

## "TUT'S TOOTS"

### The Story of an Eerie Broadcast

ONE of the most romantic and unusual broadcasts in the history of radio was the blowing of the Trumpets of Tutankhamen, after 34 centuries of silence—an event which was hailed by one American paper as "Tut's Toots Tootle Round the World."

Rex Keating, in a recent BBC broadcast, described the exciting and mysterious "incidents" that accompanied the broadcast. It took six months to get the Museum Authorities in Cairo to give their permission, and in the meantime the broadcast was widely publicised, and captured public imagination everywhere. The BBC arranged to relay it, and so did one of the big American radio networks, and a large number of European stations. Six days before the broadcast a British military bandsman was selected to blow the two trumpets, and he began to work out the various possible notes in daily rehearsals.

#### Omens

The broadcast was to take the form of an interview with Alfred Lucas—the man whose life work has been the restoration of the hundreds of objects found in Tutankhamen's Tomb. Then the "incidents" began. The silver trumpet (the other is of copper) had crystallised with the passage of 3,000 odd years and was as brittle almost as glass. Four days before the broadcast it was found to have been so damaged during a rehearsal that it was feared that it would not be usable, and when Lucas heard what had happened, he was so upset that his heart gave out and he collapsed. In the meantime, superhuman efforts were made to restore the silver trumpet, Lucas was still in hospital, and the broadcast was only twenty-four hours off.

#### Where Was Moses?

On the way to the broadcast, Keating was involved in his first accident for years, when his car was run into by a runaway horse and carriage. Just before the broadcast, the electric light was found to be cut off at the main and it was completely dark, but a frantic search produced two watchmen's electric lanterns. By this time Lucas had arrived, accompanied by a doctor, and looking very shaky indeed. With five minutes to go both the watchmen's lanterns failed, leaving the party in total darkness, and with only two minutes to go someone produced one candle. Then, with the looming relics of a long dead civilisation stretching into the shadows all around them, and with only that one tiny flickering light, the broadcast began, and the trumpets were introduced with the words: "The Trumpets of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen, Lord of the Two Lands, King of the North and South, Beloved of Re."

After the broadcast letters came in from all over the world, many of them drawing attention to the much publicised "curse" of Tutankhamen's Tomb, alleging that these were war trumpets and that by broadcasting them far and wide Keating had released the curse of war on the world.

Six months later war *did* break out.

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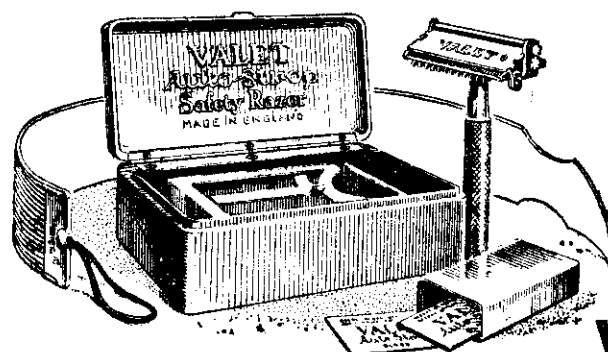
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