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Malta

A neglected Outpost of Empire.

Some plain speaking

by

Augusto Bartolo B.Lit., LL.D.

(Malta).

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A FOREWORD

is necessary in order to explain the motives which have prompted the publication of this pamphlet.

Last year there appeared in the June number of *The National Review* an interesting article, over the signature of AN ENGLISHMAN and under the heading of "Thoughts after Empire Day", dealing with the defects in the relations between England and her Colonies, and suggesting speedy and effective measures calculated to ensure Imperial Unity and place it on a solid basis. As I considered that the article was peculiarly applicable to the attitude adopted by England towards Malta, I thought of bringing to light a few facts about our island which would illustrate and bear out AN ENGLISHMAN'S contentions; and accordingly I wrote the following article, which I called "Further Thoughts after Empire Day", and forwarded it to the Editor of the *National Review* soliciting the favour of its publication in his esteemed Journal.

After some four months the article was returned to me, with the following covering letter:—

National Review
23, Ryder Street,
St. James's, London S.W.
21st Nov. 1910.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged for the opportunity of reading your interesting paper, but there has never been room for it in the N. R. owing to the fearful pressure of current politics, and I think under the circumstances it would be more satisfactory to you to return it.

I beg to remain

Yours truly,

L. J. MAXSE.

Some friends suggested that I should ask for my article the hospitality of some other London paper, but I thought no more of it, until lately the publication of some disparaging and totally unfounded remarks on Malta in certain English papers, though not of much consequence, induced me to publish it in its present form, in the hope that it might somehow attain, if only partially, the desired result, which is that of laying before the eyes of our British fellow-subjects the grossly unjust ill-treatment to which we, as a nation, are continually being subjected, especially by a certain section of the English press, and at the same time of impressing them with a due sense of respect for a people which has from time immemorial gained the esteem of all civilized nations.

It is in this spirit that the following pages have been written and made public. I am quite aware that sympathetic and appreciative accounts of, or references to, Malta, by Englishmen of renown, are very numerous; indeed, I have collected a good many of such accounts, which I hope some day to publish in book form.

Nevertheless I contend that, in the face of the libels which occasionally find their way into the columns of certain English papers, our silence would be more than unpardonable, it would be culpable, for it might be wrongly construed into acquiescence on our part in all that is laid to our charge, and might therefore imply self-condemnation. It is imperative therefore on the part of my fellow-countrymen, and highly desirable on the part of our numerous English friends, that they should come forward and break a lance in favour of our island's name and honour, whenever they should chance to be unscrupulously and unaccountably attacked; only in this manner can we hope to be able to dispel every baseless idea in our regard, and to vindicate the reputation of our island which, small though it be, has nevertheless played an all-important rôle in the history of the world.

A. B.

Valletta, Malta

March 1911.

Malta

A neglected Outpost of Empire.

In these days of Imperialism, when how to effect the closer union of the nations composing the complex organism of the British Empire has become one of the gravest and apparently most difficult of all the problems confronting the statesmen of that Empire, the note of warning sounded by "An Englishman" in the June number of the "National Review", and the suggestions contained in his interesting article should offer food for serious reflection; for any and every discussion on subjects affecting the interests of Great and Greater Britain should be hailed with delight by all who glory in their connection with the greatest and most magnificent world-empire ever known or even dreamt of. If, as a reader and admirer of the "National Review," I have rightly understood its mission to be that (amongst others) of discussing Imperial problems, throwing as much light as possible upon Imperial affairs, and generally promoting and extending the knowledge of the Empire, both as a whole and in its composite parts, thereby furthering the most vital interests of that very same Empire, I venture to hope that the Editor will not refuse the hospitality of his columns to a few remarks by one who, though not a Briton is a Britisher, and who endeavours to make up for deficiency in language by the sincerity of his intentions, and the candour and straightforwardness with which he seeks to give them utterance. These are my credentials. For me to attempt to introduce myself further than this, would serve no useful purpose, for I would still remain an unknown personality: and I therefore rely on the fairness and good sense of the reader to judge my following remarks on their own intrinsic merits (if they can claim any) irrespective of their authorship.

