

# Voices of the Dead



GENERAL WILLIAM BRAMWELL BOOTH  
... Will speak to listeners.

**T**HERE is a voice speaking, harsh and deep and strong. It speaks about a great tidal wave in Mexico. As it goes on, the voice surges and sways, as if it, too, would move men and women with its flow... as indeed it did. The voice is that of General Booth.

Now I hear a voice that speaks in French and assuredly this must be one of the most wonderful voices in the world. The voice is speaking some lines from "Phedre," the play of the French dramatist Racine, and though not one word is intelligible to me—for French in real life, like money, always seems to go too fast—I could sit and listen to this voice for half an hour. It is crystal clear and yet flexible; it swings along, now trembling, now rising high, now shaken with tragedy. I have never heard a voice like this one. It belongs to Sarah Bernhardt.

## "Wait And See"

"WHEN will Asquith speak?" I ask.

"Wait and see," says the man in the small room in the headquarters of the NBS. I can remember how that phrase ran round the world in the early days of the War, when Asquith, the scholar and the man of thought rather than action, found himself cast suddenly into a world where the scholar's delay and careful hesitation was a serious weakness and statesmen had to dive straight into action.

Then Asquith's voice came clearly, making his Budget speech of 1909. His voice is musical, calm, fluent. It is not unduly perturbed. The year 1916, when that voice was to break under the tragedy of a man cast for a role for which he was unfitted, was still seven years away then.

**T**HE voice of the late Rt. Hon. Herbert Asquith is silent and a new voice takes its place.

"There are two questions," it says, "that my friends ask me. How I came to write 'Sherlock Holmes' and how I came to be a Spiritualist."

**W**HEN the words and the songs of the famous dead can be recaptured, Time Marches Back with all the fascination with which Time Marches On. In the "museum" of the NBS at their Wellington headquarters are stored these voices of the past. They will be heard in special performances from the National stations in the near future.

## Radio Captures The Fascinating Past For Its Listeners

The voice is deep and has almost a guttural note. I do not know whether that voice is still heard from the spirit world, but though its owner has been dead for many years it is still heard from this world.

**T**HE small room is filled suddenly with the sounds of two voices singing the "Miserere" from "Il Trovatore." One of them is a man's, magnificent in the Italian manner. The other voice in the duet is that of a woman. It, too, carries clearly and well after all these years.

"Caruso and Frances Alda," says the man in the small room. "She was a Dunedin girl. She became a famous prima donna and married the manager of the New York Metropolitan Opera House."

These voices came from the treasury of the NBS in Wellington. They are the gold that has been carefully hoarded out of all the currency on the air in this century.

**T**HEY brought back history to me and they will bring back memories to others when they are heard on the air. They are to be presented by the New Zealand National stations in a series of special programmes that will begin in several weeks' time.

The owners of the voices are long since dead, but the voices themselves are still clear and fresh and living. I was astonished that the old records should in so many instances come through so clearly and well.

**T**HERE were some in which the sense of the words was lost, but very few. Foreigners speaking in English were not distinct, but I doubt if Tolstoi would have been understood much better on an electrical recording.

Tolstoi! Heaven knows that when I read the Russian classics of "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina" I never dreamt there was any chance of ever hearing his voice.

Yet the man in the room had a recording of a talk that Tolstoi gave early in this century, called "Thoughts From His Book Every Day." The title even belongs to the forgotten age.

Only the first sentence of his talk in English was intelligible, and it was typically Tolstoi: "One of the