

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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# MALTA





# MALTA

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TO  
COUNT GIROLAMO TAGLIAFERRO  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
BY THE WRITER

## PREFACE

THE following text is intended to give no more than a slight sketch, aided by Signor Boron's effective pencil, of the manifold interests to be found in Malta.

While the archæology of the island and its connection with the Order of St. John of Jerusalem have from time to time attracted attention, English writers seem regrettably to have neglected other topics presented by this unique Imperial possession, such as the folk-lore and literature of the Maltese language; the growth of the early Christian Church of Malta; the nature of the 'Consiglio Popolare'—that gleam of constitutional government in the Dark Ages quite as interesting as the Wittenagemote; or the social and economic condition of the Maltese people under the Knights and in the early days of British rule—all of which have engaged the attention of Italian and Maltese historians.

Circumstances have not allowed more than a passing allusion in the following pages to such subjects: they are here mentioned to indicate the fruitful field of research embraced by the Malta Historical and Scientific Society, formed last year in Valletta, which proposes, under the guidance of its President, Professor Napoleon Tagliaferro, to study 'the history and archæology of the Maltese Islands and other scientific subjects of local interest'—an association well worthy of the support of British residents in Malta.

The vast contents of the Record Office in Valletta and oral tradition—the latter nowhere stronger than in these islands—may on examination contribute many valuable additions to literature and history.

Two volumes in this direction have recently appeared, of considerable Imperial and local interest: 'A History of Malta during the Period of the French and British Occupations, 1798-1815,' compiled by the late William Hardman, of Valletta; and the 'Historical Records of the Maltese Corps of the British Army,' compiled by Colonel A. G. Chesney.

The writer begs to acknowledge his large in-

debtedness to the standard works of Porter, Seddall, and Bedford in connection with the Order of St. John and the Great Siege; to the writings of Miss Simmons, Judge De Bono, Signor Busutil, Mr. G. A. Page, Mr. A. S. Flower, Dr. A. A. Caruana, and Dr. A. Bartolo, and also to the many Maltese friends who have kindly supplied him with information.

Mr. Edward Reynaud has kindly revised the names of places in the map.

FREDERICK W. RYAN.

13, CLYDE ROAD,

DUBLIN,

*September 8, 1910.*



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*Sketch-map of Malta and Gozo, with Valletta on  
larger scale, at end of volume.*

‘ But not in silence pass Calypso’s isles,  
The sister tenants of the middle deep.’

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

# MALTA

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

MALTA, a mere dot upon the map of Europe, creates in the minds of those who know it or its history an interest out of all proportion to its size. The Grand Harbour, big enough to hold our Mediterranean fleet, the dockyard, the garrison of 7,000 men, and the fortifications, make good its claim to be described as 'the key to our Empire in the East.' Its importance, however, is scarcely suggested by the first view as one approaches the island. This broad rib of yellow rock, rising abruptly from the sea, gives little indication of its power as an outpost of empire, or a place rich in human interest, and a visit of a few hours only will exhaust the casual attention of the tourist. By the ship's side, crowd the traditional sunburnt urchins diving for coppers, but he has seen these in many parts if he has travelled at all. The bastions and redoubts raised

by the Knights in defence of Christendom against the Turk will attract him if he knows anything of history. In the town there is lace to buy from Borg, and cigarettes from Marich, the Governor's Palace to gaze at, and the beautiful interior of St. John's Church for a hurried visit. Then, when his steamer sails away, the tourist will probably carry with him as the dominating impression of his visit to Valletta a climb in a hot sun of a street of stairs, about which Byron has written some profane verses. But this is not to know Malta, for it has many interests beyond that of a British fortress or a port of call.

By reason of its secure anchorage and its position between the African and European seaboard, lying as it does sixty miles from Sicily and two hundred from Tunis, Malta has been, even from early classical times, the coveted prize of those nations who sought to extend their commerce and increase their possession by maritime power. It has been, in consequence, the meeting-place and the battleground of such various protagonists as the Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, and Normans, to name only a few of the races which have directed the destinies of the island.

About equal in area with the Isle of Wight,

Malta has a population of, roughly, 215,000. The Maltese are a homogeneous race, distinct from their African or European neighbours in language and character, and with national customs of which they are tenacious and proud. They are descended from the Phœnicians, who colonized the island a thousand years before Christ. From this stock they inherit their native tongue, which is neither English nor Italian, but a *patois* of Arabic akin to the ancient Hebrew. Many races have ruled Malta since the coming of the Phœnician, but few have sent settlers to the island in sufficient numbers to crush out the primitive inhabitants, and so down to this day the Phœnician strain predominates. Some ancient families, indeed, especially among the nobility, are of foreign extraction, bearing Italian, French, Spanish, or other surnames; they came to the island long ago, intermarried with the natives, and are now more Maltese than the Maltese themselves. Environment has, no doubt, in part done this, as well as the use from infancy of the Maltese tongue, universal as the language of domestic life by both high and low in the island: hence, the Maltese present a study in national development in many ways unique. A people, so small in numbers, with a territory so valuable, could not,

however, live their life entirely uninfluenced by the rest of the world, and Malta has, in consequence, been drawn into most great movements. It is no exaggeration to say, with a native writer, that in local records may be read in microcosm the history of Europe; while in the archæological remains found, the island presents a complete picture of the various stages of Western civilization. Here Hamilcar surrendered to Titus Sempronius Gracchus, when Carthage ceded her command of the Great Sea to Rome. St. Paul the Apostle, shipwrecked upon the island, preached Christianity to the Maltese. Feudalism came early into Malta, and stayed, under the régime of the Knights, an interesting anachronism, until the eighteenth century. In the wars of the Crescent and the Cross, Malta became, under the Knights, the bulwark of Christian Europe; in later days Napoleon saw its importance as a naval and military base when he declared to the British Ambassador in Paris: 'Peace or war depends upon Malta. . . . I would rather put you in possession of the heights of Montmartre than of Malta.' Buonaparte, indeed, with characteristic assurance, marked the Bighi promontory as a spot for his winter palace when the Mediterranean should become, as he hoped, a French lake. When

Garibaldi entered Rome, the Vatican considered the possibility of transferring the Holy See to Malta, always loyal to the Papal connection. These are but a few cases in which the island has been a factor in European events, and as we come to know local history better, we find the Maltese people themselves have played, within the narrow compass of their island, a part not ignoble. Hence, the problems of race, language, and religion which confront the Government of Malta to-day, of which something more will be told, have sprung from seed long sown in a field long prepared.

If historic associations and national questions do not interest the visitor to Malta, other things are to be found to make a winter season there tolerable to even the most blasé individual. Sunshine and blue sky, spacious stone-built houses, with courtyards and fountains, green-shuttered windows and restful balconies, gardens of flowering oleander, orange and lemon groves, give an Italian touch, welcome after the cheerless hues of London in November. Something, too, of the 'dim mysterious East' is felt in the appearance and costume of the people, and in much of their mode of life. It is suggested in the street-cries, the hubbub of the market, in

many names of persons and places, and also in the older architecture. In Malta the traveller from home sees for the first time that fascinating phenomenon, the meeting of East with West ; though, thanks to the Church, little is found of the vice and squalor of other great ports upon the route to India.

Plenty of amusement may be enjoyed in Malta. The season generally lasts from November to March. The cheapest Italian Opera in the world in a splendid Opera House, dances at the Casino Maltese or the Union Club, picnics to Boschetto, bathing and boating at Sliema, excellent music in the public squares, racing and polo in the Marsa, are some of the recreations with which Society whiles away the winter. A local nobility, holding titles in some cases conferred by the Kings of Aragon and Castile or the Grand Masters, maintain an old-world dignity of life in their residences in Città Vecchia or their country villas, and by their presence add a distinction to social functions. In Valletta the English visitor may obtain good apartments and the best living, perhaps in a palace of some long-forgotten Knight, at little more than the expense of a Bloomsbury boarding-house. Possessed of any tact and some regard to the

traditions and ideas of others, he will soon find himself at home, making many lasting friends among the Maltese, who, rich and poor alike, will be found polite and courteous to the stranger.

A winter in Malta is therefore a thing of pleasant memories. The charms of the climate and the surroundings, the string of gaieties its social life affords, no less than the glamour of romance and chivalry with which history has invested each stone of the island, have well earned for it the name, so dear to its patriotic people, of 'Il Fior del Mondo.'

## CHAPTER II

### MALTA IN EARLY DAYS

THE Maltese group consists of the islands of Malta, Gozo, Comino, Cominotto, with the rock of Filfla. Local legend, taking us back to the twilight of fable, tells that they were inhabited originally by a race of giants called the Phæacians, and the old writers pointed in proof to great stone structures of evident antiquity, and certain bones and skulls of superhuman size found in all the islands. These stone buildings, similar to our Stonehenge, were, in fact, built by the first settlers, the Phœnicians, while modern science has declared the bones in question to be those of a species of small elephant. This latter fact, in knocking, so to speak, the giants upon the head, raises the further question whether Malta was once part of the mainland of Africa, as the presence of the elephants seems to suggest.

The annalists of the islands have also claimed Gozo as the Ogygia of Homer, where dwelt Calypso when she allured Ulysses from his path.

#### FORT RICASOLI

GUARDING, with Fort St. Elmo, the entrance to the Grand Harbour of Valletta, and called—like so many of the fortifications—after a Knight of the Order of St. John, at whose expense it was built.







By this statement, no doubt, they wished to secure, like historians in the Middle Ages everywhere, a good place for their own particular country in the geography—whether real or imaginary—of the classics; and in this way, indeed, the fair Calypso has had quite twenty island homes placed at her disposal. Anyway, we find Gozo called by the Maltese the Island of Calypso, and her Grotto may there be admired to-day by the uncritical.

The Phœnicians were the first settlers in Malta who have left authentic records. They gave to the island the name of 'Malet,' meaning shelter, or haven, from the famous natural harbour. As they are the forefathers of the Maltese of to-day, it is not out of place to tell at some length what manner of men were these seafaring fellows.

'They were the foremost of barbarian nations, the only real political rivals of the Greeks, who came into the western waters of the Mediterranean about 1500 B.C. They sailed from the narrow strip of land that lay between Lebanon and the sea, where are their old and famous cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Arvad. The name by which we call them is not their own, but one which perhaps marked their land as the land of palm-trees. They called themselves and their country Chna, or

Canaan, for of a truth they came from the Canaan of the Old Testament ; they worshipped the gods of Baalim and Ashtaroth, with their foul and bloody rites, burning their children in the fire. Their tongue was the same as the Hebrew, and very little knowledge of Hebrew will explain many Phœnician names. Thus, the most famous of all, Hannibal, is “the grace of Baal,” just as the Hebrew Hananiah is “the grace of Jehovah.” Turn it round and it is Jehohanan, Johannes, or our familiar John.’ The Phœnician names Hercules, Hannibal, and Hamilcar, are names quite commonly found among the Maltese down to recent times.

‘The Phœnicians were the oldest mariners in the world of their day, and the most cunning traders. They were then far advanced in material arts above the Greeks and all other European nations. Certain it is the Greeks learnt much from them in the way of culture, and they learnt a much more precious gift—namely, the alphabet. All the various forms of written letters now used in Europe have come in different ways from the letters first used by the Phœnicians. The name Alphabet shows it: it comes from the first two Phœnician letters “aleph” and “beth”; in Greek, “alpha” and “beta.”’ The

Maltese language of to-day has not a distinctive alphabet of its own, but is now written in the Roman characters of English or Italian. These, being foreign characters, do not adequately express the sounds of the Maltese words, the guttural sounds of which are reproduced more nearly by the use of Arabic or Hebrew characters. This will at once show that Maltese is in no way Italian, as so many people imagine.

The chief land of Phœnician settlements was Africa, where Carthage was their most famous colony; and this brings us near our own Malta. Malta was occupied by the Phœnicians for 700 years. The best preserved of their buildings is Hagiar Kim—'The Stone of Veneration'—which was excavated by Government in the year 1839. This, near Casal Krendi, is a circular enclosure of vast stones, divided into chambers and alcoves for sacrificial and religious purposes. Here you may see the stalls of the animals of sacrifice, an oracular room for the prophesying priest, and in the Valetta Museum the altar on which the victims were offered. In the excavation of these remains were found statues of the seven brothers Kabiri, of Astarte, Sidonian deities, and stonework ornamented with date-leaves, symbols plainly showing

an origin from the palmy East. At Gozo is found another structure similar to Hagiär Kim, upon the property of the Marquis Desain, called Gigantia, or the 'Giants' Tower.'

Gozo may be reached by a steamer going twice daily ; but those who like a more picturesque mode of conveyance may take the 'Gozo boat.' This native vessel, of graceful lines and gaily painted, is rigged with two masts and lateen sails, resembling the swan-like shapes seen upon Lake Geneva. It is an open boat, bringing market produce, including fruit, sugar-canes, raw cotton and honey, cheese, and cut grass as fodder for cattle, to Valletta, for Gozo is naturally as fertile as Malta is barren. The Maltese boats often carry the quaint device of a pair of eyes, one on each side of the prow, for the good ship to see the way over the waters, a custom used by the Romans upon their galleys. The sailors in Malta used to wear the bright-coloured stocking-caps of the Neapolitan fishermen, frequently bright red in colour. Now, alas ! they are exchanging this head-dress for a black felt abomination, like the brigand's in conventional melodrama.

Gozo is but twenty miles square in area. It is separated from Malta by a channel two and a half

miles wide, and is surrounded by perpendicular cliffs. The name Gozo is a corruption by the Arabs of Gaudex, 'a tail,' a name given it by the Romans because it seemed to the traveller on his approach a sort of appendix to Malta. The peasantry are noted for their strength. Famous goat's-milk cheese and honey come from it. Its capital formerly was called Rabat, but was changed to Victoria in honour of the Queen's Jubilee in the year 1887. Gozo was once full of magnificent buildings. To-day may be seen remains of Gothic and other architecture in the city and in the burying-place of the Augustinian Order. The citadel, perched upon a solitary rock, guarded by draw-bridges, with a winding road to the top, was once an impregnable position. Under the Order of St. John of Jerusalem Gozo was governed by a Knight, originally of the English Langue. We read in the records of the Order that the refractory Brethren were often in punishment banished to Gozo.

At Marsa Scirocco is also found the ruins of a Phœnician temple, and a great stone hollowed out to receive rain-water. The inhabitants to-day depend in large measure upon rain-water for drinking purposes. The rain is collected upon the flat

roofs of the houses, which are covered with a sort of red asphalt, and is carried by a pipe into a well in the cool basement, and stored there.

In Malta was found, in 1694, a slab bearing an inscription in both Greek and Sidonian letters, almost as valuable as the famous Rosetta Stone, because it gave us much of our knowledge of the Phœnician language ; indeed, Professor Sayce has pronounced the archæological remains of this period in Malta to be the finest in the Mediterranean. Besides the giant buildings, pieces of pottery, flint-knives, and bones of sacrificed animals, the Phœnicians have left a much more permanent trace of their occupation in the present population of the island, who, especially at Gozo, in their mode of thought and usages, preserve a strong Oriental bias, and are evidently distinct from every one of the various nations who have subsequently held in turn a temporary supremacy over them.

We may conclude our reference to the Phœnicians by recording the qualities given to them by a great Oriental scholar : ‘ First, pliability combined with iron fixedness of purpose ; secondly, depth and force ; thirdly, a yearning for dreamy ease, together with a capacity for the hardest work ; fourthly, a love of abstract thought ; and, fifthly,

religiousness, together with an intensely spiritual conception of the Deity.'

'These qualities,' says Professor Rawlinson, 'are said to have especially distinguished the Phœnicians, the Jews, and the Arabs.' They may be traced without exaggeration in the Maltese people. 'Hard work' has made the Maltese merchant the most flourishing in the Mediterranean at the present day; while the successful small trader in Tunis and Alexandria and other Eastern ports is often found to be a Maltese, whose hope, generally realized, is to amass a competence and return to end his days in his beloved island. A traveller in the eighteenth century notes that adventurous merchants from Malta travelled to America—no mean performance in those days—returning with fortunes; and a good Knight, with perhaps affectionate exaggeration, would have us believe that, so famous were their woollens, half Europe at one time wore Maltese socks, and went to bed between Maltese blankets.

'A yearning for dreamy ease' may be seen in the absence of athletics, so dear to the English garrison, and all form of unnecessary physical exertion among the Maltese, and in the midday siesta; though the early rising of all classes, often at five o'clock in

the morning, may account for the need of the latter. The shaded rooms ; the loungers in Strada Reale ; the sunshade and fan, called a *palju*, sometimes carried in the summer by both men and women ; the interminable cigarettes and coffee ; suggest an Eastern, rather than a Western, mode of life.

‘ Abstract thought ’ may be found in the rich metaphors of the Maltese tongue ; in the vivid imagery and the play of ideas which mark the speeches of popular orators, like the late Dr. Mizzi, or the distinguished *avvocati* ; and in the wonderful sermons, in either Italian or Maltese, of the *padres*, in striking contrast to the more matter-of-fact utterances of English speakers.

‘ An intensely spiritual conception of the Deity ’ comes out in that religious feeling which makes the Maltese look for and find the ‘ Will of God ’ in each and every act of their daily life, much as in the case of the Celt in the West of Ireland.

The Greeks succeeded the Phœnicians, coming to Malta from Corinth at the time when they colonized Syracuse. Few details of their doings have come down to us ; they named the island Melita, that is, the ‘ Land of Honey,’ of which present-day readers who have eaten the Maltese





John B. King  
1886



### CITTÀ VECCHIA

THE ancient capital of Malta, called by the Arabs Medina (as it is known still to the Maltese), was given in 1483 the title 'Notabile' by King Alphonsus of Spain, receiving its present name of 'The Old City' when Valletta was built.

*Qubbait* or the *Kaghka marmorata* made on *fiesta* days will carry sweet memories.

A Greek inscription in the museum at Naples records a vote of thanks of the Maltese people to Demetrius, the Greek ruler of Syracuse. A city called Melita was built by the Greeks; this the Arabs afterwards fortified, calling it Medina, or the chief city, and it remained the centre of government until the year 1571, when the Grand Master, Pietro Del Monte, proclaimed the then recently built Valletta the capital of the island. It was therefore called Città Vecchia, or the old city, though it is known to the Maltese still as Medina. You may see a Greek private house of this period, in good preservation, standing in the main street of the Casal Zurriek, which is well worth a visit. Greek coins, pottery, and other remains, are in the Valletta Museum; the Greek inscriptions found in Malta sufficiently prove that the Greek language was at one time in habitual use there, and it is conjectured that it was then the language of the cultivated classes of the natives, just as is Italian or English to-day.

The Carthaginians, coming next, resumed the rule of their ancestors, the Phœnicians. Malta then played a part in the Punic Wars, during which

it changed masters several times. It was ravaged by a Roman fleet under Regulus in the year 257 B.C., and in the Second Punic War it was held by a garrison under Hamilcar, son of Gisco. The Carthaginian leader, however, surrendered here to Titus Sempronius, the Roman Admiral, and thus Malta passed under Roman rule. A writer upon Malta recalls the existence, not so long ago, of a family in an outlying village, bearing the surname of Hamilcar, who claimed descent from the Carthaginian General ; and though the actual pedigree may be a figment of the imagination, the assertion illustrates how living a thing is historical tradition, and how strangely fact and fancy, present and past, are interwoven in these islands.

Latin writers have plenty to say about Malta : it was governed by a Prætor ; several Maltese were enrolled in the Quirine tribe ; in later days it became a Municipium, while under the Christian Emperors the Code of Justinian was introduced, and, in fact, remains embodied in part in the present laws of the land.

Cicero mentions in his letters that pirates infested it, and it is not unlikely that at all times were to be found among the Maltese daring spirits ready for a raid. Captain Marryat, indeed, in his

novels, speaks of the alarm (which his boy-readers probably shared and thoroughly enjoyed) with which merchantmen sighted Maltese pirates on the horizon, whom he describes as 'the ablest corsairs in the Mediterranean.'

Malta seems to have flourished under Roman rule. Diodorus speaks of it as a Phœnician colony, famous for its wealthy inhabitants; he remarks upon the beauty of the houses, with their painted plaster-work and curiously projecting pediments, just as the modern visitor might notice the rococo ornamentation of the churches or the balconies in Strada Stretta. Strabo mentions as peculiar to the island a breed of small dogs, surely the Maltese silken-haired terrier known to dog-fanciers to-day. At that early date it was famous for its cotton cloth, much in request at Rome, and called there *vestis melitensis*. The island must have been to the Roman a winter resort, much as it is to-day to English visitors, because we find Cicero in one of his letters talking of retiring there when the political world became unpleasant for him at home; and we can scarcely imagine the Roman orator banishing himself to a mere colony devoid of the amenities and society of the Roman capital. In the year 1881, while some trees were being planted outside

Medina, a villa residence of Roman times was actually found, with mosaics, glass, sculpture, and other objects of Roman art, of great interest and value. These have been arranged in some of the rooms of the villa itself, and suggest an admirable picture of the luxury and civilization of the Romans.

Under the Roman rule occurred that event which has beyond all others captivated the imagination of the Maltese, and which makes the island almost sacred in the eyes of the Christian world: the coming of St. Paul in the second month of A.D. 58. The Apostle, sailing from Cæsarea to Rome, was shipwrecked in the present St. Paul's Bay, being driven ashore by the Euroclydon, as it is called in the Acts, now known as the Gregale, a cold and wet north-east wind, of great danger to shipping. In this bay, about five miles from Medina, may be seen, near a small island, called Il Gzira, on which stands a great statue of the Saint, the place where the ship bearing St. Paul and his followers struck 'between two seas.' Not far from this spot, under like conditions, H.M.S. *Sultan* was lost some years ago. The square watch-tower and little church on the shore were built in the year 1610 by the Grand

Master Vignacourt, the latter upon the site of one more ancient, marking the spot where St. Paul and his followers landed, and were received by the Maltese, who lighted them a fire, 'because of the present rain and the cold.' According to the sacred narrative, a viper crawled from the burning sticks, and fastened upon the hand of the Apostle, who thereupon, so local legend says, banished reptiles for ever from the island, just as did St. Patrick in Ireland. The Maltese were then converted to Christianity by the Apostle, Publius, son of the Roman Governor, being consecrated by him their first Bishop. St. Paul became the national Saint of the island. Publius, too, is much honoured. The cathedral in Medina is built on the supposed site of his house, while the great church in Floriana, just outside Valletta, is dedicated to him. Publius, in fact, so St. Jerome records, received the crown of martyrdom, being eaten by lions in the arena at Athens during the first Christian persecution there, and was eventually canonized a saint of the Church.

The name of St. Paul, together with that of St. John, the patron of the Knights of Malta, is found everywhere in the island. The smallest *casal* has its Strada or Piazza San Paolo or San Giovanni,

and statues of the two mark the street corners. Traditions of the intervention of St. Paul in the cause of the Maltese and the Church are frequent in the miraculous legends of the island. Thus, on one occasion, before the arrival of the Knights, the Saracens invaded the island, and the Maltese would have been exterminated if the Apostle had not appeared in the skies upon a white horse, bearing a flaming sword, and put the Infidels to flight. This event is commemorated to-day in a solemn procession through the streets of Medina, where prayers for the peace of the Church are offered at the Porta Reale.

The question of the identity of the island upon which St. Paul was shipwrecked was once the controversy of the age. Antiquarians, theologians, politicians, and whole religious Orders took sides against one another upon the question, Padre Georgi, a Benedictine, leading the case for Meleda, an island in the Adriatic. The Maltese historians spent much ink and paper in support of the claim of their island to the honour, and happily the matter is now scientifically decided in their favour.

A relic of early Christianity is found in the museum : it is the quaint figure of a beggar, seated

cross-legged, with a bowl in his hand, denoting possibly Charity. It is covered with figures and letters of the alphabet, which represent the symbols of some sect who tried to reduce religion and morality to a mathematical formula.

At the division of the Roman Empire, Malta was included in the possession of the Eastern or Byzantine Emperor. We do not know much of its history for the next few centuries. It certainly remained a stronghold of Christianity, but was left undisturbed by the rest of Europe. In the year 870 it again becomes the scene of active history by the advent of a new power, which for long endangered European civilization.

The Arabs, inspired by Mohammed, roused themselves from their leisured life as mere tent-dwellers in Arabia, and poured in vast numbers out of their country, with the fury of fanatics, carrying their new religion abroad at the point of the sword. They swept westward, through Syria, Palestine, and North Africa, and incidentally took possession of Malta. The Greeks there, one of whom was a Christian Bishop of the island, were put to death; the authority of the Byzantine Emperor, Basil I., was declared at an end; and the government was assumed by an Arab Emir. Despite the occupa-

tion of the Arabs for two centuries, at a time when almost all the known world, from the Ganges to the Danube, was subject to them, the Maltese never accepted Islam. The Maltese of the present day, indeed, is prompt to confess that there is no god but Allah, for that is his vernacular word for Deity ; but for the second part of the creed of Moslem he entertains a hatred and contempt almost fanatical, even though essentially Oriental by race. From this traditional abhorrence of the Arab, we must conclude the Maltese suffered severely under their rule. Native authors tell us that horrible tortures were inflicted by the Emir upon the Maltese. The Arabs built a castle upon the promontory where the fortress of St. Angelo now stands, to protect themselves against native risings. This was the first of those fortifications which have rendered Malta famous. They also fortified Melita, giving it the name, as we have said, of Medina, and they built in Gozo the fortified town of Rabat. They have left relics of their rule in many names given by them to places in the island : Malta itself is their corruption of Melita ; they divided the island into most of the present *casals*, and *casal* itself is the name given by some Sicilian attorney, when in feudal times Italian law



HAGIAR KIM, MALTA

(‘THE Stone of Veneration’), the remains of a remarkable Phœnician temple, attributed in local legend to a race of giants.

was in the habit of visiting, to a great extent, the  
 friends of the family, and that he thought he  
 was the only one who could be trusted. The family  
 was very much attached to him. The illness of the young  
 lady, which it proved to be, was the cause of his  
 death. He died on the 10th of the month of  
 the year 1844. He was the only one of the family  
 who was not a member of the church. He was  
 a very kind and generous man, and was  
 much beloved by all who knew him. He was  
 the only one of the family who was not a  
 member of the church. He was a very kind  
 and generous man, and was much beloved  
 by all who knew him. He was the only one  
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 knew him. He was the only one of the  
 family who was not a member of the church.





was introduced, who possibly could not pronounce *Rahal*, the Arabic word for village.

