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Wireless—the Invisible Bond



URING the long time that this expedition has been far from civilisation, they have been carrying out investigations valuable to science. They have set about exploring some of the vast expanse of apparent waste, hitherto unknown, seeking information that can be revealed only by privation in eternal snows. But this is not all. They seek to do a service to radio which is now doing such service to them.

During all this long period they have not been out of touch with their homeland, and as a consequence the world is able to publish in its daily papers the events of the day in Little America Antarctica. An adventure seal hunting, a man injured, a party a few hours overdue, the meditations of the leader all appear in our dailies a few hours after they have happened in a land thousands of miles from the nearest post. They have become so commonplace that they are read without any thought as to how the messages were received—perhaps they are not read. Every day from the Bay of Whales vibrations in the ether carry the tidings half way round the world to the listening posts in America from where they are sent out to the world.

But this is not the only service of radio to the expedition. The short wave station of KDKA, W8XX, broadcasts regular programmes for the entertainment of the party. Every week messages are sent through this or allied stations from those at home and these followed with special programmes. Modern science has made possible the selection, and their almost perfect broadcast, of the best programmes from America. To recount the number of successful relays and rebroadcasts from American short wave stations would be unnecessary. Readers will recall the reports of many of these feats as most of them have been intercepted in this country.

Perhaps the most outstanding of these accomplishments was the rebroadcast by 2ME, Sydney, of KDKA who was re-

ALMOST twelve months have elapsed since the small barque City of New York, the first unit of Byrd's Expedition left from New York City, bound for the wilderness of ice and snow. A singularity existed about this departure—time not space was to separate them from their homeland—they carried radio.

broadcasting the reply of the Antarctic party to the weekly messages. In this manner 22,000 miles were covered by the messages, before they were finally rebroadcast by 2ME. For a while New Zealand listeners were able to listen to the two-way communication, including musical numbers, between Byrd and his homeland.

Relays from musical entertainments in New York are common, and because of this there is the chance that the wonder of the feats will be overlooked. It may be forgotten that this is only the commencement of the wireless age, that in the near future we shall be talking to relatives, friends and business associates on the other side of the world without effort or difficulty. That in this age we shall see them and talk to them though separated by half the world. But this is by the way.

To come a little nearer home, one can cite the times when crystal owners have heard America talking to their explorers in the frozen wastes. Probably some have closed down in disgust because of a fade or a burst of static, and condemned wireless—but they forget that on a piece of apparatus costing a few pence they are intercepting conversation between two stations thousands of miles away, listening to the same music and messages that the intrepid party, snug-

gling round their oil fire, and surrounded by perpetual snows are enjoying, and listening to a message which is cheering some heart far removed from civilisation.

As one sits by their drawing room fire listening to a mother sending a message to a son in that waste do they think of the tie wireless is, of what it means to that mother and that son? Doubt, and uncertainty, the two most painful mental situations have been reduced to a minimum and the mother and son, wife and husband, the child and the father can each set his or her mind at rest knowing the other is safe. The day of return can be looked forward to without the horror that perhaps some untoward news will greet them.

But this is the vital service of radio—it has another significance. Just after 10 o'clock, when the flickering oil lamp is about to be doused and the weary pioneers retreat within their sleeping bags there comes the bright announcement: "Good evening, everybody! this is station 2YA, Wellington." Yes! it is Mr. Announcer upon whom there are many just waiting for a slip or something they do not like to wax their bitter irony and sarcasm. Put it in Antarctica—there, in the last moments of the day, Mr. Announcer and his pleasant tidings is welcomed with no uncertain note. "The voices and the music seem somehow to break down our sense of isolation for a few minutes while we snuggle down in our sleeping bags and think we have no connection with Antarctica," reads a recent message from the expedition to the "New York Times."

"We can almost see the inside of the broadcasting studio in Wellington. We can imagine what the men and women look like. It is part of the world we have left, and it adds somewhat to the piquancy of our enjoyment that they cannot completely visualise our environment, that they cannot realise the pleasure they give a group of men so cut off from the civilised community."

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