It is at all times not merely advisable, but also imperative, when dealing with such important and far-reaching questions as those which closely concern the safety and well-being of the British Empire, to speak out the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, however sad and unpalatable it may appear. And I think that "An Englishman" hit the nail right on the head when he prefaced his remarks with the candid expression of his belief that "there are still many defects in the attitude adopted by the Mother Country and the Dominions towards one another" and that "we shall never become a really United Empire, one and indivisible, unless we try to see the error of our ways." It is exactly one of these defects—and one which to me appears to be of great moment—which I desire to dwell upon, and which, without further preamble, I consider to be the neglect, and occasionally even contempt, with which the

minor dependencies of the British Crown are treated by the Mother Country. "An Englishman" himself unconsciously furnishes an instance of such neglect: for whilst he professes to deal with the British Empire generally, he in reality refers to only one portion of it—albeit the greater and more important—represented by the "self-governing colonies."

Although the question I thus raise is a broad one, and one of principle, I can only undertake to deal with particular cases, and, as a Maltese born and bred, who, however, take as a deep an interest in matters of Imperial concern as in those affecting my native island, I naturally choose the case of Malta.

Well, excluding the numerous Service men who have, at one time or another, been stationed on the island, how many people are there in England whose sum total of information concerning Malta goes beyond the mere knowledge of its existence somewhere? I am not, of course, prepared to estimate, even roughly, the percentage of such people; but I judge it to be low indeed from what I hear and read—and I can truly say that I have always been particularly eager to ascertain in what light Malta is viewed through English and foreign spectacles. Smaller still is the number of those who are aware that Malta is a British dependency: and a striking, though far from edifying, illustration of this lamentable fact is furnished by the letters which not unfrequently reach Malta, from some amongst even the best known business firms in England, addressed "c/o British Consul at Malta"! Such letters naturally find their way in due course into the office of the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Secretary to Government, and the head of that Department, who is invariably an English gentleman, is thus afforded a fairly frequent testimony to the practical interest evinced by Englishmen at home in the British Empire, which is the pride and crowning glory of their race. Finally, those who are in a position to justly appreciate the relation in which Malta stands to England, and the importance of this island-fortress to the welfare and the very existence of the Empire, form an almost insignificant minority.

But let us endeavour to trace the *fons et origo* of this deplorable state of things: for, like every other effect, it has a cause, which may be summed up in the statement that those who have the duty, or who make it their business, to spread the knowledge of the British Empire, are, in many cases, themselves ignorant of, or but too imperfectly acquainted with, that about which they pretend to be able to enlighten the others. This remark, in the case of Malta at any rate, applies chiefly to the English Press, which often gives misleading notices about Malta, and even indulges in gross misrepresentations which are as devoid of foundation as they are deleterious to the island's fair name.

Occasionally, the eye of a Maltese reader is attracted by the name of Malta occurring in the heading or in the

body of an article in an English newspaper or magazine : his curiosity is naturally at once excited, and he eagerly devours the contents, only to be ultimately startled by the discovery that the writer was not himself sure as to the exact spot of the earth on which Malta was situated. *A propos*, it may be passingly stated that the idea that Malta formed part of Africa was at one time very prevalent in England, so much so that the English Government thought it worth its while to solve the question, as regarded the service of British soldiers, by Act of Parliament, which declared our island to be in Europe. But, this notwithstanding, the old belief seems to have lost little, if aught, of its former popularity, and not a few educated Englishmen are still to be found who do not hesitate for a moment to class the Maltese amongst the coloured races !

