

Television's Magic Door---Continued from Page 1.

In The Limousine

I REMEMBER that, for our initial "Ally Pally" (Alexandra Palace to you) appearances, Earl and I were driven the seven miles from Broadcasting House to the Palace in a BBC luxury limousine, complete with liveried chauffeur and footman.

But, as the BBC got more used to having us around, the limousine changed its shape until it became the charabanc used for the conveyance of the Corporation's staff.

And that was all to the good, for it gave us personal contacts with the rank and file of the men who are responsible for the everyday occurrence of this modern miracle.

MUCH of the BBC's research into television is still a close and jealously-guarded secret. Casual visitors to the studios are severely discouraged.

It is said that recently a party of members of the British Parliament asked to make a tour of the studios—and permission was courteously but firmly refused.

So that when we persuaded the BBC to invite the touring Australian cricketers to witness Earl McCready's demonstration from within the studios, it is doubtful if Don Bradman and his men appreciated fully the signal honour that had been done them.

Once we smuggled in a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council—but only by passing him off as McCready's second!

TELEVISION and film studios look much alike—but the lighting in the television studio is rather fiercer than that employed in the film studio. Having tried in both circumstances, I know that a five-yard prance under the lights at "Ally Pally" is much the more strenuous work.

It may be true generally that "horses sweat, men perspire and ladies merely get warm." But not so under the lights of the television studio. There, if ladies show a disposition for exercise, they share the fate of horses!

I know that, after twenty minutes' gyrations under the lights, the wrestlers were not the only ones in need of the cleansing baths provided!

FOR three hours a day (recent intention was to expand this service), the BBC offers television viewers "live" material, as distinct from films. Studio programmes range from the lightest type of variety act to grand opera.

They include illustrated talks, music, ballet, revue, art exhibitions, fashion parades and frequent appearances of people prominent in the news. Current news-reels are shown daily.

But these studio and film transmissions are only half the story. In 1937 the BBC took delivery of its first mobile television unit (a second was completed recently), which made television possible from practically any point within twenty miles of the transmitting station. Mobile television was inaugurated on Coronation Day.

Now no event of wide interest within the range of the mobile unit goes untelevised. . . . So that viewers in their homes have watched tennis matches as they were played at Wimbledon, a play from the actual West End theatre, the test cricket at Lord's, sheep-dog trials, the Lord Mayor's show, the Cenotaph ceremony on Armistice Day—anything and everything as it happens, seen and heard!

MORE and more, experiments are being made with large-screen television. But home-viewers know that a very satisfying picture, with a wealth of detail, can be obtained

on the 10-inch by eight-inch screen. Receiving sets are now available for less than £30.

Television is to the stage and screen what journalism is to literature. From the opening of the first door in the early morning to the announcer's closing message at night, the fever of Fleet Street (hub of the British newspaper world), pervades Alexandra Palace. . . . But that is just part of television, production methods for which are not being without their influence on those employed in films.

IN earlier days television make-up was a grim and ghastly business. Lips were painted a bright blue; eye-brows achieved a George Robey quality; facial hollows had to be filled in and jaw bones accentuated by dark hues.

Nowadays the aim is to achieve a healthy sun-tan.

Women use normal lip-stick, with the addition of delicate shading to bring out the beauty of the eyes. For men a liquid foundation is used to bring up the sun-tan shade. Dark complexions are lightened, fair darkened.

It may have been a tribute to my own good looks, or a concession to my unimportance in the scheme of things, that never at any time was I deemed in need of the attentions of television's make-up artists.

Undeniably attractive ladies and admittedly handsome men were subjected to as much titivation as Oxford Street bill-postings; but I, a New Zealander, was allowed to appear before television's public in all my pristine loveliness!

Ear appeal! Eye appeal! Television has them both—and nowhere better illustrated than by the two charming and talented girls, Elizabeth Cowell and Jas-

mine Bligh, the one dark and the other fair, who are the BBC's television announcers.

Miss Bligh took an appreciative interest in the wrestling demonstrations; but the stuff of which Miss Cowell was made is apparently not quite so stern! I recall that, having made her announcement of the demonstration, she would turn her back on the wrestling mat and push a finger firmly against each ear—because if she heard the commentary she believed she would be ill, and if she saw the demonstration she knew she would!

BIG stores and London's pubs provide television sets for the diversion of their customers and clients. The 1938 Radiolympia (the world's greatest radio exhibition, when some £2,000,000 of radio equipment is sold), was an all-television effort and boosted enormously the sale of television receiving sets.