The national head-dress of the Maltese women, called the *faldetta*, is of Arabic origin. It is due, no doubt, to the same idea as the Eastern habit of veiling the faces of women. It is like a nun's hood, of black cloth stiffened by whalebone. It is the usual dress of the poor at all times, but the women of the better class make a point of wearing it in church, and then it is not etiquette for a gentleman to address a lady friend so attired. Little girls wear it as well, and it is amusing to see the small bare-legged people of eight or ten years wearing a diminutive *faldetta*, and adjusting it with all the care and concern of a full-grown woman. It is not merely a head-dress, but falls round the body much like a shawl. It is not very heavy and, like the shawl in the Highlands or the West of Ireland, it serves the double purpose, by its thickness, of keeping out both the heat and the cold. The *faldetta* is often made of costly silk, and is always black in colour. The country-woman will sacrifice everything to keep hers untorn; for to possess none at all is regarded as the greatest degradation. Guide-books tell us it was introduced in the year 1798 as a sign of national

mourning, to last for a hundred years, for the calamities brought to Malta by Napoleon's armies ; but this explanation cannot be accepted, in view of the existence of legislation by a Grand Master, prior to that date, prohibiting a woman appearing in Strada Reale without a *faldetta*.

The Roman Empire in decay, divided by the dissensions of the Pope at Rome and the Emperor at Constantinople, could not of itself withstand the forces of Islam. The Arabs had conquered Africa ; one assault had made them masters of Spain ; and Mirza had boasted that he would force his way from there across the Alps into Italy, and cause the name of Mohammed to be proclaimed in the Vatican. A power, however, came from the hardy North to the help of Roman Christendom. The barbarous tribes in the Empire, embracing Christianity and Roman customs, created the feudal system under which they became civilized states, full of the vigour of new nations. The armies of these Northern races under the leadership of Charles Martel, by defeating the Arabs at Tours in the year 732, saved Europe from the domination of Islam ; but the Eastern forces succeeded in holding many islands in the Mediterranean, including Malta, for the next two centuries.

About this time Sicily and Malta, both in the hands of the Arabs, came by inheritance to Roger the Norman, son of Tancred of Hauteville. Roger determined to take possession of his islands, and crossed the sea with his Norman Knights. He drove the Arabs from Sicily, and expelled the Emir from Malta. The joy of the Maltese people was great. The Cross was uplifted once more above the Crescent; a Christian Prince ruled again; the priests and people crept from their catacombs, where they had practised their religion; their patron saint might be openly invoked; the ruined churches were restored; coins were struck in honour of the event, bearing the figures of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and Roger, Count of Malta; and to-day a *fiesta* commemorates the expulsion of the Arabs.

From this year—1090—until the year 1530 Malta was a feudal fief, and, as such, was subject successively to the many different holders of the Sicilian Crown, the Norman Kings, the German Emperors of the Suabian House of Hohenstaufen, the Kings of Anjou, of Aragon, and of Castile. Under this system Malta was but a pawn in a game played by the Princes of these dynasties as lords paramount of the island. It was given to them by

great nobles as a marquisate or a *contado* ; it was mortgaged when they wanted money ; it was the scene of intrigue and faction. Giovanni di Procida is said to have plotted the Sicilian Vespers here. An Englishman called Corner is found—a curious fact—holding it for a King of Aragon against his enemies. The rule of Mary of Aragon, in particular, was so exacting to the inhabitants that it has been called, in popular speech, the ‘Time of the Tyrants.’ When Count Roger overthrew the Arab domination he allowed some of the Arabs to remain in the island. They plotted a massacre of the Maltese during a certain Holy Week, intending to surprise the inhabitants at their devotions. The plot was revealed, legend says, by the miraculous dream of a holy woman ; and the Maltese fell upon the conspirators with the cry, ‘ Kill the dogs,’ at a spot to-day called *Ghain Clieb*, or ‘ dogs’ fountain,’ on the roadside between Città Vecchia and Bengemma.

But, despite the vexatious incidents of feudalism, there are found in this period the germs of a national life. There was a *consiglio popolare*, elected by the franchises of the Maltese, consisting of the nobles, the clergy, and the commons of this island. The government was conducted by great officers of State : a Captain of the Rod,

called in Maltese the *Hakem*, who was chief magistrate of Medina and had extensive jurisdiction ; an Admiral of the Port ; a Steward of the Customs ; and a body of *Giurati* who controlled questions of labour, wages, and commerce. These offices were always held by the natives of the island. A national Church existed in the sense that successive Kings ordained, and Popes ratified the decree, that none but natives should hold ecclesiastical dignities in the island. The Maltese even undertook some wars of their own. We read of their attacking and destroying a squadron of the Republic of Pisa, and wresting the island of Candia from the Venetians after a severe naval engagement, in which the Venetian fleet was defeated. Native writers and orators, with commendable patriotism, love to dwell upon this period as the palmy days of a free Malta ; but scientific historians have not yet decided how far this local government of the Maltese extended ; nor how far this small people in those distant feudal days was even conscious of a national life.

Permanent records, however, of the feudal system are still found in Malta. From it came the Sicilian or Italian law embodied in the Maltese Code. The Normans built many of the buildings in Medina, and traces of Gothic architec-

ture may be seen in Gozo. The Church and the religious Orders own to-day quite one-third of the land in the island, which they do in many instances under title-deeds going back to the feudal times, when the *preux chevaliers* were wont to express their thanks for success in arms by pious foundations. Some of the present titles of nobility were granted by the Norman, Castilian or Aragon Kings we have mentioned; and they granted also many of the armorial bearings of the present non-titled nobility, who thus can trace pedigrees as ancient as our baronies of Camoys or Hastings.

Finally, in the year 1530, Malta was given by the Emperor Charles V., who had inherited it from the last of the Castilian Sovereigns, to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, under which it remained until the year 1798.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM

WHEN the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem came to Malta, in the year 1530, the Order had already been in existence for five centuries. Some merchants of Amalfi, a town near Naples, who were trading in the Holy Land, had erected, about the year 1030, in the city of Jerusalem, a hospital for the reception of Christian pilgrims. This was attached to a Benedictine Monastery, and was originally placed under the auspices of St. John the Almoner, but the dedication was afterwards changed to that of St. John the Baptist. The Mohammedans, who then held Palestine, tolerated the Christians, the pilgrims being, by the taxes they paid, a profitable source of revenue; but towards the end of the eleventh century the Seljuk Turks, from beyond the Caspian, overran the Holy Land, and by their cruelties to the pilgrims set on foot in Western Europe the movement which led to the Crusades.

When the Crusaders freed the holy places from the hands of the Infidels, they established the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem, electing Godfrey de Bouillon the first ruler. The works of mercy of the pious merchants of Amalfi had not in the meantime passed unnoticed: pilgrims and Crusaders on return to their Western homes had told of the assistance the hospital had given them, and had presented in acknowledgment donations of land and money. Godfrey de Bouillon himself had endowed it with his Manor of Montboise in Brabant for the Christian services done, as the original deed runs, to 'les povres foybles et malades.' The increasing wealth of the hospital led the Rector, Peter Gerard, to obtain Papal sanction for the formation of a religious Order, whose members should observe, in addition to the hospital work, the three monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. The Order now increased in fame and numbers, and there were few provinces of Europe where it did not stand possessed of manorial rights. With the revenues of such properties the Brethren maintained in the seaports of the Mediterranean, such as Tarentum and Genoa, poor houses known as 'Hospitals of Jerusalem,' which, besides being

places of charitable relief, served as starting-points for parties of pilgrims to the Holy Land ; while in the ranks of the Brethren were enrolled many Crusaders whose religious fervour had been aroused by their recent fight for the Faith.

The death of Gerard, in the year 1118, caused a change in the organization of the fraternity. Hitherto it had assumed merely a religious aspect, differing little from the numerous monastic bodies in Europe. The new Rector of the Hospital, Raymond du Puy, found under his rule many monks whose original profession had been a military career, and to these the quietness of the cloister or the works of the hospital wards must have been extremely uncongenial. The new Rector therefore proposed to convert his peaceful fraternity into a band of warrior-monks, who, without abandoning the objects and vows of the original institution, should add the further obligation of fighting the enemies of the Faith. Papal sanction was obtained, and the 'Rule of Raymond' was embodied in a Papal Bull. This document was lost at the Siege of Acre, but its contents are recapitulated in a Bull of Boniface VIII., of which some extracts may be of interest. There is in these original precepts of the Order a simplicity and directness

which reflect the quality of the religion of those early days :

‘ I, Raymond, the servant of Christ’s poor, and Master of the Hospital of Jerusalem, desire that all those Brethren who here dedicate themselves to the service of the poor shall, with Christ’s assistance, maintain inviolate the three promises which they have made to Him—namely, chastity ; obedience, which is to be understood to include whatever may be commanded by the Master ; and to live without any property of their own ; because the fulfilment of these three vows will be required of them by God at the last judgment. Let them not seek for or claim as due to them more than bread and water or raiment, which things are promised them, and let their raiment be humble, because our master, the poor, whose servants we profess to be, appears scantily and meanly clad, and it is not right that the servant should be proudly arrayed whilst the master is humble.

The Rule contained minute instructions as to the mode and extent of alms-begging, religious exercises, the visitation of the sick, and the daily life of the fraternity. The Brethren are to eat only twice in the day, and at table they were told : ‘ Let each one eat his meals, as the Apostle directs, in silence,

and let him not drink after the *completorium*, and let all the Brethren keep silence in their beds.'

Brethren who broke the Rule were subject to severe punishment and sometimes expelled. The fear of public scandal makes a quaint distinction between offences, because we are told: 'If a Brother has sinned in secret let him repent in secret, and let him impose upon himself suitable penance. If, however, his sin shall have been publicly discovered, let him on the Sabbath day after Mass, when the congregation have left church, be stripped in the sight of all, and let him be scourged and beaten most severely by thongs and rods by his Superior, and let him be expelled from our institution.' A Brother who absented himself without leave was required to eat his meals on the ground for forty days, and the internal peace of the establishment was provided for, if one Brother disputed with another, by a fast of seven days on the part of the argumentative one.

The familiar costume of the Order, the black habit and the white eight-pointed cross, now called the Maltese cross, did not come into use until the year 1259, by a decree of Pope Alexander IV. This document, addressed to the 'Master of the

Hospital,' shows the worldly wisdom of the ecclesiastics of those days, for it reads :

‘ Since it has come to our knowledge that amongst the Brethren of your Order there is no distinction or diversity of dress (contrary to the usual custom of similar institutions), wherefore it comes to pass that the love grows cold of those many Brethren of noble birth who have cast aside the allurements of the world and have chosen under the garb of your Order to devote themselves to the defence of the Holy Land. We therefore, being earnestly desirous that your Order may still continue to be enriched by God’s help with fresh donations, and may grow and increase in the votive offerings it shall receive, grant you, by the authorities of these letters, permission to decree that the Knights and Brethren of your Order shall wear black mantles, that they may be distinguished from others ; but in campaigns and in battles they shall wear surcoats and other military decorations of a red colour, on which there shall be a cross of white, like that on your Standard, in order that by the uniformity of signs the unanimity of your spirits may be clearly apparent.’

In the Palace at Valletta paintings may be seen of the Knights in these red robes, not so familiarly associated with the Order as the black mantles,

notably one by the Maltese Painter Favray of Brother Baptista Free, a Grand Bailiff, in a gorgeous uniform of red and gold.

Under this new organization of Raymond du Puy, the Order was divided into two classes, first of whom in rank and position were the Knights of Justice. Admission to this grade was only given to those who proved nobility of descent. Every candidate must have already received the accolade of knighthood from secular hands. The second class comprised the strictly ecclesiastical portion of the Convent, and was divided into Conventual Chaplains who performed the religious functions of the Order within the Convent and Hospital at headquarters, and Priests of Obedience who carried on similar duties at the various stations which came to be established throughout Europe. The third class were called Serving Brothers, admission to which, by the emoluments and dignities it gave, was very advantageous to men of the humbler ranks of society. To secure proper management of the vast property of the Order, Preceptories or Commanderies were formed in different localities. At the head of these local institutions was placed a Knight of the Order, who was in consequence called a Knight Commander ;

and from this came the phrase now familiar in other orders of Knighthood. A certain number of these Commanderies formed a local Priory, and over each collection of such Priories in the different countries of Europe was placed a Grand Prior. In the Commanderies the postulants were received and professed, though at one time the novice was required to present himself at the *chef-lieu* itself.

This military body created by Raymond du Puy from the Order of the Hospitallers was sorely needed in the Holy Land. The Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem had met with ill success, for it was merely a few isolated cities and some land in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem in the hands of Christian princes whose dissensions allowed them little time to defend their possessions from the surrounding Infidel population. In the year 1291, by the siege and capture of Acre, the last foothold of Christianity in Palestine was lost to the rising Ottoman Power. John de Villiers was now the Grand Master of the Order, the twenty-first in succession from Raymond du Puy. The Knights of St. John, abandoning Jerusalem, retired to Cyprus, and a Hospital was established by them there. Some time was spent in looking for a more suitable place of abode, and in the year 1310,

Fulk de Villaret, the twenty-fourth Grand Master, succeeded in effecting the capture of the island of Rhodes. As soon as he had settled the Brotherhood there, he organized a fleet of galleys for the protection of Christian commerce from the Corsairs in the Levant and along the northern coast of Africa. Before long the flag of St. John, waving over a powerful fleet, became as much an object of terror to the Infidel in the waters of the Mediterranean as it had been for the two preceding centuries upon the sandy plains of Palestine. Thus arose the naval power of the Order which was maintained until the eighteenth century.

The Knights remained in possession of Rhodes for 220 years. They built, fortified, and adorned the island with their own distinctive architecture almost as much as they did Malta, and those who know the two islands have remarked upon the similarity of the buildings ; and in the former island 'The Street of the Knights' still recalls their occupation.

About this time the Order became divided into Langues. Hitherto the natives of the various countries, who sent members to the Order, existed in no other division than the three classes of Knights, Chaplains, and Serving Brothers. Now a

new classification by nationality was added, without disturbing these three grades. The Order was divided into the seven Langues of Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, England, and Germany. An eighth was afterwards added, that of Castile. In course of time the English Langue was suppressed, with other monastic bodies in England, by Henry VIII., and the vast properties belonging to it confiscated by the Crown. In the time of George III., with the King's consent, a new Langue was formed in Malta, called the Anglo-Bavarian, to be recruited, in part, from English Catholics.

The chief positions in the Order were allocated to the Knights of Justice, each Langue having the privilege of filling from its members one particular office in the government of the Order at headquarters. Thus the Grand Commander was always chosen from the Langue of Auvergne, the Turcopolier or Commander of the Light Horse was always chosen from the English Langue, the Chancellor of the Order from Castile, and so forth, all international jealousies in this way being removed. These different dignitaries were called Conventual Bailiffs, and formed a sort of privy council for the Grand Master.







#### EVENING AT VICTORIA, GOZO

RABAT, the former name of the capital of Gozo, was changed to 'Victoria' on the occasion of the late Queen's Jubilee in 1887, in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants. Gozo, even more than Malta, presents in its people and its buildings a distinctly Oriental appearance.

The office of Grand Master was filled by election. ‘He is chosen,’ wrote Brydone from Malta in the last days of the Order, ‘by a committee of twenty-one; which committee is nominated by the seven nations, three out of each nation. The elections must be over within three days after the death of the former Grand Master, and during these three days there is scarce a soul that sleeps in Malta: all is cabal and intrigue; and most of the Knights are masked to prevent their particular attachments and connexions being known. . . .’

The different Langues of the Order dwelt in separate quarters, both at Rhodes and in Malta, and these buildings, called Auberges, are perhaps the most distinctive pieces of architecture the Order have left behind them. When the British Government took possession of Malta, these, with the other buildings of the Knights, became Crown property. The Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery Officers have their Mess in the Auberge de Castile, commenced in 1574, on the Upper Barracca, perhaps the most stately of the seven; the Auberge d’Italie is now the Royal Engineers’ Offices. Next the Auberge de Castile is the Palazzo Parisio, where Napoleon stayed during his short visit to the island. Several British generals, amongst them

Fox and Abercromby, have used it as their headquarters. It is now used as the General Post Office. The Union Club is now housed in the Auberge de Provence, the famous ballroom being originally the refectory of the Knights. The Treasury of the Order is now the home of the Casino Maltese. As we have mentioned these Langues, we may be so bold as to warn our readers against the mistake of the lady visitor, who innocently asked if they were educational establishments for the preservation of the Maltese tongue!

In tracing briefly the early history of the Order of St. John some mention may be made of its connection with England. This arose in the year 1101, when Jordan Brissett founded a house for the benefit of the 'Hospital' in Clerkenwell. This became the nucleus of the Order in England, and was enlarged by many donations. Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, consecrated a church in Clerkenwell in the year 1185, the crypt of which may be seen to-day, and raised the institution to a Grand Priory. Henry II., in the year 1180, founded a Convent of the Ladies of the Order, in Bucklands in Somersetshire, for we must remember there was a Sisterhood as well. Commanderies of the Order

sprang up in Scotland, David I. founding a Priory, in 1124, at Torphichen, in Linlithgowshire. The Earl of Pembroke introduced the Order into Ireland in 1174, founding a Priory at Kilmainham, which is known to-day as the Royal Hospital.

In the Record Office at Malta there is a document, printed in 1857 by the Camden Society, which presents an admirable picture of the power of the Order and, incidentally, a glimpse of social life in England in the year 1338, being a report of the items of income and expenditure of the English Langue for that year. From it we learn that Commanderies, well endowed with lands and revenues, existed in almost every county of England and Wales. The King and many great nobles enjoyed a right, called *corrody*, of dining at the table of the Knights at Clerkenwell and elsewhere, and of this privilege they frequently, it would appear, availed themselves, as the Grand Prior greatly bewails in his report to Rhodes. The original rule, indeed, of hospitality to all and sundry seems to have been closely observed, if the large expenditure upon such things as beer, made apparently in two kinds, called *melior* and *secunda*, and upon beef, is to be taken into account. Some of the items in the accounts found in this document

are innocent enough, but certain sums to Judges of the High Court suggest illegal practices; the salaries of the law officers of the Order and the fees of standing counsel appear to have been 40s. a year. We learn of the great retinue of servants, and of such officials as the armiger, the claviger, the ballivus, the messor, and the coquus, and the amounts they received, giving a glimpse at current wages—a lotrix, or washerwoman, apparently being employed in a Commandery at the princely wage of 1s. a year.

To return to Rhodes, the Order remained there, holding it as the outpost of Christendom against the Turks, until the year 1522. This danger from the Ottoman Power, the yellow peril of its day, was no unreal thing. It was no longer a question of preserving the Holy Places from the Infidels, but of saving the centres of civilization, Rome, Vienna, and Venice, with the art and learning of Western Europe. The Eastern Empire had yielded to the attacks of the Turks when, in the year 1453, Constantinople fell into their hands. Yet for a little longer the Knights of St. John held the Turk at bay in Rhodes. At length a great onset was made by Mohammed II. upon Rhodes, and by the famous Palæologus Pasha it was besieged for two months,

the numbers of the fleet—160 vessels with 80,000 men on board—showing the organized power of the Turks ; yet the Knights were victorious, routing the besiegers with fearful losses. Peter D'Aubusson, the Grand Master, was rewarded with a Cardinal's hat by the Pope, and the fame of the Order increased. The English Langue was well represented on this occasion, and we find familiar names like Lumley, Grand Prior of Ireland, and the Knights Kendall and Boswell, mentioned for deeds of daring in the annals of the siege.

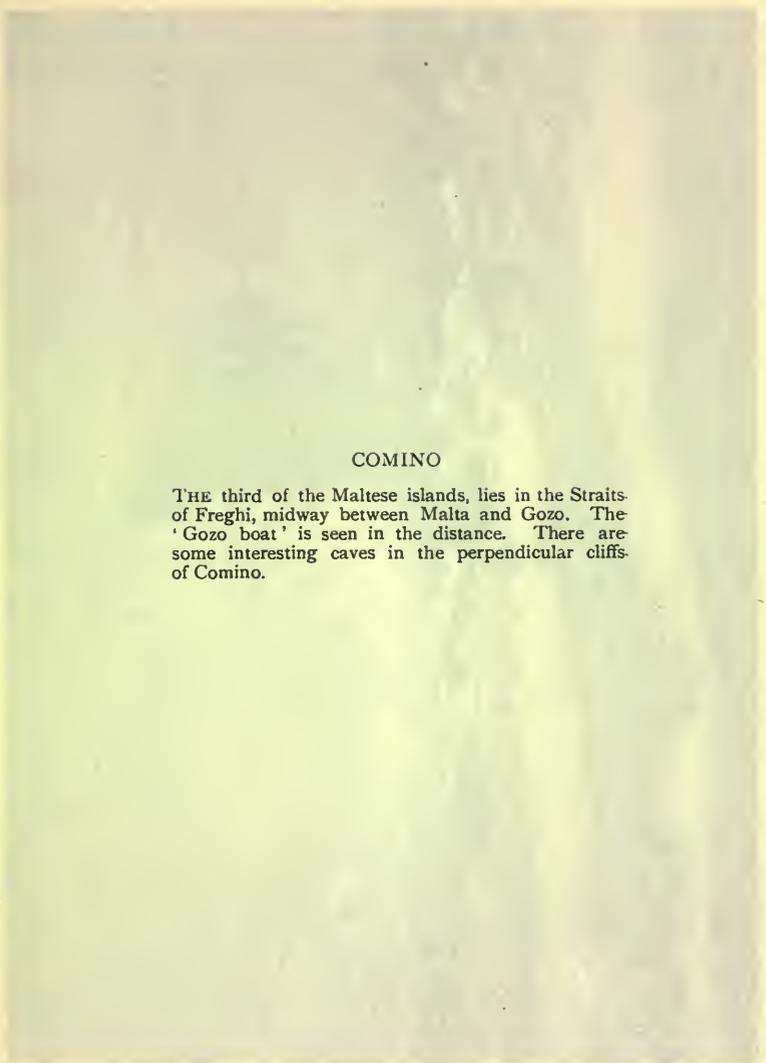
This triumph of the Order was short-lived. The Turks under Solyman the Magnificent undertook a fresh enterprise against Rhodes, and gathered a vast armament of 400 sail and an army of 140,000 Turks, with 60,000 peasants of Wallachia and Bosnia to execute siege operations. Mustapha, a soldier who appears an important personage later on in the great siege of Malta, commanded the army. Philip de L'Isle Adam had now succeeded to the Grand Mastership. The Knights in full force were summoned by him from the Commanderies throughout Europe, and 600 Brethren, with 4,500 troops, were present at Rhodes ; but it was impossible to hold out any longer against the thousands of the Turks, and after prolonged defence

Rhodes was taken. Here the English were not unrepresented, and we find the familiar names of Sheffield, Hussey, Weston, Baron, and Buck in the ranks of the Knights, one Roberts, a Knight, writing an account to the Earl of Surrey in England, in a letter that is still preserved, 'touching the distructione and taking of the Rodes' and the mighty deeds of 'the gret turk.' Though the island fell, the defence was so valiant that it was remarked by Charles V. that 'nothing was so well lost in the world as Rhodes.'

On January 1, 1523, L'Isle Adam and the Knights quitted Rhodes. For seven years they wandered in search of a *chef-lieu*, stopping for a time at Candia, Messina, Cumæ, Viterbo, and elsewhere. At this time L'Isle Adam visited Charles V. of Spain and Emperor of Germany, then holding prisoner at Madrid the French King Francis I., the latter having fallen into his hands after the battle of Pavia. Through the intervention of L'Isle Adam, who looked for aid from the Spanish Court for his impoverished Order, Francis I. was liberated, and a treaty arranged between the two sovereigns. As a reward for his diplomacy, L'Isle Adam was offered the islands of Malta and Gozo by Charles V. It was as yet uncertain whether the

Order would accept the offer. L'Isle Adam desired to recapture Rhodes, and was trying to organize a subscription for that purpose, and he shortly left the Court at Madrid and proceeded to France for funds. While there, he was told that Henry VIII. of England was much piqued at the fact that the Grand Master had not visited the English as well as the French Court. L'Isle Adam, on learning this, journeyed to London. The Commander Bosio arranged matters with Cardinal Wolsey for an interview with the King, who directed that the Grand Master should be received with honour, and so public celebrations were arranged for the visit of the hero of Rhodes. The Grand Master stayed some days at the Priory at Clerkenwell, and then presented himself at St. James's Palace. Henry VIII., to assist him in his design of the recapture of Rhodes, promised him 20,000 crowns, a gift which he afterwards presented in the form of artillery. L'Isle Adam then returned to Rome to solicit the Pope's assistance, but the troubled state of the Eternal City decided him to abandon his projected expedition. The previous offer of Charles V. of the islands of Malta and Gozo was in consequence accepted by the Order, with the added responsibility of

guarding the city of Tripoli, and a deed was signed in which these islands passed to the Knights upon the condition of an annual payment of a falcon in recognition of the feudal tenure of the donation. This document is still preserved in the Armoury at the Palace in Valletta, signed by the hand of the Emperor Charles V. 'Yo El Rey.' The donation was confirmed by a Papal Bull, upon receipt of which the Grand Master, L'Isle Adam, proceeded to Malta, and assumed, on October 26, 1530, sovereignty of the island.