The accounts of Malta which meet the eye of the average English reader are mostly from the pens of irresponsible chroniclers who, at best, have paid a very hurried visit to Malta. There are even others who, chancing to find themselves on board some ship which anchored for a few hours in one of our harbours, and apparently without taking the trouble of setting foot on Maltese soil at all, feel amply justified, when they return home, in writing, and endeavouring to communicate to the world at large, their *impressions* of the island. The lucubrations of these impromptu pseudo-historians are too ridiculous to deserve any serious comment. But people who come over here, imbued with the noxious ideas they derive from the libels of such biassed, ill-informed and worthless penny-a-liners, are not at all likely to view things in their proper light, and with an unjaundiced eye ; and unless they tarry long enough in our midst to have the opportunity of dispelling such baseless preconceived notions, and of forming their own impartial judgment with regard to the island and its people, they leave again more than ever convinced of the gospel truth of all they had read, and, in their turn, swell the mass of contemptible literature which has conspired to tarnish, and possibly destroy, the enviable reputation which our island has deservedly gained for itself. I honestly and sincerely declare that these remarks are by no means the outcome of an imaginary grievance, nor are they due to a feeling of oversensitiveness of criticism from England, for we would not surely resent being told candidly the *truth*, however unsavoury it might appear, about ourselves and our little island-home : but they are but the genuine expression of a real and long-standing grievance which the very same newspapers which have wronged us have denied us so far the opportunity of airing.

It was only last month * that I had the pleasure of assisting an English gentleman, a solicitor and a journalist to boot, in his hurried sight-seeing during a brief visit, in the course of which he had successfully

* When coming across such references to dates, the reader is asked to remember that this article was written in July 1910—A.B.

contrived to combine duty with pleasure. Before he left, he enthusiastically extolled the characteristics of the Maltese people, and in an especial manner their hospitality, he was profuse in his praises of all that he had seen generally, and expressed to me his earnest hope of paying Malta another, and this time a longer, visit. But after he left, what was my surprise at learning from a friend of mine that the English gentleman had confided to him that it was only his duty that had dragged him to Malta, so unfavourable had been the reports which he had received about the island before starting from England! I have said I was surprised; but I hasten to add that it was an agreeable surprise: for I could not help being pleased at the thought that, despite the defamatory notices he had heard previous to his coming hither, that gentleman could not, and did not, remain insensible to the charms which the island possessed. To me, a Maltese justly proud of his classic homeland, it was no mean consolation to ascertain that this much maligned, imperfectly understood little island still had the power of dispelling the worst of preconceptions and misjudgments in its regard, and of converting, as if by magic, into a sincere and even enthusiastic admirer one who had been told to look down upon it with contempt. If only English visitors came to Malta with an open mind, absolutely unconcerned with all unfounded and malicious reports, and ready to form their own judgment and conclusions, we might hope to receive justice at their hands. And I am confident that the intelligent visitor will in the end be forced to confess, in the words of Dr. John Murray, the well-known geologist of the "Challenger" expedition: "After climbing nearly every hill-top, visiting nearly every ravine, sailing under the magnificent sea-cliffs, and enjoying the splendid climate of Malta and Gozo, one is inclined to share the enthusiasm of the natives rather than acquiesce in the unfavourable opinion of so many travellers; the Maltese Islands are possessed of much natural beauty, and are full of interest for the geologist, naturalist, archaeologist, philologist, historian, political economist and politician....." And if, dismissing, if only for a short while, that air of superiority which works so much havoc in the colonies, and is an insuperable barrier in the way of a real *Entente Cordiale* between the Mother Country and her daughter-states, they should approach the people, fathom their feelings, treat them as they deserve, and endeavour to understand them, they will no doubt heartily endorse the warm eulogiums passed upon them by so many eminent Britons, and at the same time will partly realize the truth of Mr. Chamberlain's declaration when he wrote to *The Times* on Empire Day of 1909: "I think we have much to gain by such a union, and I do not by any means suppose that it will be one-sided, or that the Dominions across the seas have all to learn from us, and we have nothing to learn from them. On the contrary, we may be sure that as they progress in strength and importance, not a little of the advantage of the union will be what we have to learn as well as what we have to teach."

“An Englishman’s” statement concerning the attention now being paid by the English Press to the over-sea dominions is, no doubt, true in the main, that is, in so far as the larger colonies are concerned. But the minor dependencies are here again hopelessly relegated into the background, or left completely in the shadow. Nor, I repeat, would it matter much if they simply left us to ourselves; we could perhaps brook such neglect in silence. What we object to is being unblushingly misrepresented and occasionally defamed; contempt and calumny are more than mere man could be expected to bear quietly.

