



G. U. F.

Invites a General



I.V.F. Invites a General

By Paul White.

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Paul White Productions,
4/1–5 Busaco Road,
Marsfield, NSW, 2122,
Australia.

The ZAP Group,
Unit 6, 116 Woodburn Road,
Berala, NSW, 2141,
Australia.

books@zap.org.au

DEDICATED
to
The “Defender of Malta”
by
The Author and the “bear-leaders” and other members of the
**Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions of
Australia** who so deeply appreciated General Sir William
Dobbie’s tour of the Commonwealth in 1946.





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Foreword

“But you’ll never be able to run a tour like that” was a statement heard all too frequently in the days when this great tour was in the nebulous stage.

“The General would never agree to come.” But he did.

“The I.V.F. will never be able to finance so ambitious a scheme.”

So the I.V.F. prayed.

First the General clearly indicated that a condition of his coming was that no honorarium should be even considered. Actually, he himself shared in the costs of hire, travel, printing and the like.

The Government and the Services joined us in a every practical way in doing honour to this distinguished servant of the King.

The intimate detail of the tour is given in this small volume.



Boy Scouts help in Malta

The Idea

Automatically I reached for the receiver.

“Hullo.”

“Bacon here,” came an enthusiastic voice, and into my mind’s eye came the picture of the original of the voice at the other end of the wire, a bespectacled publisher with the accent very much on action.

The voice went on, “I say, has the Inter-Varsity Fellowship thought of inviting General Dobbie to come to Australia?”

“Well, no,” I faltered, “we...”

“He’s having a wonderful tour in Canada and the United States, and he’s...”

“Wait,” I said. “Stop, you don’t need to sell me the idea, where are you? I can’t stand ’phones, I want to talk this over.”

A chuckle came over the wire. An address was given, and some twenty minutes later a car of ripe vintage was driving over the Sydney Harbour Bridge with me at the wheel. In my pocket was a copy of the American Inter-Varsity Magazine, *His*, with a splendid portrait of the General on the cover, and a striking story inside it.

Soon I was looking at clippings from American papers and hearing the story of an amazing reception given to the Defender of Malta throughout the States of America. My friend talked enthusiastically.

“Listen,” I said, “I’m all for it, but a show like this is enormous in its scope. Why, it would cost a couple of thousand pounds at least! We want advice and backers to this.”

“All right,” said the publisher, getting into my car, “drive me out to see

strategic people to advise in a matter like this.”

Through the City we drove, past Woolloomooloo, with its wharves lined with vessels. In the roadstead was an aircraft carrier.

“Did you hear the story of *Illustrious* in Malta? She is sister ship to that little packet.” Even as he pointed he was bursting into narrative. As he concluded the truly amazing story of that famous aircraft carrier we turned steeply into the wide road that goes through Rose Bay. A flying boat came slowly to rest at the airport. In six months’ time I was to watch this same graceful landing of a great aircraft with my heart in my mouth.

Looking out over the wide sweep of Sydney Harbour I listened to the voices of my counsellors. The desirability, the need, the strategy—all were put forward.

An Invitation Is Hatched

In the bay yachts swung giddily around a buoy and another flying boat flew low over the house.

First voice. “The whole tour will cost well over £2,000, and you will need guarantors for at least £1,000.”

Next voice. “At least that, but...”

Third voice: “My wife and I will have £200 shares.”

First voice: “Second that... That’s £400.”

Second voice: “I’ll make it five.”

“Now, if I can raise these guarantees for £1,000 tonight, gentlemen, may I send a cable?” I asked.

The whole matter was further discussed.

Was I.V.F. the right body to issue the invitation?

Should we have a large or small committee?

Who should we invite to help us? Detail just surged through our minds. But then we got the thing in proper perspective. Quietly, there on that veranda, we asked Almighty God to guide us in all our problems. Even as we prayed I felt an itching to get at a ‘phone I wanted to ask those people to stand behind us. I couldn’t but feel that here was an opportunity, not to be missed at any price, and as I prayed I felt this was certainly God’s plan, but I needed those guarantors to endorse the whole thing.

As I drove home through the sunset, ideas flashed through my mind, pell-mell—we could have Town Hall meetings, vast crowds: I could see them

packing up the steps to the great buildings. Then there was the radio: what contacts we could make with people who had no chance of coming to big cities. And then I thought of a Commonwealth-wide tour.

At long last I was able to put my latchkey into position in my front door. I sent my hat spinning into a chair, lifted the telephone receiver and dialled a number. A voice came:

“Hullo.”

“Ah,” said I, “hullo. Have you ever heard of Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie?”

A laugh came down the wire.

“Why, yes, I’ve just finished reading his book, *A Very Present Help*,” and then, in quite an excited tone, “why don’t you invite him to Australia?”

I spoke rapidly for a full two minutes, and then the voice replied:

“No, I won’t be a guarantor.”

My heart fell. Then the voice again:

“That’s passive! I’m right in on this, and I’ll send you my cheque for £100 tomorrow.”

I took up the ’phone directory as I replaced the receiver. But I put it down again. I felt impelled to thank God. I did so. And incidentally asked the Almighty for more, and further endorsement on this great plan that we had on foot.

The next five minutes were memorable. I heard the name of my second friend being called over an amplifying system, and then—it seemed ages—his voice came.

“Listen,” I said, “have you ever heard of Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie?”

“Who’s that calling?” said the voice.

I explained, and told him of the Defender of Malta, and his tour of Canada and the United States, in which the Inter-Varsity Fellowship had their share.

“Stop,” said the voice, “how much?”

“Eh, well...” I said, “I’m looking for people to guarantee a £100.”

“A guarantee of £100,” he said, “right. Do you mind if I run now? My grill’s getting cold.”

Three hundred to go! I dialled again.

“Sorry, he’s away,” came the reply.

Again I dialled. This time I asked for a trunkline.

“Put me down for £25.”

At that moment the doorbell rang and a visitor arrived. I told her about the project. She was a nurse, and nurses don’t make fortunes, even though they’re engaged in one of the most dangerous and responsible of careers.

“Well,” she said, “I’ve got £90 in the world, and I’ll put that in; I’ll be a guarantor.”

I felt uncomfortable. Here was sacrifice.

“Listen,” I said, “don’t forget this is a guarantee, not a gift.”

She shrugged her shoulders.

By 8 o’clock that evening I was prepared to send my cable overseas. I had to get in touch with the President of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, Dr. Mowll, the Archbishop of Sydney. Once again the telephone came into play. Within an hour this message was on its way. It was to have far-reaching results.

Dr. Mowll Inter-Varsity Fellowship President and Committee heartily invite General and Lady Dobbie to visit Australia for the Kingdom of God as early as possible STOP Civic, University and combined Christian gatherings arrangeable expenses guaranteed please advise Sir William.

This cable could not be sent direct to the General himself as he was at that very moment in an extensive and most effective tour of the Americas. However, Mr. Chappel, of Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, acted as our agent. Soon the wires were humming across the Atlantic. This all happened on April 20th, 1945. There was a stream of air mail letters, and on July 10th came the cable:

WE GLADLY ACCEPT. WRITING. DOBBIE.

Preparations

I was determined to know everything I could about Malta during the Blitz and about its Commander, Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie, so I went to a bookshop. Getting the cooperation of the book man, I said:

“I want everything you’ve got on Malta.”

“Well,” he said, “I’ve only got a couple of books; there’s a book here by Ian Hay, *Malta, G.C., The Unconquered Isle*. There’s another one, *Malta Magnificent*, by Gerard, and oh, by the way, I saw an article in *The Listener-In*, by Commander Kimmins, R.N., who had quite a lot to do with Malta, I believe. It’s not for sale; perhaps you would like a loan of it.”

Gladly I accepted his offer.

It was a gripping story; the whole theme was built around a National Day of Prayer. Commander Kimmins went to a little country church. The place was packed; the whole village had turned out to pray. As the Commander sat there his mind had drifted round to the various places he had recently visited. His mind, he said, paused for some time at the little Island of Malta, where he had spent many happy years in peace, and which he had recently revisited again during the war. He explained that the reason why his mind paused so long at Malta was that the quiet little building where he was sitting seemed to him a picture of Malta, with its dignity and tradition, and its unity of purpose.

Like that country church, Malta was very small, but what it lacked in size, it more than made up in aim, dignity and tradition. The Commander said: “Wherever you go in Malta you are reminded of the glories of the past: St. Paul’s Bay, where the apostle landed when he was shipwrecked; the Auberges, the residence of the Knights of St. John from 1530.”

“Today some of those beautiful buildings are the headquarters of the Knights of 1942. And there’s another tradition, more recent perhaps, but none the

less significant for that. Since 1800 Malta has been the principal base for our Mediterranean Fleet. Everyone in the Navy knows Malta—and everyone in Malta knows the Navy. Like the little country church, with its tombstones and tablets to remind you of those who had found rest and comfort there, so Malta is full of memories of great men who have found sanctuary in its bays and creeks from the wide and often treacherous seas of the Mediterranean. And just as last Sunday's congregation had little room to move, so it was with the inhabitants of Malta: there are nearly three hundred thousand people in an area about half that of the Isle of Wight."

The Commander went on to say how he had frequently flown above Malta. Here easily visible was the coast of Sicily, some 60 miles away. Now a mere 20 minutes' flying time away was Malta, with literally hundreds of aircraft, grouped and ready to take off. He draws a vivid picture of Field-Marshal Kesselring urging his crews to further efforts. Kesselring, who had always proved the centre of the major Axis operations of the moment. He was the Commander of the German air force in the drive against Holland, France and Belgium, and in the Battle of Britain. Now he had received orders from Hitler to remove the Malta menace, which was the Fuhrer's picturesque way of describing the little island which sat astride the shortest route for the Italian ports to Libya. Ansaldo, the Italian spokesman, summed up the meaning of Malta in one sentence: "Malta," he said, "has become a colossal and unsinkable aircraft-carrier, almost within sight of the Italian coast." There in the quietness and relative peace of that crowded little English village church, Commander Kimmins had thought of Malta as the perfect bombing target; dispersal was impossible because of the small amount of space, and the rocky nature of the place. The harbour was deep and narrow, the fleet and the merchantmen in it could not be dispersed in a way favourable to frustration of bombing attacks.

As I read on my enthusiasm increased. Malta had been an amazing show, a place memorable for the cooperation between the Maltese, the Navy, the Merchant Navy, the Army, and the Air Force. Everyone had played their part. For a moment I was carried away by the heroism of the defence of Malta. Then I realised that the next paragraph was especially what I wanted. It was a naval man's opinion of the great soldier I.V.F. had invited to come to Australia. I cannot but give it to you word by word:

“And finally the man who leads and inspires this wonderful army of people—the Governor, General Sir William Dobbie, round whose personality the whole spirit of the island is welded. He is a man of over sixty, a teetotaler and very religious, but he’s no remote or austere figure. He is to be seen time and again toiling in the streets helping to rescue humble islanders from the ruins of their homes, and encouraging the civil as well as the military defence. He’s a family man who loves his home, and all that we are fighting for. His wife and daughter are still out there with him. Yes, General Dobbie is a big man, big physically, big professionally, and big morally. A man with a dignity befitting the representative of the King, combined with the simplicity of a soldier. He has the reputation of fighting with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. No wonder he has been an inspiration to the garrison and people of Malta.”

I put down the magazine and reached for the 'phone. I dialled a number and heard the well-known voice of my good friend and adviser, George Dash.

My thoughts had turned in George Dash’s direction when the scheme had first been mooted. The man who floated Commonwealth Loan after Commonwealth Loan successfully in World War I and run Red Cross Publicity in World War II was the one for a vast project like this.

“George,” I said, “I’ve got a splendid article here. It gives the whole background and summary of the situation. We certainly have got a wonderful man coming to visit Australia in the person of General Dobbie. Will you be free for half an hour at lunch time, and we can get down to detail?”

Two hours later I listened attentively.

“We have two main tasks ahead,” said my friend. “The first, to plan out the programme; second, to arrange how it may all be carried out.”

We drew out a very comprehensive scheme for his visiting every main city in the Commonwealth, based on the principle of two meetings a day, with one day a week off for rest. I looked at it and shuddered. “This is a tremendously exacting tour, George.”

"It is, but we can at least submit it to General Dobbie and see how he feels about it."

I posted it air mail. By air mail I received a reply. The General's strategy was obvious. His way was to contact folk in one big meeting and tell them the story of Malta and of God's hand in it. He stipulated that there should be appropriate rest times and that travel should not be extensive.

I wrote immediately to Sir William, agreeing to what he had suggested and cut the paragraph from his air mail letter. If I could avoid it there would be no misunderstandings in the tour, so I arranged for this clipping to be made into a block, then everyone could see in the General's own handwriting the strategy that he had before him in this visit to Australia:

The Objects of the Trip are:-
(a) To reach, meet & reach with the Gospel the apparatus of official, professional & business society (what the Americans call the "Up & out"). This is the main objective & all arrangements should be calculated to further it.
(b) To reach young people in the Universities and Senior Schools.
(c) To reach the general public by meetings in public halls - a secular auditorium is always preferable to a church.
We would not consider it our responsibility to minister to Christians except perhaps indirectly & incidentally.

Armed with this information, I went to see my adviser. He heard all I had to say and read the marked paragraph. "Secular Auditorium," said George. "I wonder..."

I looked at him quizzically. From experience I knew that something unusual would come.

"The Town Hall is too small. There is only one place for a show like this—the Stadium."

"That will rock them," I laughed. "Wow! What an idea. Won't some people be horrified—but how...?"

I knew the inscrutable smile that met my question.

A week later the 'phone rang.

“Paul,” came the voice, “I’ve just got news for you. Here is a letter from Mr. John Wren, saying that not only will Sydney Stadium be available to us, but if we wish, we can have the Stadium in Melbourne as well. There’s the greatest cooperation coming from all sources. You’ve got no idea what we’ve started.”

“That’s great, but I wonder how we can get the programme running smoothly. It’s all very well to think of enormous shows in Stadiums, but how are we going to get everything going without a hitch?”

Now, in asking this question, I had not been altogether in the dark. I had spoken to another adviser earlier in the day.

He had said: “In my estimation, there’s only one man able to do that job. I speak of Frank Grose.”

George’s voice came through the receiver: “I can only think of one man in Sydney who really is capable of doing that job, and that man is Frank Grose.”

I smiled at the telephone and said: “That’s exactly, almost word for word, what Arrowsmith¹ said.”

¹ Rev. H. M. Arrowsmith, then General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, N.S.W.

Accordingly half an hour later I found myself on the way to interview this radio personality and thoroughly genial soul, known to thousands as Uncle Frank. I told him about the Stadium.

“Mmm,” he said, “that’s a huge place. An enormous place, holds 14,000—have you been into it?”

I had to admit that I had not, as yet.

“Well,” he said, “put out every bit of advertising you’ve got.”

“I’ve got George Dash looking after that.”

“Oh, well!” said he and made a characteristic gesture with his hands.

And so it was we began to build up our team. A liaison officer here, a specialist there, and before long we had a team and a blue print, and then the same links had to be forged in the other States. So I went to Melbourne. Just before catching the express, I made two of the most worthwhile contacts in the whole tour. The first was the Premier’s Secretary, Mr. Gilbert Neill. Kindly, understanding, and knowing the ropes from A to Z, he was able to point out to me endless pitfalls, things I hadn’t even thought about or imagined existed. There was the matter of the official calls. I had thought of them as the official calls and left it at that, but then I discovered that first of all His Royal Highness the Governor-General must be visited, and then the State Government, the Premier, the Lord Mayor, the G.O.C. and the Ecclesiastical dignitaries. It was all very complicated, but it was very simple when you had Mr. Neill advising you. Willingly he agreed to contact the Prime Minister’s Department and arrange for the General to visit Canberra and meet the Prime Minister. He undertook to do a hundred and one things which would have left me high and dry. I went from him to see Mr. Frank Crane, the Lord Mayor’s Secretary. Once again a kindly, understanding soul, who put me right in a wealth of detail. His final word of advice was:

“When you’re in Melbourne, be sure to see Captain Curmi, the Commissioner for Malta.”

The next afternoon, 600 miles away, I travelled eight floors up in the lift and knocked on the door of an office marked “Commissioner for Malta.” A few moments later I was ushered into the presence of a courteous Maltese gentleman, Captain Curmi. I told him of the General’s visit. He was extremely enthusiastic and he had the tremendous advantage, not only of having a full, complete knowledge of what our famous guest had done in Malta, but he had had the privilege of meeting him at the San Francisco Conference and hearing him speak. So from an entirely dispassionate source I was able to hear an eyewitness account of how the General had impressed him. “He is not an orator,” said Malta’s Commissioner in Australia, “he stands up and tells you in simple, straightforward language about Malta, and then he witnesses, he tells of his faith in God.”

Leaning forward on his desk, Captain Curmi said: “Of course, you will understand, Doctor, that we in Malta are devout Roman Catholics.”

“Yes,” I said, “I’m interested to hear that you found nothing in the General’s talk that would in any way upset you?”

The Captain shook his head. “Indeed, no. It was a simple faith in God that he spoke about, and it could not but impress everyone who listened.”

He went on to tell me incident after incident from the General’s tour in Canada, how Maltese had appreciated intensely the General’s interest in them, and how they flocked to hear him speak.

I left that office loaded with photographs of Malta, with pictures of the General, and with the encouraging knowledge that Malta-in-Australia was completely behind the tour.

Melbourne generally was most encouraging. There was the University group of the Evangelical Union folk—they were enthusiastic. The Vice-Chancellor was most cooperative. Yes, he would stand behind it, and he would chair the meeting when the General visited Melbourne University.

The Melbourne University E.U. Graduates’ Fellowship agreed to put their weight into making the arrangements. Women members would arrange a great meeting for women in the Town Hall. Many people throughout the City of Melbourne pledged themselves to follow through the General’s visit with their prayers. It was there that some of us created a slogan. It was “Knees down.” While we were there in Melbourne we had the chance of meeting our I.V.F. folk from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, and the whole tour was teed up. It always seemed that some of the most worthwhile times were the last hour or so before the express whisked you off to some other centre.

In the late afternoon I met, in Mr. Bacon’s office, a group of Melbourne business men. There was a lawyer, a barrister, who was well-known as a Red Cross courier; then there was a great old campaigner, who had done yeoman service in the Chapman-Alexander days. These being our advisers, together with the University folk, I felt that with our travelling representative, Basil

Williams, at the helm, things would go ahead, so I said goodbye to Melbourne.

Rather train weary next morning, I reported to George.

He listened very carefully and nodded. “Splendid, and now the thing to do is to produce an effective brochure. Do it in two colours, and get it out so that people have *got* to look at it. Don’t say anything that is not news; make it brief and to the point. It’s a keystone in the publicity.”

Publicity

I put a large piece of paper on the desk in front of me and started to scribble, and roughly arranged a layout.

I wanted unbiased opinions of the General, the sort that would grip the man in the street. The views of clerics and well-known Christians were good, but then there was the individual whom you wanted most to contact in this tour, who would sneer and say, “Yes, propaganda.” With this idea before me, I looked through the material available. Here was the very thing. Everybody agrees that the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill is a man who is worth listening to, and he said:

“Malta, under its Governor, that extraordinary man, General Dobbie.”

That quotation would go on top.

Then I thought, “I’ll look through Gerard’s book, *Malta, Magnificent*.”

I spent three hours on that particular pastime. My list of chapters, pages and lines grew. Certainly this book was giving me what I required in the way of information regarding Malta. Better still, he had written a whole chapter on General Dobbie, and concluded it with one of the most striking tributes that I have ever read. And that tribute came from no less a person than the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Malta.