### COMINO

THE third of the Maltese islands, lies in the Straits of Freggi, midway between Malta and Gozo. The 'Gozo boat' is seen in the distance. There are some interesting caves in the perpendicular cliffs of Comino.







## CHAPTER IV

### MALTA UNDER THE KNIGHTS

A COMMISSIONER, sent by the Grand Master, L'Isle Adam, to examine Malta as a possible *chef-lieu* for the Order, reported ' that it was but an arid rock, covered in many places with sand, and in a few with a light scattering of earth brought from Sicily; that it had neither rivers nor springs, and that the fresh water was for the most part rain collected in tanks or cisterns; that it produced little corn, not half enough to feed the scanty population; that it would be a very unpleasant residence, particularly during the summer months, violently hot, with not one forest-tree and hardly a green thing for the eye to rest on; with a sort of ill-walled town called the capital at some distance from the sea; that, however, the stone, a sort of *tufa*, was soft and easy to cut into any shape; that the people speak a dialect of Arabic or Moorish and are noted for their frugality of living. For the rest the harbours may be rendered good; that what are called *casals* are miserable

villages or shocking huts rather befitting fishermen or pirates than the renowned Hospitallers ; and that, as to Gozo, it was too little, though in comparison with Malta fertile and pleasant.' Very different from this was the Malta that the Knights left behind them when they were expelled in the year 1798, beautified as it was with churches, palaces, and gardens worthy of the *chef-lieu* of what was once the richest and most aristocratic community in Europe.

When, indeed, the Order came to Malta the fortunes of the island were at a low ebb. The population was scarcely 17,000, owing to the repeated famines, with which the feudal rulers made no effort to cope, as well as the depredations of the Turkish Corsairs, who carried off large numbers of the inhabitants into slavery ; and so from the fame of their wealth and valour their new masters, the Knights, were welcomed as protectors by the Maltese. When, however, the Grand Master, L'Isle Adam, was about to enter Medina, he was stopped at the gate of the capital by the Hakem and the other leaders of the Maltese people, who required him to swear that he and his Order would preserve for the Maltese their privileges and govern them according to their native laws, a promise they

faithfully performed for a certain period of their occupation. This incident is depicted in a well-known picture at the Palace in Valletta by the artist Favray.

The relation of the Order to the natives was in one respect curious. Hitherto the Maltese nobles had been enrolled from time to time as full Knights of the Order, being received as members of the Langue of Italy. At a General Chapter of the Order, held two years after L'Isle Adam's arrival, they were, to their surprise, refused admission into the Order upon the technical ground that Malta, now the *chef-lieu*, was no longer included in the Langue of Italy, and, in consequence, the Maltese no longer complied with the qualification necessary for postulants—namely, residence within a Grand Priory; the real reason no doubt being the fear that the Maltese might become all-powerful in the affairs of the Order. By way of compensation, however, they were allowed to join as Chaplains and to serve in the large army which, from this time onward, the Order maintained. These privileges were, indeed, largely used, and many Maltese rose to fame in the service of the Knights, Giampieri, Imbroll, and Menville, to mention a few names, becoming Grand Priors. Girolamo Cassar, to whose

inspiration are due St. John's Church and the Auberges, was for thirty years architect and engineer to the Grand Master, while in the Government buildings may be seen to-day many pictures of Priests of the Order bearing such unmistakable Maltese names as, among others, Xerri, Cali, Xuereb, and Zerafa. The bodyguard of the Grand Master in later days was exclusively formed of Maltese soldiers as a compliment to the loyalty of the natives in the conspiracy of Kara Mehmet, a Turk, against the life of the Grand Master Pinto. But the native nobility, seeing themselves placed rather in the background, looked coldly upon the Order, and retired in seclusion to the gloomy grandeur of their palaces in Medina, taking little part in the life of Valletta, or in the affairs of the Order; and when the Maltese, in the year 1798, rose against the Knights, the nobles sided with their own people, and also supported their petition to the British Crown to retain the sovereignty of the island when the return of the Knights was contemplated.

To understand the Great Siege of Malta, it must be remembered that the Order first established their Convent in the Borgo, a village upon a promontory running into the sea on the right-

hand side of the Grand Harbour, now known as Vittoriosa. Here in Fort St. Angelo, originally built by the Moors, was already standing a chapel from the Norman times, in which the first Grand Master of Malta, L'Isle Adam, and his four successors were originally buried. The first care of the Knights was to put themselves and their new home into a state of defence against the Ottoman Power, which would scarcely allow them to rest in Malta undisturbed. Fort St. Elmo, at the extreme point of Mount Sceberras, then a bare ridge of ground (where now stands Valletta), and Fort St. Angelo guarded the entrance to the Grand Harbour. L'Isle Adam died in the year 1534, and was succeeded by Peter du Pont, Didier de St. Jaille, John d'Omedes, and Claude de la Sangle, whose Masterships we may leave unnoticed, save to remark that the Emperor Charles V. visited Malta when undertaking his unfortunate expedition to Algiers against the Moors. In this a large number of the Knights were lost. At this time, too, the fortifications of Senglea on the promontory next that of the Borgo were begun by the Grand Master Claude de la Sangle, of which Fort St. Michael played such a famous part in the siege.

In the year 1557, Jean Parisot de la Vallette

was elected Grand Master. He had been present at the Siege of Rhodes, and had held many high offices in the Order, having attained fame as a naval commander. Once he had been taken prisoner in an encounter with a Turkish Corsair named Abda Racman, and he was in due course ransomed by the Order. Curiously enough, he succeeded in capturing a galley commanded by the same Abda Racman, though history does not record how he treated his former captor. Tripoli was lost to the Order after their arrival in Malta, being seized by the famous Turkish Admiral Dragut.

It was soon known, through the spies of the Grand Master at Constantinople, that the Emperor Solyman was preparing a great armament, designed for the conquest of Malta, in anticipation of which the Order proceeded to put the island in a state of defence. The Borgo was defended by ditches on the land side, and a chain was fixed from the end of Fort St. Angelo to Fort St. Michael, to protect the entrance of the creek (where now lies the dismasted cruiser H.M.S. *Egmont*) in which the galleys of the Order were harboured. A floating bridge inside the chain across this piece of water connected the two garrisons. From the different Commanderies on the Continent were summoned

to Malta the Knights of the Order, and these, when the siege began, numbered 474; and with volunteers and the regular army, mainly Maltese, the forces of La Vallette amounted to just under 9,000 men. The points of defences were divided among the Knights according to their Langues: the French and some Spaniards guarding the Borgo; the Italians defending Senglea and Fort St. Michael, under the Grand Admiral del Monte, afterwards Grand Master; and the Knights of Aragon, Catalonia and Navarre the lines of Burmolo, a suburb between the Borgo and Senglea, called to-day Cospicua, the third of the 'Three Cities.' The Germans, Portuguese, and some Spaniards and English Knights took up their position in the front of Fort St. Angelo, in which La Vallette established himself.\* One Englishman always accompanied him, Sir Oliver Starkey, his Latin Secretary, whose

\* It is questioned whether, with the exception of Sir Oliver Starkey, any Knights of the English Langue were present in Malta in 1565, since the Order had been suppressed in England twenty-five years previously. Two English gentlemen, however, called Edward Stanley and John Smith, turned up with the other 'free lances' under Don Juan de Cardona, who managed to get through the Turkish lines and reinforce the Knights in the Borgo just after the fall of Fort St. Elmo.

remains now lie by the side of the Grand Master he so faithfully served, in the vault under the high altar of St. John's, an honour accorded to none other not a Grand Master. A flying column of the army under the Knight Coppier moved up and down the island to harass the enemy. Fort St. Elmo, the first point seen on the right hand of the traveller as he enters the Grand Harbour—the scene of the heroic defence by a small band for five weeks against the Turkish thousands—was garrisoned by about 100 Knights of all nationalities, and reinforced from time to time with companies of soldiers, 1,500 men being estimated to have fallen in its defence.

Upon the morning of May 18, 1565, a gun, fired from the Castle of St. Angelo, answered by the Forts of St. Michael and St. Elmo, announced that the enemy's fleet was in sight. At this signal all the inhabitants in the country parts gathered into the Borgo or Medina, where they remained until the siege was raised in the following September. The Turkish fleet consisted of 130 galleys and 50 transports; the troops in all, counting the reinforcements brought later by Dragut and Hassan, amounting to 40,000 men. Of these some 4,000 were Janissaries, a force formed by seizing at certain







#### A COUNTRY HOUSE IN GOZO

THE soil of Gozo is naturally very fertile, and the occupation of the inhabitants is mainly agricultural. The peasantry are noted for their strength.

intervals the young children of Christian parents in the Ottoman Empire, who were then brought up by the Turkish authorities to a military career from their early years. The fleet was commanded by Piali, and the troops by Mustapha, with whom was Candelissa.

The Turks first landed in the Marsa Scirocco a few miles behind the Borgo. Their first anxiety was to capture Fort St. Elmo, and this they eventually did, after a five-weeks' siege and the loss of 8,000 men, but only by literally battering it and its holders to pieces. The defence of this outpost is one of the finest records of endurance in the face of great odds that history affords. The Turks were at this time in advance of other nations in the use and quality of their artillery, and under cover of siege-works they moved their guns up against the outworks of St. Elmo on the Marsamuscetto side of Mount Sceberras: a battery of twenty, including one very deadly weapon called the Great Basilisk, beating at not 200 yards' distance upon the walls; and had the fortifications not been cut in the solid rock, Fort St. Elmo could scarcely have held out, as it did, for five weeks.

The force inside was slender, and many of the Knights saw little use in sacrificing themselves, as

it was evident they must if they remained, and so counselled a retreat into the Borgo or Senglea, sending urgent messages to this effect to La Vallette. Communication was at this time maintained between the garrison in the Fort and La Vallette, boats landing, under cover of the night, soldiers across the water from the Borgo to replace those who had fallen in St. Elmo. These had access to the inside of the Fort by a subterranean passage, the entrance of which was hidden in the rocks at the foot of Mount Sceberras. The space available in Fort St. Elmo was so small that not more than a few hundred at one time were ever able to hold it, which fact makes the stand of the garrison for five weeks against the Turks even more wonderful. La Vallette wished the Fort to hold out to the bitter end; he had already sent urgently to the Viceroy of Sicily for help which had not come, and he feared that the faint-hearted Sicilians might never start for Malta if they learnt that Fort St. Elmo had fallen. So, by a clever ruse, the Grand Master induced the wavering Knights to retain their position. He answered their messages asking leave to withdraw by saying that they could retire, as he had volunteers from the Borgo to take their places. This appeal to their pride caused them to stick to

their guns and give up their lives to become the heroes of succeeding centuries.

Dragut now appeared upon the scene, and put batteries to play upon St. Elmo from the point across the water on the Sliema side (where now stands Fort Tigné), which is called to-day Dragut Point ; and he also placed other guns on the top of Mount Sceberras to prevent further communication with La Vallette across the Grand Harbour. The small garrison was now in a bad way : their dead could no longer be replaced ; their ammunition was dwindling ; their numbers were becoming daily less. Assaults were continuously made by the Turks upon the outworks, and, as the enemy could lightly sacrifice thousands, they succeeded in moving their positions daily nearer to the walls. Many efforts to scale these or enter the breaches, now numerous, had hitherto been successfully repulsed by the garrison with all the ingenuity of the warfare of that age. Pots of earthenware, so baked as to break easily, were filled with wildfire concocted of such things as sulphur, saltpetre, ammonia, camphor, and resin, fitted with a fuse, and thrown by the besieged upon the heads of the approaching enemy. The contents of these pots, on breaking, became alight and burnt with fury,

clinging to the bodies of those with whom they came in contact. Funnels attached to halberds were filled with similar compounds, lighted, and poked in the faces of those who tried to climb over the walls of the fort, while buckets of boiling pitch were poured on the heads of those who mounted the scaling-ladders. Another missile was a large hoop steeped in inflammable material, which was set alight and thrown—a sort of firework lifebuoy—over the sea of heads of the Turks below, where it fell, encircling the bodies and shoulders of many in its fiery embrace, generally causing a panic in the ranks, and certainly diverting, as intended, the attention of the storming-party for the moment, during which the breaches were repaired.

Despite the valiant defence, St. Elmo was taken by the Turks on June 24. A swimmer had managed to get across to Fort St. Angelo and announce the desperate state of the garrison. Permission was then given, all too late, by La Vallette to the Knights to retire, and at the final assault of the Turks, the guns of St. Angelo were fired point-blank into St. Elmo as a desperate remedy, killing, however, more Christian than Infidel soldiers. The renowned Dragut was, in the hour of victory, killed by a splinter from a gun. His armour may

be seen in the Palace at Valletta. Mustapha, with the cruelty of his age, ordered the heads of the fallen Knights to be severed from their bodies. These were erected on poles, and placed upon the broken walls between banners bearing the Crescent, which announced to La Vallette that the Fort had been taken. The bodies of the decapitated Knights were now nailed to planks in the form of a cross, which emblem was gashed on their breasts, and were then thrown into the Grand Harbour, where they floated across to their Brethren on the other side. La Vallette directed that these mutilated remains should be buried in the Conventual Church in the Borgo, and in revenge caused all his Turkish prisoners to be decapitated, and their heads fired at the enemy from the guns of Fort St. Angelo.

The Turks were now free to enter Marsamuscetto Harbour, and to turn their attention to investing the Borgo and Senglea. These they approached on the land side, playing upon the cities by batteries placed upon the heights of Corradino, Cottonera, and Bigli.

As yet they were unable to pass the entrance of the Grand Harbour, which was protected by the guns of Fort St. Angelo, and so they had recourse to a novel expedient. They brought their boats

down to the end of the adjoining Marsamuscetto Harbour, probably to Pietà Creek, and from there the big galleys were dragged by Christian slaves over the small neck of land outside the present Floriana, and launched at the extreme inland point of the Grand Harbour, protected from the fire of the Forts, to the dismay of the besieged in the Borgo, who now saw themselves hemmed in by the Turks by land and sea. To prevent these ships approaching, the garrison determined to erect a stockade along the shore near Senglea, and huge piles were driven into the bed of the harbour in the night by Maltese divers. Mustapha, perceiving this, sent a body of swimmers the next day with axes to break up the stockade, at which a number of Maltese, with knives between their teeth, plunged into the harbour and swam to the enemy, and a hand-to-hand encounter took place in the water, in which the Turks were cut to pieces.

The ensuing months of July and August are a record of numerous assaults upon the Borgo and Senglea, which the Knights and Maltese were able to repulse, and other thrilling and picturesque details in which the historians of the Order—Viperani, Castellani, Vertot, and others—revel. Once, indeed, we are told, a breach in the walls of

the Borgo was effected, through which the Turks poured ; the bells of San Lorenzo rang out to warn the inhabitants of their critical position ; but La Vallette appeared in person on the spot with a pike in his hand, and by his presence restored the wavering ranks of the Christians. La Vallette was himself wounded ; but the situation was saved.

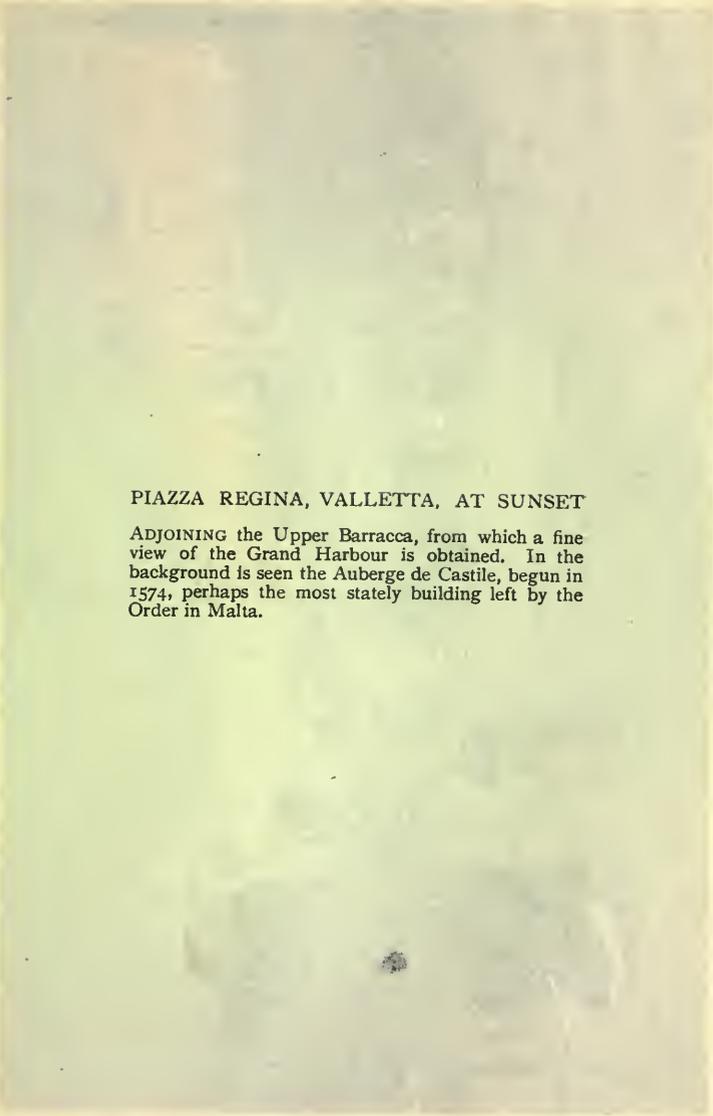
Of the numerous incidents two are worthy of mention. Ten galleys, with a party of 800 Turks, approaching Fort St. Angelo, were suddenly fired upon by a masked battery with such effect that nine of them sank with all on board. On another occasion a band of Turks effected a landing at the foot of Fort St. Michael in Senglea. A party of the besiegers suddenly sallied from the Fort and surrounded them, whereupon the Turks called for quarter, which, however, the Knights refused, and replied by cutting them to pieces, in revenge, as they said, for the treatment of their Brethren in Fort St. Elmo. From this an act of vengeance was for long known in the island as ‘St. Elmo’s pay.’ Once, also, when it seemed that the Turks had actually effected an entry into the Borgo, the Commandant of Medina issued with his garrison from the capital and fell upon the Turkish camp, and by this diversion drew off the attack ;

for Mustapha, in mistake, considered that the new force was the long - expected help from Sicily.

At length, in September, the Viceroy's fleet from Sicily was sighted. The Turkish army was by now disorganized and disheartened, and had lost many thousands; and suddenly, to the delight of the besieged, the retreat was sounded. In one day the camps were struck, the artillery was removed, the army embarked, and upon the evening of September 8, leaving 25,000 of their dead upon the rocky slopes of Malta, the Turkish galleys disappeared beyond the blue horizon.

The Great Siege had been watched with interest by the nations of Europe. In England prayers for the success of the Knights were ordered by Protestant Elizabeth; which fact shows how real was the fear of the advancing Ottoman power entertained by Western nations. Philip of Spain sent La Vallette a jewelled sword and poniard in acknowledgment of his great defence; the Pope offered the Grand Master a Cardinal's hat and ordered illuminations in Rome to celebrate the successful issue, while Malta became known in contemporary literature as 'The Island of Heroes.'

We must not forget the part the Maltese people played in this event. 'No single instance,' says



PIAZZA REGINA, VALLETTA, AT SUNSET

ADJOINING the Upper Barracca, from which a fine view of the Grand Harbour is obtained. In the background is seen the Auberge de Castile, begun in 1574, perhaps the most stately building left by the Order in Malta.





1000 B. 1000



General Porter, 'is recorded throughout the siege in which they failed to do their duty, and on many occasions, notably when the Turks attempted to destroy the stockade of Senglea, proved themselves capable of the most devoted heroism;' and it may be added that the Maltese women, no less than the men, took an active part in the defence.

In acknowledgment of its resistance, the Borgo was henceforth known as Vittoriosa, and in it—now a large, densely populated city—stands, in the still quaint old-world square, the Column of Victory erected in memory of the defence. Hard by is a medieval-looking square grey tower, which stands out above the city, where La Vallette kept watch during the siege, and in it is a clock which tradition says has kept time since the year 1530. In the Oratory adjoining the old parish church of San Lorenzo are preserved the veritable hat and sword worn by La Vallette on the day of his victory over the Turks.

The young Maltese of to-day are reminded of this great historical event in a poem found in the local school-books, ending with the exhortation—

'Oh, may the story of that deathless fight  
Still make you, like your fathers, brave and strong!  
May some great minstrel shape the tale aright,  
And give it to the world in deathless song.'

To the Great Siege is due the building of Valletta, which La Vallette designed to secure the island for ever against another attack from the Turks. The foundation was laid with great ceremony, and the new city was given the name of Umilissima. The Pope's famous engineer, Laparelli, assisted in the designs, which were carried out by the Maltese Girolamo Cassar, who has been elsewhere mentioned.

But in a short time the Knights had no Turkish foe to fear, for the Ottoman forces were finally crushed in the year 1571, at the battle of Lepanto, in which the galleys of the Order took a conspicuous part with the Christian Allies.

The warlike occupation of the Order now gradually disappeared, for the Rule of Raymond forbade the Brethren to fight with Christian princes: policing the commerce of the Mediterranean, with occasional affrays with the Turkish pirates, being the sole outlet for their militant energies; and in course of time these expeditions became mere pleasure cruises undertaken in gaily decked barges.

The Order increased in numbers, wealth, and power after its famous defence of Malta, and it had now to be reckoned with by the chancelleries of Europe as a political factor. Its ambassadors were maintained at all the Catholic Courts, and

the Grand Master, the successor to 'Raymond du Puy, the servant of Christ's poor,' was now addressed as 'His Serene Highness,' and 'Prince of Malta.'

The vast revenues were spent in keeping the Knights in luxury and grandeur at Valletta. Their original vows were forgotten, and the Brotherhood came to be regarded merely as an honourable and lucrative profession for the younger sons of noble families. The rule of the Order in Malta was at first that of benevolent tyrants, in the end corrupt and self-seeking. Dissensions with foreign powers or among the Brethren themselves, and a disregard for both the national and individual liberty of the Maltese—causing the Rebellion of the Priests, the Quarrel with the Venetians, the Expulsion of the Jesuits—mark the years of the decline of the Order. However objectionable may have been the form of their rule, the Knights certainly did much for the material prosperity of the island and its inhabitants. To the buildings and palaces of the Knights we have repeatedly referred. The Grand Master Vignacourt built the aqueduct, ten miles long, which to-day, when needed, brings water from the hills to Valletta. They organized a system of State pawnbroking in the Monte di Pietà, borrowed

from Italy, and still maintained by the British Government. They founded the University, a number of schools, and the Public Library, the latter from the books and manuscripts of deceased Knights, which were, however, as Thackeray puts it, 'none of your works of modern science, travel, and history, but good old useless books of the last two centuries.' In one respect, at least, they fulfilled the original function of their ancient Order—they maintained a Hospital in Valletta that, to the last, was famous throughout Europe, where the dissolute Knights tended without fee or reward and with a lavish if unhygienic care all who came to them to be cured; and they also spent large sums in relieving the poor of Malta. The fortifications of Malta will ever remain a lasting monument to their domination. Many of the bastions, cavaliers, and redoubts are now out of date, and indeed, in their day, were superfluous, for they were often built out of the pockets of individual Knights, who vied from pure vanity with one another in these works, gaining a sort of second-rate immortality by the fort or bastion so erected bearing the donor's name.

In 1797 Ferdinand von Hompesch, the first German to hold the office, was elected Grand

Master in succession to De Rohan. It was due to his vacillation and weakness that the Order was forced to evacuate Malta. At the outbreak of the French Revolution the Grand Master De Rohan had offended the Republican Government by offering official condolences to the family of Louis XVI., having, in fact, attended a solemn Requiem Mass for the repose of the King's soul in the church of St. John's. The property of the Order in France, once very large, was soon confiscated by the Directory, and the titles and dignities of the Order were forbidden as aristocratic. The revenues of the Order indeed were, under bad management, falling in every Languue. Those of the French had already fallen, in the year 1797, from 500,000 to 40,000 livres. In April, 1798, the French Directory decided by secret decree that the General commanding the Army of the East should obtain possession of the island of Malta.

On June 6 a French fleet appeared off the island, Napoleon being on board *L'Orient*, with the army destined for the conquest of the East. A free entrance into the Grand Harbour for all the French men-of-war was demanded of Hompesch, who replied that it was contrary to treaty rights to admit more than four at a time. Buonaparte refused to

continue negotiations, and landed his men under General Vaubois on June 10, and after a very faint resistance the fortress surrendered. A Maltese regiment, bearing the standard of the Order, made a feeble effort to resist at Porta Reale, but was put to flight, and the flag of the Order captured. Hompesch was ordered by Napoleon with scant ceremony to quit the island with all the Knights. All the treasures and possessions of the Order were seized, Buonaparte himself taking the jewelled ring belonging to the hand of St. John, with the remark that it suited his finger better. The Maltese people made little effort to save their island for the Knights. The French Republican agents had been long at work among them, and they were glad to be rid of the demoralized Order. Napoleon left General Vaubois with a French army of occupation, and departed to conquer Egypt and suffer his first reverse beneath the walls of that Acre in Palestine which had witnessed six centuries before the glorious achievements of the very Order he had just driven from Malta.

