The Chit-Chat Club—

Points from Papers Put "Over the Air."

(Set Down by "Telanother")

It was one of those biting southerly days, experienced in Wellington even during the summer months, and the members of the X club, knowing that the fires would be blazing cheerily, had arrived earlier than usual. The "wireless bugs," as was their wont, had retired to their own particular corner, and firmly esconsed in the deep leather-backed armchairs with which the club was so liberally besprinkled, with a "little of something to make the heart feel more cheery," had drifted on to the old—and ever new—discussion of the merits and demerits of the weekly programmes.

"I heard a most interesting lecture last week," said Wishart, the only bachelor member of the little circle.

"What was it?" queried Hargost, better known to his cronies as Blinks.

"The story of the apple," replied Wishart.

"Might have known there'd be a woman in it to interest you, Wishie," said Blinks.

"That old Adam and Eve stuff's worn out these modern times," said Harrison scornfully.

"Nothing of the kind, sir, nothing of the kind," said the oldest member fiercely. "It was good enough for a damn sight better man than you'll ever be, and," he added, as much as to finally clinch the argument, "it's good enough for me."

"Well, well, it's a ticklish subject," said Blinks. "I don't know that its really worth arguing about, but I must say that when I look at Harrison. Darwin's theory does make a strong appeal."

"Oh, shut up," said Wishart. "The lecture wasn't about Adam, or Eve either. It was by Dr. Franklin Kidd, the visiting scientist, and concerned the everyday apple which we eat."

"Why on earth didn't you say so before?" said Blinks.

"Right at the start," said Wishart, "he gave me a shock by asserting that the apple was a living being, and that it breathed long after it left the tree. That, apparently, is what makes the cold storage of apples so much more difficult than storing butter or meat."

"I don't see how it can breathe," said Harrison doubtingly.

"You wouldn't, but it can suffer from other human ailments. For instance, it gets fungal rot at times," and so saying he looked with a meaning glance at Harrison, who pretended to take no notice of the allusion.

"Another thing about which great care has to be taken is the humidity of the air in the cool store. If the air gets too dry, the apple loses some of its water by evaporation, and then it commences to shrivel. Air movement is also needed in the cool store to carry off the volatile waste products that come from the apple. That is why ventilation is so important. One thing that Dr. Kidd said that appealed to me was that New Zealand fruitgrowers had made a great success of the business."

"They must have done so," said Thribs, "when you think of the prices they got in England last season. I believe," and, being a merchant, Winton Thribs always gave his opinions with the air of a man who knew, "the industry is now on a good basis, and I think fruitgrowers are going to get returns that will recoup them for the lean years they have had."

"I'll tell you a chap I think has improved a lot in his addresses," said Larton, who had arrived late, "and that is Stanley S. Bull. I heard him give one on Pompeii recently and it was very good."

"By jove, it was," said Blinks enthusiastically. "I thought I knew a bit about Pompeii, but I learned a lot from that address."

"That's the place they've dug up in Italy, isn't it?" queried Wishart.

"Your classical knowledge, my dear Wishie, is profound," said Blinks with a deep bow. "Pompeii was one of the great cities of ancient Rome."

"We should never have excavated it," said the oldest member. "Let the dead past bury its dead. Why should we go prying into their history?"

"That's the stuff," said Harrison. "Why, indeed, and why should we try to piece together the story of the earth? Why do anything?"

"You'll get the story of the earth in a single book," said the oldest member, standing strong for orthodoxy, "but I don't suppose that you, Harrison, would be able to appreciate such literature."

"Tut, tut," said Blinks. "We're on the religious shoals again. Get on with the yarn about Pompeii, Larton, my boy, or we'll have the oldest sinner here conducting an evangelical meeting."

"I suppose most of you know that around the beautiful Bay of Naples there are buried dozens of small towns, which flourished in Roman times. Of these, the largest was Pompeii, a city of 40,000 people—a place of holiday for Roman nobles and princes, and just one of those gay holiday resorts such as exist today in Deauville and Monte Carlo. It is nearly 1700 years since that city was buried in an eruption from Mt. Vesuvius, and yet such are the marvels of modern science that we have been able to uncover the buried city, and see exactly how life went on in those distant times.