General Dobbie, earlier in his military career

Gerard went to pains to point out that General Dobbie was a member of the Plymouth Brethren. He said it was obvious that Malta, which is said to out-pope the Pope from the ceremonial angle in the Roman Catholic Church, was being governed by a man from one of the most conservative of the Protestant sects, and yet the Archbishop of Malta, and the Governor, who from the point of view of their Church affiliation were at the opposite ends of the ecclesiastical ladder, were men who had worked in complete harmony, and that same Roman Catholic Archbishop had written:

All my life I have read in the *Lives of the Saints* of that look which was observed to come over the faces of certain Saints when speaking of God. It has been described as a mystic radiance which seemed to light up their countenance from within. I have met it but once in a long lifetime. That was in the present Governor-General Dobbie.

I had the feeling that this would be an open sesame to those amongst the Roman Catholic community, who would like to hear this great man who had done so much for an island which was 100% Roman Catholic.

Then I turned over to the other books in front of me. No one could say that Ian Hay was biased in the direction of propaganda for a Christian tour. I was struck by what he said, all the more since, apart from being one of the most skilful authors of his type, he was also a General in the British Army. "That will have to go in," I said aloud.

The Governor of Malta, and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces there at this time, was Major-General Sir William George Sheddon Dobbie. The story of the defence of Malta must begin with him, for he was to prove the soul of that defence for the next two years.

He is a master of his profession and devoted to it. He puts his trust in God and says so.

Turning back to *Malta, Magnificent*, I put as my fourth quotation on the main page:

Dobbie had served his God, his King, his Country and his cause as few men had served them. He had done what was asked of him. Not all the weight of the Axis had proved too great for the strong shoulders which had supported Malta in her hour of trial.

I took up a second piece of paper, measured it, and drafted it out as well as I was able in my amateur fashion. I realised that there on the left-hand side it was necessary to put the whole Australian programme. I felt this needed heavier type. Now I had worked out carefully every day of those three months during which the General would be in Australia. I was carrying out implicitly the requests that he had made—he should not speak more than four times a week, he should have time for rest, he should have time to pay personal calls.

He was arriving in the autumn, and I felt that Sydney would have the responsibility of setting the pace for the whole of the Australian tour. I arranged for New South Wales to have the first fortnight. Then the General was to visit the Federal Territory, and to speak at Canberra. After that he would arrive in Victoria in time to speak at the Anzac Day celebrations in the great Southern State. He would then make a hurried trip through the island State of Tasmania, and fly from there to subtropical Queensland, being there in the height of winter. I felt that Tasmania and Melbourne, with their great cold, would be better dealt with early in the piece, and the General would have a chance to thaw out in Queensland before moving across the Continent to South Australia and Western Australia, on his way back to the United Kingdom.

So I put down the dates. Then I thought, “Well, after all, the I.V.F. is sponsoring this tour, we have the whole responsibility, it’s up to me to put in something short about the I.V.F.”

So I drew a wavy line under the itemised Australian programme, and wrote:

The Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (I.V.F.) has

the privilege of sponsoring General Dobbie's tour throughout Australia. With its activities primarily in the Universities, I.V.F. stands for a practical and reasoned Christian witness to the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the reliability of God's Word.

I felt that that put the whole of our position in a nut-shell and that the General would express clearly and sincerely our whole attitude to matters Christian. Thus page two of my brochure was finished. Now page three: the block would go in there, acting as a window to the page, and I wanted to record two striking incidents—striking enough to convince the man in the street that the General was speaking of the miraculous. I had underlined one line. It read: "My talks will be built around the theme, 'God's Hand in Malta.'" I put that as the cornerstone of the page. And I thought, "Well, they may say, 'I wonder how things went in previous tours?'" Remembering the 7,500 who crammed a sports arena in Chicago, I decided to put that in underneath the wavy line on the bottom of the page. Then it struck me hard that our Stadium held 14,000. Could we get a larger crowd than the great city of Chicago, with three times Sydney's population?

There were two pages of Ian Hay's book, *The Unconquered Isle, Malta, G.C.*, that I had marked. One was about a merchant ship—a bomb landed amidships and penetrated to her engine-room. There were 38 casualties. "But if that bomb had fallen anywhere else," Ian Hay wrote, "4,000 tons of ammunition that that ship was carrying would have gone up, and that would have been enough to disrupt the Grand Harbour at a single detonation."

That had to go in. And then underneath it I decided to put the story of the aircraft carrier, *Illustrious*, the story that I was to hear from the General's own lips a very few weeks later, but a story which to me was as real a miracle as anything I had read. Carefully I counted the words and measured the lines. It would just fit in. So page three was finished. And now what about the back? I was doing it in two colours—I ought to put a little bit of red on the back, too. Now, I always like maps, and I hit on the idea of having a map made of Malta outlined, putting it in red, printing that on the back page and overprinting a whole lot of points from *Malta, Magnificent*— points which told the story clearly of what Malta was, what Malta had done, and just how

she had stood up to the tremendous blitz brought down upon her by the Italians at first and then by the relentless Germans. So I made a series of little black blobs, and after them I put excerpt after excerpt which I got from *Malta, Magnificent*. It read like this:

MALTA—GEORGE CROSS ISLAND

- “Malta is the key that commands Egypt.”—Napoleon.
- “That tiny island of a hundred and seventeen square miles held in her slim hands the destiny of the United Nations.”
- “That unsinkable aircraft carrier anchored off the heel of Italy.”... “that dagger ever pointing at the heart of Italy.”—Mussolini.
- “There is good reason to suppose that had Malta not retained her grip on the supply lines, we might well have lost the Middle East and the Nile with all for which it stood.”
- “Rommel and his German divisions stared across the wastes of sand and saw what lay before them. The glittering prize was Egypt, the Nile Delta, Suez and, indeed, the road to India. It was Malta which denied Rommel that one chance, that one chance which was all he asked.”
- “All three Services and the Maltese people contributed their share. They were not numerous enough to stop the flow of men and material to Rommel, but they whittled it down and they kept it down. They kept it below the point where the German Commander-in-Chief dared to risk a throw!”
- “In the Battle of Britain, Kesselring had three German

Air Fleets. In the Battle of Malta he had one German Air Fleet—and the whole of the Italian Air Force. But in the former case the target was four hundred and ninety times the size of Malta!”

- “To celebrate Hitler’s birthday on April 20, 1942, more than three hundred bombing sorties were flown from Sicily against Malta!”
- “In Malta, a thousand tons of high explosive dropped on one objective alone in the island in thirty-six hours!”
- “Where in England the blitz could be measured in weeks, in the Mediterranean fortress it went on for weeks, months and years. The last peak period went on for five months, day and night without cease. During one twenty-four hours in April, 1942, the island only knew about two hours in which it was not actually being bombed!”
- “Proportionately our killed and wounded in Malta were double those of Britain.”
- “Malta cost the enemy over one thousand aircraft.”
- “The submarines operating from her fighter and gun-protected harbours sank more than half a million tons of Axis shipping. There were more German and Italian trained airmen shot down over Malta than the total number of civilians killed in two years of intensive bombing.”
- “In one month alone, it was November, 1941, British bombers of the R.A.F. (chiefly Wellington and Blenheims) dropped more than one million bombs on enemy targets.”



Arrival

Soon the General's handwriting became familiar to us. The air mail service to London was functioning well, and in a matter of five days letters posted there or here had reached their destination. My pulses were quickened somewhat when I received a letter on the 30th November, dated the 25th, which read:

We are expecting to sail next week in S.S. *Themimstocles*. After calling at Durban, not Capetown, we will go direct to New Zealand, and will not touch an Australian port.

And then another air letter, this time dated the 6th December, and said:

We are just about to start on our venture.

And then came a long gap as far as letters were concerned, but from the angle of activity it was no gap. Arrangements were being made, point after point consolidated, detail after detail worked out, everything confirmed and made water tight, and then came a message from New Zealand:

Arriving February 3rd.

That made the keys of the typewriter click more furiously than ever. I wrote a welcome letter to Sir William and Lady Dobbie. It started off like this:

I.V.F., Australia, welcomes you to Australasia on the first lap of your campaign for God 'Down-Under.' There is a steady barrage of prayer going up for you both. Interest is becoming more and more acute. We have arranged for your tour to commence on April 2nd, and are making every effort to withstand the inevitable request that you should speak at this and that.

And then came a cable from Wellington, New Zealand, from my good friend, Ross Fraser:

Great meeting last night, Town Hall and overflow packed, greetings to all.

And next day by air mail came his letter. It read:

I can tell you it was a great thrill to see the Town Hall here in Wellington fill up and the Concert Chamber overflow. There was an intense interest, and a great crowd of all sections of the community turned up. Besides giving a most interesting talk of his experiences in Malta, he gave a simple and clearly understandable Christian message. Don't forget, you promised me that you would fill the Sydney Stadium with 12,000 people, and I believe that it will be easy when you meet the man.

If we had been on our toes before, now we were straining at the leash. Day by day cuttings came from the New Zealand papers; crowded meetings, crowded overflows, splendid broadcasts and school meetings. The New Zealand Press was full of the tour.

I went to the Airways Office, "Can you give me the final information as to when General Dobbie will be flying across the Tasman?"

The attendant consulted the schedule. "Yes, sir, he will arrive on April 1st, by the afternoon 'plane, at Rose Bay."

I thanked him, although April 1st seemed hardly the right day to commence a tour of the nature that the General was going to conduct in Australia. The night before I slept brokenly. It seemed to me that I was welcoming the great man over and over again, but always in my dreams something went wrong—the 'plane didn't land, the luggage had been left behind, the arrangements went wrong, the Press hadn't turned up, something would go awry.

I arrived at the I.V.F. Office at an early hour the next day. The telephone was in great demand; arrangements were being made, the Maltese community were coming down to have first welcome to their late Governor, and then I read in the Press that Lord Gort, who had succeeded General Dobbie as Governor and G.O.C., Malta, had that day died. Two Maltese residents, Mr. Castaldi and Mr. Zimmett, met and arranged for a large Maltese flag to be

available and for flowers in the Maltese colours to be presented to Lady Dobbie on their arrival at the flying base. I rang the airways people—

“Pardon me, but what time does the flying boat arrive, ex New Zealand today, please?”

“If you would ring again at 10 o’clock, sir, we would be able to tell you with accuracy.”

At 10 o’clock sharp I rang.

“The flying boat will arrive at Rose Bay aerodrome at 2.11,” he replied.

I put through a number of ’phone calls immediately to the Press, to the Archbishop, to members of our organisation, to the Maltese community. At 1 o’clock I boarded a tram for the air base. There I found my good friend, George Dash, with everything in hand. The Maltese community was there, and I had the pleasure of greeting one and all. The Airways officials were most courteous and arranged that we should all go into the buffet, and meet the General there.

With me was Bishop Pilcher, Coadjutor Bishop of Sydney, who had been at school at Charterhouse with General Dobbie, and there was a veritable cohort of photographers and reporters.

Just before 2 o’clock we saw the aircraft move smoothly overhead and come to rest on the harbour. Everybody peered through the window to catch the first glimpse of our distinguished visitors. The Maltese waved the great flag through the window, and then it was our privilege to see General and Lady Dobbie walk up the gangway and come towards us. The General had been granted diplomatic immunity for his luggage from the Customs angle, and Bishop Pilcher greeted him when he came in. A moment later I had the great honour of shaking hands with the Defender of Malta, and his Lady.



General and Lady Dobbie on their arrival in Sydney

There was the flash of magnesium and the click of cameras. Reporters crowded round to get messages to Australia. Two little Maltese girls came forward and presented their bunches of flowers. Everybody was in the

happiest of moods.

“Thank you,” Said the General, “we had a splendid trip over.”

“Yes,” said Lady Dobbie, “and I for once enjoyed the trip.”

“Actually,” she said to me, “it was your fault.”

“It was my fault, Lady Dobbie,” I said, “what could I have done in the matter?”

She said, “I’m afraid I was a little taken back when I saw the cover of your book, *Jungle Doctor Operates*, but when I started reading it in the plane I forgot to be sick.”

There was the hectic half hour of introductions, Pressmen who wanted personality slants, and reporters who wanted to know if General Dobbie was going to visit the Cardinal, the broadcasting representatives wanted a message to Australia; there were those who wanted to know if the General had been in Australia before; what his impressions were of New Zealand; if he thought we were on the verge of a religious revival; and in the background, hovered George building up propaganda for the great meeting at the stadium in three days’ time. It was a tremendous help to have him there. Very quietly he steered things along the right channel. A few moments later we were able to put our guests into a car and see them safely off to Bishops court.

Ormond Porter and I, clutching a sealed envelope full of the General’s mail and with typed lists of the Australian programme in our pockets, followed a little while later.

When we arrived at Bishops court we were invited to have tea with the General and Lady Dobbie. It was a memorable occasion. I drank tea from a cup with green dragons on it, and heard something of the New Zealand trip.

Then Lady Dobbie said, “I’m feeling rather tired. Will you excuse me?”

“Before you go,” said the General, “might we pray?”

We all knelt down round the afternoon tea table, and in simple language we asked God that this visit might be well worthwhile to the Kingdom of God. As we got up from our knees Porter looked across at me. There was a smile on his face. It was easy to read what he meant. There would be no trouble as far as we were concerned from our distinguished visitors.

The Stadium Show

“You’ll never fill the place—why, it holds 14,000.”

I smiled knowingly. “George says—”

“But, man alive, no one knows it’s on, even. You need notices in the trams, slides in the picture shows, dodgers in every shop window; you—”

I moved uneasily in my chair and replied: “Well, we have had quite a bit of publicity over the air, you know, and there is a display window down in the Wynyard Underground Station, and George says—”

My visitor held up his hand. “Mark my words,” said he, ominously, and disappeared.

The ’phone rang.

“I say, you didn’t have an advertisement in Saturday’s paper. You’re going to have all the difficulty in the world getting that vast Stadium half full; why, even 9,000 is a huge crowd, three times a crowded Town Hall...” and then there was five minutes more in the same strain.

I put down the receiver with a mind full of doubts. For a moment I bent my head and prayed the sort of prayer that doesn’t reach the word stage. Then I opened my mail.

A paragraph caught my eye. “You should have plastered the town with placards,” it ran.

I groaned and dialled a number. “George,” I said, “I’m getting curry from all angles.”

A chuckle came through the receiver. “So am I. Even old Frank is sceptical. He’s just told me we might get 9,000.”

“And you’re still confident that those tickets of invitation are all that is necessary?”

“Listen, Paul, this will be the biggest meeting of its kind Australia has ever seen, and you’ll find our methods, the personal touch primarily, will work.”

“If you’re confident, so am I, and oh, George, just before you go, what about a landline being put across into Rushcutter’s Bay Park? The amplifying people will be a little bit worried, because you’ve got to have a special landline above the tram wires, permits and safety nets, and I don’t know what. But, George, you know I used to go to Sydney Grammar School, and their sports ground is next door to the Stadium.”

“What has that got to do with landlines?”

“Quite a bit, because scores of times I’ve been into the deep stormwater channel that separates the two places foxing cricket balls, and I think we could overcome that difficulty by putting in the landline under the road into Rushcutter’s Bay Park. So whatever happens, we can deal with a crowd of any size.

“Oh, and George, what about the tramways people?”

“You’ve arranged for the trams to take the crowd back at 9.15 from the Tramway Depot just over the road? Splendid, you think of everything. Till five o’clock then—goodbye.”

I hung up the receiver, grabbed my coat and hat. Just before I left for one of the biggest days of my life, I gathered the family around. We knelt down and asked God to be with us. My prayer was: “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” The little folk went off to school, and I caught the train. What bliss—forty minutes’ immunity from telephones. I used it to make out a list of the day’s activities on the back of an envelope.

As I was getting out of the train I met a friend.

“Hullo,” said he, “all ready for the big day?”

“Yes,” I replied, “all tied up—you’ve got some tickets?”

“I’ve got twelve; that means twenty-four of us are coming. We’ll be there.”

“Well, you be sure you’re there by seven o’clock,” I answered, “the public will be let in then, tickets or no tickets.”

“I’ll be there,” he said, waving his hand.

I crossed one of Sydney’s narrow streets with the necessary nimbleness of foot, and on the footpath I saw another acquaintance.

“Hullo, Doc, I’ll see you at the Stadium tonight.”

“Right,” I said, “got your ticket?”

“Oh yes, I’ve got it all right, I’ll be there.”

Passing the rabbit-hole-like entrance to Hosking Place, on my way to the I.V.F. rooms, I saw an undergraduate. She apparently was in a hurry. She pulled a ticket from her bag, smiled, waved it at me, and hurried on her way.

There certainly was something in a personal invitation.

A moment later I was in the maelstrom of activity that marked our I.V.F. Headquarters in those auspicious days. There was my enthusiastic secretary, Joan Bates, hard at it, typing with a determined look on her face. There was Ormond Porter, a lawyer, and I.V.F. representative from Queensland poring over a train timetable; it was his duty to be bear leader¹ to the General and Lady Dobbie when they went to Canberra. In the far corner of the room was Rosemary Brewer, our Western Australian representative, armed with a pair of scissors and a paste bottle, cutting out clippings from the daily newspapers and sticking them assiduously into a collection of scrap books to go to the various States, to give them an advanced idea of what was happening.

¹ See the chapter “[Off the Chain.](#)”

I took off my coat and faced a pile of correspondence. At that moment the

'phone rang.

"Hmm," said my secretary, "they're all asking for tickets."

I grinned, but not for long. I took off the receiver, and listened for a moment.

"No," I said, "I'm sorry; no tickets left. If you get there by 7 o'clock there may be a few seats available, though."

I took a letter from the heap of correspondence in front of me and read it through. It was an invitation for General Dobbie to attend a luncheon. I called out:

"Come and take some letters, please."

A moment later my secretary, armed with pencils and shorthand books, was sitting at the end of her table.

"The Secretary of —"

"Dear Sir,—I regret that it is impossible for the General to attend the luncheon, to which you have so kindly invited him.
The—"

At that moment the 'phone rang. Everyone in the room looked up as the receiver was lifted. We heard the mumbling of the voice, then my secretary said:

"Oh, you've got a ticket—good. Well, as long as you're there by 7 o'clock you'll be able to use it, but the gates are thrown open to the public..."

A mumble came through the telephone, and the receiver was put back.

"Now, I've got to the bit in this letter where I said that the General couldn't go. Oh, continue from there... 'Unfortunately the General is only able to undertake a limited number of appointments and it is impossible for him to take more during the short time at his disposal. I am sure that you will understand, and I hope that you will be able to attend one or other of the functions at which the General will speak.' Finish that 'Yours sincerely.' And

by the way, what is Mr. Frank Grose's number? I want to ring him up and make sure the band arrangements are all tied up."

I lifted the receiver, and somehow there was a satisfaction in feeling that you'd got in before the other fellow. I could imagine some fifty odd people round Sydney trying vainly to dial my number while I had the receiver off and was going to ring someone up! I heard Mr. Frank Grose's voice come through the receiver:

"Hullo," I said, "this is the I.V.F. here. I was just wondering if everything is in order for the programming section of tonight."

"Yes," he replied, "everything is in order—the soloists will be there, the piano is there; everything seems to be working well; the acoustics are all right, and the amplifying people have done their job admirably. Everything will go smoothly if you'll get the hymn sheets there. My angle will all be tied up."

"Right," I said, "I'll see you there at half-past six and we can make sure that everything's synchronised."

"Yes," he said, "that'll be in order. Will you come round later on in the day and we can just have a try-out of your chairmanship?"

