Best Color Photos of 1937

By GUY MURCHIE JR.

LOOK WELL at the three color photographs on this page, for they are a milestone and a prophecy. They are the high tide mark in newspaper color photography and printing for 1937, and the tangible harbingers of a new art that is not yet over its birth pangs. Although color photography is as old as 1891, when C. Lippmann of Paris produced the first color plate by interference heliography, the art remained long in embryonic development. Only within the last decade have the difficulties of inventing color-sensitive film emulsions, triple-exposure cameras, and subtractive printing processes been sufficiently overcome to make natural color photography commercially practicable. And in 1937 The Chicago Tribune, continuing its leadership in the field, adopted the policy of printing color photographs on a wide scale throughout its Sunday feature sections. In all during the year more than 200 such photographs have been made and printed by The Tribune.

- The variegated trio of pictures here reproduced was chosen from the Tribune color studio's crop of the year. They were picked as 1937's best color pictures by four first-rank artists and art critics. Valentino Sierra, a Chicago photographer who is well known for his color work, was one. E. Scialom, color photographer of Paris, was another. The other two were Fred Shafte and Charles Killigore of The Tribune's copy and art department.

Chiefly because of its spontaneity, this study of Harriet Hackett was second choice of the judges. Actually dancing before the camera, the ballerina was snapped the moment she reached a point and assumed a pose previously decided upon.

- The steel mill scene took first place without argument. It impressed every one of the judges as a masterpiece both of artistic restraint and of technical excellence. Taken under conditions of extreme heat, dust, vibration, and unfavorable light, it stands as a monument to modern photographic ingenuity and perseverance. It was adjudged a triumph in composition as well as in the solving of problems of exposure, timing, color value, etc., for the presence and utilitarian interest of a steel mill does not lend itself to camera composition as readily as one might suppose. And the simplicity and restraint revealed in this picture were acclaimed as something refreshingly new in color photography, where the natural first tendency has been to use a wide variety of colors in such pictures in order to gain the fullest possible effect from a new medium of art.

Chiefly because of its spontaneity, this study of Harriet Hackett was second choice of the judges. Actually dancing before the camera, the ballerina was snapped the moment she reached a point and assumed a pose previously decided upon.

- The third photograph chosen, one of several taken in a theater of members of the cast of the play "Pride and Prejudice," was chosen for its soothing balance of composition and color. But of course it must be remembered that after such a picture is actually taken an elaborate and delicate developing and printing process has still to be accomplished—and that plays an equally vital part in the fineness of detail and color tone that you see here.

Adjudged by four first-rank artists and photographers, the outstanding color photograph of 1937, this steel mill scene is considered a triumph in composition and a splendid achievement in exposure, timing, and color value.

A soothing balance of composition and color marks this richly toned photograph of two members of the cast of the stage play "Pride and Prejudice," the third choice of the four judges. (Tribune Color Studio photos.)

The four judges selecting the best color photographs of 1937. Left to right: Valentino Sierra, Chicago photographer; E. Scialom, color photographer of Paris; Francis Fred Shafte and Charles Killigore, the last named two members of the Tribune copy and art department.