

Handled with care

By R. SLAUGHTER, *Assistant Chief of Packing and Transport*

WHAT caught my attention in 'South American Days', Graham Madgwick's story of installation in Colombia in the twenties, published in a previous issue of the magazine, was the care taken to ensure that the fragile transmitting valves reached their destination safely by road, rail and river in comparatively primitive local conditions. Having served continuously in the Shipping Department since 1920, I have always taken an intense interest in the subject of care in handling. Believe me, it still has the same nightmares today, even with all the facilities of modern transport.

On reading Mr. Madgwick's tale of the cigar-smoking carriers, I turned up the Shipping Department's monthly report for December 1920:

'Large and continuous shipments of apparatus' it reads, 'have been made for the stations in course of erection under contract with the Colombian Government at Medellin, Barranquilla, Puerto Colombia, Bogota, San Andres, Cali and Cucuta. It is pleasant to be able to record that notwithstanding the very great difficulties presented by the selected routes from the Colombian coast ports to the sites of the various stations, only one complaint of serious damage has been received by us and even this was due to an accident possible under the best conditions of transit.'

It is also recorded that claims for these stations amounted in all to £1500 only, which is excellent, especially as a good proportion of loss was due to pilferage and not to breakage. All valves seem to have got through intact and



R. Slaughter, Assistant Chief of Packing and Transport (right), who has been on the Shipping side since 1920. Here he is with A. F. Howe, Manager of Self Motoring Ltd., in Chelmsford

evidently the handing out of the cigars to the carriers was very successful!

The expansion of the Company's interests since that time, coupled with the growth of communications, is best emphasized by the fact that in 1920 a little less than 2500 tons of cargo was shipped to places including Colombia, Portuguese Angola, New Guinea, Mozambique, Gambia and Jubaland.

These latter comprised 1½ kW installations, representative of the times, but shortly followed by the 3 kW and 5 kW.

Today a matter of probably 10,000 tons of more compact apparatus is shipped every year, and when you consider that 50 kW and 100 kW stations are now the order of the day, it can readily be understood that compared with Mr. Madgwick's 'babes in the wood', which were evidently MT6's or MR6's, valves have grown considerably in size and stature. Today's CAT.14, for example, is an impressive sight, and costs hundreds of pounds.

Everything possible is done to see that the precious contents of crates and cases arrive in perfect condition, but there are many hazards lying in wait for us. Goods can be lost in transit, and

recently a ship caught fire and its entire cargo was destroyed. Packages are sometimes handled by local labour unable to read or write, rendering stencilled warnings about the fragile nature of the contents futile. So we can never relax our efforts: new valve crates or cages have meantime been devised until we now see them standing up to five feet high, stencilled in three languages on the outside to prevent tilting, trundling, jolting and so on. Immense trouble is taken with lorry-loading, and if necessary a member of the Department accompanies a big consignment to the docks or airport. Once valves are specially stowed in the ship, we are ultimately dependent upon the careful handling by dockers, porters and all kinds of labour, in unloading and

SOUTH AMERICAN DAYS RETURN

Last winter Graham Madgwick, retired engineer, went on a Caribbean cruise. He went to Puerto Colombia and Barranquilla, where he had set up a station during his early work for



Valves today, like those of forty years ago, are packed with immense care for their journeys all over the world. Here is a C.A.T. 20 at the Valve Depot, tested and nearly ready for dispatch. Left, R. F. Cheshire of Test, and right, H. A. Towns, in charge of Packing. All valves for the Company are now tested and packed and their orders dealt with at the Valve Depot in London Road, under the charge of S. F. Steven. Many thousands of valves of every kind are handled here in the course of a week



re-forwarding and it is very gratifying that despite the large increase in the quantity shipped nowadays, casualties are relatively small.

We are the link between production and installation, and we have to move fast with the times. And, let it be said, usually against the clock!

M.W.T., described in his story 'South American Days' in the February issue of the Magazine. He has sent us these recent photographs of, right, the old Puerto Colombia Hotel, now reconstructed, and left the W/T station at Barranquilla. He himself is on the right of the group, and in the background is the original transmitting station, left, and the residence