"Two-thirty suit you?" I asked.

"Well," came his voice, "good luck," and hung up.

Turning to those in the room, I said:

"You know, we're extremely fortunate to have two men like George Dash and Frank Grose helping us. You take F.G. He knows exactly what to provide in a programme and he does it just right; he knows how to keep the thing moving, and he'll have it right on to the minute."

"Did you hear his Community Chest session on Friday?" asked my secretary.

"I did indeed; the propaganda he's given us in telling people over the air about the General's visit is amazing. The same with his 'Sunday School of the Air'; oh, he's a great asset is Frank Grose.

“Ormond,” I said, turning to my friend, who was sitting, still poring over the railway timetable, “I want you to make yourself responsible for having 16,000 of these souvenir hymn-sheet affairs to be at the Stadium by 5 o’clock. We’ll also need a number of those other various and sundry booklets that we’ve got. Will you make yourself responsible for that?”

“Yes,” he replied, “I’ll put that all in order; you can leave that to me.”

It was a tremendous relief to know that you had a team behind you who would do what was asked and could be trusted to see the whole thing through.

“You’ll find the souvenir hymn-sheets round the corner there. They’re bundled up in packets of...”

The ’phone rang. I took off the receiver.

“Hullo...”

You could almost hear the people stop in their activity to see if it was somebody else wanting tickets. But this time it was the Premier’s Secretary, Mr. Neill. I felt mighty thankful that we had come to know him early in the piece.

“Doctor,” said he, “have you arranged the order in which the guests of honour shall go into the Stadium and where they shall sit?”

“I’ve arranged it as well as in me lies,” I said, “but I’m not quite sure of the order of precedence. I wonder whether you would be good enough tonight to act as my adviser in the matter.”

There were those who said afterwards how smoothly everything had gone. If they knew how much I owed to the good offices of such people as Mr. Neill, well, they’d understand why everything went smoothly.

I put the receiver back again and took up further correspondence. This time there was a request for Lady Dobbie to open a fête. I replied to that in the only possible way. When your notable visitors have a bare fortnight, in

which time they aim to touch the whole of the metropolis of the largest city in Australia, well, there isn't any time unprogrammed.

At that moment there was a knock on the door. A telegraph boy with an urgent telegram. I tore it open. Telegrams always give me a feeling of tragedy and awe. This was from the Commissioner for Malta, sending best wishes for the evening meeting; I took up the 'phone to check arrangements for the Maltese community who were enthusiastically organising themselves for their own particular welcome to the great man. It was planned that a small Maltese girl should present Lady Dobbie with a bouquet of flowers in the Maltese colours; it was arranged also that 300 ringside seats should be kept for those folk who had behaved so gallantly in the defence of that little island which proved to be the thorn in Rommel's side when North Africa was in the balance.

I had barely finished these arrangements when the door opened again. This time to admit Joyce Percy, a Victorian I.V.F. representative. I was only halfway through my greeting when the 'phone went again.

"Hullo! Yes, George."

I whistled softly.

"Yes, I'd forgotten completely about that Press conference. Now, you want me to send notifications to the Chief-of-Staff of each of the papers, and the weeklies, yes, and you want them delivered by hand, and the Press conference for Lady Dobbie will be held at Bishopscourt at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. Do you think I should be there? All right, if you think so, I'll go, but I'll take Rosemary Brewer, too, because she can learn just what to do when you're face-to-face with reporters—when she strikes that problem in the West. Right, thanks very much. Oh, yes, everything is in good form and condition. We're going like scalded cats."

I raised my voice.

"Quickly, letters to the Chief-of-Staff of all the dailies and weeklies in Sydney. To the Chief-of-Staff. Dear Sir,—Lady Dobbie has intimated that she is willing, tomorrow at 10 o'clock, to give a Press conference at Bishopscourt.

Should any of your representatives care to attend, I feel that they will be able to get a story that will be of interest to the womenfolk of Australia. Yours faithfully.' Now, no carbon copies of that lot; we have got to send out originals. And Ormond, if you'd be good enough to run around and deliver those by hand, then there can be no doubt about them actually turning up. Heh, and if they do say they didn't receive them, well, they have been delivered by hand by a lawyer. That should be enough."

Almost automatically I leant across to answer the 'phone.

"No," I said. "I hadn't forgotten, I have reserved 30 ringside seats for your folk. We shall have everything in order. Right, goodbye."

I put back the receiver and turned round to those in the room. "That was the Deaf and Dumb Association. They'll have their own interpreter and they'll be able to take a full part in that service. I think it's going to be a great show. We certainly have got a mixed grill. Behind the deaf and dumb we have reserved 100 seats for wounded and convalescent soldiers from the 113th General Hospital at Concord. And by the way, did I tell you that we tried out the acoustics of the Stadium? We found that it wasn't in any way practical to have the platform in any other place but the ring. There, you've got the whole thing right; you've a sounding board above you, and the acoustics are perfect. The place is built and the amplification arranged to deal with ring events, so we've decided to have the centre of things there."

"But," said Peter Nicholson, the President of the Sydney University Evangelical Union, who had come in in the middle, (he was an engineer, by the way), "what about all the people who will be sitting behind the General when he speaks?"

"I know it's difficult, but they will be able to hear him because from the four sides of that great ring are amplifiers, although they'll only get a view of his back, they'll be able to hear every word that he says. You know, you can't have everything when you're going for a crowd of 14,000."

At this stage I felt that we had to remember that our job was not done only by organising and by prearranged programmes, and I thought of that verse from the Good Book, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith

the Lord of Hosts,” so for a time in the rush of that day we stopped and committed the whole job into God’s hands.

We had barely finished when the strident bell of the telephone rang. This time it was Victoria Barracks, notifying me that Major-General Callaghan would represent the G.O.C., N.S.W.

“Would you like a cup of tea?” asked my secretary.

There was a universal applause at this suggestion, and the kettle was put on. Tea was just being poured out when a knock came at the door. I went to open it, and there was no less a person than General Dobbie himself.

He came in, and we all stood up. I introduced him to those whom he had not met.

“Sir,” I asked hesitatingly, “I wonder whether you would care for a cup of office tea. I’m afraid it’s a little bit crude, but we find it a real encouragement for the work of the day.”

A few moments later the General and the rest of us were drinking tea from cups without saucers, and the great man was sharing with us the one office teaspoon. To my great relief, he seemed extremely “at home.”

Looking through the window at the sullen sky, he said: “I wonder whether it will continue to rain today. You see, there’s a garden party at Admiralty House and His Royal Highness has invited my wife and myself to be present. I don’t know whether it will be on or not.”

I looked across the room to Ormond. He nodded, and picked up the ’phone. In a minute he informed us that the latest bulletin was that the garden party would be held. We escorted the General down in our ramshackle lift, and through a maze of passages to his staff car.

“Look here!” said he, “what about this evening?”

“Well, Sir,” I said, “I expect that place to be packed out. Any rate, that’s been our prayer, and we have opened our mouths wide, and believe God will

answer.”

Lunchtime came, and what a luncheon! A few sandwiches and a cup of tea, taken between various requests answered on the 'phone and various calls made. That 'phone was used on an average of once every three minutes during that day. At 2.20 p.m. all the details seemed to me to have been arranged, everything seemed in order. The programme was there and everything was up to schedule.

I reached for my hat. “You’ll find me at Uncle Frank’s. I’m going over with him the ‘brief words’ that I’m going to say tonight.” A chuckle greeted this. “Yes, it’s all right for you fellows sitting there, pasting things into books and doing various and sundry jobs, but think of me. I’ve got to chair this meeting tonight!”

But I’m afraid I didn’t get much sympathy.

I arrived at Uncle Frank’s office just in time to see him doing one of his thousand and one good deeds. He was handing out one of his own suits to an aboriginal who spoke in a deep tenor voice. He was in trouble, and Uncle Frank was helping him, from the Community Chest.

The door closed behind me with a great deal of bang.

“Hah,” said the well-known broadcaster, “let’s hear your piece.”

Now, I had planned for four minutes, and no more. I said what I had to say and skilfully he whittled it down, changing this phrase, arranging that, and showing me just where everything should be. Then he produced a handful of typewritten, itemised programmes, with each item marked off and the time it would take, each factor carefully considered. He had worked-in five well-known hymns—it seemed a bit much to me, but he shook his head.

“No, that would be just right.”

And I knew that he knew.

“Now,” said he, “we must synchronise this thing. The General will enter the

ring at 7.45 exactly; at 7.43 I want you to leave the manager's office and direct the official party to their seats; at 7.45 the General and Lady Dobbie will mount the steps of the Stadium, and without any preamble all will rise and sing the National Anthem."

It appeared to me that I was not the only one plagued by the telephone, because he had two of them. It is an amazing sight to see a man with a telephone to each ear trying vainly to answer both at once. In the middle of it he called for his secretary, Elsa. She came in, a cheerful soul who had helped greatly. It seemed to me a notable feat that while juggling with two 'phones he could give instructions to her as well.

I left his office feeling a little bit giddy. The hands of the clock seemed to whizz round. It was 4.30—it was a quarter to five! Then the 'phone rang again. I recognised the voice of my good friend, George Dash.

"There's no need to get to the Stadium," said he, "till five-thirty."

"Good," I said, "that will give us a chance to get a bit of tea. We'll be there."

The Main Bout

At 5.30 we were at the Stadium. We entered through a side door and set to work to show an enthusiastic group of some 50 members of the Sydney University Evangelical Union just what an usher's duties were.

There were some twenty police as well as a number of uniformed attendants of the Stadium. It seemed a hopeless tangle for a while. I stood back and watched. There was Frank Grose, seeing that the appropriate space was allocated to the band, and getting two lads to help guard that wedge-shaped piece of territory called backward-point by the cricketer! George Dash was arranging the official seats and seeing that they had been marked out and duly labelled. Bill Carroll, George's able lieutenant, was supervising the programme distribution. Soon each lad knew his own particular territory. The doorkeepers and the police were in position, and everything was under control.

I slipped out through a side door to see if we would have an audience. I thought of all those rumours—we'd be lucky to get 3,000!!! Perhaps 5,000 at most. The crowd in Chicago was 7,500.

As I came through that door an amazing scene opened before me. There was still some time before the doors were due to open, and outside was a vast milling crowd of people, thousands of them; trams were coming all the time and disgorging more and more people. It was an overcast night; there was a tendency to drizzle, but it seemed to have no effect on that great crowd of people. I saw schoolboys, hundreds of them. I saw folk whom I knew by the score, and hundreds upon hundreds whom I'd never seen before.

I slipped in through the door and said:

“We must open up now.”

Our very good friend, the Stadium manager, Mr. Harry Miller, was a host in himself.

“Yes,” he said, “everything’s in order. I felt a bit queer about it at one stage, but I think all will be well now.”

A moment later George Dash’s voice came through the amplifier.

“This great Stadium is the largest building of its type in the Southern Hemisphere. It will seat 14,000 people. Please don’t rush, there will be room for everybody. The doors will now be opened.”

Standing to one side of the double doors, they seemed to bulge as the throng outside pushed towards them. The bolts were drawn, the bars taken away, and suddenly the doors opened. People tried to push their way through, the police kindly and gently holding them back. The Stadium attendants were used to dealing with crowds.

The people started to come in; they swept in like a torrent. George was busy over his microphone, telling them that the Stadium was the second largest enclosed building in the world, only beaten in size by the Madison Square Gardens. He told them over and over again that there was room for everybody and not to push. He urged them to go to the big doors or the back doors, as the numbers fluctuated. Before long, I went and looked at that great hall which had at half-past five been nothing but rows upon rows upon rows of emptiness. It was gradually filling up. As a matter of fact, there was very little space. I could not help being amused, watching those in the upper section—the bleachers—trying to get to the ringside seats, trying to attract the attention of some friend of theirs, but the Stadium attendant stood at the gate and was inflexible.



General Dobbie speaks at the Anzac Day Meeting, Melbourne

Frank Grose's programme was that there should not be a dull moment. So from the minute the people started to enter, the Salvation Army Congress Hall Band got to work and produced inspiring music. People found their way to their seats, the ushers were functioning excellently, the programmes were getting round in the right way, everything so far was going as it should, but I had still to find and direct all the official party. I had first to usher them into the manager's office, arrange them in the correct order with the kindly help of Mr. Neill, and to see that at 7.43 exactly we started on that 50-yard walk to the ring.

At the door I met Squadron-Leader McKie, D.F.C., who had taken part in the air battle over Malta. I invited him as one of the official party. I felt that the General would like him to be there. And then I saw two cars draw up. Out of the first stepped the General and Lady Dobbie, followed by their host and hostess, Archbishop and Mrs. Mowll. There was Lieut.-General and Mrs. Plant; there was the Lord Mayor (Alderman Bartley) and the Lady Mayoress. In a few moments I had them all ushered into the manager's office, introducing them to my good friend, Captain Dash, who really was the moving spirit behind the whole of that night's organisation.

At that moment the telephone in the manager's office rang. I had gone outside for a moment. Coming into the room, I found that General Plant had answered the 'phone. He turned to me and said:

"There's somebody on the 'phone; I'm not quite sure who it is, but I think it's a reporter, and he wants to speak to somebody in charge."

I took up the 'phone. To my amusement, it was the voice of Major-General Callaghan. He had the bad news that his car had broken down and he would be delayed.

General Plant was most amused when I told him that the supposed reporter was no less a person than General Callaghan.

I glanced at my watch. It was zero hour.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I said, “would you be good enough to follow Sir William and Lady Dobbie into the arena?”

Everything went without a hitch. As our distinguished visitors came into view thunders of applause drowned the music of the band, and as they climbed up the steep steps into the ring, I felt that Sydney was expressing on behalf of Australia a tremendous welcome to the Defender of Malta. As the thunderous applause rang out through that great building, my eyes travelled right round it. Apart from a very small wedge directly behind the General, the place was packed, packed to the doors. There was a sea of faces, wave upon wave from the ringside to the far wall. The brilliant lighting of the ring showed up the tense faces of those close up, the deaf and dumb, the convalescent folk from the military hospital, the Maltese; I could see a great basket of red and white roses ready for the presentation. It was 7.45. I stood before the microphone.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I said, “the King.”

The great building rang with “God Save the King,” and then I introduced Sir William and Lady Dobbie. The little Maltese lass daintily came up the steps and presented Lady Dobbie with the great basket of flowers, and even as she did so, the vast meeting rose again while the Maltese National Anthem was played. A moment later, following the playing of the “Last Post,” 14,000 people rose for a moment of silence and remembrance for those who had fought and died in Malta. Two hymns, two beautifully-sung solos, and once again I was in front of the microphone.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Sir William Dobbie, the Defender of Malta.”

Again that great auditorium, crowded to the doors, re-echoed with the cheers and the applause of an Australian audience, amongst whom were many Diggers who would not have been walking in the streets of Sydney if Malta had fallen.

Sir William was before the microphone, 6ft. 2ins., straight as a ramrod, every inch of him a soldier, his fingers locked behind him as he stood. The applause died into silence. In even tones that reached the farthest corner, the General started, what to me will always remain one of the most striking

addresses that I have ever heard.

In a ringside seat a volunteer speed stenographer, Joy Chantler, was the only one with her eyes not on the General. I saw the pages of her notebook flicking over, and wondered at her skill. A type-script duly came to hand of that classical address. This I handed to General Dobbie. He sub-edited it, and here is his own story:

The Hand of God in Malta

The title of the talk that I propose to give you this evening is “The Hand of God in Malta.”

I want to put things before you in such a way that you will be able to form your own opinion about this matter. I don't want you to take second-hand stuff from me. I am going to give you the facts and tell you the situation that obtained when the war with Italy began, and the siege of Malta commenced. I am going to tell you a certain amount about the extraordinary things that happened. I hope that by the end you will be able to decide for yourselves whether or not the title that I have chosen, “The Hand of God in Malta,” actually describes what happened. I have no doubt myself, but I want you to form your own opinion.

First of all, I take it you all understand why it was that we had to hold Malta. When France went out of the war and Italy chose to come in, Malta was in a very isolated position. We had lost our friends in the Mediterranean and had gained new enemies who were only sixty miles away. Malta was a very inconvenient place to hold for that reason.

We needed Malta as an offensive base. Some people have talked about the island being used for defensive purposes, but this was not the case. You will remember that the Italians had a large army in North Africa when the war with Italy began. The Italians, and later on the Germans, were determined that they would capture Egypt and the Suez Canal. It was necessary we should do what we could to prevent them from getting too strong, and therefore it was decided that we in Malta should attack the communications across the Mediterranean on which the enemy army depended for its very existence. Communications between Italy and North Africa made Malta, owing to its geographical position, the best place from which to make these attacks, and that is why we had to hold the island.

We had naval units based on Malta. We had submarines and sometimes we

had light cruisers and destroyers and other naval vessels. After the beginning we had bomber aircraft of various kinds, and they were all used for that good purpose of attacking the enemy's ships and so preventing the food supply on which he was dependent from getting to North Africa. At this stage we could attack only the communications, but we were extraordinarily successful, and according to what the Italians themselves admit, for a long period it was even chances whether one of their ships got across the Mediterranean without being sunk. One out of every two... this made a big difference to the enemy's army in North Africa.

If Malta had fallen, we would not have been able to exert that influence that we actually did, and the enemy would have piled up forces in North Africa which might have been too strong for ours. If Malta had fallen, I believe, and I think most people agree, we would have lost Egypt.

If we had lost Egypt, owing to Malta having fallen, the war would have taken a very different course, and you and I would not have been here now, enjoying victorious peace—I am sure of that! That is why we had to hold the island.

When you have to hold a place, it is very nice to have a strong garrison with which to do it, but unfortunately, owing to the conditions elsewhere, it was not possible, at that time, to put an adequate garrison in Malta. Please don't think I am blaming anyone. It was force of circumstances.

It was just after Dunkirk, and you will remember that though we were able, in God's great goodness to our Empire, to withdraw from France and Belgium the greater part of the personnel of our Expeditionary Force, yet we lost practically all our military equipment, and England was in a perilous position.

I don't think people took in how parlous was the defensive position in England then, but it was obvious that no reinforcements could be spared for Malta, or for other places for the time being, since all available resources were needed to defend England at that time. So Malta had a very small garrison, and we knew we could not expect any reinforcements for the time being. We did not know how long it would be before we got any. In point of fact, it turned out to be over four months.

We were on the look-out for two kinds of attack. We fully expected that the enemy would invade the island with a full-blown invasion by sea and air. For a long time he had boasted about what he had intended doing when war was declared. He expected to capture the fortress in a day or two, by invasion. That was one form of attack that we thought was going to come.

We thought we would be heavily bombarded from the air. The enemy commanded a very strong air force, and his effective aircraft at that time, ran into four figures. They were of good quality and completely up-to-date. He had excellent air bases in Sicily—only a few minutes' flying time away from Malta.

So far as our air defence was concerned, we had four antiquated aircraft—only four—they were Gloster Gladiators, and in crates at that—and we only had them by accident. Somebody had poked them into a corner of a store in the dockyard in Malta, and I suppose they had forgotten all about it. When the war began, we looked around and found these four aircraft, and were very glad we did. The Air Officer Commanding—we had one of these although he had no aircraft to command—made some sort of a deal with the Admiral, and he got these out-of-date biplanes out of their cases, tied them together, and we started the war with Italy with those four antiquated aircraft.

You can see we were not over-strong in the air. When you are expecting an air attack, and if you have not enough fighter aircraft with which to keep the enemy distant, you are very glad to have guns knocking about the place. Unfortunately, we didn't have any—sixteen for the whole island—and they were mostly of an obsolescent type. There were none of the light type for low flying aircraft, but that didn't matter much, the Italians never flew low. They had to do the best they could to protect the Naval Base, the dockyard and the submarine base, the airfields, and so on. Our defence was not good.

