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SAFETY AT SEA



WIRELESS first came to its own as a means for furthering the safety of life at sea. It was then its most important application. It is its most important application to-day. The uttermost parts of the earth were already linked together by the telegraph, but by wireless alone has the earth been linked to the sea.

Though the importance of wireless from the shipping point of view was immediately grasped by the English people, it did not receive a really striking confirmation until July, 1909, when the liner "Republic" collided with the "Florida" in a thick fog on the high seas. The "Republic" was sinking, and plunged in darkness, the wireless cabin was splintered; but the apparatus was still workable, and the operator set an example which has been followed without a break by ships' wireless operators ever since. He stuck to his post, and by his calls for help the whole of the passengers and crew were saved. The next day that operator's name was known and honoured all over the world. His name was Jack Binns.

The next startling confirmation was when the "Titanic," with some 3000 people on board, struck an iceberg on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic. Her signals of distress were picked up by several ships which raced to the rescue, but when they arrived the "Titanic" had sunk, and they were only able to save some 900 persons. Without wireless, all would have been lost.

The International Convention.

IN the following year an International Conference on The Safety of Life at Sea was held in London. An International Convention was signed, but unfortunately, owing to the outbreak of the war, it was never ratified by any of the Governments represented at the conference. Immediately after the war, however, the British Government issued regulations which were on the general lines proposed, and other governments followed suit with regulations which, on the whole, were less stringent than those laid down for British ships.

Another International Conference was held in London last year, and a new convention signed which, when ratified, as we may confidently expect it will be this time, will come into force in July, 1931. It is a long document, but, broadly speaking, its principal

Another means by which radio and its allied sciences are ensuring the safety of human life

provisions are on the lines of the regulations already in force, and where they differ they are better from the point of view of the safety of life at sea.

Ships' Installations.

FOR the last ten years it has been laid down that in general all British passenger ships, irrespective of size, and

all cargo ships of 1600 tons and upwards, must be fitted with wireless telegraphy. Exceptions are made as regards certain ships, such as short voyage ships and ships of primitive build, dhows, junks, and the like. This rule is now accepted internationally in the new Convention, as are the regulations which are in force regarding the minimum technical requirements of the wireless sets installed in ships.

The main ship's transmitter must have a normal range of 100 nautical miles, that is to say, it must be capable of transmitting clearly perceptible signals from ship to ship, over a range of at least 100 nautical miles, under normal conditions and circumstances, the receiver being assumed to be one employing a rectifier of the crystal type without amplification.

There must, too, be an emergency transmitter, and both transmitters must have a note frequency of at least 100. The emergency transmitter must be placed as high above the water line as practicable, in a position of the greatest possible safety, and must be provided with a source of energy independent of the main propelling power of the ship and of the main electricity system. It must be capable of being put in operation rapidly, and of working for at least six consecutive hours. The range of the emergency installation must be at least 80 nautical miles for ships required to keep continuous watch, and at least 50 for all other ships, and whilst the ship is at sea the source of power must be maintained at its full efficiency.

The ship's receiver must be capable of maintaining reception in emergency by means of a rectifier of the crystal type, and must be able to permit of the reception of the waves laid down for the transmission of time signals and meteorological messages.

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