→ Before we pass to the less eventful, and perhaps happier, history of Malta as a Crown Colony, the reader may be interested to learn the ultimate fate of the great Order of St. John so long associated

with the island, and which had existed up to 1798 in unbroken sequence for seven and a half centuries : Ferdinand Von Hompesch being the twenty-eighth Grand Master who ruled in Malta, and sixty-ninth of the whole Order. When expelled from Malta the Knights had no longer a *chef-lieu*, and in consequence a number of them went to Russia, and there elected, on the resignation of Hompesch, the Czar as their Grand Master. The Pope was also requested by them to nominate his successors when occasion arose ; but on the death of the Emperor Paul, Pius VII. declined to do this, and for many years the office of Grand Master fell into abeyance. In Rome the Knights still held, as they do to-day, the Palazzo di Malta in the Via Condotti and the Villa di Malta on the Aventine Hill, belonging to the Langue d'Italie, which became henceforth the headquarters of the Order. At length Pope Leo XIII., in 1877, appointed a Grand Master. From Rome the Order yet controls in different countries the old Commanderies, existing now only in name, and a number of Hospitals where the Brethren, maintaining the old designations of Knights, Priors, Almoners, and other titles of the days of chivalry, still perform the original charitable duties of the

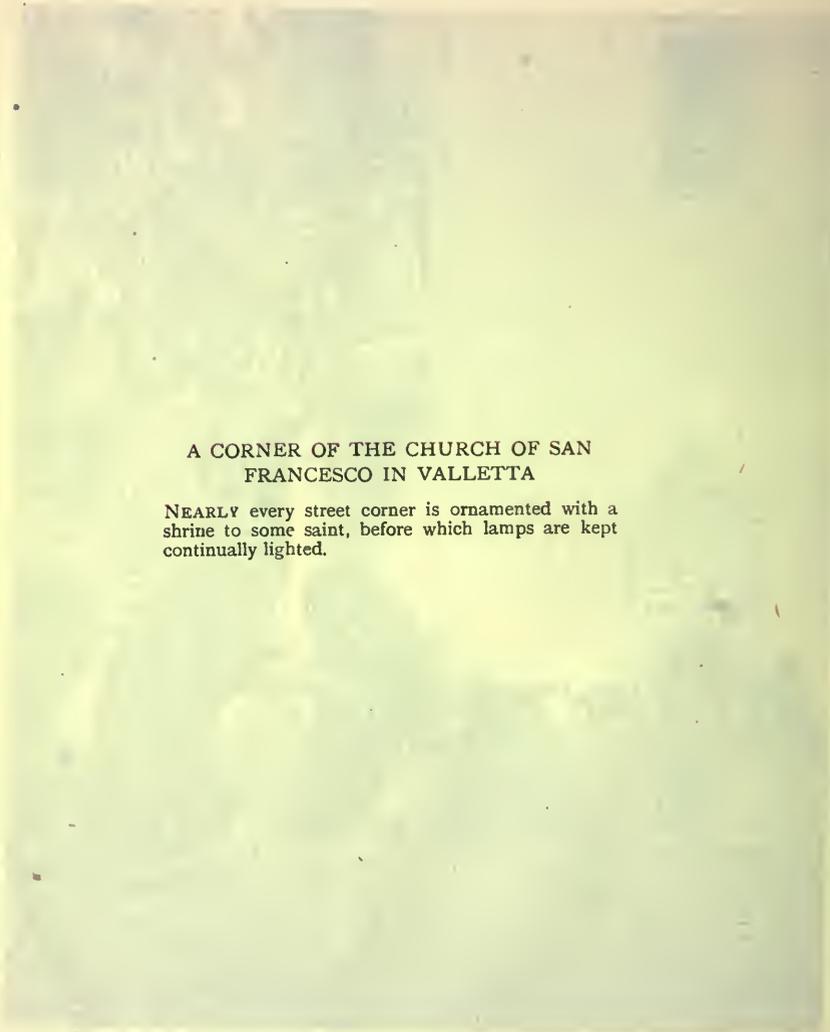
Rule of Raymond. The great officials of the Order exist in diminished grandeur in the Eternal City, where their chief rôle is to attend, in their gorgeous and picturesque uniforms, at the ceremonies of the Papal Court. Time, indeed, has brought about a curious change, for the staunchest recruits to the still exclusive and aristocratic ranks of the Order are now found in the members of the Maltese nobility, once rejected by L'Isle Adam—being, as they are, all fervent followers of the Roman Catholic faith. In England the original Langue suppressed by Henry VIII. has been revived by the Roman Catholics and placed under the Grand Master at Rome, and this branch maintains a Church and Hospital at St. John's Wood in London. It is interesting to note, as a link between England and Malta, that an English Knight, called Fortescue, beheaded for denying the King's supremacy in the reign of Henry VIII., had long been revered by the Maltese as a martyr, his picture, painted by Preti, having hung since the sixteenth century in St. John's Church, where it may still be seen. This Knight was, in course of time, solemnly beatified by the Church of Rome, and so the gallant martyr is known to-day as Blessed Brother Sir Adrian Fortescue. He was a





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A CORNER OF THE CHURCH OF SAN  
FRANCESCO IN VALETTA

NEARLY every street corner is ornamented with a shrine to some saint, before which lamps are kept continually lighted.

first-cousin of the unfortunate Queen Anne Boleyn, which may account in part for his untimely end.

The Crown in recent years thought fit to establish a Grand Priory of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England. This was, in 1888, incorporated by Royal Charter, with the Sovereign as its Patron, mainly for the purpose of performing ambulance and charitable works. By Royal command Badges of this Order may be worn generally in England. This English association now occupies the original St. John's Gate at Clerkenwell, and have enrolled in their members many thousands throughout the British Empire, carrying on the good work of the original Order. They have established hospitals in the Holy Land, and a corps for ambulance-work in Malta. Let it be hoped that some day these two British bodies may find some common ground upon which to unite. The English association also awards decorations and distinctions, and has its church, with the stalls of the Knights, in Clerkenwell, beneath which is the crypt of the old church of the original English Grand Priory consecrated by Heraclius in 1185.

## CHAPTER V

### MALTA A CROWN COLONY

ANOTHER great siege, in which the Maltese played the new rôle of besiegers, began the connection of Malta with the British Crown. The French General Vaubois, left behind with his troops in occupation by Napoleon, organized a provisional Government which sought to introduce republican ideas into the island, and, in consequence, soon lost favour with the native population. They ordained, amongst other things, that all armorial bearings and other aristocratic emblems should be effaced; the churches were stripped of all their ornaments of value, and the famous tapestries of St. John's Church were put up to auction in the public square. The treasures of the Order had been already taken away by Napoleon, the principal of them being, in fact, lost in *L'Orient*, when that ship was blown up in Aboukir Bay; but the jewelled poniard presented by Philip of Spain to La Vallette found its way

to Paris, and may be seen to-day in the Louvre. By the orders of the French Government Strada Reale was henceforth to be called the Street of the Rights of Man, and a Tree of Liberty was solemnly planted on a day ordered as a great public holiday. Further, Vaubois levied a corps of conscripts for service in the French army from the inhabitants, and, in the name of fraternity, quartered his soldiers upon the Maltese families. An immediate cause was found, in the seizure of the tapestries in the Del Carmine Convent in Notabile, to rouse the Maltese into insurrection against their new rulers: the French being forced to retire into Valletta, where they were held prisoners by the Maltese for the greater part of the next two years.

Nelson now appeared upon the scene with British ships, and also Portuguese and Neapolitan allies. Malta, since the Knights had departed, was by a legal fiction considered to belong to the King of Naples, as successor in title to the Emperor Charles V., and it was in this King's name and that of his own Sovereign that Nelson landed British bluejackets and marines under Captain Alexander Ball to assist the Maltese to take Valletta. In the September of 1800 the French garrison surrendered to the combined forces of Maltese, English,

Neapolitan and Portuguese, having passed through all the horrors and privations of a two years' close blockade of Valletta. The ordinary water-supply through the Vignacourt aqueduct had been cut off, and the scarcity of provisions was such that coffee, for instance, reached the huge price of £2 8s. 4d. a pound, and eggs 8d. each. Moon-blindness, too, attacked the soldiers, causing them to lose their sight during the brilliant moonlit nights of summer; and death from disease claimed many hundreds of both the enemy and the native inhabitants, numbers of whom were also unhappily shut up with the enemy in the city.

When the French finally surrendered Valletta, a Congress of the representatives of the Maltese people, held at Sant' Antonio, solemnly ceded Malta and its dependencies to the British Crown. Two days later, on September 8, 1800, Captain Ball, who had been present with the Maltese during their investment of Valletta, and had helped them in all their councils of war, entered the capital and assumed in King George III.'s name the government of the islands, and from that time forward Malta has remained in British hands. The government was then entrusted to Sir Charles Cameron as Civil Commissioner until 1802, when Admiral Sir

Alexander Ball assumed the post of first Governor until his death at Sant' Antonio in the year 1809. Ball had shown himself a statesman, as well as a man of action, in his dealings with the emissaries of the Knights and the King of Naples, who both wished to possess Malta, and he long remained in the memories of the Maltese as the guardian of their liberties at a critical juncture. A native writer, indeed, has stated that for many years after his death the humblest cottage in the most remote *casal* would be found to contain, beside the usual picture of the Blessed Virgin, a portrait of this British Admiral. His mausoleum stands conspicuously out above the water of the Grand Harbour, a little below Fort St. Elmo, in that part of the fortifications known as the Old Barracca.

By the Treaty of Amiens it was provided that Malta should be restored to the Knights, mainly through the intervention of the Emperor of Russia, who had received the remnants of the Order at St. Petersburg, and had been by them, quite illegally, elected Grand Master, pressure having been brought upon Hompesch to resign. In this treaty it was stipulated that on their return to Malta the Knights should establish a Maltese Langue for the Maltese people, and that an

Auberge should be erected for these new Knights, a condition never realized. For the return of the Knights was so contrary to the wishes of the Maltese inhabitants that the British Government, who had determined to evacuate their troops, reversed their decision and remained in possession of Malta. In 1814 the Treaty of Paris finally confirmed the title of Great Britain to the Maltese islands. Thus, by the voluntary act of the inhabitants, Great Britain obtained the possession of an important naval situation, and in return took upon itself to provide for the safety and welfare of its people.

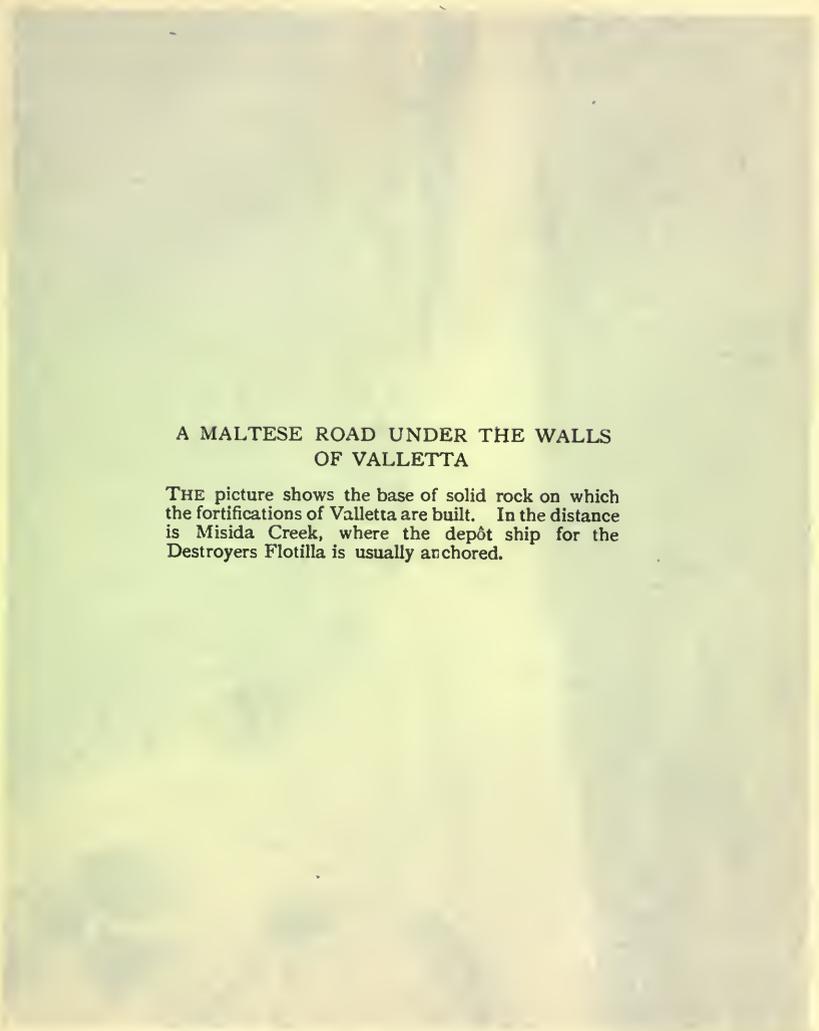
The name of Canon Francesco Caruana must not be forgotten in connection with the British occupation of Malta. This fighting priest, who died peacefully as Bishop of Malta in 1847, had personally led the Maltese into insurrection against the French, and it was largely through his effort that the return of the Knights, as arranged by the Treaty of Amiens, was successfully opposed.

From what has been said in the preceding pages, it will easily be seen that the successors of Sir Alexander Ball found themselves entrusted with the affairs of an island like no other colony of the Crown. The title of Great Britain to the islands was neither

that of colonization nor of conquest; for since the British occupation no emigrants from the old country had settled there in any numbers, and the islanders made it quite clear, in their dealings with Sir Alexander Ball after the expulsion of the French, that they ceded their territory to the British Crown upon the express conditions that their laws, privileges, and customs, both civil and religious, should be safeguarded. The laws of Malta, when the English came, presented certainly a curious mixture, consisting in part of the Roman and the Sicilian Codes, and the ancient Canon Law of the Church, all modified by the 'Bandi,' Notices, Ordinances, and Pragmatics of successive Grand Masters. These things, the growth of time, could not be swept away at once, nor would it have been politic to impose English laws and customs upon a people not understanding English, and clinging so closely to their traditions. Indeed, as a matter of fact, the Civil Code of the Grand Master de Rohan remained in force in the island long after the British occupation: the greater part has been gradually repealed, though certain sections are still in force. For these very reasons the internal affairs of Malta involved great difficulties to the early Governors, who were inclined,

as perhaps the nascent Empire required, to administer the affairs of the new dependency simply as those of a fortress. The Governor found himself responsible for the working of laws and customs entirely un-English, and with which he could scarcely be expected to have any familiarity, or, indeed, sympathy. In the Council of Government, where he had to preside, the debates were generally conducted in Italian; and one may well imagine the feelings of some early Governor, with a Georgian prejudice for 'foreign ways,' in appending his signature to a proclamation in the language of Dante—a tongue scarcely to his mind a proper vehicle for the expression of British supremacy. To this day the visitor will find in Malta much that is un-English, from the embodiment of the decrees of the Council of Trent in local law to the apparent impossibility of obtaining cold roast beef for love or money in the island! If, therefore, he would not wear out his soul in trying to get the leopard to change his spots, let him follow the excellent Italian proverb: *Paese ove vai usanza si trova.*

The Governors in the early decades of the nineteenth century were left very much to their own devices by Downing Street, and, consequently, often



A MALTESE ROAD UNDER THE WALLS  
OF VALLETTA

THE picture shows the base of solid rock on which the fortifications of Valletta are built. In the distance is Misida Creek, where the depôt ship for the Destroyers Flotilla is usually anchored.







carried things with a high hand ; nor were inconvenient questions asked in the House of Commons, for the reformers in England were busied with their own affairs. Sir Thomas Maitland, whose administration lasted the unusually long period of eleven years, was the most remarkable of the type just described. He was High Commissioner of not only Malta, but the other possessions, including the Ionian Islands and Corfu, we then owned in the Mediterranean. His reign was so autocratic that he was known as 'King Tom,' and has been described by Lord Napier as 'a rough old despot'; yet he was able to do much for the prosperity of Malta by abolishing the Board of Giurati who controlled the sale of corn and other bodies, in whose hands were many injurious monopolies ; and he will chiefly be remembered for the firmness with which he established British rule throughout the Mediterranean. However, even this bluff and independent person could not escape the religious difficulties which in Malta, as in Ireland, are ever with us. The Throne of the former Grand Masters of the Order of St. John stands within the sanctuary of St. John's Church, and this seat Sir Thomas Maitland was requested by the Roman Catholic Bishop to occupy on the occasion of a Thanks-

giving on the termination of the Plague of 1813. The Governor found himself on the horns of a dilemma: by his presence as the King's representative in the sanctuary at the Roman Catholic ceremonies he would court the criticism of the Protestant party at home, yet by absenting himself he might offer a serious slight to the Maltese people. The Governor, however, succeeded in satisfying all parties, arguing that the Throne was reserved for the Sovereign himself, and that he, the Governor, being only his Sovereign's servant, would not venture to use it. However, he said, let the Throne be occupied by the Royal Arms instead. This was done, and to this day the Throne of the Grand Masters in St. John's Cathedral is surmounted by the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom. Sir Thomas Maitland died in 1824, and was buried with great pomp in Malta, and an oration was pronounced over his grave by Count Spiridion Bulgaris, one of the leading men in Corfu, in which island Sir Thomas Maitland had assisted in the creation of a constitutional Government. The bastion where he is buried contains also the tomb of Sir R. Abercromby, who was wounded at Aboukir Bay and died in Malta shortly after.

The Marquis of Hastings, who had filled the high office of Governor-General of India, was one of his successors, and is principally remembered for his lavish hospitality. His tomb stands under the cavalier of St. John, within a small grove of trees, and the bastion which surrounds it is known as 'Hastings Bastion.' Among the Governors of the old school we must certainly place Sir Hildebrande Oakes. We read in one of his proclamations that 'the King's Civil Commissioner observed with regret that some weak and inconsiderate persons, deceived under specious pretext, have suffered themselves to become the instruments of a few turbulent and factious individuals.' We tremble in reading these words to think of what dark deeds were then hatching—perhaps a second edition of the Sicilian Vespers—but we are considerably relieved for the fair fame of Malta merely to find, in the words of the proclamation: 'They have been seduced to subscribe a paper purporting to be an application to the King for certain changes in the existing form of government of these islands.' How would Sir Hildebrande have dealt with the agitation for Reform with its People's Charter, subscribed to by more than a million signatures, then engaging the attention of the Home Government?

About this time the popular leaders had begun to press for 'Home Rule' with much talk of the *consiglio popolare*, of whose doings we really know very little. It appears that the Home Government was not averse to meeting the wishes of the Maltese people, but decided to suspend full representative government until, in their opinion, the people were fitted to undertake the responsibility.

In 1806 a Mr. John Richards had been sent to London as a Maltese agent to forward the interests of the popular party; to ask the authorities for a representative council, independent tribunals (the laws had been hitherto administered by the English officials), a free press, and trial by jury; 'In fine,' the petition ran, 'a constitution which shall unite the spirit of our ancient, free, and only legitimate government with that of the English constitution, our religion always being kept inviolate.' These demands were not acceded to, and the representatives of the British Government became the object of much abuse. After many years of agitation, the Home Government appointed in 1836 a Royal Commission to inquire into the state of affairs in the islands. The commissioners were Mr. John Austin, the jurist, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) George Cornwall Lewis, who recommended a revision of

the tariff, a free press, alteration of the laws, and a better system of primary education, their recommendations being eventually carried into effect. The personal impressions of Sir George Lewis in Malta, as recorded in some private letters, were eventually published in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1863, and make very interesting reading. He described, amongst other things, how he and his colleague were received in the island 'as if they had come with a Maltese Magna Charta in their pockets, and when they summoned the chief complainants and began to talk of inquiry the Maltese were quite surprised, and seemed to think that they had merely to give a grind or two and out would come a whole code of laws already made of British rule.'

A great event in the early days of British rule was the visit paid to Malta by the Dowager Queen Adelaide, whose arrival is reported in the *Malta Government Gazette* of December 5, 1838, as follows :

'At two o'clock precisely all eyes were directed to the shipping in the harbour, the men-of-war were suddenly dressed in colours. The first gun of a Royal salute was fired from the *Hastings*, which was taken up, as before, by all the ships, whose

yards were simultaneously manned, and between two lines of boats extending from the ship to the shore, a barge in which the Queen and the ladies of her suite sat, steered by the commander of the *Hastings*, was seen to advance, whilst the sailors in each line crossed their oars as Her Majesty passed. The scene, favoured by the finest weather, was at this moment beautiful beyond description. A gentle breeze, just sufficient to display the gay tints of the flags, under the influence of an autumnal sun, the roaring of the cannon, the good order of the multitude, whose eyes were all directed on one object, gave it a magnificent character which can scarcely be conceived in a less resplendent climate or in a less pure atmosphere. The presence of Royalty, the beauties of Nature, the perfection of Science and Art, and the construction of those immense engines of war floating on the water, the military parade and splendid uniforms on shore, the waving of handkerchiefs and the general joy of the people, all contributed to the enchanting effect, which was increased by the gracious smile of Her Majesty as she ascended the platform and was received by our gallant Governor.'

This extract of colonial journalism seems to have been written by some romantic 'A.D.C.' who has followed the advice of the lady in 'Cranford,'

and modelled his style upon that of 'the late revered Dr. Samuel Johnson.'

The visit of the Queen lasted three months, during which time she endeared herself to the native population. The Collegiate Church of St. Paul, of which she laid the foundation-stone on March 20, 1839, was erected at her sole expense. It was dedicated in November, 1842, by the Right Rev. Dr. Tomlinson, first Protestant Bishop of Gibraltar. The Bishop of Gibraltar, curious as it may seem, had his official residence in Malta, and for long lived beside the palace of the Roman Catholic Bishop of the island in Strada Vescovo, more properly, therefore, called Strada dei Vescovi.

It may easily be understood how, under the anomalies with which British rule had at first to contend, several instances arose making the feeling between the native Maltese and the English residents far from friendly. During the administration of Sir Patrick Stuart in 1846, the once famous 'Carnival affair' occurred, involving correspondence between the Governor and Mr. Gladstone, then Colonial Secretary. It had been the custom for centuries, as it still is in Malta, for the inhabitants, in masks and grotesque attire, to

celebrate the Carnival in the streets of Valletta on the four days, including the Sunday, preceding Ash Wednesday. These festivities, a necessary part of the national life of Latin countries, shocked the deep religious feelings of Sir Patrick Stuart, who, as a Scotch Protestant, had been taught from infancy 'to keep the Sabbath day holy,' in a way which the Southern mind could scarcely understand. He resolved, therefore, if possible, to withhold his consent. The Grand Master had been accustomed to give by proclamation permission for the Carnival to be held in Valletta, a precedent followed by the British Governors. Sir Patrick Stuart's permission was so worded as to convey a strong hint to the Maltese to refrain from celebrating the Carnival upon the first day of the week. Immediately expressions of discontent were heard. The unfortunate Governor was stated to have entered into an agreement with the Protestant Bishop (who happened to be his father-in-law) to enforce a rigid observance of the Sabbath upon the Roman Catholic subjects of the Queen, as the first step in a campaign of proselytism. A demonstration was held in the city of Valletta on the first day—the Saturday—of the Carnival, to express the popular discontent. On the Sunday itself great numbers

of the peasantry entered Valletta, and in the afternoon a large mob paraded the streets, leading a string of goats and horses, dressed up in Carnival clothes, which, they said, with a certain sense of humour, were not included in the proclamation forbidding the masquerade! The bell of St. Paul's Church was summoning the English residents to the usual afternoon service. Its tones aroused the mob to fury. In a few moments the building was surrounded by a frenzied crowd, denouncing the Protestants inside the church. The popular rage, however, merely vented itself in shouts and threats lasting for some hours, and then the crowd moved away to the square in front of the Governor's Palace. Sir Patrick Stuart, after some delay, sent orders to the guard, luckily that day formed of men from the native Royal Malta Fencible Regiment, to disperse the crowd. The Maltese soldiers in a tactful manner obeyed the Governor's orders, and in a short time peace was restored. This disturbance, however, led to further political agitation, and Sir Patrick Stuart was eventually recalled.

In his place was sent the Rt. Hon. Richard More O'Ferrall, an Irishman and a Roman Catholic, the only civilian who has ever occupied the position of Governor of Malta, who was already versed in

public affairs, having been a Member of Parliament for County Longford, and one of the Lords of the Treasury. He was received by the Maltese with acclamation, and hailed as a deliverer. During his administration letters patent were issued, providing that the Council of Government or local legislature should consist of the Governor, nine official members, and eight members elected by persons qualified to serve as jurors. Mr. More O'Ferrall's administration hardly realized the favourable anticipations his appointment had evoked. In the newly formed Council of Government a new criminal code was introduced, including certain offences against religion, and the purely legal question arose in the debates that ensued as to whether the Roman Catholic Church should be properly described as the 'dominant Church' in Malta, which was made the subject of bitter controversy throughout the island. In consequence of this the Governor, who was supported by a distinguished Maltese, Sir Robert Casolani, was strongly opposed by two priests of his own faith, Monsignor Fiteni and Canon Amato, who were both elected members of the Council. In 1851 he resigned the office of Governor and returned to England, and the policy of popular concessions was, for a time, abandoned. Though the popular

leaders have since then often asked for another civil Governor, their request has not been regarded. Some time after this ecclesiastics were disqualified as candidates for election to the Council of Government.

Another cause of serious friction was the case of Captain Graves, R.N., who, in discharging his duties, had reprimanded and punished a Maltese boatman. The latter, in revenge, attacked this officer with a knife in broad daylight in the principal street of Valletta, in the presence of many witnesses. Captain Graves eventually succumbed to his wounds. The boatman was tried for murder, but, political feeling then running high, the Maltese jury refused to convict, finding as a fact that the victim had indeed received bodily harm, but exonerated the prisoner of murder on the grounds that the victim had met his death through the wound having been improperly treated. The Maltese judge very properly ordered them to reconsider their verdict, but without avail.