So far as the other danger is concerned—the danger of invasion, which I thought the greater of the two—if the enemy had made the attempt, he would have had almost complete mastery of the air. We needed a lot of infantry to defend the various beaches along the sea-front. There were over thirty miles of such beaches. To oppose the invasion, if those operations were

attempted, all we had was four battalions, together with one additional battalion in the course of organisation. You will agree with me that that was a very small force with which to meet the danger. It is a danger that we really thought was imminent, since the enemy knew what we had got in Malta. He knew to a man and a gun just what lay against him.

That was the situation on 10th June, 1940, when Mussolini declared war. It was a time when the British Empire was standing quite alone for a year before the Germans attacked Russia, and thus brought the Russians in against them on the same side as ourselves. Italy's action was the beginning of the siege of Malta.

We had an extraordinarily small force with which to hold the island. We knew the enemy had as large a force as he chose to bring against us, and we also knew that we could not expect reinforcements from the Home Country, or from anywhere else for the time being, and that was the situation.

I put the facts before you simply and clearly. I have not exaggerated or left out any factor in the defence problem.

We will come back to consider that problem later on, and meanwhile, I will tell you about what happened.

Mussolini told us, or rather gave us a formal declaration of war—a very rare courtesy these days. Anyhow, he told us one afternoon, on the 10th June, that he was going to be in a state of war with us at midnight. We went on with what we were doing. We had made all our dispositions... and there was nothing more to be done. When midnight came we watched the beaches as far as we could. We expected he would attempt landings under cover by darkness. However, the night passed and the dawn came, and the landings were not attempted, and they never were.

I wonder why they were not?

Do you ever wonder why the Germans didn't invade England immediately after Dunkirk? I don't know whether you have been following in the newspapers the trial of the German war criminals at Nuremberg, but I noticed that evidence was given by some of them that the German General

Staff were very anxious to attack, and argued strongly that the landings should have been attempted in England at that time... immediately after Dunkirk.

They realised the going seemed to be pretty good. The invasion didn't come in England or Malta! *Why?* In this case, the enemy apparently made a bad blunder, as they did in the other case. Do you know any explanation to cover the fact? The only one I can see is that God's restraining hand kept them from attacking us at a time when we were ill-prepared to meet them.

But a day later the first bombers came over, and they came over many times that day and the following days. I remember hearing the air-raid warning go, the first one, on the early morning of 11th June, and I remember mentioning to my wife—or did she say to me: “There goes the siren for the first time. I wonder when we will hear it for the last time?”

We had two very wonderful years in Malta after that, and during those two years I think we heard that siren go 2,300 times. We got rather used to it, and the first time we slept away from Malta it was so quiet we found it difficult to sleep. I am only telling you that because I want you to take in something of what the people of Malta had to put up with. It was a big thing to bear. Malta is the most densely populated country in the world; a quarter of a million people live in one hundred square miles.

The Italians thought that by bombing a place like that they would break the spirit of the people and bring about the fall of the fortress. If they did, they were wrong, because the people of Malta put up an extraordinarily fine show from beginning to end, and they never wavered in their determination to see the thing through. Every bomb that dropped with intent to break their spirit seemed to stiffen their determination, and they never caused me one moment's anxiety. I am very glad to pay my tribute to the citizens of Malta for the way they stood up to the hard things that came to them.

I remember after one raid, meeting a woman standing on the debris of her home which had just been destroyed, and I went up to her. It was very hard to find something suitable, under those conditions, to say. I tried to sympathise with her—just a poor simple woman—and when I got up to her she said: “Your Excellency, we have lost everything, but it does not matter, so

long as we win this war.” That sort of thing was said to me on a number of occasions by the people of that island.

Well, the enemy sent over these bombers and caused a number of casualties and a lot of damage. Of course, our little Gladiators went up to meet them. We never had more than three in the air at a time, and I want to stress the tremendous odds those young fellows who manned those small, antiquated aircraft were against. They were going up, each fighter, many times a day, trying to keep the enemy away from Malta. They did extraordinary things, and you will be glad to know that His Majesty, the King, awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to one or two of them. We were delighted when the King did that, and we still think that the decoration had never been better earned before or since. I pay my tribute to the Royal Air Force for what they did.

During my two years in Malta we were always short of fighter aircraft. We got others later on, but we were always very short of the machines so vital for the defence of the island. We had lots of bombers, but we never had anything like command of the air. You can imagine the odds that were against us. The Air Force went about its task and tried to keep the enemy away from Malta, and at the same time, at every opportunity, tried to damage communications between Italy and North Africa. You will be glad to hear that in the Air Force in Malta, although we had no Australian units, we had a number of individual Australian personnel attached to the various squadrons in Malta. We were very glad to have them, and I may tell you, they did magnificent work.

I want to tell you now about another danger that loomed up. It was not very pronounced at the beginning, but it was there, and that was the danger that our food supplies would give out. Malta, being a very densely populated island, cannot grow anything like the amount of food that is needed to feed the population. Ninety per cent. of it has to be brought from outside by sea, and one hundred per cent. of everything else, and also the munitions of war, the anti-aircraft shells, petrol for aircraft, etc., had to come by sea. That was the job of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, working together, to see it got through.

In the early days of the siege, it was not too difficult for ships to reach Malta, but as time went and the situation in the Mediterranean deteriorated, it became more and more difficult to get the ships through. As time went on and the Germans and Italians secured almost a stranglehold, it became almost impossible to get ships through. I would have said “impossible” except for the fact that some ships did get through, and I want you to take in what a tremendous thing our Merchant Service did for us, so far as the force in Malta is concerned. If they had failed, nobody could have blamed them. They were asked to do what was something of a miracle, and they did it. There was one convoy—it was the final convoy that got to Malta in August, 1942, before the siege was raised, and this convoy came from Gibraltar. They mostly used to come from Alexandria. This one passed through the Straits of Gibraltar—fourteen large ships of the Merchant Navy, full of all sorts of things that were needed, and it was escorted by a very strong naval force. It started off with fourteen ships—*three* got to Malta! Eleven were lost on the way. The naval escort had many casualties, too. That was a big price to pay, but that was the price that the Merchant Navy and the Royal Navy did pay, and the three ships that got in, just made the difference. Eventually the siege was raised, owing to the success of the Eighth Army, and it was possible once again to get ships into Malta. When the first ships did get in, the larder in Malta was nearly empty. It would have been quite empty if these gallant ships had not fought their way through. They just made the difference.

We owe a tremendous lot to our sea Services, and I hope our Empire will not forget that. Whenever the Merchant ships came to Malta I used to go on board and invite some of the men to the palace, and I was delightfully struck by their demeanour. They had just been through a grim time on the voyage to Malta. They had seen their sister ships sunk, and they had heavy casualties, and in a most extraordinarily fine way they had taken it as a matter of course—no fuss made about it. I was greatly impressed with them. I do hope we will not forget what we owe to the Merchant Navy.

I want you, if you will, to come back with me to the problem I mentioned at the beginning—that defence problem that confronted us. I have given you the facts. Now, the resources we had were inadequate if we were to make certain of holding Malta. We needed other help, and we knew it could only come from God Almighty. From past experience, I expected help from that

direction. Others in Malta were of the same mind. I have read in the Bible about people in old days who had been faced with the sort of problems we were right up against. They were in a pretty perilous state, and we read that they turned and asked God to help them and He did. I turn over the leaves of my New Testament and read these words:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. (Romans, 15th Chapter, 4th verse).

This meant a lot to us in Malta. It gave us comfort and hope. All sorts of things have changed as the centuries have passed, and the technical side of war has changed. But God has not, and we have proved that was the case, and so we turned to Him and we asked Him to help us, and He did.

As the Governor of Malta I thought it right to send out a special Order of the Day. I sent out two, actually, one addressed to the people of Malta, and the other addressed to the garrison of the three fighting services. They were worded differently, of course, but they meant much the same, and this is the wording of the one to the garrison of Malta. It was just a short time after the great decision had been made in the War Cabinet. This is what I said:

The decision of H. M. G. to fight on until our enemies are defeated will be heard with the greatest satisfaction by all ranks of the Garrison of Malta.

It may be that hard times lie ahead of us but I know that however hard they may be the courage and determination of all ranks will not falter & that with God's help we will maintain the security of this fortress.

I call on all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God's help, and ~~then~~ in
then

reliance on Him to do their duty unflinchingly

W. G. S. D.

The decision of His Majesty's Government to fight on until our enemies are defeated will be heard with the greatest satisfaction by all ranks of the garrison of Malta.

It may be that hard times lie ahead of us, but I know that however hard they may be, the courage and determination of all ranks will not falter, and that with God's help we will maintain the security of this fortress.

I call on all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God's help and then, in reliance on Him, to do their duty unflinchingly.

—W. G. S. DOBBIE.

There I honestly believe you have the secret of the successful defence of Malta.

We realised our need, we asked God to help us, and He did, just as simply as that; and during the two years that followed (and before my wife and daughter and I left the island) we saw unmistakable proof that God was doing just that thing. It was obvious that unusual things were happening.

Yes, I remember people coming up to me, sometimes Senior Officers and sometimes hard-boiled types of people. They have come to me and said, at the end of the day: "You know, Sir, I believe there has been Somebody up there" (pointing upwards) "who has been helping us today." "Yes," I have said, "I think so, too." Then I reminded them that we did ask Him to help us, and today we have been watching Him do it. We in Malta, knew that it was God who was helping us through.

Just about the same time I was greatly encouraged to realise that there were those in high places in England who were thinking along the same lines as ourselves. I got a telegram from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. He was then General Sir Edmund Ironside, later on to become Field-Marshal Lord Ironside. I knew him when he was a Gunner and I was a Sapper, and he and I understood each other. I knew his difficulties, and I knew he could not send reinforcements. The telegram I received read like this:

PERSONAL, FROM C.I.G.S. DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER
THREE VERSE TWENTY-TWO.

I reached for my Bible—it was never very far away—and looked up the reference:

Ye shall not fear them, for the Lord your God, He shall fight for you.

From a person in his position to one in mine it was very encouraging. I am perfectly certain the C.I.G.S. was right. We had ample proof that God was doing just that thing. I could tell you any number of instances just to show the sort of thing I mean.

In the early days of '41 a convoy came into Malta. The naval escort included a brand new aircraft carrier—H.M.S. *Illustrious*. The German air force recently had come to Sicily in great strength. It attacked the escort, concentrating on *Illustrious* and hurt her pretty badly. By the way, they lost a lot of aircraft in the process. She limped into Malta that night under cover of darkness, and we started to patch her up so that she could go to a less exposed place to be repaired properly. Next morning the Germans came over and spotted her and renewed their attacks, and succeeded in hitting her several times. Some of the damage was of a very serious nature, and it began to look as if we could not get her away. We knew the Navy needed her badly, as we did not have many aircraft carriers at that time. The Admiral came to me one afternoon and said: "They tell me the *Illustrious* must have four clear days without any further damage before she can go to sea."

Four days without any more damage! Some of us, including myself, went and prayed that God would help us out of our difficulty.

Next day the Germans came over again a number of times, and for some reason they changed their tactics and bombed from a great height. The whole day passed without any further damage being done. The same thing happened the second day. The same the third day, but the attacks that were made did not do any damage. The same on the fourth day. On the evening of the fourth day, I stood by the harbour and watched, with a feeling of relief, as the great ship steamed out. It was mended up properly in a U.S.A. yard. The

word we used for this in Malta was “Miracle.” The odds against the ship getting away were enormous, and yet the impossible happened, and we called it a miracle, and there’s only one Person who performs miracles.

The cruiser *Penelope*, operating from Malta, was doing a lot of damage to the enemy, and one day when she was in Malta was hit by a bomb. She was not very badly hurt, but it was necessary to patch her up, too, and she was put into dry dock. It was an uncomfortable position, sitting up in a dry dock, with the enemy, who was in very great strength, making constant raids to destroy her. They riddled her with bomb fragments to such an extent that her crew renamed her “H.M.S. *Pepperpot*.” She, too, had a most miraculous escape. A tremendous lot of superficial damage was done but with no fatal results. She got to sea and headed for Gibraltar. She had to pass there to the Island of Pantellaria, through the Sicilian Narrows, past the south of Sardinia, with its many air bases, and so on, and was attacked by every conceivable thing in the sea, under the sea, and in the air; but somehow or other she got through. When they got to Gibraltar the ship’s company held a thanksgiving service to thank God for the great deliverance they had had at His hand. Again, we in Malta called it a Miracle!

And now, as one looks back from the vantage point of a few years distance we can see things perhaps in a truer perspective. As one views the happenings of those days and see that Malta has remained in British hands, one can only describe events as having been nothing short of miraculous. I have no doubt about it. I believe it very firmly, and I am glad to acknowledge publicly that it was God Almighty who brought us through.

All the people concerned with the defence of Malta did magnificent work. I have spoken about the people of Malta. I have spoken about the fighting services and the Merchant Navy. They could not have done better. But it was God’s protecting hand that brought us through. I am personally glad to acknowledge that debt, and that I, the Governor of the island acknowledge what He did for us at that time.

If Malta had fallen, the course of the war would have been very different, but in God’s mercy it did not fall, and we received a tremendous benefit. For that, we must give thanks to God. I think the whole thing can be summed up

very appropriately in the words of Psalm 124, which reads:

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel
say;
If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men
rose up against us;
Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was
kindled against us;
Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone
over our soul;
Then the proud waters had gone over our soul;
Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their
teeth;
Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the
snare is broken, and we are escaped,
Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and
earth.

I want to tell you what a tremendous thing it was for me to know that I could turn to God Almighty in all the difficulties and problems that came my way. If it is a fact that we cannot trust anyone unless we know him, we cannot trust God unless we know Him. And you know as well as I do that there is only one way by which we can know God, and that is through Jesus Christ, who came to this earth to show us God. In God's mercy to me I came to know Him in that way many years before I went to Malta, and when I did go there and was faced with these new and rather strange problems I knew I could turn to One whom I had already tested and proved and found that He had never failed me.

I am going to tell you now how that beginning came with me. It was a long time ago. I was fourteen years of age and at school in England, when I realised that even as a schoolboy can know, I was a sinner, and that I badly needed a Saviour. The burden was heavy, and I did not know how to bear it.

One evening I suddenly saw, for the first time, what I had heard before over and over again, as you have heard. I suddenly realised that Jesus Christ had come to this earth 1900 years ago for the very express purpose of giving His

life, in order to pay the penalty of my sin, so that I might go free. I thank God that I did realise it that night, and then and there accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour. He had paid the debt that I had incurred so that I might go free.

That was the beginning—over fifty years ago. Since that happened and all that time on Malta, all through my army life (and I have had over forty years in the Army) I have known Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Friend, and when I realised how much He had done for me I felt it was up to me to show my gratitude by obeying Him and trying to please Him—and He became my Lord, and on top of it all, He had made Himself my Companion and Friend.

This is a practical thing I am speaking of. I am speaking of what I know and what I have proved, absolutely to the hilt, and I can assure you that it is a real and practical thing for Jesus Christ to be in one's life, in the Army as anywhere else.

I have put Him to the test, if I may reverently say so, and He has never failed me. He has solved my problems, and He will solve yours. Nobody else can do it. He is the One you need, and still need, and He will not let you down.

We talk about the nations being built up. They will never be built up like that unless we, as individuals, get on to that firm foundation ourselves. There is only one foundation which will stand the test, and that foundation is the Rock, Christ Jesus.

I commend Him to you, and if you will take Him into your life as I did, you will never regret it.

There can seldom have been more sincere applause. The whole place seemed to lift with the clapping. The way that vast crowd sang "Oh, God, Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope For Years to Come," was an inspiration. During the last verse I lifted the microphone down and placed it on the floor, and the Archbishop of Sydney, Dr. Mowll, pronounced the benediction. The band struck up a martial air and the General and his Lady proceeded down from the ring, followed by the official party. They were all escorted into the office of the general manager of the Stadium (Mr. Harry Miller).

For a moment there was silence as they came into that room, which was used to a different type of fight to that put up that evening. Round the wall were photos of famous fighters in various poses, looking grim. Looking round that room I saw two famous Generals talking to an Archbishop, an ex-P.O.W. Padre in conversation with the Lord Mayor.

George took the opportunity of introducing General Dobbie to Mr. Miller, who said:

“Sir William, a few months ago saw this great building packed out for a fight between two famous lightweights. It was one of the greatest days of my life, but, tonight, somehow it is different, somehow it is bigger.”

“How many people do you think there were?” I asked.

“At least 12,000,” he said, “we’ll know tomorrow a more or less exact figure”.

At that moment George tapped me on the shoulder.

“I say,” he said, “did you realise that you forgot to tell people that there was to be a collection?”

“Goodness,” I said, “I was so carried away by the whole meeting that I forgot all about it. But, George, it must be right. All the time that I was arranging these things one prayer went through my mind, ‘Lord, hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.’ And I had ‘collection’ written down on the little bit of paper that I had in my hand, but somehow I forgot it. There will be tremendous costs associated with this tour, but I believe that God will provide.”

We went for one more look at that vast building. Again all those seats were empty. The ropes were being put round the ring again.

“Mmm,” said George, “there’s been a fight tonight of an unusual type. It was Dobbie versus the Devil.”

I agreed with him, for that night the message of Jesus Christ had been fearlessly proclaimed by a great man, and a wonderful soldier, a man who

had a simple faith in God, a faith which he had tried out himself and found to be completely trustworthy. I realised that Ian Hay had been right when he said that General Dobbie was a master of his profession and a Christian who believes in God and says so. He certainly had done so tonight.

Somehow fatigue came over me like a cloud. I put on my coat and hat and walked across to catch a tram. It was packed. As I stood up in the corridor it was more than interesting to hear the conversation of people who were at the meeting. The man in front of me said:

“I haven’t been to church for years, but I’d go every Sunday to hear a man like that. That was a wonderful show.”

“Yes,” said his companion, “I haven’t had much faith for years, but somehow it’s different now.”

As the conductor approached me I fumbled in my pocket for my fare, and as I gave it to him I realised that he was none other than my good friend, Bruce Peebles.

“How did it go?” he whispered as he pulled the ticket.

“It was a wonderful show,” I replied.

“Splendid,” he replied, “I was thinking of you and praying for you as the tram went past outside, and I wished I could have been inside.”

He was one of thousands who had been the artillery, the folk who prayed while the General had been on the job in the ring. Somehow I thought of the story of Joshua fighting in the plain, with Moses praying to God on the hill. I realised that many had prayed like that.

It wasn’t far from midnight when I walked home beneath the gumtrees. On the way I met my next-door neighbour, Bill Laker. He had been to the Stadium.

“Well,” said I, “what did you think of it?”

“It was a wonderful show,” he said, “and never to be forgotten. Why, that was

a meeting which should make the whole of Sydney sit up.”

“It will give the Press a chance,” I nodded. “Just recently there’s been quite a big controversy about empty church pews, but nobody can complain about the Stadium being empty tonight; there were nearly 14,000 there I believe. That actually is the largest meeting of a religious type ever held in an enclosed building in Australia. The enthusiasm of the people must influence the lives of those who say that Christianity is a failing message. Well, it will be very interesting tomorrow to see what the Press has to say.”

I was scarcely inside the door when the telephone bell rang. Wearily I lifted the receiver.

“Hullo.”

Then I heard the voice of the Archbishop.

