateur actor. "Like Boris Karloff" said some of

the critics. Well, may be, but a first-class amateur actor. He took the part of Bates, the butler-bookmaker of Ian Hay's comedy, "The Sport of Kings," played by the B.B.C. amateur dramatic society. After all the talk in Parliament and Press about his alleged interference with the private lives of the staff he raised the biggest laugh of the evening by saying in his character of butler, "I have no desire to dictate to the staff or interfere with their private lives." But then he told them to "Scram." As the bookmaker he adopted a rich Glasgow accent, he took off his coat, spat on the floor, said "O Hell," and appeared to enjoy himself immensely.

No Tyranny.

THERE are those who whisper that this was an elaborate piece of propaganda on the part of the "D.G." intended to show a sceptical world at the psychological moment that he really was a human being. Actually, though the performance did serve that useful purpose, it was entirely fortuitous. Still, if Sir John had taken the trouble to deny in public the rumours that he tyrannised over his staff it would certainly not have carried the conviction that his humorous double entendre on the stage did.

At Olympia.

LAST year television sets were banned at Olympia because the manufacturers feared that their presence would affect the sale of radio sets and also because there were no television transmissions. This year there can be no excuse, and television will be shown for better or worse.