These instances have not been given with a view to raking up old animosities, but to allow the English reader interested in Malta to realize how deep in the past lie the roots of the ever-present social and racial problems which still confront

British rule in this part of the Mediterranean. In fairness, however, it must be stated that high officials in the Services and the Government have done all in their power in recent years to bridge the chasm that still divides the two nationalities. It would be invidious to name any of those still living : among those who have passed away, H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, as Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet ; Sir Lintorn Simmons, Governor of Malta, and a distinguished Field-Marshal ; Sir Victor Houlton, Chief Secretary to Government ; General Porter, who has written the standard English history of the Knights of St. John ; and the Rev. W. K. Bedford, who has written so learnedly about Malta—these are some still spoken of with affection among the Maltese as persons who have proved themselves, in native phrase, ‘ simpatici ’ in their dealings with the local inhabitants.

The Maltese nobility have been duly recognized by the Imperial Parliament. A Commission consisting of two Maltese judges was appointed in 1877, whose report was presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, in which was recommended the recognition of the claims of certain families to hereditary titles of

nobility ; and, in accordance with the suggestion, a local body, entitled the Committee of Privileges, to be chosen from among the Maltese nobles, was created by an Order in Council, this new body henceforth to decide the question of claims. The titles thus recognized are held by about twenty families, not a very large number, though many of the *titolati*, as they are called, unite in one person many different creations. The nobles of Malta take precedence among themselves according to the date of the creation of nobility, and irrespective of the title, whether it be that of Baron, Count, or Marquis. They are officially addressed as 'Most Noble,' while their eldest sons enjoy the courtesy title of Baroncino, Contino, or Marchesino, and the younger sons and daughters are styled 'dei Baroni,' 'dei Conti,' or 'dei Marchesi,' according to the title. The title is generally added to the surname. Some of the titles are feudal, and devolve with certain estates by perpetual entail, having been conferred by various foreign Sovereigns in the days when Malta was a feudal fief. Others have been conferred by the Grand Masters ; but in no case have purely Papal titles been recognized by the British Government.

Various native regiments have been raised from

time to time among the Maltese for service under the British Crown. During the Grandmastership of De Rohan, indeed, some companies of Maltese artillery had actually served beside English troops in Corsica, that island being then under British protection, and, at the same period, some 1,600 natives entered the British Navy. When, toward the end of the Siege of Valletta by the Maltese, assistance came in the shape of a British expeditionary force, Brigadier - General Graham, who commanded it, issued an address, which began : ' Brave Maltese, you have rendered yourselves interesting and conspicuous to the world ; history affords no more striking example ; betrayed by your invaders, the oppression and sacrilege of your tyrants became intolerable. Without arms, without the resources of war, you broke asunder your chains. Your patriotism, courage, and religion, supplied all deficiencies. My master and Sovereign has sent me with a handful of men to assist you until a powerful force can be prepared.' The address further asked every Maltese to take part with the soldiers of the departed Order (who were now bearing all the burden of the siege), concluding with the words : ' Let the universal cry throughout the country be " For God and our Country." '

The enthusiasm evoked by this appeal was so great that General Graham at once enlisted a battalion of paid Maltese on the British strength, who were called by the Italian name of 'I Cacciatori Maltesi,' or 'Maltese Light Infantry,' thus creating the first Maltese regiment in the service of the British Crown, consisting of eight companies of 100 men each. Captain Weir, Royal Marines, was their first commanding officer, and the Regimental Colour was buff, out of compliment to General Graham, the uniform of his own regiment being faced with buff. Their Regimental Colour is preserved in the Armoury of the Palace with the King's Colour, which carries the Royal initials, G.R., surmounted by the rather curious crown and Maltese cross affected by the later Grand Masters. At the termination of the Siege of Valletta, the Maltese Light Infantry were, with the other Maltese regiments, awarded medals, which were struck in honour of that event, bearing the inscription 'Patria liberata' and 'Malta ai suoi difensori.' This regiment was afterwards disbanded, and others, called the 'Maltese Pioneers' and the 'Provincial Battalion,' were raised.

During the Napoleonic wars in 1807, a Royal Malta Regiment served against their old enemies

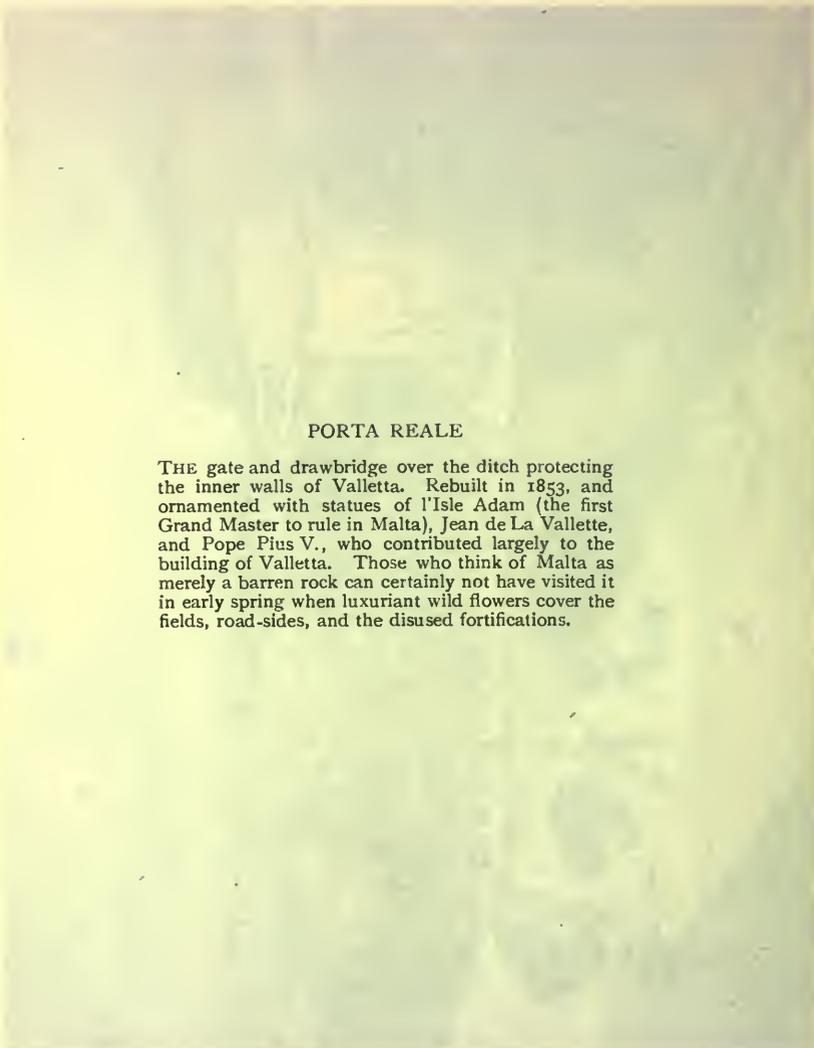
the French in Sicily, and succeeded in taking the town of Diamante, in Calabria. The Maltese were then ordered to the island of Capri, where they took the town of that name, being joined by some men from the British 58th Regiment, under a Captain O'Brien. This, however, they were unable to hold, and were ordered to retreat by Sir Hudson Lowe, and, in doing so, unfortunately fell into the hands of the enemy, surrendering to the French General Lamarque. An incident is told of the fate that then befell the colours of this regiment. The Maltese soldiers were sent as prisoners to Castel Nuovo, near Naples, but, before they left Capri, some of their officers had succeeded in tearing the flags from their poles and hiding them round their persons ; but, when they reached the prison at Naples, hearing they were to be searched, they burnt their colours rather than allow them to fall into the hands of the French.

Malta, during the Napoleonic wars, must have presented a very cosmopolitan appearance, owing to the number of ships and troops of British and various foreign nationalities of the allies that assembled there. One regiment, raised by Count Froberg, a Frenchman, was itself a curious mixture of Greeks, Albanians, Slavonians, and Turks, and these









#### PORTA REALE

THE gate and drawbridge over the ditch protecting the inner walls of Valletta. Rebuilt in 1853, and ornamented with statues of l'Isle Adam (the first Grand Master to rule in Malta), Jean de La Vallette, and Pope Pius V., who contributed largely to the building of Valletta. Those who think of Malta as merely a barren rock can certainly not have visited it in early spring when luxuriant wild flowers cover the fields, road-sides, and the disused fortifications.

soldiers, quartered in Port Ricasoli, took it into their heads to mutiny, hoisting the Russian flag, and demanding to be sent back home in Greek or Russian vessels. They held out for some days, actually firing a few mortars into the town of Valletta. At length they were dislodged by a native Maltese regiment.

Best known, perhaps, were the Royal Malta Fencibles, a corps raised under Marquis de Piro in the year 1828, and placed upon the establishment of the regular army. They are now called the Royal Malta Artillery. Their officers' mess is in Strada Mercanti, and their headquarters are in Fort Lascaris. This regiment saw active service in the year 1882, in the Egyptian War at Alexandria, where they assisted Captain, now Sir Evelyn, Wood's Brigade to hold the forts at Damietta, Rosetta, and Bedouin.

Many native militia regiments were raised by various Governors since the days of Sir Alexander Ball, notably during the Crimean War, under the administration of Sir William Reid, when conscription was practically adopted in the island.

A humorous tale is told of the first efforts of a native battalion in the course of training under canvas. Word had gone round that the young

recruits were being starved in their tents at Musta, by a niggardly Government and this fearful report soon brought a flotilla of faldette driving in carozze hurriedly to the scene, anxious wives, mothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts carrying to the camp all sorts of provisions and good things highly injurious to the efficiency of a battalion out training. They, however, happily found that their Pietros, Salvos, and Giuseppes, were far from the verge of starvation.

In the year 1889 the Royal Malta Regiment of Militia was raised, through the influence of the Governor, General Sir Lintorn Simmons. In the year 1895 this regiment was remodelled, and the new colours were presented in a manner quite recalling one of the gorgeous pageants of the days of the departed Order. The ceremony took place in the Church of St. John, in the presence of H.R.H. Princess Louis of Battenberg, the Governor, Sir A. Lyon Fremantle, and almost every naval, military, and civil officer in the island. The regiment, in review order—1,005 of all ranks—was drawn up along the centre of the aisle. The colours, having been placed upon the drums stacked before the altar, were consecrated by the Bishop with the impressive ceremonial of Roman ritual and the

accustomed prayers for victory. The colours, which bore the date MDCCC, in commemoration of the services of 'I Cacciatori Maltesi,' the first Maltese militia regiment raised for service under the British Crown, were then formally presented by Lady Fremantle. His late Majesty King Edward, on his visit to Malta, graciously allowed this militia regiment to be henceforth called, as it now is, the King's Own Malta Militia Regiment.

The officers' mess of the 'K.O.M.M.R.' is situated in the left wing of the Palace, and this regiment takes its turn in the round of garrison duty with the other British regiments in the island.

Malta was governed, during the Crimean War, by Sir William Reid, a distinguished soldier, meteorologist, economist, and practical administrator. He had served when young in Wellington's campaigns, having been present at Badajos, Salamanca, and Vittoria; and he had governed the Bermudas, as he subsequently did Malta, as a model colonial governor, introducing elaborate and successful schemes for the agricultural and commercial development of the islands. He had also, it is interesting to note, seen service in Ireland during times of agitation. Malta, during

his tenure of office, served as a base for troops which were despatched to the Crimea. In the spring of 1854 three regiments of guards, the Rifle Brigade, the Royal Engineers, and fourteen line regiments, were stationed in Malta, and the resources of the island were taxed to the utmost. At Valletta hospitals were established, to which many thousands of the sick and wounded were sent back from the front and the horrors of the Russian winter. The commerce brought to the island by the large number of troops in Malta during this war greatly enriched the local traders.

To Sir Gaspard le Marchant, who succeeded Sir William Reid, are due many of the excellent roads which traverse the country parts of the island, and many of the poor-houses, schools, hospitals, and similar institutions, including the spacious public markets, were built during his administration, and under this Governor the present excellent system of water-supply was inaugurated. From the report of Sir Gaspard le Marchant upon the defences of Malta, shortly after the Crimean War, it would seem that almost any enemy would then have taken the island from us without much difficulty. Scarcely a gun was fit for service. Ammunition was stored in such exposed positions

that the enemy could have at any moment either seized or exploded it by a shell. The shot piled near the guns was not suited to their calibre, and the gun-carriages and platforms on the fortifications were so completely out of order that the firing of a few rounds would have rendered them useless. The Mediterranean Defence Committee was formed, and, owing to Sir Gaspard le Marchant's influence, Malta was raised to the position of one of the strongest fortresses in the world. How Malta as a fortress stands to-day it is not within the scope of these pages to discuss ; nor will we enter, in what is intended to be a pleasant picture-book, into the thorny controversies which have marked the internal politics of the island during the last quarter of a century. These include, need it be said, the Language Question, which arose when the Home Government expressed their intention, never carried into effect, of substituting English as the official language of the Courts in place of Italian, which had been introduced in the later days of the Grand Masters ; the Mixed Marriages Question, in which the local Courts contended that marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics must conform to the decree of the Council of Trent in order to be valid ; and the Constitutional Question, in which the



popular party in the local Council seek a larger measure of autonomy for the Maltese people.

Despite these matters, the Maltese people are staunchly loyal to the Crown and the British connection, recognizing the benefits which have attended British rule in education, liberty of the individual, national security, and an easy fiscal system—there being no direct taxation of any kind, and, strictly speaking, no public debt. As Marchese Mattei, one of the elected representatives in the Council of Government, has remarked: ‘Whatever friction there has been, or may be, it must be borne in mind that it is of purely local concern, and does not in any way touch the large Imperial interests, which are, indeed, as dear to the Maltese as they are to Englishmen.’ In truth, the Maltese of to-day do not regret the sentiment expressed by the inscription their ancestors placed, in a moment of enthusiasm, over the Main Guard in Valletta :

‘MAGNÆ ET INVICTÆ BRITANNICÆ  
EUROPÆ VOX ET MELITENSIVM AMOR  
HAS INSULAS CONFIRMANT.’

A.D. 1814.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

THE Maltese are a light-hearted, merry-making race, ever ready to put aside their work and join in the gaieties which accompany the many festas of their calendar—the Church, indeed, accompanying the Maltese peasant in some form or other from the cradle to the grave. The principal building in a casal is the parish church, which generally stands upon a fine piazza, and has often been erected by the voluntary labour of the villagers—men and children carrying the stones from the quarry, and the women mixing the mortar for the masons. In this way was built the church at *Musta*, resembling the Pantheon, the dome of which is said to be the third largest in the world. It is described in Fergusson's 'History of Architecture.' The church in a casal, therefore, by reason of this personal bond, becomes an object of loving care to the inhabitants, who endeavour in adorning it to surpass the artistic efforts of their

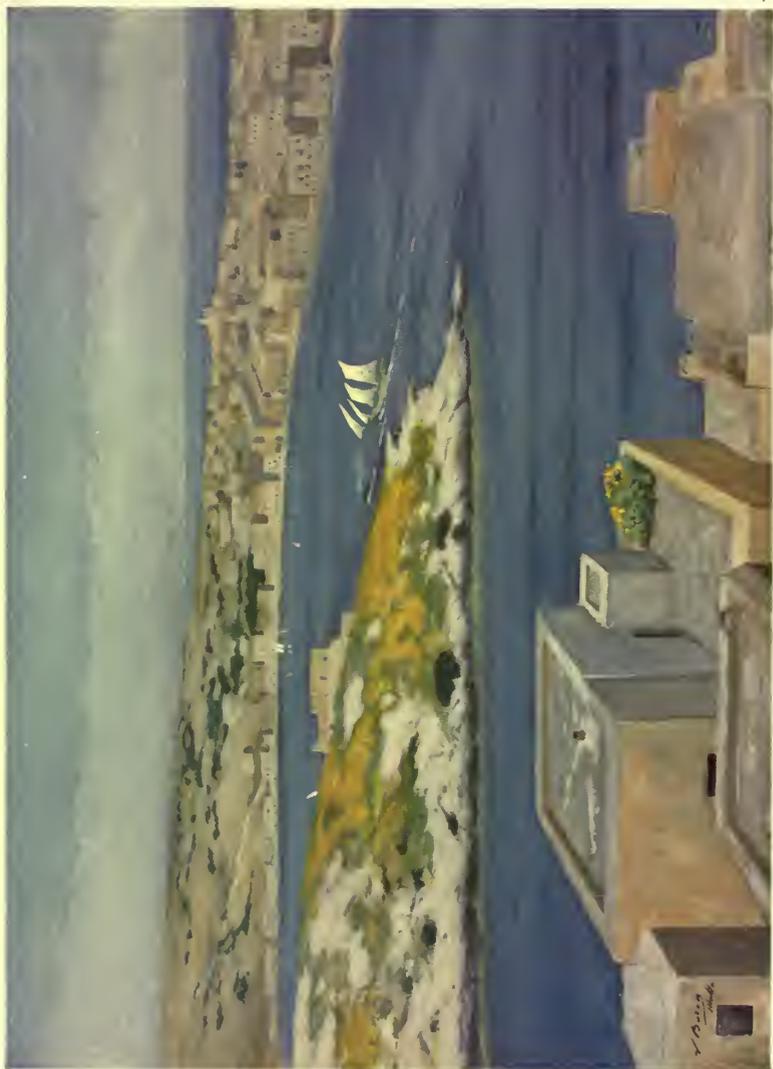
neighbours. On the festa of the village—commemorating a titular saint, legend, or historic event—the interior is, in addition to the usual elaborate altar decorations, embellished with green leaves and flowers strewn upon the floor and curtains of red damask upon the walls, which latter often mar the architectural beauty of the building; but the bright colour seems to charm the multitude, and, as it is their church, one cannot criticize. The people especially delight in the illuminations on the evening of a festa, when the façades of the churches are outlined by hundreds of lamps of coloured glass.

Many of the villagers belong to confraternities—guilds which meet for prayer and to perform works of charity, or to assist the priests in the numerous processions. On these latter occasions the members, or *fratelli*, as they are sometimes called, wear long white garments, like an alb, reaching to the ankles, and silk capes of green, brown, or red according to the particular confraternity, adding another note of colour to the already crowded canvas of Church ceremonial in Malta. Great is the honour to the young man who has been elected by his comrades to carry in these processions the banner of his guild, behind which is also carried a crucifix and

#### SLEIMA

A MODERN suburb of Valletta, situated by the sea, and much used, as is 'St. Julian's' adjoining, as a summer resort by the residents of Valletta.







two ornamental silver lanterns mounted upon poles. The labours of the day are hardly ever begun in Malta without a visit to some favourite church—generally to attend Mass—on the part of all—from the poorest workman to the busy merchant; and in the evening parties of workmen may be seen returning home along the country roads, seated upon some friendly stone-cutter's low flat cart reciting their rosaries.

An English novelist in 'The Lost Key,' a story dealing with Maltese life, has well described this deeply religious vein in a vignette of the interior of St. John's Church :

'The nave was almost empty, but here and there, before a side-altar, was a kneeling figure shrouded in a faldetta, her lips moving rapidly with a gentle murmur as the beads of her rosary slipped through her fingers; and little children ran in and out, the boys pulling their ragged caps off their little rough heads, and all dipping their dirty fingers in the holy-water stoup as they made their reverence to the altar. The Church was evidently the home of the poor and the little ones. Underfoot was the gorgeous mosaic pavement, memorials to Grand Masters and other great personages among the Knights. On the walls and columns and altars were the trophies of their valour, and the signs of their

magnificence, now gone for ever ; but the Maltese sun still burnt fierce and strong, and the Maltese men and women and little children still passed into the shade of the sanctuary for a moment in the midst of their work and play to adore, if but for a moment, that unseen but supreme Power in which they still retain an undiminished faith.'

In the numerous churches may be found 'bambini' and statues of the saints laden with necklaces, hearts, and crowns of silver, as votive offerings in return for answered prayers, and in many shrines crude pictures hang upon the walls, showing the donors in the act of miraculously escaping from burning houses, shipwrecks, and such like terrifying dangers.

The men from the country formerly appeared upon festas, as they do still in Gozo, in the costume of 'Zeppo' (the name by which a peasant is generally known), consisting of a sort of black velvet vest decorated with the well-known peasant-buttons of silver filigree, with a coat slung over the shoulders for ornament, velvet trousers reaching below the knee, white stockings, and a bright girdle twisted many times round the waist. The men of the poorer class, as a rule, never wear boots or shoes ; if anything, they wear a sort of

sandal called a *korsh*. The peasants also carry a sort of long stocking-bag of bright striped stuff, called a *horja*, worn hanging gracefully over the left shoulder, in which they keep their food for the day, or put their purchases when marketing.

Filigree work in both gold and silver has long been a staple craft of the Maltese, which they probably learnt from contact with the Levant, whence also it came to the southern cities of Italy. The metal-workers in Strada Irlandese—as in other old towns, certain streets in Valletta were assigned to particular trades—formerly also made massive brass knockers in the shape of dolphins, realistic reproductions of the fish, which still adorn the doors of most of the better houses in the island. Souvenirs for tourists, too, are cleverly made by embellishing all sorts of articles with the coins of the departed Order—huge thick silver pieces, flamboyantly emblazoned with the arms of the Grand Masters, in direct violation of the Rule of Raymond, which forbade such worldly vanities. This coinage was accepted currency for many years under British rule.

The women of Malta, who are petites, have been remarked for the gracefulness of their carriage and the smallness of their hands and feet, their olive

complexions and rather full red lips being well set off in the frame of the black faldetta—‘ce joli vêtement,’ as René Bazin has called it—from beneath which smile roguishly their dark, languorous, long-lashed eyes. They all wear, even the poorest, an immense quantity of jewellery, and ‘Carmela,’ who scrubs the floor bare-footed, will appear on a festa with filigree brooches, bangles, and earrings that her English mistress might envy. The Maltese revere their religion above all things, and after it their womenfolk, and in consequence jealously guard their wives and daughters, placing, until quite recently, upon them undue and antiquated restrictions. An old Maltese maxim said that a woman should appear but twice in public—once on the day of her wedding, and once again at her funeral! Though doubtless this rule was not strictly followed, there is still ample room for some Maltese Christabel Pankhurst to arise and tell the tale of the subjection of her sex in the ‘Island of Heroes.’

On religious festivals, when the needs of the soul have been satisfied with Procession, High Mass, and Benediction, the people settle down for the rest of the day to a solid bout of eating, drinking, and innocent, if somewhat noisy, amusement.

Formerly the Upper Barracca in Valletta was roofed in, and here the country-folk, who had come to the city for the day, encamped and picnicked. Innumerable booths are now erected in the streets, or upon the piazzas outside the churches, where wonderful pastries and sweetmeats are exposed for sale: including plenty of the famous cheese-cakes called *kassatat*, with *pastizzi*, nougat, high-piled pyramids of honey and almonds, and fruits of all kinds. A picturesque figure on these occasions, giving an Eastern touch to the scene, is the boy who sells tumblers of iced water from a barrel slung across his shoulders. Light Sicilian wine, very cheap, sour, and sold from the cask, plays a large part in these celebrations. As a rule the Maltese peasant is very frugal, bread, or *pasta*, with a few olives, a little oil, and some goat's-milk cheese, forming the chief support of the poorer classes, who seldom, or never, eat meat.

In the evenings the crowds love to wander up and down the streets of Valletta, or the casals, singing Maltese airs and comic songs, the latter with plenty of local and pointed personal allusions, accompanied by guitars or the less romantic concertinas. Then certainly will be heard that well-known ditty, *Meta morna tal Melleha* ('When we

went into the country'), containing many affectionate allusions to *tal rosolin*, a favourite liqueur, from the potent effects of which, if the song is to be believed, a catastrophe occurred to a party of twenty-one merry-makers. The music of this song is distinctly Eastern, like all the traditional native melodies, in its falling rhythm, and the rather mournful notes are little suggestive of the hilarious theme. As the evening of a festa draws to a close, the people are quite beside themselves with excitement, and the din in the streets is terrific; but their amusement is all harmless enough, as the very small number, if any at all, brought before the magistrate next morning may testify.

The festa of San Gregorio presents a curious example of the mixture of religious ceremony and rustic revels. A procession of all the clergy of the towns and villages, with the Cathedral canons, starts from Casal Paola in the morning, passing through Zeitun, a village famous for olives and wine, to the Church of San Gregorio, while the cry 'Sancte Gregorie ora pro nobis' is chanted by the crowd upon the way. As the various confraternities, all present in full force, arrive at the church, the leaders lower the banners of the different guilds at the threshold in honour of the

saint. The banners are then flourished in the air, a performance of considerable danger to the heads of the spectators by reason of the size of the banners and the muscular Christianity of the bearers, who are worked by this time into a sort of religious frenzy. The police try to moderate these displays, and good-natured scuffles invariably ensue. When the religious ceremonies in the church are ended, the crowds return to Zeitun, where a sort of fairing is held, to which in particular come young married couples, a custom described in some traditional Maltese verses of which the following is a translation :

‘THE SWEETHEART’S BARGAIN.

‘In the wedding or matrimonial contract  
They make this conjugal bargain :  
That he shall take her to the Feast of San Gregorio ;  
Shall set her upon the wall ;  
Shall buy her a slice of sweetmeat, made of hempseed and  
honey,  
For that is the kind that best pleases his lady the bride.’