Let us quote facts, for facts are stubborn things. Of late years, Malta has been the favoured and fortunate resort of quite a bevy of Royalties—foremost amongst whom were his late lamented Majesty King Edward VII, and his gracious consort Queen Alexandra—to say nothing of the scores of other eminent personages who felt somehow attracted to these shores. On each and all of these auspicious occasions, influential England dailies and periodicals brought the name of Malta prominently to the fore in endeavouring to convey to their millions of readers an idea as to what this meeting-place of royalties was like. But with what result? So long as, to quote an instance, we read that St. John’s Church—the church of the warrior-monks of old, which is truly regarded as one of the grandest monuments of Christian Europe—was built by Queen Adelaide of England in the beginning of XIXth Century, we could afford to laugh: for although our national pride could hardly suffer to see the unique importance of the grand old church which had evoked the enthusiastic admiration of hundreds of eminent men, totally ignored, yet it was the reputation of the English Press itself that suffered in the long run: for the Malta reading public—which besides the bulk of the Maltese educated classes comprises numerous Englishmen and women—to speak nothing of the countless other readers in other parts of the world to whom the “Westminster Abbey of Malta” is familiar, would naturally feel inclined to gauge the accuracy and reliability of the foreign and imperial intelligence daily appearing in the English Press by the nature of the information which it published concerning the best-known objects of general interest in one of the most important, albeit one of the smallest, of British dependencies. But when we saw our good qualities so completely overlooked and our defects and shortcomings (for no gathering of men, however perfect, can claim to be immune from such) unduly and, as it seemed, wilfully magnified and exaggerated, when we read of such other grave defects being ascribed to us as only existed in the writers’ over-heated imagination, we did more than laugh—we were disgusted and indignant. But this general conspiracy of slander and traducement had no effect upon the King and Queen, for they came three times in our midst, either singly or together, and received the greatest gift a sovereign can ever aspire to—a people’s love. For they captivated the hearts of the entire population and, in their turn, they over and over again spoke of the ge-

nuine delight which they had derived from their visit to the loyal and law-abiding inhabitants of the Maltese Archipelago.

Let us take another instance. As is generally known, for some time until quite recently Malta had been the temporary home and official residence of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught. The Maltese had other reasons to be pleased with the arrangement besides the personal charm of T.R.H. which soon won for them an immense popularity throughout the whole length and breadth of the island. The people felt greatly honoured by the residence in their midst of the King's own brother and his august consort, who, on their part, were evidently keenly appreciative of the pleasure and privilege of occupying for a time the stately and historic palaces of the renowned Heads of the greatest order of chivalry the world has known. The English Press—which, judging by the nature of the news about Malta it had been wont to publish, had hitherto appeared to attach far greater importance to a trifling accident befalling a service man than to any item of general and national concern to the island—now all at once bestowed a fair share of its divided attention upon Malta—or rather upon the Duke and Duchess, whose movements and doings were daily, and often fully, reported and commented upon. However indirectly and undesignedly, the name of Malta frequently figured in the columns of the principal London dailies, as being closely associated and interwoven with that of its Royal Residents. Thanks solely to the Duke's residence, Malta, we were all gratified to see, was again being advertised, and the English Press was becoming the unconscious means of vindicating its ancient claim of being looked upon as an ideal winter resort—apart from the manifold other attractions it invariably offers to the intelligent visitor. But at the same time we could not but be deeply grieved and hurt by the reflection that, in the eyes of the English at home, the importance of Malta rose and sank in accordance with the movements of the Royal Residents,—a sad truth which was fully confirmed by the fact that, when the Duke severed his official connection with Malta, the English Press resumed its old attitude towards the island. For we thought—and no one who knows us will dare question the justness of our belief—that, irrespective of the Duke's residence on its shores, Malta could lay many claims to the consideration of the civilized world in general and of the British Empire in particular.

The apprehension lest I should encroach too much upon the patient kindness of the Editor and the readers has detained me from going into details. Yet should the Editor consider my remarks as mere gratuitous statements which require substantiation, any amount of evidence can be had for the asking.

