

INTERVIEWS WITH THE DEAD

Space-time Reporter from 3YA Visits Lucrezia Borgia, Cleopatra and Other Women of History

OF course, it's been thought of before. Most things have been. But that's different from doing them. The Greeks thought of flying men—but Icarus came down with a splash. Jules Verne thought of a submarine—but he didn't make the submarine possible. And heaps of people have had this idea of ours, but it's never been done. There was H. G. Wells's "Time Machine," for instance.

The trouble has always been that people have relied too much on machinery. This age of ours has been a machine age. That's what has put everybody on the wrong track. We realised that at once. We wanted to visit the past. Obviously, no one would ever be able to invent a machine to take us there. The very idea of machinery was taking us slap in the opposite direction. Take that old machine, the clock—the very worst invention man ever made. It stops him living. Could anything be worse than that? It measures time. Now, that was just the idea we had to get away from. Time can't be measured. It's always there. Trying to measure time is worse than trying to measure the sea with a teaspoon. The sea has got some sort of shape, so that you can estimate its size. But time hasn't. Nor has space.

Our Advantage

That was where we had an advantage. It had been brought to our notice that there was no essential difference between time and space. The difficulty was to realise it. We talk about fixed stars, but obviously nothing can be really fixed in a thing which has no shape. It's only a manner of speaking, a useful method of comparison. The same thing applies to time. Nothing can be fixed in it. The year 5000 B.C. means nothing more in time than does the year 1939 A.D. Both years are there. It's merely a matter of getting at them. And that's what—after a lot of deep thought—we've done.

Having achieved this outstanding success, the next thing to consider was what was to be done with it. We were not going to be content with a mere achievement. We had to make use of it. It seemed to us that History is unquestionably one of the most fascinating as well as the most useful of sciences. Up to the present, the world has had to be satisfied with garbled, and often entirely fanciful, descriptions of what we call the past. And so, we decided that we could make no more valuable contribution

CHARLES THOMAS introduces a New Kind of Radio Feature

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to our fellow men than to show them the Historical Truth.

The Choice Was For Women

The next step was to decide how to do it. We came to the conclusion that the best method would be to interview, say, a dozen famous people. The staff meeting carried



"... That's where our reporter will need to use all his tact"

it nem. con. that they should all be women. There was a faint protest from a typiste, but it was wisely ignored. After all, no one can deny that women are far more fascinating creatures than men.

We then had to find a suitable reporter for the interviews. He would have to have a pleasant, soft voice, and an ingratiating manner. He would be interviewing women of some eminence. Also, he must have a sure delicacy of touch which would enable him to ask tactful questions of some women who were bound, on occasions, to be a trifle outspoken. We couldn't allow Madame de Maintenon, for instance, to say what she really thought of Louis XIV. We had to be

careful in our choice. We think and hope that we have succeeded.

The Office-Boy Was Delighted

Then came the great excitement — the choice of the women to be interviewed. The first one was Lucrezia Borgia. Bill, the office boy, was delighted. He likes blood, does Bill, and stabbings and poisonings, especially when they're done by slim dark women with a fatal look. I hope he won't be disappointed with Lucrezia. That pretty, golden-haired, docile girl has been rather maligned, I fancy.

The next to appear on the scene was the Mother of the Gracchi. She seemed a bit far back to Bill, and anyway, he isn't interested in mothers. But she'll have plenty to say, will Sempronia. Then came Mary Shelley—the one who wrote Frankenstein. You'll forget all about Frankenstein when you hear her talk. She is far more interesting than her book. The fourth was Sarah Siddons. We had to have one representative of the English stage. You remember her portrait by Reynolds as the Tragic Muse? And then Zenobia. Do you know anything about Zenobia? She's rather a thrill. She was queen of that magnificent city, Palmyra. Very clever, a good fighter, and devastatingly attractive. I always think her end was one of the saddest things on earth. The sixth was Charlotte Corday, the lady who killed Marat in the bath. She was a sure winner with Bill. He's always dreamed of being a second Scarlet Pimpernel.

For Number Seven, we went back a bit. Aspasia was the woman. She knew Pericles, Sophocles, and Euripides, and she spoke to Socrates when he was a young man. Then we came back to England and chose Charlotte Bronte. It'll be interesting to see her at home with Emily, and Anne, and brother Bramwell.

The Truth About Joan of Arc

Number Nine was Joan of Arc. She's always interesting because they are still trying to find out about her, and everybody has a different idea. Now, you'll know the truth. Catherine the Great was next—the Empress of Russia. That's where our reporter will have need of all his tact. Also with the next one, Cleopatra, that authority on pearls and poisons—and a good many other things beside. The twelfth and last of them was Lady Hester Stanhope of Democracy Hall, the niece of William Pitt and one of the most original English women who ever lived.

Our Space-Time reporter has just returned in high excitement from sixteenth-century Italy, where he called on Lucrezia Borgia. If you tune in to 3YA, Christchurch, on September 15, you'll hear all about it.