"In A.D. 63 an earthquake shook the city to its very foundations, shattering temples and theatres and ruining many of the houses. Half of the population fled, but as several years passed without a recurrence, they gradually drifted back. The Senate commenced rebuilding the city and artists and sculptors were employed by the hundred to embellish the buildings and private houses. The work was almost completed in August A.D. 79 when Vesuvius let forth its pent up fury, and in two days seven towns had ceased to exist."

"Pompeii at that time was in the throes of a municipal election...."

"Oh cut it out," said Wishart. "That's making it a bit thick. I don't suppose they ever had local bodies in those days, and even if they did, how could anyone know?

"They were just as far advanced as we are in most ways," said Larton, "and we know the election was being held because of the notices which were everywhere in evidence—even down to little boosts for the candidates reminiscent of "the man who gets things done." The showers of light ashes and powdered pumice fell gradually at first, but everything was black as night—as it was in New Zealand when the pink terraces were destroyed. Many of the people escaped with their lives, as the fall at first was gradual, but others, thinking that it would cease, became entombed. So perished Pompeii.

"Centuries passed, and further falls of lava accumulated above the town. Vesuvius became so elevated that a Pompeiian would hardly have recognised it. At various times excavation work was attempted, and in 1860 the Italian Government set out on a definite programme of work. To-day that work is being continued by the Mussolini government.

"Their literature, their art and their amenities of life were equal to—if not better than our own. Theatres were found, medical instruments the equal of any to be found to-day, and in fact a civilisation very much like our own. That is what existed in the Roman Empire no less than 1700 years ago."

"What a wonderful old place it must be," said Blinks. "Wish I had the money to go and haunt the ruins."

"Talking of places I'd like to visit—and those I'd keep at a safe distance, I reckon this Arctic exploration business is called in," said Harrison. "What's the use of the thing anyway? They go away, endure all sorts of hardships, and then get back through the skin of their teeth—all for nothing."

"They do wonderful work for science," said Brenton, who, being the outdoors man, could always find a word of praise for those who explored. "It's through the work of Arctic and Antarctic explorers that we have been able to advance the science of navigation to the pitch it has reached to-day. You should have listened in to the last address given by Lieut. Burt."

"As a matter of fact, I heard it," said Harrison, "but I wasn't impressed with the case he made out for exploration in the Arctic."

"I was," said Blinks. "Again and again Arctic explorers have made knowledge available to us, and we are deeply in their debt."

"What was his last address on?" queried Thribs.

"The final stages of Worsley's Arctic trip. They got amongst the rocks when close to Green harbour and had the dickens of a job to get clear, and safe into port. They bumped about on the rocks for a couple of days, and eventually got off by means of a kedge anchor, warping the vessel a few yards at a time. The timbers were leaking badly and they had to keep the pumps going day and night, in order to keep the vessel afloat. Had it not been for the fact that the boat was made of good old English oak, it would have been smashed to pieces."

"They got a great reception from the Norwegian miners when they eventually landed at Green harbour. The ship was pretty badly damaged, for, in addition to being on the rocks it had been badly crushed in the pack ice. The rudder was damaged and loose, the propellor broken, the main gaff broken, the engine room bulkhead burnt, and there were many minor breakages, so you can bet they were all pretty glad to see port again."

"They got some great glimpses of the Aurora Borealis while on the trip, and Lieut. Burt said that it was infinitely better than the Aurora Australis. This wonderful phenomena could be described as being normally of a luminous silver brightness varying at times to a faint semblance of an oil lamp; a very pale phosphorescent green, or a subdued flame colour. In its full glory it dims the moon, and extinguishes the stars, though when shining at half power the stars can be plainly seen, peeping through its fringes. Sometimes the lights would form a broad arch over the snow-capped mountains, being well-defined below and splintered above, into a thousand radiating silver spears. During the whole time the expedition was away, scientific work was carried out, and much added to the store of human knowledge through its efforts—so you see the money spent on these efforts isn't really wasted at all."

Pertinent Points On—

"STORY OF THE APPLE."

"POMPEII."

"JACK FROST."

"IN POLAR FIELDS."

"What wonderful strides we've made in the last fifty years," said Blinks. "It's almost as if we were a race of super-men."

"Super-fools," growled the oldest member. "You are only reaping what the brains of others sowed for you."