I have so far confined my remarks to the English Press, which tends to mould English public opinion in our regard. But the Press is by no means the only

offender in this respect. The same tendencies are unfortunately exhibited, and the same blunders unluckily found, in the numerous works dealing with the British Empire. Indeed, if we except such really excellent standard works as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*,—which, by the way, contains a lengthy, interesting and on the whole very accurate article on Malta,—very few books there are on the British Empire which give Malta its due, and the brief and necessarily far from complete account given in *Whitaker's Almanac* is a good deal better and fuller than that to be found in the generality of the books I refer to. If it is deemed justifiable to completely pass over its history anterior to the British rule, surely the story of its spontaneous entry into the British Empire ought to be dwelt upon at some length; but that long and glorious story is generally disposed of in a line or two, and summed up in the equivocal phrase that “the British captured Malta in 1800” or in the unfounded statement that “the British conquered Malta in 1800.”

I shall now proceed to deal with two glaring instances of neglect which to me appear to be far more significant, and perhaps typical, than any hitherto mentioned.

Last year, the Imperial Press Conference was held in that wonderful metropolis which is, in all respects, worthy of the honour of being regarded as the guiding head, the throbbing heart and the moving spirit of the whole British Empire. To speak to English readers of the enthusiasm it aroused, and of the beneficent and lasting results it achieved, would be more than preposterous—on my part it would be sheer presumption. But one thing which Englishmen may not know is that the Conference was not truly representative of the whole Empire, unless in trying to evade one horn of a dilemma one should get entangled on the other and declare that the smaller colonies form no part of the Empire. However that may be, it is a fact that several small colonies, Malta included, were thought to be too insignificant to participate in the important, I would almost say epoch-making, event. Assuredly Malta cannot, for reasons too obvious to need enumeration, boast such newspapers as the Australians and Canadians possess, which have elicited warm praise from “An Englishman”, who, however, has not been insensible to their grievous faults, some of which could be more appropriately defined as crimes. But it *has* a Press, and, small though it undoubtedly be, (though large enough in proportion to the size of the island and the number of the people) it is *the* Press of Malta, the organ and mouthpiece of public opinion, the medium through which the people utter their sentiments, express their loyalty, and air their grievances—in one word, it is the voice of the people of Malta: and one thing which is noteworthy about it is, that, whilst some of the newspapers are second to none in the Empire in point of devoted loyalty to the British Crown and to the Imperial cause, none of them has, as far as I can remember, rendered itself so shamefully guilty of such

wanton acts of rank disloyalty as those with which a section of the Dominion's Press has been unequivocally charged by "An Englishman." It becomes self-evident, therefore, that the exclusion of our Press from the Conference was practically tantamount to the exclusion of Malta from Imperial unity. And such was the feeling that it evoked in the island. So the Conference was held, unforgettable speeches were delivered, all-important Imperial questions were discussed, a feeling of brotherly affection was engendered, or strengthened—the dormant note of patriotism had at last been struck, and the response was disastrous to the cause of Little Englandism and such as to fill with the greatest hopes even the least sanguine of Imperialists. But the minor colonies did not share these feelings of Imperial patriotism which had stirred to its depths and thrilled the hearts of the Mother country and of the self-governing colonies. Messages were sent and flashed across the seas—messages of love, of promise and of hope—but as they crossed the ocean they lost much of their effect and only a faint echo reached the peoples of the Crown colonies. For those peoples could not help realizing that these messages, Imperial in tone though they were, were not meant for them, but only for their greater and more favoured sister-states. Thus, whilst the great dominions felt more than ever before irresistibly attracted to the Mother Country, the smaller dependencies were deeply wounded; whilst a great step was made in one direction towards the attainment of the lofty ideal of Imperial Federation, in another direction a step backwards was made, unless there be anyone who will maintain that the basis of that Federation can be other than love and loyalty to the one Flag.

