

ODDS

"YOU mustn't imagine we've nothing else to do but puff our pipes and listen to the radio," says a lighthouse keeper who looks after one of the big English coastal lights. "But rough seas isolate us in the winter for weeks at a time. Believe me, we often mutter a thankful prayer for the friendly voices that come to us through the loud-speaker."

He and his mate put a four-valve all-wave receiver together. When work is done they use it to listen to the world. Daventry Empire news bulletins, and direct reception from New York, Moscow, Japan, Berlin, keep them better informed than most about what is going on "outside," as they call it.

Their light cost £20,000 to build, and there is enough in it to keep them pretty busy. The engine room, for instance, is as large as on a fair-sized passenger steamer. It gives power for the 10,000 candle-power light, for the Trinity House radio emergency service, for the giant foghorn. The Diesel engines must be serviced carefully, the light must be watched with scrupulous attention, the whole place must be scrubbed and polished every day.

But they have time to listen to everything they can get, from foreign shortwave transmitters to the passing to and fro of messages on the interesting 150-200-metre band.

They know when the *Skylark* is coming in with a good catch of fish. They heard the skipper of the *Lazy Jane* deciding to pull up his nets when the BBC announced gales, and sympathised with the *Daisy* when they ignored the warning and lost everything. They heard the Captain of the *Mary Ann* warning his wife not to row out in her punt to meet him. "It's rough to-night. Stay home, dear," and they heard, soon after, that she had misunderstood the warning, and had been drowned when the punt was swamped.

The keeper has a wireless friend on a lightship. They've never met, but they play chess by radio every week.

"In the night watches, while the great beam reaches over the darkening waters, there's a cosy glow in our lighthouse 'living-room' and the radio is on."

Sixpence A Time

Van Straten, musical director at Quaglino's, London West End restaurant, learnt his music at sixpence a time. The son of a London tailor could not afford very much. Sixpence a week, however, and a "Maidstone" fiddle, put him in the hands of his council school mathematics master.

The Van Stratens wanted son Alfred to be an accountant. He did his best, but a visit to the Continent started him off on hotel orchestral work at The Hague, where he made himself into a one-man revue.

Back in London, he found work with a Jack Hylton combination, then returned to the Continent for engagements in Paris and on the Riviera. Two

DO YOU KNOW?

What is Meant by the Length of a Wireless Wave?

A transmitting station radiates its signals as a train of electro-magnetic vibrations, or "waves," which have a constant velocity. These waves are radiated at infinitesimally separated spaces or frequencies. One wave will have travelled a definite distance at great speed before the next one is radiated. This distance is the length of the wave. Wavelengths are measured in metres. One metre equals 39.37 inches.



BIBLE IN THE STREET: A glass-topped stand enclosing an open Bible in extremely bold type was recently placed outside St. Paul's, Portman Square, London. Dozens of passers-by stopped to read it every day. At night, reading was possible by brilliant interior lighting

years leading his own band at the Cafe Anglaise, Leicester Square, topped off his reputation; and in 1931 Quaglino picked him up. Eight years there in the one job has made something of a record in the business.

Tauber Was Cold

When Richard Tauber was in Australia last year he had to travel from Melbourne to Canberra: the first part of the way on *The Spirit of Progress*, as

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modern as any American train. But at the border of Victoria he had to change to a different gauge. There was no heating; he was given a hot water bottle. The ventilators were open and would not shut. He stuffed them with blankets. At Canberra, with its magnificent Government buildings, there was no heating in the cinema where his concert was held. Women shivered in the fauteuils with rugs covering their evening gowns.

Ask And Ye Shall Receive

According to Charles Siepmann, BBC Director of Programme Planning, plans laid down in August for future programmes were based on information secured in the BBC's researches into listening tastes (described in *The Listener* on August 25). Plays, for instance, were proved to be more popular than had been thought, so time was given weekly for the broadcast of first-class dramatic productions. "We shall have plenty of controversy," Siepmann also announced. "There will be monthly political debates, discussions every fortnight, and national broadcasts of a feature called 'Public Inquiries.'"

Fixing The Frequency

"A constant and regrettable tendency" to increase the frequency of the A above middle C (treble clef) is reported by the International Broadcasting Union. This note is used everywhere to tune instruments. Experts who met in conference in London at Broadcasting House some months ago, fixed the frequency

at 440 per second, a standard maintained in the U.S.A. for the last 20 years. In England the frequency had been 439 cycles per second.

To Improve Servicing

The Danish Radio Technical Association recently instituted a scheme to save owners of sets from the work of inefficient service men. Its members are issued with guarantee labels to fix to sets after working on them.

Peeling Paint

Paint on the great Perisphere at the New York World's Fair began to peel fifteen days after the opening.

To Puff Television

During England's Radiolympia (August 23 to September 2) the BBC Television Director invited any and every one to act, joke, play, sing or talk in front of the television cameras. Offers were accepted by post, or applicants were personally interviewed by a receptionist. They were warned, however, not to boast of their performance fees, for none were paid. The BBC considered it sufficient reward to transmit them to onlookers at the daily programmes.

Increasing The Vocabulary

Americans just love making up new words. Here are some of the latest additions: Warboding (to describe international tension); reminuisances (tiresome reminiscences); sinema (naughty film); Roosevelt the charming Roosevelt manner); representathieves (naughty politicians).

He Decides

According to most authorities, Dante was born at Florence in the year 1265. But Ravenna, the city where he died and is buried, has persisted for many years in claiming also the honour of his birth. Mussolini has now decided to end the controversy. He has declared that Dante was born in Ravenna, and Florence has to accept what the *Yorkshire Post* calls "this surprising verdict" without demur.

ENDS