"There's something in that too," said Harrison. "I heard an address from 1YA one Sunday night recently, called 'Wireless and Prophecy,' and that was the view the lecturer took. He admitted that wireless was one of the most wonderful things of this wonderful age and said that there was a tendency to ascribe the glory of these things to the greatness of the human mind, and to point out to them as wonderful achievements of this brain age. That view, he said, was not to be despised altogether, but to get the real meaning they had to go deeper. Man was the discoverer of these things, often after the most patient research, but the forces themselves were the product of the Master Mind and came from the hand of God."

"It's true enough that we're apt to forget that we are but harnessing these forces, and not calling them into existence," admitted Blinks.

"The lecturer contended that most of them were contained in prophecies in the Bible, and quoted various passages, giving his idea of their inner meaning.'

"That's just where I disagree with him," said Blinks. "During the war there were dozens of prophecy fiends who were willing to tell us from Isiah or anything else exactly when it was going to end, and when the milennium was coming. Granted that the Bible is Divinely inspired, its interpretation requires the human element and that's just where these would-be prophets go astray. Let us acknowledge that we are working according to some Divine plan, but for Heaven's sake let us leave prophecy alone."

"We're always coming across wonderful things," said Drexter, "and recently when I heard an address of Dr. E. Kidson's on frost, I realised how little I knew about nature."

"Yes, it was a good address," said Brenton. "Put things in a very practical way, which made them easy to understand. I always thought fighting frosts in orchards with fires was balmy."

"So it is," said Blinks. "How can you heat the whole of the atmosphere?"

"You don't have to. Dr. Kidson explained that frost is purely a ground phenomenon, and that even five feet from the ground the temperature may be several degrees higher than at ground level. By directly heating the air, the ground temperature is brought up, and so there is no danger of frost. Heaters such as are used in orchards are cheap, costing about 2s. each, and they burn crude oil. You have to have 100 to the acre."

"Good Lord," interjected Blinks. "Who wouldn't be an orchardist and spend the night going round and lighting up the heaters that had blown out."

"They don't give much trouble that way. The cost is fairly high of course an to protect your trees for a year would cost from £10 to £20 an acre according to the number of frosts you had. This method of protection is but little know in New Zealand as yet, but it is bound to grow. The thing is to know when to expect a frost and then to take the remedy before the damage is done."

"I know there'll be a frost when I get home, if it isn't pretty soon," said Blinks, trying to be painfully facetious. "Its well after six now, s' what about it boys?"

Five minutes later the cheerful fire was blazing alone in its glory, and half a dozen "wireless bugs" were fighting their way home in the teeth of the southerly.

By a proposed amendment to the South African Radio Act of 1926, it is hoped to place a better check on unlicensed set owners. The amendment makes it obligatory that "any person who sells, gives, or in any manner whatever supplies any valve, loudspeaker, or telephone receiver to any person who is not a licensed listener under this Act shall within seven days after such supply notify the Postmaster-General thereof by written notice setting out the name and address of the person so supplied."

ONLY EIGHT CIRCUITS

Not infrequently one hears people in New Zealand state that as new circuits are being brought out they will wait and get the latest.

The Sydney "Wireless Weekly" says: "There are just eight basic circuits in radio reception, and this despite the hundreds upon hundreds of so-called circuits. In fact, nothing serves to confuse the layman so much as the weekly appearance of new circuits with high-sounding names and lavish claims, producing the general but erroneous impression that radio is a constant experiment with receiving sets rendered obsolete a week after they are purchased. The plain truth is that new circuits are very, very rare, although new names are plentiful.

Present Basic Circuits.

Our present-day basic circuits are as follow:—

1. The simple vacuum tube receiver, a most elementary tuner.
2. The simple cauum tube receiver, with a most elementary tuner, and no provision for so-called regeneration or radio-frequency amplification.
3. The regenerative receiver, in which part of the output from the detector is returned to the detector to increase the strength of signals.
4. Audio-frequency amplification, used in conjunction with all kinds of receivers in order to increase the sound volume in 'phones or loudspeaker.
5. Tuned radio-frequency amplification, in which each stage is tuned so as to secure the utmost transfer of radio energy from one stage to the next.
6. Untuned radio-frequency amplification, utilising fixed transformers which require no tuning or adjustment.
7. The reflexing arrangement, whereby a set of tubes do double duty, first as radio-frequency amplifier and then as audio-frequency amplifier.
8. The super-heterodyne, whereby the incoming wave is thrown into interference with a locally generated frequency, setting up a so-called intermediate frequency current which is amplified and then detected.