The Carnival, lasting the four days before Lent, is the festival best known to English visitors, and this round of revelry is formally commenced upon the Saturday by the *Parata*, which is held in St. George’s Square. Here a body of men assemble,

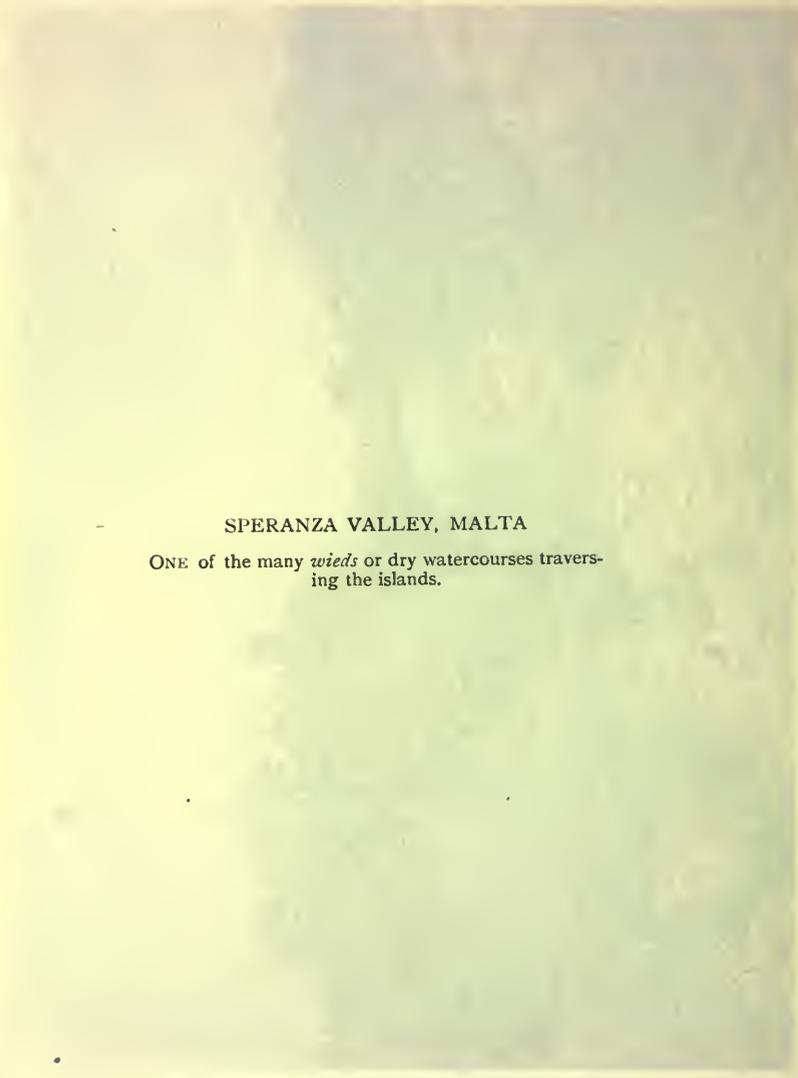
some dressed as Turks, in baggy trousers and jewelled turbans, others representing Christians, who renew in mock combat, with wooden swords, the old feud of the Crescent and the Cross, dancing all the time to a catchy tune: the display ending by the performers lifting up on their shoulders a little girl called *Il Gharusa tal Parata*, or 'The Bride of the Dance,' who waves a small dagger in her hand and throws kisses to the crowd. This performance, having been witnessed by the Governor from the balcony of the Palace, is afterwards repeated at the corners of the principal streets in Valletta. The Carnival itself is too well known to need any description, the ensuing four days being given over by rich and poor to hilarious amusement: revellers, masked and in dominoes, are free to enter the houses of their friends, and much merriment is caused in the efforts to discover the identity of the numerous visitors.

The anniversary of the raising of the Great Siege, called the *Vittoria*, is celebrated as a national holiday upon September 8, when the places associated with that historic event are decked with evergreens, red and white flags, and streamers bearing the names of Knights who distinguished themselves in the year 1565. Formerly, some of









SPERANZA VALLEY, MALTA

ONE of the many *wieds* or dry watercourses traversing the islands.

the identical suits of armour worn by the Knights in the defence, with the rents and holes made by Turkish sabre and shot, were placed during the day for the public to view in St. George's Square, at which awestruck peasants came to gaze from the ends of the island. The crypt, with the tomb of La Vallette in St. John's, is thrown open to the public, who visit it, and the Column of Victory at Vittoriosa, in great numbers. The women in Rabat who were unable to leave their homes for the commemoration in Valletta used to climb out upon the roofs, and keep up in chorus with one another across the housetops a sort of pæan of victory, in memory, no doubt, of the honourable part their sex played in the siege, when they helped to repulse the Turks by carrying the ammunition to the guns.

Such celebrations are accompanied by much sound from the bells of the many churches, which are not rung in the ordinary sense, but simply hammered in a primitive manner, usually by small boys, without any regard to time or melody—a custom said to have come from Sicily, like many other curious things in Malta. Numerous small bronze or iron petards, filled with powder and stone, are fired off during the day, and a grand dis-

play of fireworks usually terminates the festivities.

A sombre prelude to the *Vittoria*, called *Il Libera tal Cavalieri*, is held upon the eve of September 8, when a Requiem Mass for those who fell in the Siege is celebrated in all the churches, including the chapel in Vittoriosa where lie the mutilated remains of those gallant Brethren who sacrificed themselves in Fort St. Elmo.

The Maltese, indeed, do not forget their dead. The Addolorata Cemetery, situated beyond the Marsa, is one of the finest in Europe, from the beauty of its monuments and the care with which it is kept. On All Souls' Day the grounds are illuminated with thousands of small lamps placed on the graves, beside which gather a vast concourse of relations and friends to pray for the souls of the departed.

In the Chapel of Bones you have a *memento mori* of a very gruesome nature. It is a small crypt under what was once the Hospital for Incurables, at the end of Strada Mercanti, the walls of which are entirely covered with skulls and bones of many hundreds of the departed patients—not, as some imagine, of those who fell in the Great Siege. The various arms, legs, finger-

bones, and so forth, have been carefully sorted together and then arranged in quite artistic patterns by a former chaplain of the hospital.

More gruesome still is the sight to be seen in the vault of the Convent of the Capuchins, where the shrivelled bodies of the deceased brethren, preserved intact through some property of the atmosphere, stand upright in niches round the walls, dressed in the habits of their Order. The public used to be admitted once a year to a Requiem Mass in the vault, when, *vanitas vanitatum*, the bodies were decked with flowers. This practice has been discontinued, and special permission must now be obtained from the Father Superior to visit the vault.

Many Maltese customs are undoubtedly of pagan origin, adapted by the early Church to Christian ideas. On St. John's Eve bonfires are lighted, with the permission of the authorities, by the country people in all sorts of places—street corners, roadways, and gardens, and the people may be observed jumping through the flames, a performance resembling some ancient Roman rite. The Knights observed this custom of the Maltese, as they did many others—no doubt to keep in favour with the populace—and so upon St. John's

Eve the Grand Master, supported by the Bishop and the Grand Prior, proceeded in great state to the Hospital of the Order where he solemnly set alight eight barrels of pitch.

On Candlemas Day, when 'new fire' in the shape of candles is still blessed in all the churches, every parish priest used to present the Bishop and the Governor with a two-pound candle, in token of allegiance to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. On the *Imnaria*, a corruption of the Latin *illuminaria*, fires are lighted upon the top of the old church in Città Vecchia, and are watched by thousands of the country folk, when once again this ancient town, called by a recent writer the 'City of the Dead,' awakens into life. At the end of the day races are run outside the gates by the Maltese, upon mules and ponies: hundreds of the country women having taken up their post on the walls in the scorching sun from early morning to secure a good view. St. Rocco's Races are run from Pietà to Porta des Bombes upon barebacked mules and horses, for which prizes, including elaborate gold brocade favours, are presented by the Government, as was done by the Grand Masters. Few who look at these races realize that they commemorate the termination of the

great plague which devastated Malta in 1593. During the 'Vittoria,' boat-races, also, are rowed by crews representing the different fishing villages around the coast, from Ras Hanzier to the Custom-house. Ras Hanzier, meaning 'the point of the sow,' it may be remarked, embodies in its name a local legend, which tells that one of these animals was lost in the catacombs in Città Vecchia, and eventually appeared by an underground tunnel five miles long at this point in the Grand Harbour.

Those interested in ecclesiastical history should visit the Greek church in Strada Vescovo in Valletta, where the Greek Rite is observed in a church in communion with Rome: a tradition which may extend as far back as the time of the Greek Bishop of Malta whose death is chronicled in the Arab invasion of the year 870. Good Friday presents a curious piece of religious realism in the richly canopied bed, upon which lies an effigy of the dead Christ, carried by the *fratelli* of the Confraternity of the Crucifixion through the streets of Valletta. The procession was until recently followed by many pious persons, inflicting penances upon themselves, and dragging heavy chains along the Way of the Cross. On the Feast of St. Paul a more joyful procession takes place, when the statue of the Patron

Saint of the island is carried through a gaily decorated route in Valletta, while a body of young men, waving branches of palms, dance before the figure as it is borne along.

A simpler ceremony, which will appeal to the religion of 'any plain man,' as Butler might say, is found in the blessing of the beasts of burden upon St. Anthony's Day, when a priest sprinkles holy water upon a number of horses, mules, and donkeys decked with ribbons, drawn up before the steps of the Church of the Vittoria in Valletta. The ceremony is repeated at Città Vecchia in the Augustinian Convent, where, in addition, the dumb performers receive a feed of barley—perhaps in accordance with the monastic law of hospitality. Pilgrimages, amongst others, take place to Melleha, where, in a small chapel, there hangs a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary said to have been painted by St. Luke.

Superstitions are plentiful in Maltese life. A child's first birthday is the occasion of the *Kucija*, at which the child is offered a basket containing a variety of articles, such as a crucifix, inkpot, sword, and so forth, his choice of one of these being supposed to indicate the profession for which he is destined by Providence. Marriages in Malta are largely arranged by the parents, the happy pair

often meeting for the first time in the rôle of lovers at the ceremony of the betrothal, called *Il Chelma*. At this gathering of friends and relatives the young man presents his fiancée with a fish, containing a ring in its mouth, and the respective mothers mix aniseed, salt, and honey together, with which they rub the lips of the intended bride, the mixture being supposed to make her affable and prudent. Rings like those seen in Italy, with the symbol of hands united, are exchanged. The marriage itself is the occasion of great gaiety, and in the country usually terminates with a rustic dance and a feast, at which the bride and bridegroom drink out of the same cup to signify their happy union. The priest who marries them is generally given, as his fee for the ceremony, a cake and a couple of bottles of wine.

Some superstitions are distinctly curious. The 'Evil Eye' is an ever-present danger in Malta, and as protection against it young and old, as in Italy, wear trinkets made of coral shaped into a hand 'making the horns.' No *carozza* driver, for instance, likes to drive out after dark without someone sitting on the box beside him; and so at sunset little Maltese boys, sons or younger brothers, always appear upon the scene to fill

the vacant seat, or else his Satanic majesty might mount and drive the vehicle with its owner to perdition. The inquiring mind would like to know why it is considered unlucky to eat cabbages on New Year's Day, and why a child absent from the family gathering upon St. Martin's Day bodes ill to the house. Some startling beliefs, at first sight ridiculous, may have some sound sense at the bottom of them. Thus the distinctly homœopathic cure for fright consists of giving the patient a plate of soup; then informing him, when he has enjoyed it, that it has been made from a dead puppy, this agreeable declaration being followed up by dashing the animal, in quite a 'habeas corpus' manner, into the plate before him. Something distinctly utilitarian, too, may be found in the warning given to children—in a country where water is scarce—that if they drop stones into a well they will be required, as punishment in the next world, to pull them out with their eyelashes. The Maltese language abounds in proverbs and maxims, illustrating the customs and beliefs of the people, and it is rich in folklore and legends, in which latter, as may be expected, the Saints of the Church and the Knights of the Order largely figure. Here is one which may be taken as typical:



THE PROCESSION OF THE FESTA DI SAN  
GIOVANNI

ENTERING St. John's Church, one of the many in  
which the Maltese populace delight.







## THE LEGEND OF OUR LADY OF LIESSE.

In the year 1134 three brothers, Frenchmen of noble birth, from Picardy, all three Knights of the Order of St. John, were taken prisoners in a fight with the infidels near Ascalon, then in possession of the Egyptians. As soon as they were cured of their wounds they were sent as a present to the Soldan of Egypt, and, on their refusing to become Moham-medans, were thrown into prison. But the Soldan had such an intense wish to induce them to turn renegades, that, when the priests of his creed failed to convert them, he sent his daughter Ismeria, who was deeply learned in the doctrines of Mohammet, to argue with the Knights. But the latter remained firm, and explained the doctrines of Christianity so forcibly to the girl that she was seized with the greatest desire to possess an image of the Blessed Virgin, and brought a piece of wood and carving tools to the Knights, entreating them to carve a figure for her. D'Eppée, the eldest of the brothers, promised that she should have the image, and when she left them, as neither of them could carve, all three betook themselves to fervent prayer. During the following night the angels brought a small image of the Blessed Virgin, which shed a brilliant light in the prison, and perfumed it with sweet odours; and when Ismeria came next morning, the Knights gave her the image, which they called Our

Lady of Liesse—the last word meaning gladness and rejoicing. In obedience to the commands of the Blessed Virgin, Ismeria liberated the Knights, and commenced with them the flight to France. They passed unquestioned through the streets of Cairo, and, when in trouble as to how they should cross the Nile, a boat rowed by a young man suddenly appeared, ferried them across, and vanished. During their first night's halt they were miraculously transported, while asleep, to France, and in the morning discovered from a shepherd that they were close to the Knights' Castle in Picardy. The Blessed Virgin indicated, by the sudden heaviness of her image in Ismeria's arms, where it pleased her that the new church in her honour should be built. Ismeria, in obedience to Our Lady's commands, was baptized, and took the name of Mary; and after living for a short time with the mother of the Knights died, and was buried in the Church of Our Lady of Liesse.

A chapel in honour of Our Lady of Liesse, where the boatmen hear Mass in the morning, stands to-day by the waters of the Grand Harbour.

The Maltese tongue fell for a long time into disuse as a written language, through the loss of a distinctive and fixed alphabet to express the sounds of the words, the result being that little of the ex-

tensive folklore and legend has been written down. Hookam Frere, who during his long residence in Malta devoted himself to the study of his favourite Greek authors and taught himself Hebrew and Maltese, seems to have advocated the use of Arabic characters. As a great classical scholar, he saw the value and possibilities of the Maltese language, and he continually urged the University authorities—who even to-day seem to neglect their own tongue in favour of Italian—to raise Maltese to the dignity of a literary subject in their curriculum, and so to provide the young Maltese with ‘a key to many locks.’ ‘Those who continue to pursue their studies,’ wrote Frere, ‘will possess an advantage peculiar to themselves in entering upon a vast field of literature, hitherto very imperfectly explored, in those languages which are cognate dialects of the native Maltese—the Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic. In all of these the University of Malta might obtain a decided pre-eminence over the other Universities and learned bodies in Europe.’ Frere also pointed out—with a prophetic vision of the East becoming ‘a land of promise’—the commercial possibilities of Maltese. ‘The Maltese language may be usefully employed if written in

the Arabic characters. The native language of Malta is an Oriental dialect, intimately connected with Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac. With respect to the first, the fact is notorious that a Maltese finds no difficulty in making himself understood anywhere in the coasts of Africa and Asia—a circumstance which is of no small convenience in commercial intercourse, and which might be improved to great advantage in that respect. . . . It is obvious that the inhabitants [of Malta] could possess great advantages if a change of circumstances, re-animating commerce and directing it to Africa and the Levant, should enable them to develop again the commercial industry which they exhibited not long ago in the northern and western coasts of the Mediterranean.’ So wrote Frere in the ‘forties’ of the last century, but the Italian Language Question seems to have placed in the background the really more important question of the proper footing of Maltese. If Frere’s advice had been taken, the University of Malta might have by this time become a great imperial, if not international, centre for the study of Eastern languages. However, such able Maltese professors as Dr. M. Mizzi and Signor Preca have revived in their recent writings an interest in the

scientific study of their native tongue. Since Frere's time, too, Maltese has been both grammatically taught and written in all the Government schools, and so it is not too late to hope that all that is traditional in Maltese literature may be saved from the wreck of time.

Here is an interesting note upon the Maltese language by Louis de Boisgelin :

‘Corrupt as is the Maltese patois, it is, notwithstanding, extremely pleasing, and, like all other Eastern languages, is full of metaphors, proverbs, and animated expressions. These render it peculiarly fit for poetry, the taste for which the Maltese imbibed from the Greeks, and afterwards from the Arabs, whose style of Eastern poetry, together with the moral which formed its principal ornament, they more particularly adopted. They sang their own compositions, accompanying themselves on a kind of instrument resembling a violin or lyre.’

The following translations of two ancient Maltese sonnets were also made by Boisgelin :

1.

‘He who too far indulges hope  
Will find how soon hope fails ;  
He's like a seaman bottling wind  
In hope to fill his sails.’

## 2.

‘Thou who by sad experience know’st  
How sure Love’s arrows fly,  
Say, what’s the smart, for well I know  
What thou hast felt, feel I.’

The translator tells us that he had compiled a Maltese grammar, to which he had added several native dialogues, songs, and tales, but unfortunately the French took the manuscript away with them in 1798. He also records that one of the Brethren of the Order (the Bailiff de Neven) became so conversant with the language ‘that if any Maltese spoke to him he immediately knew the *casal* he inhabited; for, though the villages were very near each other, there was a slight difference in the pronunciation between them all, and this was likewise the case in Gozo.’

Boisgelin was a Knight of Malta, who fled to England at the French occupation, and published in London in 1804 a perfectly monumental work upon Malta, dedicated, by the way, to the British Navy, ‘which,’ as the Preface runs, ‘has produced so many celebrated heroes, whose brilliant exploits may be said to rival even those of ancient chivalry.’ This was done no doubt with diplomatic intention, for the Knights wanted naturally

to re-occupy Malta, and England alone was strong enough to transfer it to them if she so desired.

The Maltese still cling to many of their distinctive manners and customs, 'following blindly,' as a native writer eloquently puts it, 'in ancestral grooves, where the long memories of the ages stir darkly in the popular mind'; and while they yet do so it is to be hoped some systematic study may be made of these living links with far-distant systems of thought and beliefs. Whether the Maltese peasant, abandoning in the course of time the pageantry of his national customs, and speaking, perhaps, only the English tongue, will then be any the happier, it is idle to discuss. From the sentimental point of view we would rather see him remain as he is: living in thought in a world of his own weaving, and rarely going beyond the narrow limits of his little island; for, if we believe the poet,

' Knowledge is sorrow ; they that know the most  
Must drink the deepest of the bitter cup.'

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME RANDOM IMPRESSIONS

DISRAELI wrote in one of his novels: 'If that fair Valletta, with its streets of palaces, its picturesque forts, and magnificent church, only crowned some green and azure island of the Ionian Sea—Corfu, for instance—I really think the ideal of landscape would be realized.' The beauties of Valletta, despite this fine piece of word-painting, are not apparent at the first view. The traveller, going by the overland route to Malta, sails from Syracuse in the familiar Hungarian s.s. *Carola*, with her genial captain—for no British ship, strange to say, carries mails or passengers between this important Imperial possession and the mainland. Midnight being the hour of arrival, the island will present patches of rock silvered in the moonlight and deep shadows, dotted with the myriad lights reflected in the dark water from the ships of the Fleet, Valletta and the Three Cities. If he travels by another line, he may be lucky enough to pass between the guardian







#### A SOLITARY VALLEY, GOZO

THE geology of the Maltese islands has been ascribed to the Eocene epoch. The nearest shores of the African Continent at Tripoli correspond to the Malta formation, as do also the southern shores of France at Marseilles and for some miles eastward.

forts of Ricasoli and our old friend St. Elmo in the early hours of the morning, and will have ample time, before being allowed by the authorities to land, to watch that most wonderful of sights, the panorama of the Grand Harbour unfolding in the rays of the rising sun.

The Grand Harbour, a long, narrow arm of the sea, runs almost exactly two miles inland to the Marsa, where it is lost to view in a forest of masts. The steamer usually anchors about fifty yards from the quay known as the Marina, upon which stand the Custom House and the Victoria Gate leading into Valletta. Save for the few green balconies of the rather dingy shipping-offices upon the Marina, and the monument to Sir Alexander Ball just visible beneath Fort St. Elmo, the architectural charms of Valletta remain so far undiscovered, and little of its reputed life and colour can be seen—unless in the bunting of the wash-tub hanging from the back windows of Strada Levante. Otherwise not a sign of the auberges, churches, palaces, squares, and crowded streets, for they lie hidden behind the famous fortifications towering many hundred feet above the steamer's deck.

No written description can convey the imposing appearances of these masses of masonry and rock,

rising straight from the water's edge in curious symmetrical shapes—scarps, curtains, demi-lunes, ravelins, and all the other technical effects of mediæval fortification—almost oppressive to the beholder by reason of their magnitude. Even the bell-towers of the renowned St. John's are out of sight: they were intentionally kept low in building, as much to get them out of the line of the guns of the Order, mounted on the cavaliers of St. John and St. James, when firing seawards, as to prevent them becoming a mark for those of the enemy—the sacred building in those days presenting the characteristics of a place of strength with that of worship, 'half church of God, half castle.' The science of modern warfare has rendered parts of the fortifications of Valletta now of no importance, and many places on the heights overlooking the harbours have in consequence been abandoned by the military authorities. Many of these bastions—called Notre Dame, Our Lady's Half-Moon, St. John the Almoner, and by other romantic names marking the particular posts of the Knights in time of attack—have accordingly been turned into promenades for the public, and planted with trees and flowers, so that the frowning ramparts, where men-at-arms once watched for the enemy, now

conceal behind them nothing more formidable than nursemaids and their charges, the latter playing, to their great delight, among the dismantled guns and pyramids of old-fashioned cannon balls. Many ditches and fosses of the outer works of Valletta have also become deserted, and are filled with weeds and wild-flowers, while innumerable caper-bushes and creepers cover the walls, taking root in the cracks of the masonry.

From the Marina, the Three Cities on the far side of the harbour, rather than Valletta, attract attention. They are Vittoriosa, Cospicua, and Senglea, standing on slight elevations between the Calcara, Dockyard, and French Creeks, which run inland upon the right shore. The Clock Tower from which La Vallette watched the progress of the Great Siege rises behind Fort St. Angelo, and the red-coloured dome of San Filippo in Senglea is at once noticed crowning rows of weather-beaten houses reaching down to the water's edge. Distance lends enchantment here, for the grandeur of these cities is gone: they are now in large part given over to barracks, stores, and quarters, connected with the multifarious activities of a Naval Station. In Vittoriosa, on the edge of Dockyard Creek, stands the official residence of the

officers of H.M. Dockyard, the same building having been, two centuries ago, the residence of the Captain of the Galleys of the Order of St. John. Hollowed in the rock close by are found the caves, now used as Government stores, in which were housed the wretched Mohammedan prisoners who rowed these galleys, chained to benches five abreast and urged by whips to bend to the fourteen pairs of oars. Adjoining their far from cheerful abode is the spot where these unfortunate beings were graciously allowed to bathe, called by the Knights in consequence 'The Bay of Vermin.'

Here, too, in the old days was moored the famous fighting ship of the Order, built about 1600, known as *S. Johannes Baptista Hierosolymitanus*, or more popularly as *The Great Galleon*. When ready for war she carried a crew of 100 Knights, 500 fighting-men, and 100 seamen, with 55 guns firing sixty-pound balls, and is said to have cost 50,000 crowns to equip for a single expedition in pursuit of the Turks, during which she generally remained at sea six or seven months.

In Dockyard Creek is moored H.M.S. *Egmont*, formerly called the *Achilles*, the flagship of the Port Admiral. This replaced in recent years the

still older *Hibernia*, one of the wooden walls of England, which was long a landmark, or rather watermark, in Valletta Harbour.

Senglea, with its spacious and symmetrical streets, had once hoped to emulate Valletta as 'a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen'; and many 'dolphin' door-knockers—those emblems of Maltese respectability—may be seen upon the doors of the fine old houses, in which still linger a few families of position. Vittoriosa was built earlier and otherwise, not for mere gallantry but hard fighting, with streets narrow and crooked, to allow a handful of men to resist, in hand-to-hand encounter, an invading army. The Three Cities attract many visitors to view the spots associated with the Great Siege, and everyone inspects in Vittoriosa the Column of Victory, the hat and sword of La Vallette in the Oratory of San Giuseppe, and the Palace of the Inquisitor—a very important personage in his day, who could be exceedingly unpleasant to those who published an undesirable book, or took sides with the enemies of Holy Church. The Cottonera lines, built on the principles of Valperga, surround the Three Cities on the land side; but despite their many interests and their ancient pedigree—Vittoriosa, the original

Borgo, showing traces of Norman architecture—they have sunk into shabby gentility, and it is not now considered quite the thing to live ‘across the water’; this phrase in Maltese—*tal nahha l’ohra*—conveying a sense of social inferiority. On a small rocky promontory beside Fort Ricasoli stands Bigli Hospital, perhaps the finest naval hospital in the world, built by the Government in 1830. This was the spot destined by Napoleon to be the site of his winter palace, which, had he ever erected it, could scarcely have surpassed, in outward appearance at least, the present handsome building.

The visitor, anxious to land from his steamer, will find that he must entrust himself and his trunks to one of the hundred *dghaisas*, the owners of which are seeking with loud, discordant, guttural cries to secure his custom and row him to the Marina. The *dghaisa* resembles a gondola, only brightly painted, generally green, with tapering bows rising about four feet higher than the boat itself, which are, during a festa, adorned with flowers. In summer a brightly coloured awning with tasselled fringe is stretched over the heads of the passengers. Two men generally row the boat, who, it is curious to note, stand up to do so, one at the

centre and the other in the prow, using a long, sweeping oar apiece with great grace and energy.

