

Real Life Stories
A Witness From 60 Years Ago - Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie

Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie (July 12, 1879 - 1964) was an officer of the British Army, who served as the military governor of Malta during World War II. Dobbie was a member of the Plymouth Brethren and was a veteran of the Second Boer War and World War I. He was also the former Commandant of the British School of Military Engineering. He was General Officer Commanding Malaya (1935 - 1939). Churchill said of him, "*Dobbie is a Governor of outstanding character who inspired all ranks and classes, military and civil, with his ... determination ... a soldier who...in...leadership and religious zeal...recalled memories of General Gordon and...the Ironsides and Covenanters*". Every night about seven, General Dobbie led family devotions and everyone would be summoned for prayer. Dobbie would stand praying and ask the Almighty to bless a convoy, but he never prayed to stop the bombing. That was God's will. He sought grace to do his duty along with the people of Malta. In the current *Gospel Standard* the following reminiscence is found about the General.

There was much evil and corruption in the world during the last War, but we are reminded of the testimony of his Excellency the Governor of Malta, General Sir William Dobbie. A notable figure, he was never ashamed of his faith. O that there were such men in high places today!

A naval officer, writing in the Daily Telegraph, said of him: "Gen. Dobbie is a big man. He is big physically; he is big professionally, being one of the foremost Fortress men in the British army; he is big morally. As one who has had the honor to be a guest of Gen. and Lady Dobbie during the present siege of Malta, I would like to mention how impressive Gen. Dobbie can be. His charming house at San Anton is run with a dignity befitting a representative of the King, combined with the simplicity of a soldier. After dinner the guests proceed to the drawing-room, where, standing in front of the fireplace, Gen. Dobbie says: 'It is usual in this house to say a few words of thanks to Almighty God'; and then, for a minute or so, he gives an extempore prayer of thanks for the day and its events. No wonder he is one of whom it has been said that he fights 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."

Gen. Dobbie's name became a household word in wartime Britain because of the brave and noble defense of the Island of Malta. Speaking of this he said: "I have purposely left to the last the point which really overshadows all others in importance. During those two years of siege I was very conscious of the good hand of God upon us, and I am sure that the continued safety of Malta was ultimately due to His divine protection I am convinced that God, for Christ's sake, does still answer prayer, and I believe that the recognition of this fact was the secret of the spirit of endurance and fortitude shown by so many persons in Malta.... Acknowledgement of God through Christ, and trust in Him, is now as ever the thing which matters most."

Of himself General Dobbie said: "I came to know Christ as my Saviour forty-seven years ago, and all through my military service to the present day He has been my Saviour and my Lord. Although I have often been unfaithful to Him, yet He has never been unfaithful to me, nor has He let me down. I have always been sensible of the fact that my sins, which were forgiven me, were blotted out once and for all, and that in spite of my failures, I have become 'a new creature in Christ Jesus.' That realization has given me a profound peace which none of the circumstances of army life in peace or in war have been able to disturb. To serve God and to follow Him is a very real and practical thing in the army. The help that He gives is also real and practical, as I have proved times without number. I have made it a habit to bring all my problems to Him, both great and small, both professional and private, and I can testify that the help He gives is certain and convincing".

"I have known the Lord Jesus now for forty-seven years, and I could not face life without Him. I pity from the bottom of my heart those who are trying to live without Him It is no small thing to know that all the past has been forgiven, that help from the hands of Almighty God is available for the present, and that the whole future for eternity is assured. I am not presumptuous when I say I know that, because it has all been given to me by His grace, apart from my own deserts. I commend such a Saviour to all."

At the time Mr. J.H. Gosden wrote: "O if Britain could boast of ten such righteous men in her high places, how different would be her prospects! We are profoundly thankful for this witness humbly and simply borne to the faithfulness of God and the reality of His salvation in Christ."

... Gleaned from Banner of Truth