“Paul,” said he, “it was an amazing meeting. I want to let you know that the General is very enthusiastic about the whole thing. I, personally, felt at one stage that you would have been wiser to take the Town Hall, but I realise now the worthwhileness of what was done. Tonight was a wonderful testimony to a wonderful God.”

I went to bed feeling very tired, but very warm inside. I knelt down beside my bed and I thanked Almighty God for holding up my goings in His paths and that my footsteps had not slipped.

Next morning I saw the paper that came boomerang-fashion over the fence. I ran out. What sort of a Press would we get? So that you may judge for yourself, I’m printing the reports as they appeared in Sydney’s two great morning papers.

MALTA’S EPIC ORDEAL—12,000 Hear Story

Four antiquated Gloster Gladiators packed in cases were all the aircraft Malta had when the war with Italy began in 1940.

This was revealed by Lieut.-General William Dobbie, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the island during the historic siege, when he addressed 12,000 persons in the Sydney Stadium last night.

The address was given under the auspices of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions.

The audience included the Lord Mayor (Alderman Bartley), the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney (Dr. Mowll), heads of the Services and many officers and men of the Navy, Army and Air Force. Many members of the Maltese community in Sydney also attended. Lady Dobbie was presented with a basket of red and white flowers—Malta's colours.

Sir William Dobbie called his address "The Hand of God in Malta," and he said he hoped the audience would form the opinion he held that there were, during the siege, many instances when the garrison turned to God and asked Him for help. He gave it.

ROLE IN GRAND STRATEGY

"When France went out of the war, and Italy came into it, Malta was not the best or most convenient place to hold, and it was not held for defensive reasons, but for offensive operations," said Sir William. "Malta played a great part in the grand strategy of the war, the object being to prevent the enemy's shipping and supplies getting to North Africa."

Sir William Dobbie said that at the beginning of the siege Malta had a very small garrison—four battalions of infantry and a fifth in course of organisation, and 30 miles of beaches had to be watched for possible enemy landings. The air defences consisted of four antiquated aircraft, which the island had by accident. There were 16 anti-aircraft guns for the defence of the

whole island for the persistent air attacks of the enemy.

General Dobbie said that during the siege the air-raid warnings were sounded 2,300 times.

—*Sydney Morning Herald*, April 5th, 1946.

11,000 ATTEND TALK ON MALTA

More than 11,000 people last night went to Sydney Stadium to hear an address by Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie, former Governor and C.-in.-C. of Malta.

Sir William spoke for an hour and a half and recounted stories of the battle for Malta.

He said if Malta had fallen, the course of the war would have been very different.

The audience cheered when he praised the part played by the R.A.A.F. in the defence of Malta.

—*Daily Telegraph*, April 5th, 1946.

Off the Chain

Very early in my acquaintance with General Dobbie a moot point had been settled. Of course, it was impossible for those of us who went round Australia with him to be called “A.D.C.” because the General occupied no official position, but within an hour of his arrival the matter of terms was settled by Sir William himself.

“So you are to be bear-leader, are you, White?”

“Bear-leader?” said I, “I’m afraid I don’t quite understand, Sir.”

He smiled. “Well, you see,” he said, “you go round with me everywhere, and I’m the bear; when you pull the chain, I jump.”

And so was created the position of C.B.L. (Chief Bear-Leader)!

Now, there’s one thing that the General does like, and that’s good staff work. He sets a very high example himself. His letters are itemised, sectioned, sub-sectioned, every point crystal clear. There is no doubt as to what he wants and just how it may be achieved.

He had just finished a talk to a crowded hall in Armidale, a University town in the New England district of New South Wales. It was bitterly cold. I helped the General on with his coat.

“I say,” said he, “what time does the train go tomorrow?”

“8.52 a.m, Sir. The seats are booked; car 5, Nos. 13, 17, 18. I will deal with the luggage.”

The General nodded. “Good-night,” said he.

Next day at 8.40 a.m. the General and Lady Dobbie arrived at the station. Carefully I counted the bags. There were nine pieces in all. These the General

and I carefully arranged in the rack, then settled down to the eight-hour, 250-mile journey to Newcastle.

The train had barely started when a waitress came to the door.

“Tea,” she said.

“Oh, yes, please.”

“Not for me, thank you,” said Lady Dobbie from her seat in the corner (No. 13, by the way). “I can’t understand why you Australians will always drink tea.”

“Oh,” I said, “it’s 9 o’clock and it will be two hours before the next cup arrives.”

The General smiled, and he and I shortly afterwards negotiated with difficulty the drinking of a cup of tea in a swaying train. However, there were only a few minor incidents before the refreshing and not too hot beverage was put away.

The General was interested in everything. The apple and pear orchards, the great granite outcrops as we came down from the hills to the lower ranges of the mountains. He was interested in the lucerne growing by the river flats, the merino sheep we passed. He asked what steps were being taken to deal with the obvious soil erosion visible through the train window. And then he began to talk about things, the things I had wanted to know all the time, things that he took as being too everyday to mention in his talks.

He was very intrigued by the autumn tints of the willows fringing the creeks. Drawing my attention to one particularly fine patch, he said:

“They are very like the willows back at home in England, the year before we went to Malta.”

“I’ve often wondered, Sir William, when I’ve heard you speak, how did your appointment to Malta come about? I wonder if you’d tell me the actual way that things happened.”

“Well,” said the General, “I was having dinner at the club, and just after I’d finished a waiter came up to me and said the C.I.G.S. wanted to see me.”



Anzac Day, Melbourne

In my own mind I worked out these four letters—Chief of Imperial General Staff.

“The C.I.G.S.? That would have been Sir Edmond Ironside, would it not?”

“Yes,” said the General, “he is now, of course, Field-Marshal Lord Ironside. Well, I went over to him, and he said, ‘Dobbie, I want you to go to Malta.’”

“What did you say, Sir?”

“‘Oh,’ I said to him, ‘in what capacity?’ and he said he wanted me to go as Governor and Commander-in-Chief.”

“And what did you do, Sir?”

“I went at once to telephone my wife.”

Lady Dobbie broke in at that moment.

“Yes,” she said, “and I was away at a Camp for Girls, a Crusader Camp, and my husband, when he rang, said that he had agreed on one condition, and that was that I should go with him. Just before we left the C.I.G.S. had a last talk with my husband. He said, ‘I am sending you to Malta simply for one reason—you must hold the island at all cost. It is terribly important to the Empire.’”

“What did the General reply, Lady Dobbie?”

“He just bowed and said, ‘With the help of God, I will, Sir.’ That was the secret of it, you see. My husband went out full of faith in God’s power.”

Lady Dobbie wrapped the rug more snugly around her—it was very cold. “I was much happier this war than the last, because I could be at my husband’s side. You see, in the 1914 days I had to stay at home with a young family while my husband was in France, and I felt the separation very much indeed. I wanted to be with him. In my family there has been an Army tradition for generations, and I would much prefer to be with my husband.”

“Bombs, or no bombs, Lady Bobbie?”

“Oh, yes. And then my daughter was with us, as confidential secretary to her father. Did I ever tell you the story of her arrival in Malta? Well, you see, she was in Singapore and decided to join us, so she flew to Alexandria, and then picked up a ship. Of course, her ship would be the lamest duck in the whole

convoy! Now, I didn't know she was coming on that actual convoy. I merely knew that she was coming some time, and I watched those dozen odd ships come in on the last stage of the thousand miles journey from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The sirens wailed; we watched the dive bombers coming over from Sicily. As I stood there I breathed a prayer for their protection. We saw the 'planes coming out of the clouds to attack this convoy, and then a most unusual thing happened, an occurrence I've never seen happen before in Malta, and we were there for over two years. Suddenly a thunderstorm came up, and great black clouds seemed completely to come out of the sea and overshadowed that convoy. The Germans were flying blind. They attacked, but their bombs fell harmlessly into the sea. Not one ship of that convey was hit. We stood there in amazement watching this happen, then some half hour later a car drove up to the palace. My husband said to me, 'There's someone here you'd like to see.' It was my daughter. She came up the steps and said, 'Hullo, Mum.' "

I turned to the General. "But you, Sir, you knew that your daughter was on that convoy?"

"Yes, I did," said the General, "but I didn't know which ship."

"And I expect you prayed quite considerably?"

"Certainly I did," said the General.

We lapsed into silence for a moment and I watched the paddocks go by, with their gum trees and sheep and kangaroo grass.

There was an ominous, slithering sound amongst the baggage overhead. I jumped to my feet and straightened things out again.

On sitting down the General said to me:

"I was telling you how we left England for Malta. Between the time of the C.I.G.S.'s invitation for me to go to Malta and our actual leaving in the flying-boat it was very hectic indeed. Three weeks and full of activity, but when we did fly we travelled direct to Tunis, just three weeks before France came out of the fight. The thing I objected to was having to get up the next

morning by 4 o'clock. We arrived in Malta at 7."

"It must have been rather interesting flying in those days, Sir?"

"Oh, yes, but it wasn't dangerous; the plane kept well to the west all the time. But what I do remember about the whole trip was that our pilot made a very bad landing indeed at Malta."

"And wasn't it in Malta, Sir, that you received your knighthood?"

"Yes," replied the General, "on the 13th March, 1941. But I prefer to put it this way, that my wife became a Lady in Malta!"

Lady Dobbie smiled across at me, and I couldn't help telling the ancient story of the small boy who came along to see the doctor. His father said, "Now, you go over to the kind gentleman, there." "Mmm," said the small boy doubtfully, "he's not a gentleman, he's a doctor."

The train was pulling into a town. A moment later we stepped out onto the platform at Tamworth.

The General had been asking when the train would arrive at the various places along the line, so I went along to the ticket window and invested 3d. in a timetable. I brought this back to the compartment, and first of all extracted from it a folded map of Australia and presented this to the General. Now I had noticed right throughout the tour his keen interest in finding out all he could about the local geography. After he had travelled a road once he pointed out landmarks. He showed tremendous interest in that timetable. He synchronised his watch with the railway time and checked up on the speed at which the train went.

When we were under way again I noticed that he took the map of Australia out, and he was plotting upon it with a red pencil, little red blobs here and there. He also had his diary open. I couldn't resist enquiring what it was all about.

"I always do this," said the General. "As a matter of fact, I've got a map of the world back in England and on each town in which I have spoken, I put a red

blob, like that one. And that shows me where I have been in these various tours. Now, see here..." He had marked the cities in Australia where he had spoken—truly, it was a formidable collection and the map looked as though it was having quite a sizeable attack of measles.

At 11 o'clock sharp more tea arrived. This time Lady Dobbie didn't spurn it. Since the train was travelling along on a more or less level track, it was not quite the hazardous procedure to drink it that it had been earlier in the day's travel.

As we put down the cups, Lady Dobbie said:

"Did you ever see my daughter's book?"

I shook my head; I hadn't seen the book, although I had tried to get it at the bookshops.

"Well," said Lady Dobbie, "she tells some extremely good tales. There was the amusing incident of the five naval officers who had a very rough trip getting to Malta, and they decided that they would visit one of the local, rather famous hotels. They had barely got inside the place when raiders came over, and the place was wrecked by blast. All the doorways were blown in and the roof crashed down. They found themselves in the very centre of the bar, completely blocked in from the outside by masses of stone, so they decided to make hay while the sun shone. And make hay they did. Some two hours later a rescue squad forced their way in. Shortly afterwards five stretchers carried out the bodies, to the accompaniment of much misdirected sympathy from the crowd."

The General left the compartment for a moment to look at a portion of the country coming into view from the other side of the train. He was standing in the corridor and just out of earshot.

I said to Lady Dobbie:

"Wasn't it your daughter who told an anonymous story which actually referred to her father?"

“Oh, yes,” said Lady Dobbie, “you mean the one about the air raid? I’ll tell you it:

“My husband was in the palace, where we lived. He had a new A.D.C. Sir William was in the library writing a letter when the sirens went. The A.D.C. came up to him and said, ‘Excuse me, Sir. Raid on.’ The General did not look up, but said, ‘Right oh,’ absently, and went on writing his letter. Then the bombs began to fall; you could hear them coming closer and closer. The A.D.C. was very concerned. He coughed, ‘Excuse me, your Excellency, but the raid seems to be rather severe.’ ‘Yes,’ said my husband, ‘I’ll just finish this letter.’ He proceeded to sign his name at the bottom, folded the sheets, put it into an envelope and went across to the window. He looked out. ‘Can’t see it too well from here; you get a much better view from the tower,’ saying which he led the way, two steps at a time.

“In this way my husband did much to build up morale. He walked around the streets, air raid or no air raid, and the people came to realise that there wasn’t the danger that they had at first thought.”

“But, Lady Dobbie, wasn’t there a tremendous risk?”

“Personal risk does not come into it,” said the General, looking up from the *Bulletin*.

For five minutes I listened to the rumble of the wheels, and then my questions started again.

“Was there any time when you went very close to disaster in Malta during the bombing?”

“Well,” said Lady Dobbie, “my husband always used to complete his morning’s work in the palace that they used for administrative activities by about 1.15. Then he would come back home for lunch. This was his inevitable rule. On one occasion everything seemed to go more smoothly than usual and by a quarter to one the work was finished. So the General got up, folded his papers, and rang the series of little push bells in front of him, called his staff together, and they left half an hour earlier than usual. It was in the middle of lunch when the telephone rang, and we heard that a 4,000-

pound bomb had dropped, wrecking all those offices. Probably the General's staff would all have been killed but for God's hand in making things go more quickly that morning. You know, my husband used to receive enormous fan-mail from people all over the place. They inevitably said that they were praying for Malta, and I feel that this was God's way of answering. I always think of those words, 'Not by seeming accidents, but by invisible guidance.' We saw that over and over again in Malta in our everyday living."

Lady Dobbie looked through the window of the train. "Where are we now?"

We were coming into the realm of smoke-stacks and coal trucks. I realised that Newcastle was just ahead of us. I counted the nine pieces of baggage and got them all out to the corridor, and a few minutes later the General and his Lady were being welcomed by the Mayor of Newcastle, and by a crowd of interested folk.

In two days' time one of the greatest meetings of the whole tour was witnessed in Prince Edward Park, when 20,000 people mustered on Victory Day to hear the General.

Lady Dobbie

“Ah,” said Lady Dobbie, scanning the menu, at an unofficial luncheon during the first week of the tour, “mulligatawny soup; my husband loves that. You watch him when he reads the menu.”

A moment later the General read the bill of fare.

“Mm,” said he, “mulligatawny soup. Yes, I’ll have that.”

Lady Dobbie, next to whom I was sitting, said confidentially to me, “He always likes that. You see, he was born in Madras.”

Now I had felt rather uncomfortable. I didn’t quite know what one should say at a luncheon with so notable a person as Lady Dobbie, but all my doubts disappeared like mist before the sun as she told me about her life in Malta. It was very easy to work with the General and his Lady.

That evening it had been arranged for a schoolgirls’ rally to be held. We had taken a large building which held 1,500 and arranged for an historic church over the way to be available for an emergency overflow. We had organists for each building, and ushers; we had prepared for the films, “Malta, G.C.” and “Malta Convoy” to be shown in each building; programmes had been placed in position, transport arranged, everything was ready—or so I thought.

At 4 o’clock, as was my wont, I rang up to make sure that all arrangements were moving smoothly. First of all I contacted the broadcasting people regarding the General’s Sunday evening talk, which was to go over the air.

“Everything in order?” I asked. “We have got it all advertised and there will be whole towns listening in the country.”

Then, to my horror, the voice came over the telephone: “Wait a bit, the General isn’t broadcasting on Sunday. Why, the service isn’t being taken from the Lyceum at all.”

“What?” I said, forgetting all my mother’s careful teaching, “but I’ve got your letter here, saying it was all in order, all fixed up.”

“Well,” said the voice, “I’m afraid there’s been a misunderstanding, the General will not be on the air.”

“Gosh,” I said, “what are we to do? How are we going to keep faith with those who have arranged for the General’s talk to be used in their churches in place of a sermon? What can we do?”

Various suggestions were made, and four I.V.F. folk went running here and there to try and make arrangements, but they all drew blank. As these arrangements were being made, sitting at my telephone, I prayed, and asked God that something better than our original plan might come out of this bungle. Every suggestion that I could make led to a standstill, and then light dawned. If the General’s sermon could be recorded and then broadcast after the church service, it would mean, not only those who were unable to go to church would hear, but those who had attended their own church service would be able, when they reached home, to hear the General’s talk. Hastily I dialled a number and poured the suggestion into the ear of the broadcasting station, which was most kindly and helpful. There was a short delay while things were investigated, and then his voice came back:

“That’s the solution—we’ll do it.”

With a sigh of relief, I put back the receiver. It was nearly 5 o’clock.

I rang up the Caltex people, who were arranging for the showing of the Malta film. Their publicity man, John Moyes, had been very helpful and I felt that there would be no hitch there. I rang up and said:

“You’ve got the films all right?”

“Oh, yes, they’ve just come,” said John. “Just half a tick, I’ll check this up.”

“Well,” I thought, “that’s all right, anyway.”

Then a worried voice came through the ’phone, “I say, what is this? These

aren't the right things at all. These are negatives, we want positives.”

“Oh,” I said, “they're in the other tin, the black one; look in that.”

“Hmm,” I thought, “a storm in a teacup.”

But then the worried voice came again, with even more worry:

“I say, that's only the negative of the sound track; haven't you got the films themselves?”

“Hang up,” I urged, “and I'll contact the studio.” Their bell rang monotonously—no one answered. My heart sank. Then we remembered that the General had brought a film with him. In a minute there were messengers running all over the place, and at last the film was located.

I had barely gone out of the door when it started to pelt with rain. I bolted for shelter, and managed to reach the Oil Company's office in time. There we were faced with another problem. All the expensive sound projection unit could not be carried through the rain; no taxis were available, but ultimately we borrowed an umbrella and made the journey without incident.

Everything was soon connected up, the screen erected, the switch pulled down, but no picture appeared. The power had failed. Once again there was a scurry, a rushing around. The rain was pelting down at this stage, but already some 500 girls had appeared. At last my cinematograph friend had everything in order. Lady Dobbie's car arrived on time.

Ten vital minutes were spent in a quiet room asking God's blessing on that meeting. You could hear the rain pelting down outside, but inside we were asking God that that might be the beginning for many women and girls of Australia. When I heard Lady Dobbie speak that evening I was conscious of the fact that she had a message, and a way of presenting it that would grip the hearts...

I was one of the few men allowed to go to Lady Dobbie's meeting for women only. It happened in this way:

My advisers said: “Now, listen, you’re going to have this women’s meeting broadcast over Station 2CH. Now, the only way to get people to listen-in is to have a well-known radio voice come over the air.”

“Yes,” I said, “just as you like, but my voice is only associated with the jungle, and there wasn’t any jungle about Malta.”

However, they said I had to do it, and do it I did, although I explained, with considerable cost to myself, that I felt like Ovid amongst the Goths. This, a number of the I.V.F. womenfolk took pains to tell me was the wrong metaphor; I really was the spanner in the works. However, I heard Lady Dobbie speak, and speak for a considerable time to an audience that was gripped from the first sentence to the last.



Lady Dobbie visits the Melbourne Women’s Hospital

Once again we had her talk taken down verbatim. Lady Dobbie always spoke in a practical, sincere, taking-you-into-her-confidence way. So that you may taste the full flavour of what she said, here is a word for word report:

“It is a great pleasure for me to stand here and to think how many of you are interested enough in Malta to come and listen to my talk. I do not pretend to be a dramatic woman who can hold audiences enthralled, but I like to see women in front of me because I can talk in a homely fashion about my own life in Malta and everyday things.

