

# The Coming of Television

*Many of the articles published about television and its present state of development are merely speculation, and hence readers will welcome the following discussion on television by no less an authority than David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America. In it he tells just how far television has progressed, and what may be expected from it when it takes its place with radio as a public utility.*

WHERE is television?

When will it be ready for the home? What form will it assume? How about the necessary television transmitting stations? What are its likely effects upon the established radio and motion picture industries?

These are pertinent questions, frequently asked. The answers are of peculiar significance to Hollywood, yet thinking men and women of all the world likewise are evincing keen interest.

Let us then preface any discussion of this subject with the general statement that television, or the process of transmitting images by radio is still in the laboratory stage. True, rapid progress is being made. The sweep of events during 1930 and in the first months of 1931 has been very substantial indeed. Television has been brought definitely nearer commercial development by the research and technical progress of the Radio Corporation of America during this period.

One year ago, television was a subject of engineering conversation and a topic for technical dispute. It now has progressed beyond that point. To-day, transmission of sight by radio is a matter of accomplishment, not of speculation. It must be understood, however, that the present sporadic activities in this direction cannot be classed as a practical service. They are purely experimental, but as such deserve encouragement and merit public interest.

The present status of television might be likened to the condition of radio in the immediate pre-broadcasting era, when amateurs were beginning to hear faint sounds through the air. Voices and music were passing through space in those early days of radio; comparatively, there are actually some images passing through the air to-day. They are being received by established experimental stations, and by amateur operators in various sections of the United States. In this connection, it should be observed that the early success of radio broadcasting was stimulated in no small measure by the amateur wireless operators of that day. Similarly, the amateur operator in



David Sarnoff.

television is now playing his part in the development of this new service.

The next stage—and I should anticipate its realization by the end of 1932—should find television comparable to the ear-phone stage of radio. At this point, the public may well be invited to share in its further unfolding. By that time, television should attain the same degree of development as did radio sound broadcasting in the early period of the crystal set. This does not mean that the actual physical structure of the first television receiver will be similar in any way to the crystal receiver; the similarity will lie in the class and condition of the service. The visions which first come through the air to the public will be of the same embryonic quality as the first faint sounds which sent mother hurrying to the ear-phone of the boy's crystal set in the attic.

When television reaches this stage, rapid strides may be expected comparable perhaps with the growth and development of broadcasting of sound. The progress to follow should make possible the projection of moving images on a screen on the wall. Reception of sight by

radio then will be comparable to the loud-speaker stage of sound reception.

The Radio Corporation of America is conducting its present experimental developments in television through a large research staff in the RCA Victor plant at Cambred, New Jersey. When television emerges from this experimental stage it will be handled as a service by the National Broadcasting Company.

The motion picture industry need experience no alarm over the impending advent of television. There will be no conflict between television in the home and motion pictures in the theatre. Each is a separate and distinct service. History confirms the fact that the creation of a new service for the public does not result in the elimination of an older service, provided each has something of its own to give. On the contrary, many examples might be cited to prove that the reverse is true. The telephone did not displace the telegraph. The radio did not displace the cable. The incandescent lamp did not displace the candle; more candles are being sold to-day than before the creation of the incandescent lamp. And television in the home will not displace the motion picture in the theatre. Public theatres will continue to operate because people will go there in response to the instinct for group emotions and to see artists in the flesh. These are human demands which television in the home cannot satisfy.

Since the dawn of the new era of electrical entertainment, untold millions have been added to our audiences. It is interesting to compare the opportunities of this new era with those of the past. The lifetime audience of Demosthenes was not as great as a one-night audience of Amos 'n' Andy, Napoleon and Kaiser Wilhelm, showing themselves in their splendid regalia before all their spectators, never in their lives were seen by as many eyes as saw Richard Dix in "Cimarron." The sound of all the guns and cannons fired in all the wars since the dawn of time did not reach as many ears as does the crow of the proud Pathe rooster on the talking screen.

THIS vast increase in the entertainment audience has been made possible by the introduction of modern science into the older arts, and now television will come to open new channels, to provide new opportunities for art and the artist and to create new services for the audiences of all the world.