Let us turn our attention to still more recent events. Last year the glad and gladdening announcement was made, under the happiest auspices which contained every promise of success, that a grand Imperial Festival—The Festival of Empire—would be held in London between May and July of the current year. Elaborate preparations were made for its worthy celebration. All the over-sea dominions, great and small, in whatever part of the wide world they were situated, were expected, and were to be specially asked, to participate in the projected Feast of Union, unique in its character, grand in its conception, and unprecedented in the happy results which it was confidently anticipated would accrue by it to the Empire as a whole and to every single dominion composing it. Arrangements were made for committees *ad hoc* to be convened in each dominion, under the direct control of the respective head of government, and special representatives were to be invited to personally take part in a great pageant representing Britannia and her children—one-fourth of the Globe was to be present, through its representatives, in the mighty capital of that mighty empire within whose bounds the sun can find no setting. But why recount that which is known to everyone who takes the slightest interest in what daily takes place around him? Let me rather come at once to my point, which is

that, *more solito*, Malta, like many another crown colony I presume, was again overlooked. The local press, greatly resenting this unjustifiable slight, was, as a matter of course, loud in its protests against this latest evidence of neglect and contempt which, by deeply wounding the sentiments of this loyal population, seriously injured the cause of Imperialism. The *Daily Malta Chronicle* especially complained that we were not classed amongst the dominions of the Empire, although our home in the tideless sea is, as it were, a keystone of the whole fabric. Copies of the several issues in which the question was mooted were duly forwarded by the Editor with a covering letter to the organizer of the movement, the Earl of Plymouth, who replied in due course, through the Hon. Secretaries, "particularly thanking" the Editor for bringing the matter to his notice, and assuring him that "the representation of Malta at the Festival is certainly hoped for" and that "The Council are taking steps that attention shall be called to the matter, and hope that this may bring about the desired result." But nothing further was heard, and, to all appearances, no steps had been taken to secure the hoped for representation of Malta, until the dire calamity which dazed the Empire on the 6th of last May necessitated the postponement of the Festival to next year.

Instances, more or less similar in character to those above referred to, could be multiplied almost to infinity; and I could even carry my point further and startle the reader with the disclosure that the little island of Malta, which enjoyed the blessings of civilization centuries before many of the nations now under the British Flag had begun to emerge from a state of semi-barbarity, the island of Malta which boasts a history out of all proportion greater than its limited area, is actually ruled by a form of government only slightly better than that which obtains on The Rock. The free and liberty-loving people of the British Isles would not, surely, be gratified to learn that the Mother of Parliaments, which has granted the most liberal of constitutions to conquered South Africa, still denies, in the full blaze of twentieth century civilization, the management of its own domestic affairs to our island, one of whose proudest boasts is that it was incorporated with the British Empire, over a century ago, not by the force of arms, but at its own spontaneous request, sanctioned by the voice of Europe. But a question of such importance cannot possibly be dealt with in the present instance, nor would the occasion which has prompted these remarks justify such a digression.

It is all very well to speak to us of the rights and privileges, and corresponding responsibilities, attendant upon British citizenship. It is all very well to bring home to us the unexcelled glory of the heritage in which every individual member of the Empire is supposed to share fully. But what is the use of preaching these fine theories, if you loathe and shun all direct communica-

tion with us, if you disdain to take us into your confidence, if your action is in diametrical opposition to the views you expound, and implies the most practical recognition on your part of our insignificance and helplessness? "It is a sign of national decline when men clamour for their rights and speak lightly or seldom of their duties," wrote the Lord Bishop of Ripon last month, when dealing with the constitutional crisis at home. But surely his Lordship would consider that he who, keenly alive to a sense of his duties which he never attempts to shirk, neglects to claim those privileges which are supposed to belong to him, nay to be his birthright, is unworthy to hold a place in the union of free men which the British Empire professes to be. Was Sir Wilfrid Laurier at all right in speaking of the British Empire, not very long ago, as a "loving mother of loving nations?" If so, let Britain do away with all difference in the treatment she accords to her daughter-states. It is only the unnatural mother that evinces special predilection for one or more of her offspring, and looks down upon the others with contempt. A truly loving mother treats all her children alike, nurses them all with the same fond care, and feels the same pride in them all, irrespective of their age, strength and condition.

Britain's attitude towards us is all the more keenly felt, and all the more deeply resented, because, to quote a passage from Sir Charles Lucas' account of the island, which is as admirable as it is concise, Malta "besides being one of the most valuable, is also historically one of the most interesting, of the British possessions. It is not, like Gibraltar, little more than a fortress: it is inhabited by a people who have a long and eventful history, who enjoyed in past ages a considerable measure of self-government, and whose aspirations, in so far as they are not incompatible with Imperial interests, are recognized by the British Government as entitled to be met."