“I often think I get a great deal of credit for courage which was not deserved at all. If I had wanted to get away from Malta, I could not have done so. Once the Island was besieged there was no nonsense about any nervous Governor’s wife going home. We could not spare the petrol to send anyone home because they ‘got the jitters,’ so I was doomed to stay in Malta. I look back on those years as amongst the happiest in my life.

“Malta is a very small island, and we were up against things badly from the very beginning. We were ill-prepared for any sort of siege or difficulty. It has only just struck me since coming to Australia how very near you were to having an invasion. There were many invasions that might have taken place all the world over, yet they just did not. It was a miracle that kept these enemies back. Only One does miracles, and that is God. He said to the enemy, like He says to the sea on our shore, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.’ Hitler did not always make mistakes, but he made some very bad ones in this war from his point of view. One of the worst was not invading England after the retreat from Dunkirk when all our ammunitions of war had to be left on the shore or on the road down from Belgium. My own son was in that retreat, and he said it was pitiful to see the wonderful tanks, guns and other weapons of war that had to be left behind. Thank God that three-quarters of that army did get back. Hitler knew exactly in what state they had arrived in England. Why did he not turn round and come across the water and attack England? It is a most extraordinary thing. Looking back on that we would say it was the strategic mistake on the part of a man who had planned an invasion for years. The Japanese did not come to you in Australia, or the Italians to us in Malta. They were all the most wonderful deliverances. I think we ought to thank God for the great deliverances of this war.

“Now the first thing I want to tell you about is what preparation we had for war in Malta. A great many of you have heard my husband speak, I know,

but I will quickly run through our state of preparedness, or unpreparedness, for war.

“You could not imagine a place less prepared for any invasion or attack by sea or air. We had four aeroplanes—old, obsolete things. They were Gloster Gladiators, which even in that day were considered quite out-of-date. They were very slow and altogether unsuitable for the work they had to do.

“We had about six young Air Officers in Malta, and an Air Officer Commanding. I am still wondering how they came to be there, for there was nothing for them to command or fly. They must have been on their way to somewhere else. They got hold of these aeroplanes and took them out of the crates and turned them from bombers to fighters. With those four we began the war, and every time the air raid warning went, three went up. The pilots would sit in the 'planes throughout the hot Mediterranean summer, for directly the air raid warning went, they could not wait one moment. They had to go up at once. It was a most gallant fight they put up. The people of Malta put tremendous faith in them. They used to call these aeroplanes *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*—there was plenty of hope about them, but very little else, except indomitable courage. They had to tackle practically the whole of the Italian Air Force; certainly that part of it stationed in Sicily. The Italians would come, a hundred bombers at a time, supported by as many fighters, and our three little aeroplanes would go up to tackle them. It was a most wonderful and inspiring sight. Sometimes they did bring one down, and it encouraged the Maltese people tremendously. I saw them go into action a score of times from the top of the Palace of Malta. Of course, the enemy 'planes were very much faster. Our three went on like the little nigger boys—from four to three, three to two, and two to one, and when just that poor one, which was *Faith*, and is now a museum piece in Malta, remained, we did get some more out from England—about thirty. That relieved our immediate position. The Air Officer Commanding used to say to the Governor, ‘We have shot down one hundred enemy aeroplanes this month,’ and the Governor would reply, ‘Well, so you ought—you’ve had plenty of practice!’

“We had four battalions of infantry and one of Maltese, some five thousand men altogether. We also had some Maltese Artillery, in addition to our own.

Their task was to protect a quarter of a million people and stand guard over between thirty and forty miles of little bays where invasions might take place. Mussolini had promised us that he would be ruling over Malta in the first five days of war, and humanly speaking there was no reason why he should not have been. However, the Italians are neither as brave nor as enterprising as the Germans or the Japanese. They thought they could take a short cut and that if they bombed and bombed from a great height (which makes it safer, I might tell you) they would overcome Malta and bomb her bravery out of her. That was an easier way than by a direct invasion! Our preparations for an invasion included the placing of small groups of men at various positions along the beaches. They were told to keep their eyes glued on the sea day and night to watch for the first signs of anything coming over from Sicily. I used to go round with the Governor. We would take these men something to occupy their time when off duty—footballs, dart boards, books—anything to keep them satisfied while they were having such a dull life. Every time the Governor went round he would say, ‘There may only be a lad of nineteen on watch tonight, but on him might depend the whole safety of Malta.’ They only had one visitor, and that was the man who brought them their rations once in three days, and I do not suppose he was very thrilling. We were told that the signal for invasion would be the ringing of church bells. We listened and listened, and we were all to do wonderful things and not be the least bit flurried, but it never came, thank God! I am sure that our men would have fought to the end.

“However, we did get the bombing. You see, there was the invasion scare; the bombing, which we had plenty of; and the fear of starvation, which was the most dangerous and subtle of the lot. On June 10, 1940, we were warned that from midnight Italy would be at war with us. At 6.30 the next morning came the first air raid warning. I thought, ‘I wonder how the people are going to stand up to that?’ We had a lot of people staying in the palace, and they went down at once to the air raid shelters. These raids went on. They would just be down there for half an hour when the all clear would go. You cannot imagine how interrupted your life was, particularly in regard to meals. At last I got hold of the servants, the footmen and the butler, and said that it was no good having such interrupted meals. I told them to serve meals at the proper times, regardless of air raids, and if people were too frightened to come for their meals they would have to go without. At least the servants could be sure

that I would be there. That was the only thing to do. We had three regular daily raids, in addition to smaller ones. I think the Italian airmen in Sicily used to look at their watches and say, 'We have half an hour to spare, let's go and worry Malta.' We had 2,300 raids while we were there. The people used to keep a note of the number. We practically saw the bombing finish—there was not very much more after we left. As we were preparing to leave Malta and the new Governor was due to arrive, my husband said, 'I guess we shall go off in an air raid. It will be a case of bombing out the old and bombing in the new.' The raids had been terrific throughout that winter. They had got worse and worse during the Christmas of 1941–42. I will never forget my last Easter Sunday in Malta. The raids were incessant throughout the day. We were never hit in our palace—the Governor has three; one where he works, another where he lives, and the third we lent to the nuns for an orphanage. The one where we resided was never hit, although we had narrow escapes. I was in the garden picking oranges one day, and I thought, 'There goes a bomb. I wonder if I am still alive?' It came very close, but did not hit the palace. Our windows in the residential palace were broken, but we were never actually hit. The beautiful show place at Valetta was terribly bombed.

"You are wondering how we lived through the bombing. There was one secret of it all. You see, Malta has been a bone of contention for thousands of years, and subterranean passages had been built under the Island. These were very useful to us during the war. When war broke out, every man in Malta was advised to go into his garden and dig a cave for himself and family. After a short time, everyone in Malta was able to get into a shelter, if they wanted to, but they were not compelled to do so. I know if any of us from the palace had been killed by a bomb, people would have said, 'Well, it serves them jolly well right. They would not go into a shelter.' We found that it did help people if you did not rush and bolt into a shelter. They say cowardice is very catching, but I think courage is more so. They minded bombs no more than a shower of rain. If you live with people like that, you cannot have a fit of hysterics. They would all say, 'What *are* you doing?'



Living within the Rock, Malta

“We then got the Germans, and that was very different to the Italians. So much so that a woman in a shelter was heard to pray, ‘Please, God, grant that it may be the Italians who are coming over, and not the Germans!’” When the Germans took to coming, they came right down low—no nonsense about

keeping high.

“I do not think some people are born brave and some born cowards. I think the whole battle is who you live with, and whether they are brave. If they are, you cannot start a private fear of your own.

“Some of these shelters were hundreds of years old. I went into one that was about a mile long. In this place anyone who wanted shelter could go in at night. They staked out a claim, of which they had the use from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. They had to take their bedding up and down, but the beds were allowed to remain there. They had about 1,500 down; people were born and died there. It was well ventilated and lighted, and doctors put their hands at once on any epidemic. It is all very well to go into a shelter, but it is what you find when you come out that is distressing. The people of Malta have enormous families—15 is nothing. A mother would go in the shelter at night with her children, and when she came up in the morning, what would she find but her house on the ground; everything gone in a minute and a half. One did not know what to say to a person in that position, with destruction all around. The children had to be fed and clothed, and they had no home to go to. They were put on a cart and taken ten miles out into the heart of the Island. Probably the house they hoped for was already occupied. The Protection Officer would look round and then the church would open its doors. You could get a great many families into a big church. They would have curtains put up, and settle down there with what they had rescued, and would be there for eighteen months. A strange life, wasn't it? Everything they had was gone—furniture that had come down from mother to daughter, etc. And did these women ever complain? Not a word of it! I remember the Governor telling me he went down after a raid and met a woman we knew very well whose house had been bombed to the ground. He sympathised with her, and she looked at him, tears in her eyes, and said, ‘It doesn't matter so long as we win this war.’ I hope all those people are being compensated now, and that the Island is being built up and they are beginning to forget those horrible days. One man's shop in Valetta was destroyed three times. After the first and second bombings he had rebuilt it, but when it was destroyed for the third time he said, ‘I am not going to try again.’

“The Germans took to bombing the aerodromes, and the infantry used to

have to go out and try to repair these. There was a tremendous number of casualties amongst the troops in the aerodromes.

“I remember as the food position got worse, the A.D.C. said to me one day, ‘Well, I suppose we will be living on grass soon, but it will be offered in such grand style, on these lovely silver dishes, that we won’t mind!’ Everybody was beginning to get a bit thin and hungry. I have often looked at a piece of toast at breakfast and said to myself, ‘I don’t think I am hungry enough to warrant that piece of toast; somebody in the kitchen needs it much more than I.’ We often had to do that.

“I particularly want to mention the wonderful work of the Merchant Navy. Ninety per cent. of everything had to come over the sea. The moment the merchant ships started on their thousand miles’ journey, the enemy was following like a cloud of mosquitoes. They would start off eight, and come in four; seven, and come in three. They would be carrying munitions of war, and petrol, besides our ordinary supplies, and they knew that one bomb on the ship would send them to the bottom, and it did, over and over again. When we were told of a convoy coming in, we would go down and wave. It was wonderful to see the Merchant Navy slip into the Grand Harbour. They were bringing us food and other things we needed. They used to come in, listing, partly shot away, but still safe. The men were always given an invitation to visit us at the palace. These gallant men, who had been on the bridge for seven or eight nights, would put on clean collars and come to lunch, bringing with them a parcel of tea, or something equally scarce. When leaving, they always said the same thing—‘We will be back again in three months. Don’t you worry. We won’t let you down.’ But very often they were hit on the return journey, and never came again. There is the classical case of the last convoy that got through before Rommel was beaten. Out of a convoy of fourteen, only three ships reached Malta. That was the price the Merchant Navy paid to keep us fed in Malta, and I think all of us learned to value the Merchant Navy in quite a different way.

“I want to bring home a lesson that I learned in Malta. It was always with me. I told you that we did not have to go into the shelters if we did not want to. The shelters were rock, and I always used to think of them as a parable, the rock speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told over and over again in

the Scriptures that He is the Rock. You may take the rock as an exact picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only safety in Him, but you are not compelled to take that safety if you do not want to. Over and over again in the Bible we have the invitation, but not a command. Remember, it is not a command to have your sins forgiven. It is an invitation—‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ I learned that when I was a very small child. I think a personal testimony is much more telling than anything else. I cannot talk about the experience of others, but I can tell you of mine. When I was a very tiny child I found the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I think a picture of Him was shown to me by my nurse or mother, who were both most wonderful Christians. I believe ‘the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’ I have had an infant, six months old, stiffen with temper because its bottle was too cold. Children are born in sin. From the time of the Fall, the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked. In baby language I think I was told I was a sinner, and that I could come to the Lord Jesus and obtain salvation.

“I used to wish that I could see my name written in some wonderful golden book, to make sure that my sins were forgiven. Then some few years later, I listened to a C.S.S.M. (Children’s Special Service Mission) beach meeting, and the speaker said, ‘Now, children, I dare say some of you would like to see your name written somewhere, you would like to be quite sure that you are safe for eternity,’ and I thought, ‘Yes, I would.’ The speaker continued, ‘God could not give us a book with the names of all the people who have believed, who are believing, and who will believe, written in it, and so He thought of one wonderful word, that comprehends the whole lot—“Whosoever.” “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3, 16). If you want to know you are saved, put your name in that “whosoever,”’ he said. I read my name in that ‘whosoever,’ and knew without any doubt that I was saved. My name has never been removed, thank God.

“Everlasting life begins now. It is a wonderful thing to know that you have eternal life when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is too easy to talk about God. Hitler and others used to bring God’s name into everything, in hypocrisy, but I am talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. You say God and Christ are the same. That is true, but the Lord Jesus Christ was God made

man, the Ladder set up from earth to Heaven. Until we use that Ladder, we are not safe. We are outside the rock shelter. You may be trusting in your own goodness or unselfishness, yet these things are false security. A young officer and his wife in Malta had to take a house in a much bombed spot, so they had the brick shelter made much more secure. One morning at six o'clock there was a great air raid, and they took the precaution of sending the nurse and their baby down to the shelter, congratulating them selves that they had made it perfectly safe. Then when they heard the end of the air-raid warning, they went down to the shelter to tell the nurse to bring the baby out, and to their horror they found the shelter had been hit and their baby and nurse killed. That taught me a lesson in false security. Do not put your hopes in anything that will not stand the test. Do not depend on your own goodness or righteousness. Remember it is the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the debt and is the righteous One.

“The Lord Jesus has been a wonderful Master to me. I have had a wonderfully happy life, and if I lived it all over again I would ask to have it just the same. I began a subaltern’s wife, and ended a Governor’s wife. I have been in all parts of the world, but have taken the Lord Jesus Christ with me. He has given me a most wonderfully happy life. We have had sorrows. We lost our elder son in Italy in 1944, but if you know the Lord Jesus Christ you can take all those sorrows as from Him, and I feel now that that was in love. Though he was the light of his father’s eyes, he takes it in that way. Often my husband has said, ‘Well, I always think of Arthur’s great joy and happiness now, and what he is enjoying in Heaven.’ It is so wonderful when you know that Lord, and can take everything as from Him. Though at first it may be rough, after a while the sweetness of the Lord softens the sorrow.

“Until you can say, ‘Thou blest Rock of Ages, I’m hiding in Thee,’ you do not know what real security and peace are. You can be ready then for the storms of life. My final word to you is that you should yourselves know that your feet are secure on the Rock of Ages.”

Universities

The Universities, of course, were of particular interest to us since the Inter-Varsity Fellowship came into being after the last war as a direct follow-up and expansion of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, which has existed since 1898, with its roots right back to the days of Charles Simeon in 1850...

Members in the Evangelical Unions of the Universities right through Australia each had their plans. We had interviewed or written to the various Vice-Chancellors and replies were most encouraging.

Students wrote articles for their picturesquely-named University papers. Striking posters were devised; student groups got up half an hour earlier in the morning to pray; generally the Universities were preparing for the Defender of Malta to attack. At Sydney University an E.U. member who was carillonist found the Maltese National Anthem, and this was played with vigour on the bells as the General arrived at the University in his staff car. Another E.U. man, at the console of the great organ played as the official party made their way into the Great Hall, hallowed by a thousand examinations. There, to 1,200 students inside and a similar number outside on the lawns listening to amplifiers, the General gave his talk.

At Melbourne a great crowd were in their hall. An amplifying system had been arranged; an enthusiastic E.U. technician, not to be upset by the lack of a quarter of a mile of flex, went direct to the Army and borrowed it. Everything would have been all right but for the fact that a fuse blew and the unfortunate technician found himself imprisoned underneath the platform and had to sit in a very cramped position and listen to the General, knowing that his part of this amplifying system was not in action. Once again crowds of students sat quietly listening in the brilliant sunshine on the grass outside the University Main Hall.

In Queensland there was a great turn-up of University staff and students.

In Adelaide one of the largest gatherings of undergraduates in the University's history welcomed the General.

And the Perth report read:

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Currie, had invited the General and I.V.F. folk to lunch with himself, his wife and a group of University notables, and a very happy luncheon party it was. After it we drove down the road to the University, and a crowded hall awaited us. There was no music. After a brief introduction by the Vice-Chancellor, the General spoke. It was an unforgettable sight, a crowded hall, the great British General, in his full uniform. He apologised for wearing this to a University meeting, but it was between two official functions. (We felt there was no apology needed and were jubilant that he was wearing it—bear-leaders had thought out every possible excuse to get him to wear uniform at the various meetings.) The dais was draped with the Union Jack—in the background were lovely tapestry panels, light streaming through stained glass windows—it was an unforgettable sight. The General slipped quickly and easily into the spiritual side of his talk. After a series of Punch-like sallies he never lost the attention of his hearers for a moment. The hall re-echoed with the acclamation of students. After the meeting Professor Currie estimated the crowd as between 800–900, which was a record lunch-hour meeting for the University of Western Australia. The percentage present out of a total day population of 1,000 was very high.



Overflow on the lawns of Melbourne University

To put our fingers upon the pulse of these meetings we had invited a Hansard reporter, Mr. Reuben West, to come to the meeting at Melbourne University. From my seat on the platform I watched his nimble pencil slipping over paper. Shorthand always intrigues me. A couple of days later a transcript was available. I handed it to an Undergrad. He read it through.

“You can live it all over again,” he said. “That ought to be kept.” And it was this remark, and many others like it, that led us to venture into the production of this book. Here is what was said, as it was said (by Hansard report):

The Vice-Chancellor (Mr. J. D. G. Medley) introduced Sir William Dobbie and said:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome to the University our very distinguished guest and visitor, Lieut.-General Sir William Dobbie. (Applause.) He must be very tired of being introduced to audiences. All know his name and fame so well, that no introduction is necessary. I shall therefore merely repeat my

welcome and ask him to speak to us. (Applause.)”

Lieut.-General Sir William Dobbie: “Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, it is very kind of you to invite me to meet you here today, and I am glad to be here. In the thirty minutes that I have at my disposal, I want to tell you of what happened in the siege of Malta that went on for two and a half years. I shall begin by saying something about the people of Malta—who are Phoenician in their origin. They are of the same stock that Hannibal and his Carthaginians came from in the old days. Those of you who have studied the adventures of that gentleman will remember that in his day—two or three centuries before Christ—he put it across the Italians of that time, good and proper—they called themselves Romans then. I know they got the best of it in the end, but for a long time he caused a lot of anxiety in Italy, and I am glad to think that the Maltese, to the present day, have continued that good work. They caused a good deal of head-scratching in Italy during the six years of the war.

“Now a word about the island. You know where it is—a thousand miles from each end of the Mediterranean—but among other things, it is the most densely populated country in the world. There are no less than 2,700 persons to every square mile. That being so, Malta cannot support its own population with the food that it grows on the island. Most of the food and everything else they need has to be brought by sea—I want you to take note of that, because that was one of the big factors in the defence problem of the island. During the siege, we worked out that we needed something approaching 20,000 tons of stuff to be brought to Malta every month, and, as you know, the situation in the Mediterranean was such that it was difficult—and increasingly difficult—to get ships through from Alexandria or Gibraltar to Malta.

“Now I shall tell you the reason why we needed to hold Malta. It was very isolated, and therefore was an inconvenient and difficult place to hold. France had fallen out of the war; Italy had come in; our nearest friends were 1,000 miles away, and our nearest enemies only 60 miles away. We wanted to hold the island to use it as an offensive base. From the moment Italy entered the war we used Malta as a base for naval and air units to attack the enemy’s shipping as it carried stuff across the Mediterranean from Italy to North

Africa—it was ships that fed the enemy’s army in North Africa. They had a large army there, as some of you may remember—some of you may have fought against it—and it was a very great threat to the safety of Egypt. We wanted to do what we could to prevent that army from getting too big. If it became too big it might have been more than our army defending Egypt could have competed with—even though they had some Australian units fighting with them!

