

## *Impressions of Many Lands*

I have been making a strange, eventful journey around the world, the kind of journey that one does not contemplate in time of peace but which seems to me of supreme value in time of war. In the course of that journey I have had the opportunity to pass through many countries. I have found myself one day discussing international affairs with a governor in the Netherlands East Indies; on the next talking to a British governor at Singapore; on the next talking to a prime minister of his own country in Bangkok; another day travelling across India, pausing every now and then, technically, I believe, to refuel, but in reality, as it seemed to me, to have the opportunity of meeting another man of our race, doing his work of administration and keeping the flag flying in his own lonely part of the world. I have found myself flying above the waters of the Persian gulf, above the date palms of Basra; and I hope the fact, of which I have been aware, that in three or four places which I visited trouble has since broken out, is no responsibility of mine.

In the middle east, in Palestine, Egypt and Libya, I had the supreme privilege of my life, that of following Australian soldiers over battlefields on which I believe they have immortalized their name. At a great naval base in the Mediterranean I had the opportunity of seeing ships and men of the Royal Australian Navy; and I looked at them with pride, and, may I say, with great thankfulness. I saw some ships which, when this war broke out, were reputed to be so old that cynics declared they would never be able to travel across the ocean but would be best employed by being tied up in port, as though they were like wooden guns that might frighten the enemy if he did not examine them too closely. Some of those old ships have battered their way across the seas, and, in the Mediterranean, have destroyed submarines, taken part in great actions, and, I believe, upheld the reputation which for centuries has been maintained by the Royal Navy.

I found myself travelling across Africa, going into British settlements which I knew only by name and which I had never expected to see. Everywhere on that long journey, which was not without its occasional perils and excitements, I found reason to thank God for the race to which I belong. We are, if I may use the expression collectively as to the whole of the British peoples of the world, a curious people, as any other race will admit. We are not without our faults; I dare say we are not without some unpleasant attributes. I assume that we have them. I know my friends have always been able to discern them very clearly in me, and no doubt you have friends who perform the same kind office