The BBC, in its work of popularising the service, is many

marches ahead of its German and American rivals—the only other countries where the term "television" yet has practical application.

Ten years! Perhaps in that time, but certainly little before, television will penetrate to New Zealand, but the enormous expense of effective programme distribution (special cable facilities are necessary in order that wide areas may be covered), the difficulties of programme organisation (with all its wealth of resource the BBC finds it difficult enough to maintain its daily schedule of a "flesh and blood" show), as well as other factors equally important but not of sufficient general interest for discussion here, make New Zealand all its 13,000 miles away from television at the present time.

I should not advise making your radio "do" an extra year, so that you can then buy a television set. Your next radio is likely to be equally old-fashioned before the "modern miracle" is made evident on this southern edge of the world!

This World of Ours

Germany's Minister of Information propaganda?

Song from abroad

Mae West
Is one of the best:
I would rather not
Say the best what.

Several years ago Adolf Hitler thought he had cancer of the larynx. Dr. Carl von

by
JOHN GUTHRIE

Eicken, head of a Berlin University department, diagnosed Hitler's ailment as a simple polyp (small benign growth, round and stemmed like a pea), on his larynx. Removal of the polyp from the larynx, a simple throat-cutting operation that many a physician (and layman) would be glad to have the chance to do for Herr Hitler, was very easy.

That Certain Age

FOR several weeks the Canberra Advisory Council has hotly debated the weighty problem of whether men should be allowed to wear trunks in the local swimming pools. They have just announced their decision—Against. Explains the chairman: "The human form ceases to be divine at a certain age."

ENGINEER LEROY of the French Air Force, crawled out on to the wing of a training plane 10,000 feet above the village of Ouzhy-a-Bois to make a regulation parachute jump.

Waving to his comrades, he bailed out, pulled the rip-cord, floated gently to the ground. Peasants rushed to the spot where he landed, lifted up the lifeless body of Engineer Leroy. He had died in mid-air.

Pets' Corner

MILDRED and William Hurd, of San Francisco, wanted a divorce, but could not agree what was to be done about their dog.

The judge settled the issue by awarding the animal to Mrs. Hurd on week-days and to Mr. Hurd on Sundays.

Historical Research Dept.

"It is high time that New Zealand had a film of its own, showing our national characteristics. Can nothing be done about it?"—Newspaper correspondent.

Asked for his views on this matter, one of our better-known film magnates said this was the irritating sort of question that people asked without knowing the facts. The main Centennial films were well on the way, said this chap, showing the lively drama of New Zealand life, with one or two pretty big heart-throbs in it. The scene showing the First Pioneer swapping two beads and one blanket for 43,000 acres of good sheep country was very moving, the joy of the innocent Natives at getting the beads and blanket so cheaply being sympathetically portrayed and making one think of Blake's Songs of Innocence and realise like nothing on earth just how far away we had got from the happy old-time days when the simple things of life could give so much pleasure and delight.

The scene immediately after the transaction, showing the First Pioneer falling on his knees and thanking Heaven for guiding his footsteps into the country of a people so utterly decent and unspoiled by crude commercialism, is beautifully done (says this chap) and makes you realise also just how far away the present godless age has got from the fine spiritual things of the past. The First Pioneer, of course, is a symbolic figure, something like an early patriarch, who stands for most of the boys of the time. The film will go to show, this chap added, that:

Mr. J. A. Lee
Was all at sea:
Our forefather
Was decent, rather.

Snow-white

In more whimsical vein, the film magnate told us, there will be a film about New Zealand as it is to-day. The leading parts will be taken by a young farmer (who has done pretty well in the Junior Agricultural Club competitions) and his stock, under the striking title of Snow-White and the Seven Calves, the young farmer playing the part of Snow-White who will be a prince in this instance, rather than a princess.

Only trouble is, said the film

magnate, that this young chap will keep falling into drains and things and we are having a job getting him to look the part. We're giving him a course of Lux this week, and then Viyella, and after that, if he still needs a bit of doing up, we're washing him in warm water with Rinso.

"We reckon that pretty soon we shall get him in such condition that the mothers of all the other young farmers in the country will be looking at their own boys with tears in their eyes and saying they thought they were white until they saw them alongside this chap, and no spoiling his fabric either."



—Los Angeles "Examiner."

"I don't know—it's a new war dance the boys picked up at college!"