“When the siege began, we had ridiculously little with which to hold it. In order to meet the strong Italian air force—the Reggia aeronautica—we had only four quite antiquated aircraft—Gloster Gladiators—and they had an unlimited number with which to attack Malta. We also had a very small force of an army with which to hold the island against the invasion which we thought was coming. We had four battalions, and another one in the making—call them four and a half battalions, if you like—and they had to watch and defend the thirty-odd miles of beaches for landings from Sicily that might be attempted, as well as the places where airborne landings could be made. Four and a half battalions do not go far for all that. That was the state of affairs in Malta when Mussolini, in his wisdom—or, shall we say, in his folly—declared war against the British Empire on the 10th of June, 1940.

“My wife and I had only a few weeks before come to Malta. My predecessor, the former Governor, had been taken ill and had to be replaced quickly because of Italy’s imminent entry into the war. We arrived, therefore, a few weeks before Italy declared war, and practically the whole of our experience of Malta was under siege conditions. As soon as Italy entered the war, Malta suddenly found herself right in the forefront of the battle, instead of being rather a comfortable place, and she remained so for a long time until we had captured Sicily and southern Italy.

“There is another factor I want you to take in, because it was important in our defence problem. We knew that, owing to the situation in Great Britain, and also in other parts of the Empire—you remember, the Empire was quite alone at that time in the war—we could not hope for any reinforcements for quite a time. We had no idea how long that time would be, but we knew that England was right up against it, and in a very undefended state. She had lost nearly all the military equipment that had been collected, when the British

Expeditionary Forces had to withdraw from France and Belgium after Dunkirk. Because of her undefended state, therefore, we could not expect anything to be sent out of England to Malta or anywhere else so long as the threat of German invasion held good—and it was a very real and imminent threat at that time; or so it seemed. Therefore, we had to make the best use of what we had. I have told you what we had, and you will probably agree that that was not very much. But the enemy did not invade us. It is a wonder that he did not. He made a big blunder in that he did not make even an attempt. He had boasted long before that he intended to do so when war came, but when war came, for some reason or other he did not. He contented himself with bombing us and trying to take a short cut to success. You gentlemen who have served in the Army or any other branch of the Services, probably know that short cuts in war seldom succeed. The Italian short cut did not succeed, for several reasons; one was that the people of Malta put up a remarkably fine show. The Italians had forgotten the little bit of history lesson which I ventured to give to you at the beginning of my talk today. They had the idea that the Maltese were the same kind of people as themselves, and they thought that by bombing a densely populated country they would bring that people to its knees. However, they thought wrong; the Maltese in Malta put up a jolly fine show from beginning to end. That was the beginning of the siege.

“The invasion was not attempted then, nor was it ever attempted, much to everyone’s surprise. As the Governor, I was constantly receiving telegrams from the War Office in London, telling me something like this:

“We learn from sources that are usually very well-informed that an invasion of the island is planned to take place on such-and-such a date.

“They then gave the exact date. However, the invasion never took place. I cannot help thinking that these scares were put up by the enemy themselves in order to make our hair curl. However, we had only one visit from the enemy, other than from the air, during the whole of the time I was there as Governor. The war had been going on for a year, when the Italian fleet—or bits of it—were kind enough to call. However, instead of coming with their big ships, as courtesy demanded, they came in the smallest things they could

find—little craft called E-boats, with one-man torpedoes, under cover of darkness. They wanted to get these things into the harbour and blow up the shipping there. They carried these craft on bigger ships and put them into the sea, still under the cover of darkness, a few miles off Malta. I was particularly pleased about one thing connected with that operation. It was a whole year before this happened, but our gunnery fellows on the coast had been watching for an attack for 365 nights. Although nothing had happened in that time, it did happen on the 366th night, and I am glad to tell you that they were not caught napping. They were alert and got these little craft in the searchlight beams, and then there was what you would call some pretty good shooting. The result was that not one of these small craft got into the harbour, and not one got away—they bagged the whole blooming lot! You will be interested to hear that the gunners who did most of that good shooting were members of the Royal Malta Artillery, a regular unit of the British Army. (Applause.) Members of what is known as the P.B.I., which of course means the Poor British Infantry. (Laughter.)

“I was greatly interested in the operation order for that attempt, which we captured. You servicemen here know that an operation order should be short and to the point. This was a most voluminous document—pages and pages of it—and written in Italian, too, strange to say! (Laughter.) After somebody had translated it for me I was very interested to notice that in spite of its voluminosity—if there is such a word—there was one thing that had been entirely left out—that was, any reference to the enemy—that is, to us. We were rather hurt! (Laughter.) It is usual when an operational order is issued to say to the fellows concerned, ‘This is the job we want you to do. Here is all the information we can give you to help you to do it—information about our own forces, and information about the enemy.’ But they left that part out entirely, so far as information about us was concerned. They sent these wretched little boats with their crews—very gallant men they were—on this forlorn hope with their eyes blindfolded. It was a great shame; they were brave men who undertook it. I saw some of them who were made prisoners of war, and I liked the look of them.

“I should like to say a word about the award of the George Cross. As you know, the George Cross was awarded by His Majesty the King to the people of Malta in April, 1942. For some months before and after that date Malta

was having a pretty good hammering. The Germans had come to Sicily in very great strength with their air force, and were determined to stop the offensive, which I have told you was being conducted from Malta. The hammering went on for months, and it was very heavy. To give you some idea of its intensity, for five or six months, practically every day there were three major raids apart from many little raids and many other things that were happening throughout the nights. But the three major raids, which consisted of at least a hundred bombers and many fighters escorting them, came as regularly as the clock—you could set your watch by them. The people of Malta had a lot to put up with at that time. But although the enemy raided Malta as heavily as they could, with the intention of stopping the offensive, he failed to do it. Our offensive action went on. It was reduced, but it was maintained. I was very glad that it was possible to keep it going. We found it awfully difficult to do so, because the enemy was interfering with the runways of the aerodromes, and it was difficult to keep them in order. We could not use ordinary civilian labour, because it was under fire so much of the time; we therefore used a large part of the Army. We turned them over to help the air force in that time of its need. Several thousand men of the Army went and lived at the aerodrome, and directly a hole was made in one of the runways they pounced on it and patched it up. It was thus we just managed to keep the offensive going.

“It was during that time, when the raids were at their height that the King did that very gracious thing, and awarded the George Cross to the people of Malta. It came as an absolute surprise to me, and, of course, to everyone else. I received a telegram one day from the Government in London telling me that the King had done this, and it fell to my lot, as the Governor, to tell the people. I got the message over to them on the radio, and through the newspapers on the island, and I explained to them that the King had done something quite unique in the history of the Empire. As you probably know, never before had an award or a decoration been made to a community; it was always given to some individual. I explained this to the people, and you can imagine how glad they were. They went about with their heads in the air—or “their tails up”—and great grins on their faces, and it bucked them up no end. It was a very timely gesture of His Majesty, and when I got home later I told him so, and how tremendously pleased and bucked up the people were at what he had done; I think he was quite pleased. I believe that it was his own

personal idea—it was not done on the advice of any of his advisers—and for that reason, we in Malta valued it all the more.

“We in Malta owed a tremendous lot to the sea services, and I think the whole of our Empire owes a terrific lot to them. It was very difficult to get stuff to us by sea, and if we had not got it, Malta could not have been held. The things that the Merchant Navy did, with the help of the Royal Navy, were quite incredible. You have probably heard of the final convoy that reached Malta in August, 1942. It came from Gibraltar. Fourteen ships of the Merchant Navy with a large naval escort started; three got in; eleven were lost on the way. That was a big price, and I want you to realise what a tremendous job the Merchant Navy—to say nothing of the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy—have done in the cause of our Empire in this war, and I hope that we will not forget that they deserve very well at our hands.

“When, finally, my wife and daughter and I left Malta, it was in a Sunderland flying boat for Gibraltar—the same flying boat that had brought my successor, Lord Gort, to Malta an hour or two before. He arrived in one raid and we left in another, as my wife remarked, ‘They bombed in the new and bombed out the old.’ Incidentally, he brought with him the George Cross to be presented to the island. His arrival and our departure overlapped for an hour or so in the middle of the night. The Sunderland flying boat was manned by an Australian crew, which was most attentive to us, and you may not be surprised to hear that they fed us heavily on tea all through that voyage!

“I have tried to give you as simply and briefly as possible the facts concerning the defence problem with which Malta was faced. I have withheld nothing from you that mattered, and I want you to face up to the question: How was it, in view of those facts, that Malta won through? It is true, as I told you, that the people played up wonderfully well. I could have told you also a tremendous lot about the two Royal Air Forces, which included many Australian personnel at that time. They could not have done better. I could have told you also what the Army did—it could not have done better. I have told you a little about what the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy did; they were all grand. If any of them had failed—and you could not have blamed them if they had—we would not have held Malta. But don’t you think there

was something beyond that? I, personally, am positive that if it had not been for God's help, we could not have won through. The odds against us were too great for us to make certain of holding Malta. But because many of us in Malta realised that fact, we asked God to give us His help, and He did.

"Many times during the two years that followed, while we were still in Malta we saw most unmistakable proof that God was doing what we asked, and as I look back on it now, one can only say it was a miracle that Malta stood. The odds against us were too great, and I honestly think that if it had not been for God's help we could not have held Malta. If Malta had fallen, the whole course of the war would have been different. If this catastrophe had occurred in the early days of the siege, we would have lost Egypt, and the Empire's lifeline would have been cut in two and the way open to the East for the enemy's forces. If Malta had fallen in the latter part of the siege, the operations of our counter-offensive—the Eighth Army after El Alamein—would have been greatly hampered, because Rommel would have been able to get whatever reinforcements and equipment he needed. But he was deprived of that because Malta was able to hold on.

"Perhaps I was in a better position to form an opinion on this matter than anyone else. I am confident that if it had not been for God's help we could not have made certain of holding Malta. I want you to know that what I am speaking about now is a very practical thing; it is not something fanciful, as some people think. In the early days of the siege, when Mussolini declared war against us, I received a telegram from no less a person than the then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Ironside. He is an enormous man, 6ft. 4ins. in height, well built in proportion, and goes by the nickname of 'Tiny'! He and I were old friends. In our early days he was a gunner and I was a sapper, and as you know, gunners and sappers get on very well together. He sent me a telegram from the War Office in London, which read:

"Deuteronomy chapter three verse twenty-two.

"Ye shall not fear them, for the Lord your God, He shall fight for you.

"I don't know what you think of that statement, but we thought a lot of it in Malta. It was encouraging to think that others in high places were thinking

along the same lines as ourselves. This is a practical business I am speaking to you about. The help that God Almighty gave us then, He will always give to those who are willing to receive it as a practical thing and it is exactly fitted to our needs.

“I have had the experience of His help throughout my Army service. I received my commission in the Army long before any of you young people were born, and I have had well over forty years’ service in the Army. I suppose you know that the Army is as good a testing place as any, and I have found that the help that God gives is a real help and fitted to the needs of Army life. I have also known Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be a very real companion and help to those in the Army and out of it who allow Him to come into their lives. I want you to know that also. You have your lives in front of you, and you have great plans, I expect, to make good use of them for the good of your country. May I remind you that if you want to help others to get onto a firm foundation you have to be on it yourself. May I remind you that Jesus Christ is that one and only Foundation on which you, or I, or anyone else can build and know that it will stand.

“I am speaking to you about what I know personally. I am giving you first-hand evidence, not only of the thing I have tried, but also of a Person whom I know and I earnestly commend Him to you as the One to meet your needs as He has met mine.

“I thank you for the way you have listened to me, and I trust that what I have said will have been of some interest to you.” (Sustained applause.)

The Vice-Chancellor: “Ladies and gentlemen, we have been listening to a man whose contribution towards winning the war was second to none. That is a big thing to say, but it is true. I do not propose to offer him any formal vote of thanks; the best compliment we can pay him—and I do not think he would wish for any other—is for us to assure him that we shall remember and think over what he has said. On your behalf, I give Sir William Dobbie our best thanks.” (Renewed and sustained applause.)

Schools Chapter

I always like composite photographs. You see the situation from a variety of angles. The General's visits to the schools appeal to me in just that way.

A number of pictures flash through my mind—a crowded Town Hall with two and a half thousand young people from the schools of Melbourne—Sydney with a similar number, the galleries crowded, and the body of the hall packed with young people listening to that message of God's Hand in the life of a great man, God's Hand in the defence of a great Empire. I think, too, of Lady Dobbie speaking on a night when the rain literally poured down, to some thousand schoolgirls, and I can see her speaking at the M.L.C. to 700 girls packed into one room—you could see nothing but girls' heads in orderly rows like fruit trees on a hill, and then in Geelong, 800 schoolboys and girls crowded into a hall, seeing the films and listening with that silence which speaks of interest gripped, and it was the same picture in the main, which you found from Queensland to Fremantle, with Launceston topping the figures with 3,000. I want to pick out one such meeting and give it to you in focused detail.

It was a bitterly cold day in the New England district of New South Wales. The General was staying with the Bishop of Armidale, and I was bear leader. I found a message to ring the Bishop, and after it, "Oft in danger, oft in woe." This was beyond me, so I made enquiries and found if I looked up the words quoted in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* I would find the telephone number of the Diocesan Registry. A little further research along this line showed me that The Rural Bank coincided with "Art thou weary, art thou languid," and the Bishop's own number to "O Thou who makest souls to shine."

The message was to ask the General to speak that afternoon to the boys at the Armidale School, to which he readily agreed. In the early afternoon we went to this Great Public School in the highlands of New South Wales.

The General got out of the car. He would never have people opening the

door for him if he could possibly avoid it, and as he got out, there standing at the salute was the School Sergeant. Behind him was the Headmaster and the boys of the school. But the General had seen the Sergeant. For three or four minutes he chatted with W.O. Marchant, who had served in both wars. It appeared that they had been in the campaign at Paschendale and the Australian Regiment had been relieved by the Brigade commanded by the General himself.

As we stood for a moment in the Headmaster's study the General said to me quietly, "A splendid warrior that, D.C.M. and M.M. and Bar."

The room was crowded with boys. The General has a facility for suiting his story to his audience. The way he told about Malta to those boys was characteristic. It was clear and interesting and it had that touch in it that always marked the General's Christian witness. He told them the story of H.M.S. *Penelope*, alias "Pepper-Pot"; he told them about the four Gloster Gladiators, *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*, and the one that was always on the ground being tinkered with; he told them, too, about the anti-aircraft guns, how they were all heavy calibre and not light calibre guns. He said that they had none of the lighter variety of anti-aircraft guns which were used for low-flying aircraft, but it really didn't much matter because in those days it was only the Italians who came over and they never flew low. He told the story of how the Italians dropped their bombs into the harbour, and how they killed nothing but a lot of wretched fish, which were collected post-haste by the defenders of Malta and fried for their tea. Then Sir William went on to tell them he believed in God. He said:

"The Companionship and Friendship of the Son of God is a very wonderful thing. I've come to give you first-hand information of One I know personally, whom I have proved in peace and war. I wish I could tell you what a tremendous standby He was to me in those difficult days of Malta. Though they were difficult, they were very happy as well. There is no one else who can solve your problems. The chief problem we have to solve is sin, its effect and wages. The Lord Jesus Christ gave His life in order to solve that problem for you.

"To illustrate my point, I will tell you a story of my own experience in the

first World War—it happened probably before many of you were born, but it is quite true, in spite of that. It was in the autumn of 1917, when I was a Colonel in the First British Division and we went into a health resort called Paschendale. We had to do an attack. The weather had broken and the mud was awful. I don't know if some of you fellows know what mud is... but it can be quite nasty! We did the attack, and I went out very early one morning from Division Headquarters up to the very leading troops, to see how they were getting on and to discuss things with them. My orderly accompanied me, and after our business was done, in due course we turned round to walk back. I was walking in front and he was a few paces behind, carrying his rifle. Behind the lines was a little hollow in the ground, and in the bottom of the hollow was a bog. I was not looking where I was going, and I walked right into it before I knew where I was. I soon found myself up to the waist in mud, and the more I struggled to get out, the deeper I got in. My orderly was a very sensible fellow—some orderlies are, as you may have heard—and when he saw my difficulty, he stepped over to the edge of the bog and held out his rifle to me. I was just able to catch hold of it—he held the muzzle towards me, I noticed—and was able to pull me out.

“Do you see the point of that? He was on firm ground and he was able to pull me out. He helped me to climb back onto firm ground, but if he had been in the bog with me, he could not have done so. If you want to help others, you have to be on firm ground, and I solemnly tell you that the only firm ground I know is the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ, and unless you get your feet fixed on Him, you will not be able to help others. And so I beg, for your own sakes, to close with His offer, that He makes now, to deal once and for all with the question of your sins, and having done that, let Him come into your life; it will then be a useful and happy one, because it will be spent with and for Him.”

I heard him give the same advice to a very similar audience in the historic King's School grounds, with its background of willows, green turf and river. General Dobbie spoke to 2,000 young people from the schools of Parramatta. On this occasion he laid stress upon the importance of reading God's Book. He said:

“I don't know whether you do what Field-Marshal Montgomery does; he

reads his Bible every day. I do, and I fancy a lot of you here do, too. I want to tell you what a tremendous help to me God's Word has been specially during those two years that I was in the island. In that wonderful book I have read things that He has put there for our learning, and so that we might take courage. I have proved that the Bible is not as some say, 'out of date'; and it is not a useless book; it meets our needs in a most wonderful way in this 20th century. There are many stories which I used to read over and over again during my time in Malta. There was one I read: To Dothan, a little village in the lower part of Palestine, one day came Elisha, the man of God, with his servant, and the servant got up early in the morning, and to his consternation saw that they were surrounded by the enemy. He got the wind up properly and said, 'Master, what shall we do?' Elisha said to him, 'Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that are with them.' And Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And I realised that it was true in my case and in the case of Malta and in hundreds of other instances; I knew and I had confidence that God would see us through; and He did."

At his meetings, wherever possible the General had asked that the moving pictures, "Malta, G.C." and "Malta Convoy" sound films be shown before his actual talk. He felt that these put a window in his talk, and took people visually into what Malta underwent during those years when the General himself saw 2,300 air raids. Twice I sat beside him as he watched this film. He never grew tired of it. In it he was able to live again those days which he said were tremendously happy ones. There was the crackle of machine gun fire, the roar of the bigger guns, the crescendo scream of falling bombs, and the still shriller sound of dive bombers. You could see tracer bullets wending their way upwards in long curves; you could see enemy 'planes diving right at the ships. It was a dramatic picture; there was no faking about it; it was photographed during that convoy which made all the difference to the saving of Malta. Eleven ships left Gibraltar; three arrived in Malta. The sound track played the Maltese National Anthem as those battered ships made their way into Valetta Harbour. Their cargoes just turned the scale in our favour.

And then came the story of Malta herself. In everyday life of the people of the

island you had the school children living their school days normally, running in orderly fashion into the great caverns that were the island's air raid shelters. There were the Maltese manning the guns, members of the Royal Malta Artillery, the Spitfire pilots taking off to intercept the thousands of raiders who came over. And then you saw the bombs fall, great mushroom-like columns of smoke and dust rising up in the air, and you saw the ruin brought to the island by the bombing, ruin which was only from the point of view of buildings, not of morale. I was always intrigued with one stage of this picture, when a 'plane was seen to come over, the General said, "See that one? They'll get it in a minute. Watch, see, there! Got it!" We saw the 'plane crash to the earth.