On landing, the visitor passes through the Customs and into the hands of the drivers of *carozze*, who seemingly are about to make him scale the perpendicular heights of the town in their quaint little carriages—like small victorias, with equally small fares ranging from a couple of pence, and with white holland curtains suspended from a sort of framework like a four-post bed. The drivers will then lash their sturdy little ponies at a furious rate, and rattle the visitor along the rocky road from Victoria Gate into the heart of Valletta. Strada Levante is passed on the way, with its motley crowd, made up of the crews from ships of all nations, Maltese boatmen, coal-heavers, and lightermen, who here buy their tobacco and frequent the cheap eating-houses, in the doorways of which you see the proprietors frying, over portable stoves, fish, macaroni, and such local delicacies as black-puddings called *mazzit*.

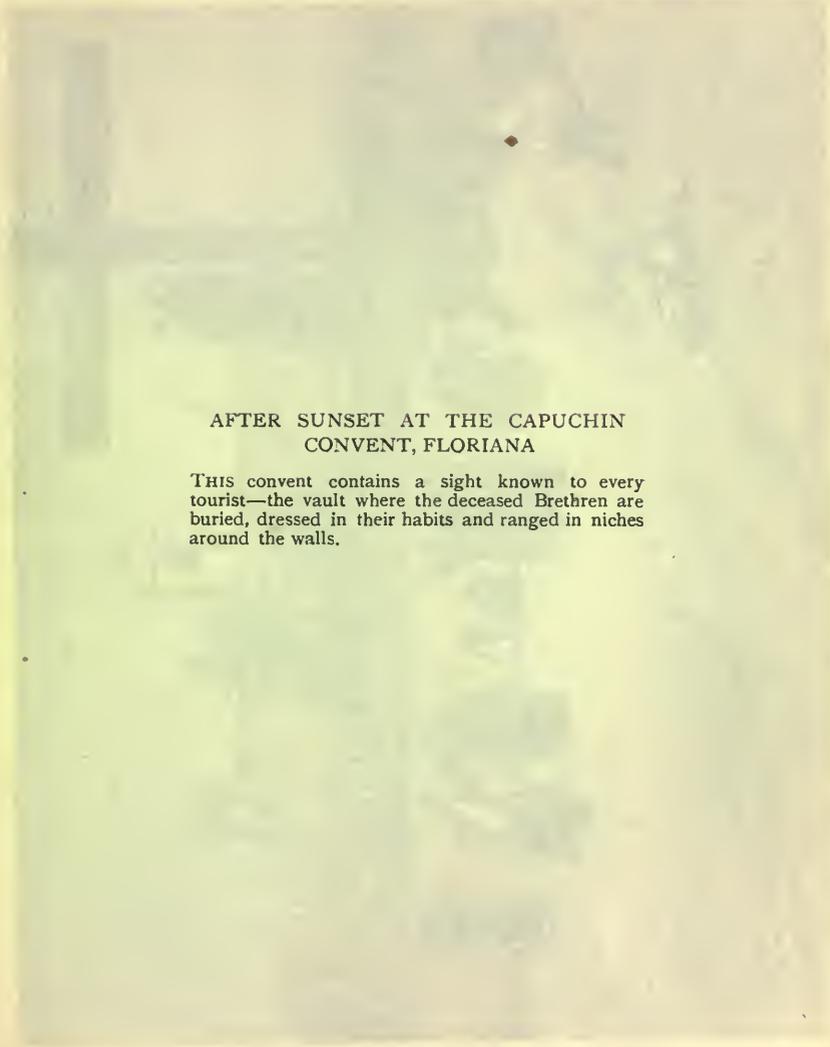
One reaches, at length, by sharp turnings through Strada Cristoforo, St. George's Square, the focus of life in Valletta, where stands the Governor's Palace, the Main Guard with its well-known inscription defining England's title

to Malta, and the Garrison Library, in which one can get all the latest English and foreign papers, and hear the local gossip; and on the square itself may be seen a stolid sentry pacing up and down, whose khaki or scarlet tunic and fair Anglo-Saxon features will give the English visitor, if he has been a wanderer in foreign parts, a pleasurable sense of home. This appearance of Tommy Atkins beside the quaint little laurel-tubs in front of the Main Guard has inspired a French novelist with the following passage, which may interest the reader as a foreigner's impression of the Imperial ideal :

‘ Je revois le soldat en petite veste rouge, blond, un peu raide, qui promène son fusil entre la façade entincilante déjà de soleil et une ligne de lauriers-roses en caisses. C'est le même partout, ici et là, sous les climats chauds et sous les climats froids, la même tenue correcte, le même air de conquérant inassimilable, montant la garde pour la reine qui collectionne les isles du monde.’

So in his ‘ Sicile ’ writes René Bazin, in phrases that might have been coined by Kipling.

Strada Reale, just half a mile long from Porta Reale to Fort St. Elmo, runs along the crest of the promontory upon which Valletta is built,



AFTER SUNSET AT THE CAPUCHIN  
CONVENT, FLORIANA

THIS convent contains a sight known to every tourist—the vault where the deceased Brethren are buried, dressed in their habits and ranged in niches around the walls.





J. B. ...  
1909



forming a sort of spinal column to the city. Ten streets run parallel to it, five on either side, and eleven more cut it at right angles, all in accordance with the original plans, Laparelli and Cassar having anticipated by several centuries the symmetrical lines of modern American cities. The monotony, however, disappears in this case by reason of the slopes of Mount Sceberras, the varied levels of the streets giving at every turn striking views: vistas of the harbours and shipping in the distances below; glimpses over the housetops of the sweeping Mediterranean horizon, with perhaps the Fleet steaming away to 'Gib'; inland is seen the undulating country, yellow streaked with green, dotted with casals overshadowed by the domes of the ever-present church; and, near at hand, a jumble of balconies, church-towers, roof-gardens, and ramparts, looking almost topsy-turvy in the curious perspective. Strada Reale contains most of the important buildings in Valletta: the Governor's Palace, the Opera House, the Casino Maltese, the Union Club, the Borsa di Commercio, one side of St. John's Church, and the Public Library, which latter is interesting as a building begun by the Knights but completed under English rule. In Strada

Reale also are to be found two less heroic institutions, not to be omitted, however, as places to be visited: Bissazza's, where are sold, amongst other confectionery, curious Sicilian sweetmeats; and Blackley's, where a truly British 'afternoon tea,' including currant buns, may be obtained. In the afternoons everyone turns into St. George's Square for the band, or strolls up and down Strada Reale until sunset, when, as there is scarcely any twilight, darkness falls in a few minutes upon the city, and the crowds disappear. The sunsets in Malta are indeed magnificent, and well worth a climb on to the terrazzo to witness. The east appears a rich dark purple, and the west presents 'the true yellow glow of Claude Lorraine,' as the observant Brydone remarked a century ago; and particularly fine is the effect, viewed on the road from Valletta, of the somewhat Oriental towers and buildings of Città Vecchia in sullen silhouette against the setting sun.

A description by Thackeray, written sixty-five years ago, depicts very faithfully, so little has life in Malta changed, some features which will to-day strike the fancy of the newcomer.

'The streets are thronged with a lively, comfortable-looking population; the poor seem to in-

habit handsome stone palaces, with balconies and projecting windows of heavy carved stone. The lights and shadows; the cries and stench; the fruit-shops and fish-stalls; the dresses and chatter of all nations; the soldiers in scarlet and women in black mantillas; the beggars, boatmen, barrels of pickled herrings and macaroni; the shovel-hatted priests and bearded capuchins; the tobacco, grapes, onions, and sunshine; the signboards, bottled-porter stores, the statues of saints, and little chapels, which jostle the stranger's eyes as he goes up the famous stairs from the Water-gate, make a scene of such pleasant confusion and liveliness as I have never witnessed before. And the effects of the groups of multitudinous actors in this busy, cheerful drama is heightened, as it were, by the decorations of the stage. The sky is delightfully brilliant, all the houses and ornaments are stately, castles and palaces are rising all around, and the flag, towers, and walls of Fort St. Elmo look as fresh and magnificent as if they had been erected only yesterday.

'The Strada Reale has a much more courtly appearance. Here are palaces, churches, court-houses, and libraries, the genteel London shops, and the latest articles of perfumery. Gay young officers are strolling about in shell-jackets much too small for them; midshipmen are clattering by on hired horses; squads of priests, habited after

the fashion of Don Basilio in the opera, are demurely pacing to and fro; professional beggars run shrieking after the stranger. The houses where they are selling carpet-bags and pomatum were the palaces of the successors of the 'goodliest company of gallant Knights the world ever heard tell of.'

The city of Valletta is itself the lasting legacy of the Order, the principal buildings and almost every house having been erected in the days of the Knights. Valletta was built, as is well known, immediately after the Great Siege, upon the promontory which the attack of the Turks showed to be the point of vantage for the defence of the island, and to this the Knights transferred their headquarters from the Borgo. On March 28, 1566, the first stone of the new city was laid, with great ceremony, at the corner of St. John's Bastion. La Vallette forthwith took up his abode in a wooden hut in the midst of the works, which he continued directing from day to day until his death in 1568, the hero of the Great Siege thus living to see only the outer fortifications completed. The new Grand Master, Pietro del Monte, began his term of office by announcing that no one would enjoy his favour who did not to the best of his ability

promote the building of the city. In consequence of this Eustachio del Monte, nephew of the Grand Master, began at once to build a house—the first in Valletta—in the centre of the high ground above St. Elmo occupied by one of the Turkish batteries during the Siege, the special interest of this house being that it formed the nucleus of the present Governor's Palace. Subscriptions for the building of the city had been collected from all parts of Europe, both from the members of the Order and from the principal Roman Catholic Sovereigns. The Pope sent not only a contribution in money, but his chief military engineer, Francesco Laparelli, who resided in Malta for four years, and designed the fortifications of Valletta. These were completed in the year 1570, when Laparelli departed, leaving the works, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, in the hands of a truly remarkable man, Girolamo Cassar, about whom we know very little. Happily, however—the Knights being very business-like individuals in the matter of galley log-books and minutes of meetings—the register of the Council of the Order records for May 18, 1581, as follows: 'The Grand Master, Jean Levesque de la Cassière, certifies that Girolamo Cassar, of the Maltese nation, Ordinary Architect and Engineer

of the Order, during many years lent his services in the said capacity, from 1565 to 1581.' After mentioning his services during the Siege, it goes on to say: 'Girolamo Cassar was one of the engineers under whose directions Valletta was built. The designs for the seven auberges are his; that of the magisterial palace; and the most remarkable of all his works is the Church of St. John.' A list of buildings designed by Cassar here follows, including several churches in Valletta, and the fortress-palace called the Tower of Verdala. It is interesting to notice that Cassar was succeeded as Chief Engineer to the Order by his son Vittorio Cassar, several of whose military works remain in the watch-towers placed round the coast of Malta and Gozo.

The architecture of Malta, or rather that part seen in the official buildings of the Order, has been described as Renaissance, to which a certain Doric sobriety has been added, in keeping with the originally monastic foundation of the Order. In the other buildings, civil and ecclesiastical, built for and by the Maltese themselves, a noted architect has written that a curious similarity is found between the architecture and that of some of the Belgian towns, which is explained by the presence

of the Spaniard, for, as has been mentioned, a Spanish Sovereign held Malta for the two centuries preceding the coming of the Order. Spanish architects in great numbers were in all probability employed upon the city of Valletta. 'Those peculiarly licentious forms of Renaissance art,' says Mr. Ingress Bell, 'which are distinctive of Spain—those defiant, discursive, curly-wurly doorways and dressings, which are plentiful in Antwerp—have their exact counterparts in Valletta.' Their influence is said to extend even to the balconies, which are held to be the Spanish *miradores*, themselves but modifications of the Oriental *moncharbis*, supported upon solid brackets of stone and closed with gratings. The Spanish design is certainly seen in the private houses of Valletta. Here is a description of a Valletta house given by Bedford: A vaulted vestibule leads into the courtyard of the mansion—sometimes closed by folding-doors with a wicket for entrance, sometimes by a high wooden gate, the object of which is to keep out the goats driven along the street to be milked by a picturesque herdsman, in half-seafaring guise, straight into your milk-jug—a touch of nature which modern science, finding in the goat's milk the medium of infection of the dreaded Malta fever, will shortly banish from

the scene. The courtyard is sometimes planted with shrubs or else simply paved, but always has a well. There is often a mezzanine floor, with a distinct entrance and tenancy, let to persons in humble station. The rooms of this tenement have no chimneys nor ventilation except from the front, and the cooking of the occupants is done upon the balcony in a little square stone oven. The ordinary rooms of the house are often palatial and always lofty, on an average eighteen feet high, and approached by a broad, handsome staircase, generally going round the four walls of the hall—a welcome change from that found in the ordinary English house.

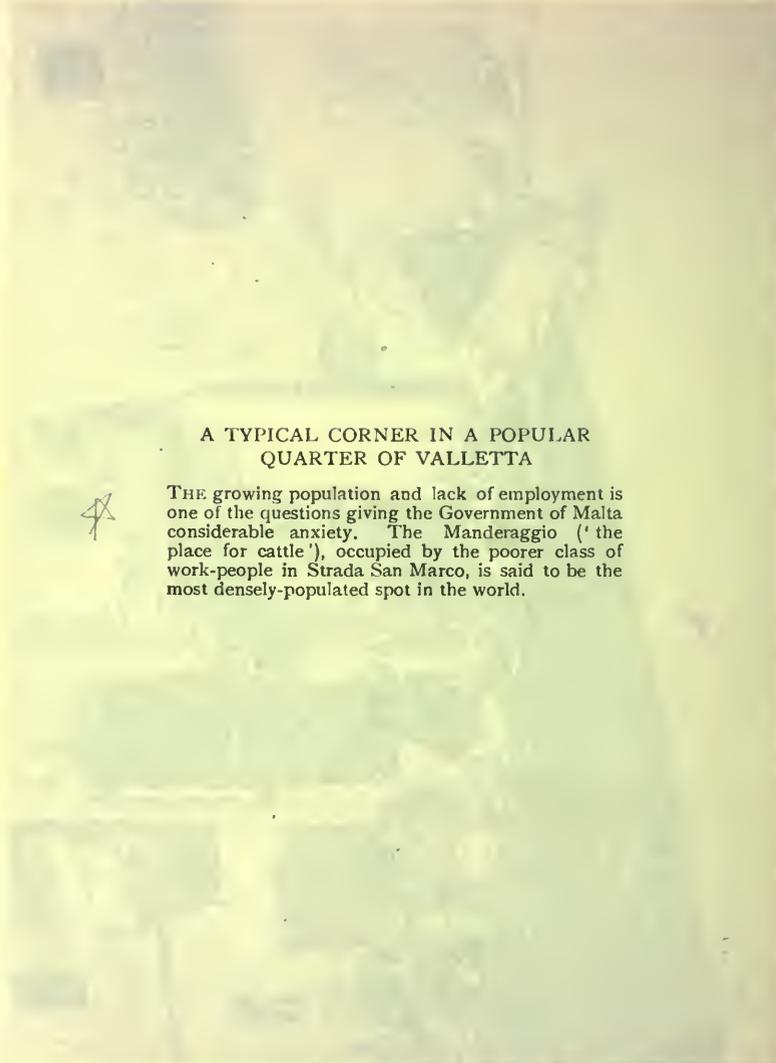
Some short allusion must be made to the three buildings which recall, above others, the days and doings of the Knights. St. John's, originally the conventual church of the Order, but now ranking equally with the Cathedral of the Bishop in Notabile and called in consequence the 'Co-Cathedral,' stands in a rectangular block of buildings which includes the Palaces of the Treasurer, and the Grand Prior, and the Campo Santo, the burying-place of the Order. The principal entrance is in Strada San Giovanni, by the great doorway between the two unpretentious towers, which is usually pro-





1884





A TYPICAL CORNER IN A POPULAR  
QUARTER OF VALLETTA

★ THE growing population and lack of employment is one of the questions giving the Government of Malta considerable anxiety. The Manderaggio ('the place for cattle'), occupied by the poorer class of work-people in Strada San Marco, is said to be the most densely-populated spot in the world.

tected by a heavy leathern curtain, like those in Italian churches, which can only be moved aside by a muscular effort on the part of those entering. The gorgeous pavement immediately attracts attention, formed as it is of over 400 armorial bearings in a mosaic of marbles and rare stones—‘the sprawling, heraldic devices of the dead gentlemen of the dead Order, as if in the next world they expected to take rank in conformity with their pedigrees, and would be marshalled into heaven according to the orders of precedence.’ So remarked the cynical Thackeray, Grand Cross Knights alone being granted burial in the nave, and Grand Masters alone—Oliver Starkey excepted—in the vault under the High Altar.

The most striking thing about the nave is its enormous width of 51 feet—greater than that of St. Paul’s—and its length of 187 feet. In the transepts are seven chapels, each devoted to a particular Language, filled with artistic treasures and memorials amply suggesting the commanding power of the departed Order. The Oratory Chapel, in which the novices were instructed, contains a fine painting of the decollation of St. John the Baptist, by Caravaggio, signed with the letters M.A.C., which are traced, such was the painter’s vanity, in the

blood trickling from the saint's neck. Caravaggio visited Malta in 1608. He is known to have painted the famous portrait of Vignacourt in the Louvre, and to have killed a Knight in a duel for saying it did not do the Grand Master justice. The ceiling of the church is barrel-vaulted, and entirely covered with frescoes by Mattia Preti, called *Il Calabrese*, giving the history of the life of St. John the Baptist, in which the figures stand out in wonderful relief. Preti, who is said to have spent thirty-eight years of his life upon this work, came to Malta in 1657, at the invitation of the Grand Master Cottoner, from Rome, where he had just completed his famous frescoes in Sant' Andrea della Valle. He lies buried in St. John's Church, the ceiling of which is, perhaps, his masterpiece. A quaint conceit, showing the growing artificiality of Preti's age, is seen in the daughter of Herodias, who is depicted in the fresco dancing before Herod, while hovering in the air above the damsel is a demon engaged in working her limbs by strings in the manner of a marionette. The grand embellishment of the Church of St. John's is, of course, the tapestry, consisting of twenty-eight pieces in all, which completely cover the sides of the church. They were presented in 1697 by the Grand Master

Perellos, and prepared from designs of Preti by the famous brothers De Vos of Brussels. Unfortunately, these wonderful works of art rarely appear to public view, save for a few days in the year in summer, when everyone is out of Valletta. The effect of these tapestries when in position, in strict harmony with the painted vault of the ceiling, is nothing short of a riot of colour and florid design, perhaps anywhere unequalled.

Among the things the sightseer must not miss are the silver railings of the Chapel of Our Lady of Philermos, saved from the spoiling hands of the French by a clever coat of paint; the modern effigy in the Chapel of France of the Comte de Beaujolais, brother of Louis Philippe; and two statues of an African and an Asiatic by Bernini, who also designed the High Altar.

The Governor's Palace is an outwardly severe two-storied building, presenting inside a maze of courtyards, colonnades, and corridors, filled with frescoes and pictures illustrating the history of the Knights. In the Palace is the Armoury of the Order, containing over 4,000 pieces, most of which did service in the Great Siege. They have recently been catalogued by Mr. Guy Laking. Relics of the days of chivalry are to be found

in a bâton of La Vallette; the sword and dress of Dragut; the original act of donation of the islands of Malta, Gozo, and the fortress of Tripoli to the Order; and the trumpet on which was sounded the retreat of the Knights from Rhodes in 1522. The present ballroom has witnessed sterner scenes than the vagaries of the 'Boston' or the mystic mazes of the valse. In this room, then ornamented with red damask and large mirrors, was held, upon the night of June 10 to 11, 1798, the last Council of the Order, at which presided the Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch, in biretta and black robe, seated on the throne decorated in crimson and gold, beneath a large crucifix. The Bishop of Malta, the Prior of St. John's, and the Vice-Chancellor were seated at a black ebony table, drafting terms which they fondly imagined they could offer to the French. Here they received on the morning of the 11th the Chief of Brigade General Junot, first aide-de-camp of Napoleon, who made them sign 'a suspension of arms,' during which the surrender of the fortress was to be arranged on board *L'Orient* between Napoleon and the Deputies of the Order. In this room, also, the remains of Sir Alexander Ball lay in state, his death having taken place at Sant'

Antonio in October, 1809. The room was draped in black and white, and at one end was placed the coffin, upon which lay the gold sword and medal presented to him in 1800 by the devoted Maltese to commemorate the surrender of Valletta.

One other building must be mentioned—the Hospital built by the Order at the end of Strada Mercanti. It contains the longest hospital ward in the world—503 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 30 feet high—and is used to-day as a military hospital. The Knights observed to the last one of the original rules of their Order in maintaining, and personally attending, this Hospital. Their methods were scarcely in accordance with modern ideas. They relieved the darkness of the interior (it had very small windows) by great tapestries, which must have made a snug home for many malignant germs; they served the patients upon silver, and filled the ward with heavy furniture. Even to-day the place is a dismal one, and dreaded by the soldiers who are sent there; and it stands in a very bad situation, being exposed to the enervating Scirocco.

The reader who wearies of the many memorials of the past presented at each turn in the buildings of Valletta and the Three Cities may turn

for relief to the beautiful gardens, such as the Argotti or Sa Maison, each called after a Bailiff of the Order ; or the Maglio, which is called after the game of handball formerly played here, and now turned into a finely planted promenade—its history in this respect resembling that of the Mall in London—or the Giardino Botanico, all these being in the suburb of Floriana. In the country Palace of Sant' Antonio, too, fine gardens will be found, with palms and all types of tropical foliage ; and at Verdala, a palace built like an Italian fortalice, there is the wood called Boschetto, planted by the Grand Master Verdala as a deer-park.

One may follow the country roads—lined in spring and summer, before the fierce August sun has parched them up, with all sorts of wild-flowers, geraniums, the deep red thorn-rose, clumps of the dark carob-tree, and occasional cypresses—passing through orange and lemon groves, vineyards, gardens of figs, peaches, pomegranates, medlars, apricots and pears. Farther afield, a climb to the top of the Bengemma Hills will give a view of fields green with wheat, barley, and cummin, or streaked red with clover. (The countryside from this height presents the appearance of a chess-board, the small fields and

gardens being carefully enclosed by high walls or terraced at different levels to prevent the wind and the rain sweeping them away, so thin is the layer of soil. One cannot, indeed, escape the stone. Malta has been described as a mason's earthly paradise, being in reality one vast quarry, the verdure with which it is covered in spring and early summer being due to the untiring energy of the inhabitants, the peasants in the country, like those in Gozo, living by agriculture, exporting to England and elsewhere early potatoes, beans, onions, melons, figs, oranges, especially blood-oranges, and lemons.

Thus the Isles of Calypso abound with many interests over and above the fortifications, fever, and lace, with which alone they are frequently associated.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIAL LIFE

BRYDONE, in a once popular volume, 'A Tour through Sicily and Malta,' published in 1773, wrote: 'As Malta is an epitome of all Europe, and an assemblage of the younger brothers, who are commonly the best, of its first families, it is probably one of the best academies for politeness in this part of the globe. The Knights and Commanders have much the appearance of gentlemen and men of the world. We met with no character in extreme; the ridicules and prejudices of every particular nation are by degrees softened and worn off by familiar intercourse and collision with each other.'

Maltese society of to-day reflects in a faint measure the features drawn by this observant Englishman of a Malta of the past; and though the Auberges are no longer filled by 'gentlemen and men of the world' drawn from seven nations, it still preserves a distinctly cosmopolitan strain in



PIAZZA REALE, VALLETTA

HERE stand the Library of the Knights, the Casino  
Maltese, and the statue of Queen Victoria.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Social Life

Byron's, in a more popular volume 'A Tour through Sicily and Malta,' published in 1774, says: "As Malta is an asylum of all Europe, and a meeting-place of the younger nobles, who are dispersed to the loss of their families, it is the theatre of a variety of intrigues, for political and other purposes, and of dissensions and quarrels, which are not only the cause of the quarrels of gentlemen with each other, but of the quarrels of the world. We find with no exactness to be true, the prejudices and passions of every nation, but they are by degrees softened and worn out by familiar intercourse and collisions with each other."

Malta's variety of to-day reflects in a less measure the features drawn by this observant Englishman of a Malta of the past, and though the Antiques are no longer filled by "gentlemen and men of the world" drawn from every nook and cranny, it preserves a distinctly cosmopolitan character in



Vincenzo Borroni  
1903



the descendants of refugees, many of whom fled from persecution in their own lands to the haven offered under the independent sovereignty of the Grand Masters. For instance, a Maltese priest known to the writer includes among his ancestors a lady called O'Kelly, whose family sailed from Galway in the seventeenth century to escape the Penal Code then in force against Roman Catholics ; and to-day, under the British flag, there dwells in Malta a queen in exile—a lady who claims to be the rightful holder of an Eastern throne. The Order of St. John in its palmy days attracted from the Continent many artists, musicians, merchants, traders, bankers, and members of learned professions, as did British rule in the early years of the last century, affording in Malta a security not found elsewhere during the Napoleonic wars. Many of these settlers attained to honourable positions in the island, and the descendants of these Spaniards, Germans, Italians, French, and Greeks, still in many cases pursue the businesses and professions of their ancestors.

Malta in consequence offers a great variety in its social life : a diversity of temperament, traditions, and manners, interesting to the visitor who believes that the greatest study of mankind is man. To

this pot-pourri of nationalities must be added the birds of passage from the liners, yachts, and ships of the foreign navies touching here for a few days. The kaleidoscopic scenes of a reception at the Palace or a ball at the 'Borsa,' witnessed for the first time, will leave an impression not easily forgotten. Besides the usual personages—'His Excellency and Staff'; the Maltese nobles; the officers of the fleet and garrison in their gay uniforms; Monsignori and Cathedral Canons in picturesque robes and buckled shoes; 'honourable members' of Council, Crown officials, and innumerable Consuls in the gorgeous dress of their respective Governments—one may see in addition some of those casual visitors to whom a diplomatic 'A.D.C.' has been careful to issue invitations. These may include officers of the Italian, French, German, or American navies; possibly a Cabinet Minister cruising in the Mediterranean during the parliamentary recess; some great proconsul returning from our dominions beyond the seas; a French official bound for Tunis; a 'cavaliere' from Rome; a distinguished Orientalist studying the Maltese language; a Turkish Pasha or an Egyptian politician; a Chinese gentleman from the awakening East on his way to England to study our Constitution—these, in all manner of

costumes and colours, with the blaze of foreign ribbons and orders, the babble of ten different tongues, little suggest the uneventful round of life in a Crown colony.