But all this is cheerfully ignored by Englishmen, who would no doubt shrug their shoulders and laugh were they to be told that, if it had been possible for King George V., on being called upon to "bear the glorious burden of the British Monarchy," to have sent a special message to each of his dominions he could have said of Malta, as he has said of India: "We became personally acquainted... with monuments of a civilization older than our own." And yet long before the first page of English history had begun to be written, Malta was a flourishing trading centre in the hands of those intrepid navigators who, venturing as far as the British Isles, provided a great part of the then known world with tin from the Cassiterides. When Caractacus, led in triumph through the streets of Rome, wondered why a people which possessed such stately mansions should have begrudged him his wooden hut, Melita was already one of the most celebrated of Roman colonies: whilst long before that time the magnificence of its buildings and the excellence of its

manufactures had excited the wonder and admiration of many a Latin writer of renown. But Englishmen can afford to ignore, nor do we pretend that they should know, the history of Malta prior to its entry into the British Empire. They may also afford to ignore that, in the second half of the 16th century, this little island, then a veritable bulwark of Christendom, saved the whole of Christian Europe from the ravages of the Turks—even though Queen Elizabeth of England was the foremost amongst the European Sovereigns of her time, to acknowledge and solemnly avow this historical truth, which however has since been gradually condemned and relegated into the dark realms of oblivion. But when they ignore, or affect to ignore, the part sustained by Malta in the great war which finally secured for Great Britain that naval supremacy which is now the basis and guarantee of her power, when they manage to forget that, to put it in the words of a far from sympathetic modern historian “that cyclone of colonial strife, far vaster than that of the age of Louis XIV., trended towards Calcutta, but its starting point was Valletta”, then they do not show a lack of interest in our island as much as they exhibit a lamentable ignorance of one of the most brilliant periods of their brilliant history.

I would I had the power of squeezing into a few words “a long and eventful history” so that I might impress the reader with a sense of our island’s importance, from whatever aspect it is viewed. But, after all, this is not necessary : for I contend that, although the Mother Country should take a just pride in the glorious past of any of her daughter-states, yet the sole circumstance of its being a portion of her Empire, should in itself alone entitle Malta to the consideration of all Britishers. And if, for instance, the name of Valletta fails to arouse in the memory of the average Englishman the superb historical recollections which it conjures up in the mind of every student of European history, it should at any rate suggest to him the existence of a British naval station, now ranking only second in importance, but which held the foremost place, as the headquarters of the largest fleet afloat, until the *Entente Cordiale* sealed by the great diplomat-king who has passed away to live in history, between England and her traditional enemy across the Channel, and the threatening mailed fist of Germany which is ever aspiring after Britannia’s Trident, shifted the centre of naval power from the Mediterranean to the North Sea.

The reason generally assigned by British Ministers for declining to meet the wishes of the Maltese is that Malta is a fortress, and that the great Imperial concerns should be placed far beyond the shadow of danger. But it is exactly this very same reason which should urge upon the powers that be the necessity of adopting a conciliatory attitude towards the Maltese, and of acceding to their legitimate aspirations, thereby strengthening their proverbial loyalty to the glorious throne of Old England, and

cementing that auspicious union freely contracted over one hundred years ago.

If, in dealing with the sources of our grievances, I have, in any way, overstepped the limits, I can only repeat what I said on a former similar occasion: "It was the love of country of a Maltese, and the loyalty of a British citizen, that spoke. Let that be my excuse!"

If, then, it be thought presumptuous for an unknown inhabitant of a small island, half-hidden beneath the waves of the Mediterranean, to offer, with all due respect, advice to the statesmen and the people of the classic land of liberty, which is mistress of civilization, I shall screen myself behind the warning unequivocally sounded by the ex-President of the United States, and say to you: "You are so busy at home that I am not sure whether you realize just how things are, in some places at least, abroad."

AUGUSTO BARTOLO.

Malta, July 1910.

“DAILY MALTA CHRONICLE” Printing Office.