Tracer bullets

There are two memorable things to me regarding the schools' youth meeting in the Melbourne Town Hall. First of all is that kindly gentleman and skilful organist, Dr. Floyd, to whom it is always a great pleasure to speak. I met him outside the Cathedral, and he said:

"Oh, hullo! I'm just going up to the Town Hall now to practice on the organ to make sure that I know where everything is."

“May I come with you?” I asked, and walked with him along Swanston Street. We talked as we walked.

“You know, I’ve always been a liberal Evangelical, but the older I get the less I become of the former and the more I become of the latter.”

“Well, sir,” I said, “after having met General Dobbie and travelled around with him, I am more than ever convinced that a conservative belief in God’s Book—if we have a real and simple faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and our Guide—is the thing that matters in life.”

Dr. Floyd nodded and said some things of which I made a mental note.

A few minutes later he was at the console of the great organ. I stood behind him, because it always intrigues me to watch organists in action. The maze of stops, swells, couplers and other gadgets always interest me. They are very confusing to one whose musical ability consists of playing by ear.

“Before the meeting starts today,” said Dr. Floyd, “I’m going to play some of Bach. He’s incomparable on the organ. Then I’m going to play a thing that Handel wrote. It’s full of fizz.”

Before he started to play, Dr. Floyd spoke to Mr. Norman Kay.

He said to Kay: “Go down into the body of the hall and see how it sounds.”

And to me: “I picked up this music in London. I don’t think anybody else in Australia plays it but myself. I don’t think they’ve got the music, even. It’s a very much unplayed piece of Handel’s—listen to it.”

He played. He had just turned a page when he stopped, and turning round, said: “Well, Norman, how did it sound?”

A voice from the hall: “Very well, sir, but I think it needs a little more depth.”

“Ah,” said Dr. Floyd. Turning to me, he said: “Needs more depth—eh, we’ll give it a spoonful of this out of deference to your profession.”

He pulled out a stop marked “Tibia.”

It was my onerous job also that day not only to chair the meeting, but to express our appreciation of those who had helped. Now, one could not say a stereotyped thing like how much we had appreciated the music given to us by Dr. Floyd. Every schoolgirl and boy in Melbourne knows the little man whose fingers bring out such wonderful music.

So as I chaired that meeting, I tried to do two jobs simultaneously. Turning as well as I could from the microphone and keeping my voice loud enough for everyone to hear, I said:

“Earlier in the day my good friend, Dr. Floyd” (I turned to the organ—the little man turned round and bowed) “said to me, ‘It is a wonderful privilege we have in Melbourne to welcome Sir William Dobbie, so great a soldier, so great a Christian.’”

There was a burst of applause, and the General was on his feet. He was always bringing some new facet of the defence of Malta before his audience. Although I had heard him speak a score of times, it was always fresh. He had the facility of infusing life into his stories.

“You have heard,” said the General, “how the R.A.F. pilots fought and won the Battle of Britain, and how the Eighth Army fought and won, but I wonder if you have heard how the Italians fared in the Battle of Imagination? We in Malta were most intrigued to listen to their broadcasts in English. ‘We have destroyed every military objective in Malta,’ said the announcer’s voice; ‘not one has escaped.’ Now, we were delighted to hear this, for at that stage of the proceedings not one single military objective of vital importance had been touched. We only hoped they believed it. He went on, ‘The oil supplies of Malta have been laid waste.’ But through the foresight of Admiral Ford, all the oil stores of Malta were underground, but then the announcer went on to say, ‘We have destroyed Malta’s coal mines.’ The whole island laughed at that, because there never was a coal mine in Malta. Malta isn’t made of the right stuff; it’s limestone, not coal. We got a lot of cheap fun out of all these things from the Italian radio. But the Germans were not to be outdone by mere Italians, and felt it necessary for them to beat these stories. Kesselring, in charge of the Luftwaffe, had been giving Malta a very torrid time indeed with his dive bombing. And coming over from Berlin radio we heard how

the Germans had sunk ship after ship of the British Navy (you may remember how they sank the *Ark Royal* four times), and then came their greatest triumph. The announcer said: 'We have sunk H.M.S. *St. Angelo*.' Now you know the Navy have a funny way when they have an establishment on shore of giving it the name of a ship. Now there was a very solid stone fort built on a very solid rock foundation, and this was called *St. Angelo*. And do you know, the Germans went and sank it!

"Indeed, we got a lot of cheap fun out of these broadcasts. It was greatly needed, for those were grim days in Malta, but the morale of the people never faltered."

I was standing near the door after one of these great youth meetings and I heard two schoolboys talking. One of them said: "Gee, I'll never say it's sissy to be a Christian again after hearing him."

State Report

All Secretaries love reports, although they don't like compiling them, and I had asked each State to supply me with a report of the doings of the tour in their own particular State. I feel, on looking through them, that Western Australia, which was the last State in the tour, should be reported. In front of me are nine foolscap pages, closely typed, everything itemised, sub-headed 1, 2, 3, 4 and a, b, c, d. What a representative collection they had on their committee! There was the Chairman, Norman Chenoweth (A.I.F.), Resident Medical Officer in one of the military camps. The Secretary, Heighway Bates, a Bachelor of Dentistry. The Treasurer, John Shepherd, a Justice of the Peace, Town Clerk of Fremantle. And then there was Rosemary Brewer, a teacher with a Science degree, who was the I.V.F. representative; Bram Saunders, of Station 6IX, broadcasting expert; Harry McAndrew, President of the I.V.F. Grads' Fellowship, and our good friend, Neil MacLeod, recently a padre in the Forces, an M.A., B.D., with a true Scotch sense of humour.

I'm going to take a series of verbal fillets from that report and pass them on to you; the bits left out, of course, are purely my responsibility, and I am sure that our Hon. Secretary, dentist though he be, will not object to a few extractions on my part. He tells how all tackled the task with tremendous vigour. He puts his finger on the focal point of the whole campaign, the prayer barrage that was put up right through the whole State and Commonwealth.

Of course, as the General had pointed out, we must play our part. The publicity schemes in the West had a number of unusual angles to them. The Defender of Malta brochure had found its way via the postal system to the West, and gangs of I.V.F. folk visited the football grounds and the races. They placed under windscreen wipers or on the driver's seat of the various cars parked there programme slips and the Defender of Malta pamphlets. A rubber stamp had been made and these were stamped with the words "You must hear Dobbie tomorrow." And to what effect!

Four thousand tickets stamped “Admit two” had been produced, and another 4,000 with “Admit one” had also followed them up. The next evening at 7 o’clock there was a queue of some hundreds waiting. But this was soon engulfed by the theatre when the doors were opened at 8 p.m. The crowd came steadily. Mr. Jack Watts, the manager, said there were 500 standing in addition to the house seating 2,200. There were some 400 seats in the front of the theatre reserved for Parliamentarians, Councillors and the Maltese community, who all wore red and white ribbons, or rosettes; this gained them admission to a special seat. The Deputy-Premier ably chaired the meeting; his remarks were brief and in the spirit of the gathering. Hymns were well sung and the announcements cheerful. The General’s “Hand of God in Malta” address gripped the audience. At the conclusion, Neil MacLeod made the following challenge:

“Your Excellency, Mr. Chairman, Sir William and Lady Dobbie, Ladies and Gentlemen: History is made only when we make decisions. A decision in the sense that, not only has something happened but that something has really been done by us. A decision involving our accepting or rejecting, and as Brunner points out, there is but one decision worthy of that name—that is decision for or against Christ. You must all make that decision some time—why not decide tonight? Leave the old self in a flying leap, rather than a lifelong gliding motion—an act of decision that ventures out into the unknown—that thrusts the soul on Christ tonight. You have listened to one Mediterranean Governor give his fearless decision—there was another called Pilate, who tried to wash his hands of the whole affair. Will the decision of History at length put you in line with Pilate or with the other Governor who so eloquently spoke to your soul tonight?”

He then let me into some of the intimate detail and difficulty of the tour, things that I always feel are of great interest.

The ‘plane arrived on time at 7 o’clock Friday evening, 29th June, and was met by the committee, the President and student members, G.O.C. Western Area, Father Pace (an almost blind and aged Maltese priest, leader of their community in Western Australia), Mrs. Garden-Oliver, M.L.A., Mrs. Robertson, were there. The two last-mentioned had done splendid work in convening the women’s committee. Mrs. Robertson had with her her

daughters and her two grand-daughters, aged 8 and 3. They presented a very large and lovely bouquet of flowers from I.V.F. This, by the way, had thrown us into a panic, the carrier having got lost, but the flowers turned up shortly before Mrs. Robertson was due to leave for the aerodrome. Shirley Wilkinson, Secretary of the Christian Fellowship, presented a much-commented-upon bouquet of West Australian wildflowers, from the I.V.F. Students in the West.

A car, provided by the State Government at the request of the Prime Minister, was waiting to take them to their hotel, and off they went. Ormond Porter, bear-leader, cheerful as ever, retrieved baggage and came on in the Airways' bus.

After dinner there was the usual conference and plan of campaign for the city, a campaign which was incorporated in six foolscap pages of notes.

That evening a reporter from the *West Australian* interviewed the General. And one of the best reports of the whole tour appeared next morning. This great paper, unlike many others in Australia, had no compunction whatever about mentioning the names of God and Jesus Christ. The publicity they gave was of a very high order. A most remarkable interview was also printed in the *Mirror*, again I quote verbatim:

Malta's Defender Believes End of the World Is Coming

By Peter Batten

“I believe that the end of the world as we know it is at hand; perhaps I shall be expressing myself better if I say ‘the end of the age.’” The man who made this startling statement said it with as much emotion as you or I would say, “It looks like being a fine day.” Nor was the setting for our talk attuned to any such prophecy.

Sir William Dobbie, immortalised for every man and woman

who admires courage as “The Defender of Malta,” sat in a wicker chair on the balcony of the hotel. Below us street traffic ran its slightly erratic course; in the foreground lay the placid waters of the Swan, the ferry making a pattern like a small boy’s pencil efforts on a bluey-grey sheet of paper.

I looked at Sir William. He is well worth looking at. Over six feet in height, he is (despite his 66-odd years), as upright as a sapling pine. His features are rugged, his eyebrows with a hawklike curve, meet almost menacingly when he emphasises a point.

But there is much more of the dove than the hawk in this man among men. We are apt to forget that this former Governor of Malta during her fearful ordeal by bombing has been a soldier ever since he left Charterhouse.

He saw service in the South African war and in the 1914–18 war, and he holds the Distinguished Service Order, quite apart from his C.B. and C.M.G. Until 1940, he was G.O.C. of Malaya for five years.

“You really think the end of the world is coming?” I asked him, trying to keep an incredulous note out of my voice.

“I do,” he said quietly. “I see no other way out for mankind—no other way but chaos. Everything points to the end of the age. You must remember that every prophecy made in the Bible about the first Coming of the Lord was borne out; why then should we doubt that all the prophecies about His Second Coming are not equally ordained?”

He rose from his chair, excused himself and returned in a moment with a Bible. There was no conscious suggestion that a newspaperman might wonder at the act. Sir William opened his Bible as he might have opened a book of reference: to him, most obviously it is an everyday guide.

When he began to read I noticed particularly that there was none of that somewhat self-conscious, Puritanical snuffle most of us think it necessary to adopt if we are suddenly called on to read from the Scriptures.

Sir William read me the passage from St. Luke as he might have read any passage from a Review of standing. (I do not adopt that simile in any irreverence; it merely struck me that way.)

“Listen to this,” he commented quietly, “... and there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

He stopped reading and looked thoughtfully out across the water.

“The sea has always been taken in the Bible as the symbol of great unrest,” he observed, more as though he was talking to himself than to me. “Could anything better describe the state of the world?”

“I am bitterly disappointed in U.N.O. Up to the present it has achieved so little... ‘distress of nations, with perplexity’... there you have it. Just as the League of Nations failed because it put God out of its reckonings, so U.N.O. appears to me to be failing for the self-same reason.

“Listen again...” and Sir William turned to the second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, to the chapter in which St. Paul warns Timothy of the times to come... “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to their parents... without natural affection, truce-breakers.”

Sir William paused, then added: “Isn’t that a complete picture

of the world as we know it today? All the troubles between employers and employees, isn't it caused in the main by 'truce-breakers'—agreements today seem to be of no value.

"To me the Apostle's words are a perfect description of our condition. The discovery of the atomic bomb, its fearful possibilities... 'men's hearts failing them for fear'... 'the powers of Heaven shaken'... all this is foretold in the Scriptures; one does not have to look for passages that might represent our present world-state; that chaotic state is with us now."

Sir William was silent again, looking out over the peaceful Swan.

"And do you believe that when the Saviour returns, He will have the same conditions against which to work? A struggle for recognition; derision, scoffing, ridicule?" I asked.

"No!" came the swift reply. "I do not. The First Coming was as a poor Man among poor men. The Second Coming—it is foretold—will be in Power and Majesty. I believe that God will make a physical reappearance in Might and Majesty, and that He will take over the rule of the entire world. I do not believe that prophecies mean only a change in the heart of man, but that His Second Coming in that sense indicates a change in mankind itself.

"That Coming will, I believe, be physical; we shall see Him in Power and Majesty, and He will rule this world, saving it from chaos."

I wish I could reproduce for you the depth of sincerity that was in Sir William's voice as he spoke. There is nothing of the fanatic about him: little of the visionary. He is an ordinary man among ordinary men in his everyday life.

The report goes on telling how the General and Lady Dobbie contacted the people of the West. There were women's meetings, a group of Prefects from

the schools, luncheons, and a picnic. Then turning to the last page of this report I come to the end of the tour:

It was a Monday evening. Thirty committee folk and other close helpers, with their wives, met the General and Lady Dobbie, to bid them farewell from the I.V.F. of Australia and the W.A. Committee. There was a little presentation, typically Australian. Then Lady Dobbie spoke and said that after the last meeting, the day before, the door of opportunity seemed to slam in their faces. They didn't know what God had for them in the future, but all their married lives they had never had to agonise in prayer over the next move—the Army made the moves for them; now they had to make a decision, a new experience for them, but they knew that the Lord would make plain the path, and commended the Lord's guidance to young people starting on the Christian road.

Then the General spoke briefly of his appreciation of the organisation and all that had gone on behind the scenes to make the tour a success. He spoke of the many friends they had made during their visit. Then Ormond Porter wished General and Lady Dobbie Godspeed, and the General, in a simple prayer, committed us all into the same all-powerful Hand.

Farewell

There were two letters in the mail. I sat down at the table with the silent 'phone beside me. I thought of the hectic days that had been spent, when everybody wanted to go to the Stadium meeting. I heard the typewriter tapping away next door. The Hand of God had not only been in Malta, but with the I.V.F. in Australia. The impact of the vital message of the Good News of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord, and God, had been immense. I opened the first letter. It was from the General. I read it through, and then I read it through again, and then made a note on it, "Type six copies," one of them for *I.V.F. Invites a General*. Everybody should share in that letter. Here it is:

Hotel Esplanade,
Perth, W.A.,
7/7/46

My Dear Paul,

We have just had the final meeting of the tour, the Youth Meeting in the Capitol Theatre here. I was praying much beforehand that, as it was to be the last, it might be the best. It certainly was a happy one. The place was packed and they listened very well. But I am sad tonight, as I face the fact that this chapter in our life is closed. It has been a very happy one for me, and I have been very conscious of the tremendous privilege accorded to me in addressing all these thousands of people, who were so ready to listen. I feel and so does my wife, that this form of service is finished, and that God must have some other form in store for us.

But I am very sensible of the great debt we owe to you and your pals of the I.V.F. and others. We had the pleasure of speaking of Christ to these crowds, but the opportunity was only made

possible by the unremitting work and devotion of you all. I fancy we little know how much of this was entailed. But we are grateful, and I only wish some way could be found of letting all these kind friends (the local committees in the various places, etc.) know how grateful we are and how much we appreciate what they did. Theirs was the hard work—and we reaped the benefit of what they had done.

We are also most grateful to all who made the tour possible from the financial point of view. I do wish we could have done it at our own expense, but as that was not possible, we are grateful to those who bore the burden.

If I may say so, I think the organisation and the staff work of the tour has been first-class (and I know something of staff work). And on top of the efficiency, we met everywhere unbelievable kindness, patience and thoughtfulness which have touched us greatly. I am afraid that we must have been an awful nuisance sometimes, and that I anyhow have been “difficult.” But the way you all stood us and the bothers we caused has left an impression on us which we will not forget in a hurry.

As regards the results—these are in God’s hands. But I know that a tremendous lot of prayer, in this country—in England—in America and elsewhere has been continuously offered—and that God does answer prayer. I know also that in every case where my wife or I had to address an audience we did it consciously, relying on His power and His grace.

May you and your colleagues now be guided as to your future activities, and enabled to reap fruit where the seed has been sown.

My wife joins with me in sending our warm love to you all.

Yours ever,
W. G. S. DOBBIE.

Then I opened the other letter; it was from Western Australia. And it told of the farewell to our distinguished guests who had become our very real friends, and I read:

On Saturday morning, July 13, in pouring rain, nine of us saw the *Stirling Castle* off. We were not allowed on board, but both the General and Lady Dobbie came onto the wharf to shake hands, on an impulse of Lady Dobbie's. We waved, and they waved salaam. Each time a concerted cooee brought a vigorous wave from the ship. So they disappeared into the rain and fog, and we thanked God and took courage.

MALTA, G.C.

IN Valetta—in the Palace Square, is a marble tablet which reads “The love of the Maltese and the voice of the Europeans confirm these Islands to great and invincible Britain.”

The treeless little island, where everything seems built of stone, with its sheer cliffs honey-combed with caves was in jeopardy. Bombs rained upon it. The Axis radio said Malta had been destroyed once and for all. They sent squad after squad of bombers with elaborate fighter escort to blast the island into oblivion.

At the beginning the defences were three old bi-plane Gladiators called Faith, Hope and Charity. They had been hastily put together from the crates in which they had been found on the wharves.

The world was amazed that Malta held. The reason might be explained in the words of Scripture—“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The Governor of Malta and the Commander-in-Chief, Lt.-Gen. Sir William Dobbie, broadcast to the people in a simple way, understood by all Maltese. He urged them to place their trust in Almighty God. Malta held.

Napoleon once stated that “Malta is the key that commands Egypt.” Deutschlandsender radio said: “Malta’s importance can be understood if it can be realised that it controls the most important trade routes to the Levant and India. It controls the way from Gibraltar to the Suez Canal.” There is good reason to suppose that had Malta not retained that unyielding grip on the supply lines of the German and Italian forces in North Africa we might well have lost the Middle East, and Rommel would have advanced through Egypt, the Nile Delta, Suez, and started on the road to India.

No place was so tortured by bombing as Malta. At one stage, for five months, day and night, the bombing went on without ceasing. On this tiny target Kesselring flung one German air fleet, and the whole of the Italian air Force. Proportionately the killed and wounded in Malta were double those of Britain.

Major Gerard writing of the island says—“George Cross Island? I will remember the tear-stained, rugged faces of Malta . . . Crucifixion Island.” There is something strangely significant in these last words. It was General Dobbie who right throughout these critical days quietly pointed the population, and the troops under his command, to the One whom to know is life eternal.

Vast convoys got through, guns, ammunition, planes—all were brought by indomitable courage, and Malta fought back. Again Gerard writes of his experiences. Watching General Dobbie set out for London he says—“Dobbie had served his God, his King, his country and his cause as few men have served them.”

The End