This cosmopolitan element finds its way into the hospitable Maltese drawing-rooms, where may be enjoyed, in the afternoons, music, tea, and conversation, this latter being conducted in either Maltese, English, or Italian, and possibly French, for this language is often spoken in Maltese families. And such drawing-rooms—balconied, cool, shaded, lofty, spacious, marble-floored and frescoed, filled with family treasures and ancestral pictures, including an occasional Knight, the latter in powdered perruque and the eight-pointed cross, smiling blandly from his frame in complete disregard of the set-to between Christian and Mussulman of which we catch a glimpse through the indispensable pillar and curtain in the background of the painting; probably, too, a canvas of an old Maltese dame in a starched muslin head-dress, with rosary in hand, prayer-book and crucifix on the table beside her, and, if she be a 'baronessa,' certainly a bell wherewith to summon to her 'la serva'—for in those good old days the more aristocratic they were the more helpless seemed

the fairer sex to be. The drawing-room, in keeping with these old-world figures, is furnished with stately settees and stiff-backed gilded chairs in fine faded old brocade; statues, tapestries, come possibly from Flemish looms with those more famous ones of St. John's; beautiful collections of antique silver; plenty of old books, including the 'Lives of the Saints,' many old prints, with enough views of Valletta and the Grand Harbour to fill all the pictorial geographies in the world.

It is customary to offer guests paying afternoon calls a liqueur called *rosolin*, made in Malta, which is sometimes served in quaint silver liqueur-cups, some of which the collector of old silver may be lucky enough to find in the old curiosity shops in Strada Santa Lucia, at the back of St. John's. In these pleasant surroundings you may chat, in either of the four languages mentioned, with, perhaps, a charming signorina who was your partner at a Club dance on the previous evening, discussing all things from the merits of the new prima donna to that never-failing conversational sheet-anchor in Malta—the state of the passage in the penny steamers to Sliema.

Into this Maltese circle the English residents

rarely intrude, nor do the wives, sisters, cousins, and aunts, of the fleet and garrison who have come for a winter season to the sunny South—whether deterred by the linguistic efforts that may be expected of them, or the innumerable stairs to be climbed to reach the drawing-room, which in Malta is generally, for coolness, upon the top-floor, it is not quite clear. The fact remains that, with the exception of a few high officials, the two nationalities do not mix, and more's the pity; so that we are left to imagine that the Briton abroad is a shy and retiring individual.

English society, indeed, finds plenty with which to occupy itself, and under the influence of the strange environment and the continual gaieties of the season loses much of the stiffness for which it is proverbial at home. English ladies in Malta, we are told, laugh over their household difficulties, instead of uttering dismal groans as in England; and the officers grumble less over their uniform than usual; while both the sexes have plenty of opportunity for flirtation. The young officer fresh from home may well regard the poet's warning: 'And thou may'st find a new Calypso here!' Money seems to go a long way. People who at home look twice at their butchers' books own

a trap and a pair of ponies, drive tandem, play polo, ride in races, subscribe gaily to a box at the opera and for tickets for the club dances. House-keeping, indeed, in a flat in Strada Mezzodì, or a house at Sliema, is bereft of its terrors if the 'sinura' is wise enough to entrust it to 'Pietro' or 'Carmela,' who will bargain in the markets with an Eastern cunning at five o'clock in the morning for fish, fowl, kid (in lieu of lamb), water-melons and prickly pears, and all the ingredients for wonderful *bragioli*, *ravioli*, or *timpani*, and other mysterious dishes in the Maltese menu.

The servants (*sefturi* they are called in Malta) are faithful to the 'sinur' and 'sinura's' interests, and, though often illiterate, will render an exact account of every penny spent in the morning market. From this they will return in a lordly manner, followed by a small boy balancing gracefully upon his head a tall narrow basket containing the purchases for the daily needs. To those who would venture upon the gentle art of housekeeping for themselves, a little book by 'Fat Rabbit,' published locally, which tells of prices and places where to buy, will repay perusal. To watch the Maltese peasant women doing their housekeeping, wrangling and haggling together over the price of olives

or a chicken, gesticulating wildly, with expressive movements of their features and faldetta amid a positive torrent of words, is an awe-inspiring treat.

The dances, of which there are several every week, constitute the chief attraction of the winter season, and take place at the Palace, the clubs, or in the ships of the fleet. They cannot be given in the ordinary private houses owing to the absence of wooden floors. Perhaps one of the finest dancing floors in the world is that swung on chains in the vast ballroom of the Union Club, once the Auberge de Provence, in Strada Reale. The Carnival Ball at the Palace is the great event of the social year. It is opened by a Maltese native dance, something like a minuet, in which about a dozen couples take part, generally including some *débutantes* of Maltese society, the ladies of the dance being dressed in red-and-white costumes of the national colours, designed in the eighteenth-century style. Not the least pleasant part of this dance, for the performers at any rate, consists of the numerous rehearsals that take place from house to house or in the Palace in the weeks preceding. At the Carnival Ball fancy dress is, of course, the order of the evening, and the old-world costumes of departed kings, queens, courtiers, maids-of-

honour, Catherine de Medicis, Richelieus, Romeos and Juliets, the gay uniforms of naval and military officers, harmonize well with the mise-en-scène of the Palace of the Grand Masters with its mediæval and romantic memories. Once again, perhaps, the old walls may witness the coming and going of forms clad in the familiar robes of the Order, the flippant conversation of the wearers while 'sitting out' a dance in the corridors no doubt causing the ancient Brethren looking down from their painted canvases to frown severely in spirit.

The Casino Maltese, better known as the 'Borsa,' from their old quarters over the Exchange, have, in their new habitation, once the Treasury of the Order, at the corner of St. George's Square, also a fine ballroom, strikingly decorated in white and gold. The Casino de' Nobili gives a *bal masqué* at Carnival, the very limited invitations for this event being anxiously sought by

'matrons ever on the watch  
To mar a son's or make a daughter's match.'

A reference to these entertainments would not be complete without an allusion to Professor de Lancellotti and his band, which plays with that feeling and abandon of which only the Southern temperament seems capable.





William Borja  
Bata 1909.





A FOUNTAIN IN A POPULAR QUARTER

THE popular quarters of Valletta are most picturesque. 'Even the poor,' wrote Thackeray, 'live in palaces.'

Another well-known feature of the season is the Opera, beginning in November and lasting for four months. Most great singers, from Albani to Tetrizzini, when less known to fame, have sung to Maltese audiences in the handsome opera-house with its tiers of stone boxes in Strada Reale. Success in Valletta generally means for the prima donna a step up the ladder which ends at La Scala or Covent Garden. The Maltese are very musical and make critical audiences, who neither speak during the performance, come in late, rustle their programmes, nor do any of the thousand and one things which we permit in our theatres at home; and they will not hesitate to hiss a performer who sings out of tune or renders the music incorrectly. Like the Italians in the matter of encores, they insist upon their favourite scenes being repeated all over again. Operas are given five days in the week, including Sunday evenings, when the humblest Maltese will crowd to hear and appreciate Donizetti or Verdi. Both old and modern music, from Mercadante to Wagner, may be enjoyed in Valletta, and one may hear Leoncavallo's 'Zazà' and Giordano's 'Fedora,' and other operas which rarely find their way to England; while the old favourites of our

grandfathers, such as 'L'Africana,' 'Aida,' 'Norma,' 'Barbriere,' and 'Les Huguenots,' still hold their own. The Theatre Manoel, built in 1731 by Grand Master A. Manoel de Vilhena, was once famous for opera bouffe. Here Madame Angot still occasionally charms, and Don Pasquale is consumed with jealousy upon these old boards in Strada Teatro. This theatre, built of stone like that of San Carlo at Naples, is the second oldest of those still standing in the world, having thus for two centuries escaped destruction by fire. During the temporary occupation of the French, when Valletta was invested by the Maltese, a company of Sicilian players were by chance shut up within the city, and these unhappy persons were forced by the besieged soldiers to perform for their amusement in the Manoel Theatre, despite the occasional shots from the Maltese mortars that passed over the roof of the building.

The Malta Sports Club organizes cricket matches, tennis tournaments, and race meetings at the Marsa, a vast expanse of sandy ground with occasional patches of carefully-prized grass. Here is a very fine club-house, with polo-ground and golf-course adjoining. Expeditions to St. Paul's Bay, where there is an excellent hotel, to Marsa

Scirocco, or other pretty little villages lying along the coast at the foot of the numerous creeks—blue arms of the sea running into the golden rocks ; an excursion in the slow-moving eight-mile railway to Città Vecchia ; moonlight picnics in the summer nights to the groves of Boschetto—a pleasure ground laid out with trees and ornamental water by Grand Master Verdala ; sailing in the small and swift Maltese craft of native build, decked, and with a three-cornered sail, called *bakka*, now sometimes found in the waters of English yacht clubs ; amateur theatricals—once ‘ His Excellency the Governor ’ was forbidden by the sensitive authorities as being rather personal — drives in essentially English dog-carts—in short, to get as much fun as possible becomes the end and aim of the gay and light-hearted English visitors out for a winter season. ‘ In such a fashion only,’ it has been cleverly remarked, ‘ is exile from Aldershot or Hyde Park made tolerable.’

Plenty of grumblers, of course, are to be found in Malta, as elsewhere. There is the ‘ junior sub ’ who tells you that ‘ this season is not as gay as the last ’—‘ last season,’ indeed, is always ‘ top-hole ’—and the old lady who avers that nowadays ‘ society is not what it used to be,’ to whose pessimistic

assertions we can best reply in the words of the editor of *Punch* upon a kindred occasion : ' It never was ! ' One anonymous individual, indeed, went so far as to state, in a recent number of a Service journal, that nothing of good was to be seen, found, or heard, in Malta. Stay ! We are doing even this melancholy critic an injustice : the ' Victim,' as he signed himself, admitting that the island contained one attraction—' a really inviting cemetery !'

Society in England and elsewhere has, it is true, changed in one direction with the march of democracy. It has lost the importance and influence it possessed in the days before Reform, when the great English houses in quite the grand manner arranged the affairs of their country and the Empire—often to the advantage of their poor relations. Colonial society likewise has since those days lost much of its dramatic interest and its marked personalities. Rawdon Crawleys are no longer sent through the charms of a Becky Sharp to govern Coventry Island ; nor is Malta nowadays stirred into excitement by the presence of a Byron bound for the Isles of Greece, or a Fabrizio directing from this isolated little rock revolutions in Italy. These things disappeared when Cook's Coupons replaced the Grand Tour.

When Byron started from London in 1809 to travel, as proper for a young patrician of his day, he found the ordinary routes on the Continent closed by the Napoleonic wars, and, as his mind was at that moment filled with the books about Persia, India, and the East, that he had been reading, he sailed for the Mediterranean to

‘ . . . view the walls  
Where free Byzantium once arose,  
And Stamboul’s Oriental halls  
The Turkish tyrants now enclose,’

as has been recorded in some verses addressed by him ‘To Florence,’ which were written in Malta.

Byron arrived in the island ‘en grande suite’ consisting of his intimate friend Mr. Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Bathurst, his valet Fletcher, his family butler Murray, and Rushton, a son of one of his tenants ; and the poet must have considerably astonished the authorities of this ‘little military hot-house’—for so Byron disdainfully called the island—by his appearance in the famous scarlet uniform belonging to no known regiment and apparently of his own design, which he donned on great occasions during his travels. Byron began in Malta a romantic friendship with a Mrs. Spencer Smith,

the wife of an English officer, such a person as one would expect to find in its cosmopolitan atmosphere. Of her the poet wrote to his mother : ' This letter is committed to the charge of a very extraordinary lady, whom you have doubtless heard of, Mrs. Spencer Smith, of whose escape the Marquis de Salvo published a narrative a few years ago. She has since been shipwrecked, and her life has been from its commencement so fertile in remarkable incidents that in a romance they would appear improbable. She was born at Constantinople, where her father, Baron Herbert, was Austrian Ambassador ; married unhappily, yet never impeached in point of character ; excited the vengeance of Bonaparte by taking part in some conspiracy ; several times risked her life, and is not yet five-and-twenty. . . . Bonaparte is even now so incensed against her that her life would be in danger if she were taken prisoner a second time.' This lady is addressed by Byron in several stanzas of ' Childe Harold ' as ' Florence,' and in the separate poem already mentioned. Byron, when in Malta, as became a gallant, had an altercation with an English officer, which nearly terminated in a duel. He stayed in the house at the corner of Strada Vescovo overlooking St. George's Square. His

impressions of Malta were scarcely happy ones, judging from the bad-tempered tone of his farewell to Valletta, due, we must imagine, to the scirocco prevailing during his visit, which 'gave him fever and the spleen.'

A more appreciative visitor was found in Sir Walter Scott, who cruised in the Mediterranean in 1831 in H.M.S. *Barham*, placed by the British Government at the disposal of the then enfeebled and dying novelist. Scott stayed at Beverley's Hotel in Strada Ponente. A good account is found in Lockhart's 'Life' of his impressions, and the great ovation he received from the distinguished people, both English and native, then gathered in the island. A garrison ball was organized in his honour in the Auberge de Provence, where more Scottish music was then heard than has been the case either before or since. On his entering the ballroom an ode of welcome was read, and it is recorded that one native admirer attempted, not merely symbolically, but in actual fact, to crown the brows of the great man with a wreath of laurels. Scott took many excursions through the island, and was much interested in the character of the people. The city of Valletta entranced him: 'This town,' he repeatedly remarked to his com-

panion, 'is really a dream.' The relics of chivalry to be seen in the books in the library, the buildings, and churches of the Order, naturally interested exceedingly the author of 'Ivanhoe,' so much so that when, as Lockhart has recorded, he imprudently resumed the pen of romance, forbidden him by his doctors, the subject he chose was drawn from his memories of this visit. Strada Stretta, the scene of the duels of the Knights, with its gloomy doorways, narrow passages, and overhanging balconies, in particular charmed him, lending itself to dramatic treatment in the hands of a weaver of romance. 'It is hard,' he exclaimed, as he wandered through Valletta on the last day of his visit, 'if I can't make something of this!' Fate was unkind, for the great novelist died the next year on his return to England. Scott found at Malta many old friends from England and Scotland, including Sir John Stoddard, then Chief Justice of Malta, an Englishman who always had a kind word to say for the Maltese; Sir William Alexander, the English Lord Chief Baron; Colonel Bathurst; and the whimsical genius James Hookham Frere. This antiquarian and man of letters—the personal friend of Pitt and Canning, a former Under-Secretary of State, and British Minister at

A PROCESSION AT SUNSET AT CITTÀ  
VECCHIA

CITTÀ VECCHIA, called 'The City of the Dead' by a popular writer, awakens into life on the occasion of the many processions and religious ceremonials which abound in Malta.





V. Bony  
1809



the Court of Spain—had settled in Malta with his wife the Dowager Countess of Erroll, attracted there by the charms of the climate, and under the Mediterranean sky he wrote for the English public at home many of his best works. It is interesting to note that his famous translations of the plays of Aristophanes, described as ‘masterpieces of a difficult art,’ were first of all privately printed in Malta in 1839. Thackeray, too, in the early Victorian era, visited Malta, and has recorded his impressions in ‘A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo.’ The novelist, like Scott, was put in ‘damned’st quarantine’ in Fort Manoel, known to travellers, as he punningly observed, as ‘Le Manuel des Voyageurs.’

Michele Fabrizi, the Italian patriot, the henchman of Mazzini, Crispi, and Garibaldi, spent many years of his long, eventful life (he was born in 1804, and died in 1885) in Malta. ‘Since 1837,’ writes Mr. Trevelyan in ‘Garibaldi and the Thousand,’ ‘he had made it his headquarters, and from there guided the movement against the Bourbons in Spain in the direction of Italian Unity. Early in the fifties he laid in a secret store of ammunition, and hundreds of bad old muskets, some saved from the wreck of the late revolution in Sicily, others

purchased for £50 from Mazzini in London. Though such an armoury was illegal in Valletta, the British authorities, benevolently neutral to Bomba's enemies, made no effort to find it; the rumour of its existence gave Fabrizi importance among all Sicilian parties. The Government of Palermo kept spies around him, who periodically reported his doings. There was a continual passage of conspirators from Sicily, Genoa, and England, to Malta, and thence threatening Bourbon rule.'

In recent years many celebrities have sojourned, admired, and recorded their pleasant impressions of sunny days in merry Malta. Lady Brassey, sailing in the *Sunbeam*, has spoken with fondness in her famous diary of the place and the people, leaving a record of her visit in the phrase 'the price that Lady Brassey paid,' by which shopkeepers for long after tried to prove to tourists the equity of their prices for souvenirs. The French novelist, René Bazin, was so charmed on his arrival by the still mediæval appearance of the place that he asked, 'But where are the Knights themselves?' H.R.H. Princess Beatrice has translated into English a diary of one of the German Knights, giving a picture of social life in Malta in the sixteenth century; while His late Majesty King

Edward, with Queen Alexandra, paid no less than three visits in his short reign.

Social life in Malta, however, is now less eventful than in the days when a Governor could be so autocratic that he was called 'King Tom,' or when, eighty years ago, a local guide-book, describing a certain 'pretty miniature palace,' gravely wrote of the owner—no doubt to impress the reader—'the Marchioness passed her younger days at the Courts of Europe!'

Malta, indeed, is often overlooked. Even Kipling, the Bard of Empire, has seemingly been silent about this little island which Byron once thought worthy of several stanzas. If, despite the perusal of these pages, the stranger be disappointed in the vaunted charms of Malta and craves to be home again, we can only ask him, when writing 'London' on his luggage labels, to repeat as a corrective the four lines in Byron's 'Farewell to Valletta':

'I go—but God knows when, or why,  
To smoky towns and clouded sky,  
To things (*the honest truth to say*)  
*As bad—but in a different way.*'



## BYRON'S FAREWELL TO MALTA

ADIEU, ye joys of La Vallette !  
Adieu, scirocco, sun and sweat !  
Adieu, thou palace rarely entered !  
Adieu, ye mansions where—I've ventured !  
Adieu, ye cursed streets of stairs !  
(How surely he who mounts you swears !)  
Adieu, ye merchants often failing !  
Adieu, thou mob for ever railing !  
Adieu, ye packets—without letters !  
Adieu, ye fools—who ape your betters !  
Adieu, thou damned'st quarantine  
That gave me fever, and the spleen !  
Adieu that stage which makes us yawn, sirs,  
Adieu his 'Excellency's' dancers !  
Adieu to Peter—whom no fault's in,  
But could not teach a colonel waltzing ;  
Adieu, ye females frougt with graces !  
Adieu, red coats, and redder faces !  
Adieu, the supercilious air  
Of all that strut 'en militaire' !  
I go—but God knows when, or why,  
To smoky towns and clouded sky,

To things (the honest truth to say)  
 As bad—but in a different way.  
 Farewell to these, but not adieu,  
 Triumphant sons of truest blue!  
 While either Adriatic shore,  
 And fallen chiefs, and fleets no more,  
 And nightly smiles, and daily dinners  
 Proclaim you war and woman's winners—  
 Pardon my Muse, who apt to prate is,  
 And take my rhyme—because 'tis 'gratis.'

And now I've got to Mrs. Fraser,  
 Perhaps you think I mean to praise her—  
 And were I vain enough to think  
 My praises were worth this drop of ink,  
 A line—or two—were no hard matter,  
 As here, indeed, I need not flatter:  
 But here she must be content to shine  
 In better praises than in mine,  
 With lively air and open heart,  
 And fashion's ease without its art;  
 Her hours can gaily glide along,  
 Nor ask the aid of idle song.

And now, O Malta! since thou'st got us,  
 Thou little military hothouse!  
 I'll not offend with words uncivil,  
 And wish thee rudely at the Devil,  
 But only stare from out my casement  
 And ask, for what is such a place meant?  
 Then, in my solitary nook,  
 Return to scribbling, or a book,

Or take my physic while I'm able  
(Two spoonfuls hourly by the label),  
Prefer my nightcap to my beaver,  
And bless the gods—I've got a fever!

*May 26, 1811.*

## CLIMATE

(From the Colonial Office List.)

THE climate of Malta is equable and very healthy in winter. In August the heat at the sea-level approaches that experienced in the tropics. The nights, however, are pleasant and cool, except during the prevalence of the scirocco wind. The mean maximum temperature during the three coldest months (December, January, and February) is  $58.8^{\circ}$  F., and the mean minimum is  $50.6^{\circ}$  F.; but during the four hottest months (June, July, August, and September) the mean maximum is  $81.6^{\circ}$  F., and the mean minimum  $70.6^{\circ}$  F. The mean temperature is  $64.6^{\circ}$  F., and the mean annual rainfall is 20 inches. There is no river or rivulet in the island, the water drainage becoming absorbed in the porous sandstone beds, and finding its way through underground channels and aqueducts. An old guide-book, written by Thomas MacGill, and dedicated to Queen Adelaide, contains the following quaint remark upon Casal Krendi and the neighbourhood: 'The fine air on all this portion of the island is truly exhilarating, and would put even a cynic in jovial humour.'

### RULERS OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS

1500 B.C., the Phœnicians.

700 B.C., Greeks.

480 B.C., Carthaginians.

256 B.C., Romans.

870 A.D., Arabs.

1090 A.D., Roger the Norman.

1090 to 1530 A.D., Malta a feudal fief, subject in turn to the Suabian, Aragon, and Castilian crowns.

1530 A.D., March 24, the Emperor Charles V. grants the Maltese Islands to the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

### A LIST OF THE GRAND MASTERS WHO GOVERNED MALTA FROM 1530 TO 1798

1.	L'Isle Adam	...	...	...	...	1530
2.	Peter Dupont	...	...	...	...	1534
3.	Didier de St. Jaille	...	...	...	...	1536
4.	John d'Omedes	...	...	...	...	1536
5.	Claude de la Sangle	...	...	...	...	1553
6.	Jean de la Vallette	...	...	...	...	1557
7.	Pietro del Monte	...	...	...	...	1568
8.	Jean de la Cassière	...	...	...	...	1572
9.	Hugo de Verdala	...	...	...	...	1582
10.	Martin Garzes	...	...	...	...	1595
11.	Alosius Vignacourt	...	...	...	...	1601
12.	Louis Mendes Vasconcellos	...	...	...	...	1622

13.	Anthony de Paule	...	...	...	1623
14.	Lascaris Castellar	...	...	...	1635
15.	Martin de Redin	...	...	...	1657
16.	Annet de Clermont Gessan	...	...	...	1660
17.	Ralph Cottoner ...	...	...	...	1660
18.	Nicholas Cottoner	...	...	...	1663
19.	Gregory Caraffa	...	...	...	1680
20.	Adrian Vignacourt	...	...	...	1690
21.	Raymond Perellos	...	...	...	1697
22.	Mark Anthony Zondadari	...	...	...	1720
23.	Anthony Manoel de Vilhena	...	...	...	1722
24.	Raymond d'Espuig	...	...	...	1736
25.	Emanuel Pinto ...	...	...	...	1741
26.	Ximenes de Texada	...	...	...	1773
27.	Emanuel de Rohan	...	...	...	1775
28.	Ferdinand von Hompesch	...	...	...	1798

1798. June 12, Buonaparte enters Valletta.

1798. June 18, Hompesch leaves Malta.

1799. February 9, Sir Alexander Ball made President of the Maltese Provisional Government.

1800. September 8, Sir Alexander Ball enters Valletta at the termination of the French occupation.

BRITISH CIVIL COMMISSIONERS AND GOVERNORS  
OF MALTA

1801. Sir Charles Cameron.

1802. Sir Alexander Ball.

1810. Sir Hildebrande Oakes.

1813. Sir Thomas Maitland.

1824. The Marquis of Hastings.  
1827. Sir Frederick Ponsonby.  
1836. Sir Henry Bouverie.  
1841. Sir Patrick Stuart.  
1847. Right Hon. R. More O'Ferrall  
1851. Sir William Reid.  
1858. Sir J. Gaspard Le Marchant.  
1864. Sir Henry K. Storks.  
1867. Sir Patrick Grant.  
1872. Sir C. T Van Straubenzee.  
1878. Sir Frederick Borton.  
1884. Sir Lintorn Simmons.  
1888. Sir H. D. O. Torrens.  
1890. Sir H. A. Smyth.  
1893. Sir A. J. Lyon Fremantle.  
1899. Lord Grenfell of Kilvey.  
1903. Sir C. Mansfield Clarke.  
1907. Sir Henry Fane Grant.  
1909. His Excellency General Sir H. M. Leslie  
Rundle, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

### CONSTITUTION OF MALTA

THE government of Malta and its dependencies is administered by a Governor, advised and assisted by an Executive Council, established in 1881, reconstituted in 1887 and 1903, and now by Letters Patent, December 17, 1909, by which—as the outcome of the demands of the popular party—two Unofficial Members, with salaries, have been added to the eleven Official Members of which the Executive had hitherto been composed.

Legislation is carried on by means of a partly elective

Council of Government, originally constituted by Letters Patent of May 11, 1849; and from time to time reconstituted by Letters Patent. It now consists of a President and a Vice-President, ten Official and eight Elected Members. The electorate numbers a little under 10,000 persons.

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