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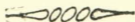
A  
BRIEF DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
ISLAND OF MALTA

SHEWING SOME OF ITS  
PRODUCTIONS AND PECULIARITIES  
OF ITS INHABITANTS.

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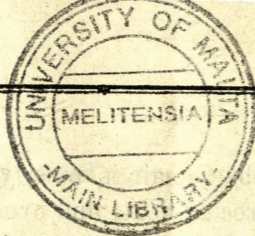
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MALTA 1883.



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## CHAPTER I.

On the Geographical position of the Island its climate and productions, and general character and peculiarities of its Inhabitants.

The situation of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea, being 60 miles south of Sicily, near Italy, is in 35 North Latitude, and about 40. East Longitude, placing it in a temperate Zone, inclining more towards moderate than excessive heat (except during six weeks in July and August, when the thermometer reaches 90 and 92, consequently it may be deemed not only pleasant, but delightful, as from its many aromatic groves of orange, lemon, and fig trees, with abundance of ivy trees, and surrounded by the sea at only a few miles distance,—rendering the refreshing sea breezes to be felt all over

the Island, whereby the air is mostly kept in in temperate degree of heat, and even during September, when the « Scirocco » wind prevails, at which time some lassitude is felt, but which may be much counteracted by practising abstinence from heavy kinds of food as, beef, pork &c., and by a free use of cooling drinks, as home made lemonade and orangeade, together with a light diet of Fish and Fowl, the former being very abundant at this time of the year, particularly the Dolphin, called in Maltese «Lampooky», a really nice flavoured and delicate fish with scarcely any bones, and weighing about 2 or 3 lbs at 2d. a lb. and which can be either baked, boiledfried or stewed. Fowls and pigeons are also plentiful at this time, and can be had at very cheap prices, as, good capons at 16d & 1|8 each, chickens and young pigeons at 8d a pair.

By regular adherence to the diet and drink

before suggested, accompanied by frequent cold water and shower baths, skin and blood will be kept constantly cool, and the animal spirits elastic and cheerful.

Besides the very abundant production of the fruits already named, there are many other kinds of very delicious flavour and exceedingly juicy, such as the 3 different sorts of melons, Water, Sweet, and bread-melons suited to the Summer and Winter use, exquisite pears, large and small peaches, fine beautiful nectarines and mulberries hawked about the streets at 5 o'clock in the morning at only 1d. the lb.

The Maltese grown oranges are so large and juicy, that they are sought for and exported to all the nations of Europe.

From the Island being composed chiefly of rock, the soil is very shallow, and although all the serial kinds of grain are sown, they do not produce such full yields, as where the earth is deeper.

Vegetables, as Potatoes, and Cabbages are plentiful, and Peas ( 2 crops yearly ) and Cauliflowers very large and abundant, followed by artichoks, asparagus and Spinage, with that beautiful sauce, vegetable Tomatos sold at 10 lbs. for 1d.

Mention must also be made of that exceedingly popular fruit from the «Cactus» tree, called Indian fig, or vulgarly Prickly Pear, which although an inferior kind, is really very nice flavoured and juicy, and from its cooling nature, is much sought for of a summer morning by the lower classes, as being very cheap, 4 lbs being sold for 1d. Another great attraction for the breakfast table at the commencement of the heats of Summer, is the green fig just getting ripe, when on being opened, a rich luscious guice escapes, inviting itself to be partaken of, as also its accompanying dish of delightful Honey Comb fresh from the Bee Hives of Gozo an island

situated a mile or 2 from Malta, whence it is brought, in large quantities and sold at 3d. per lb.

Fish is abundant all the year round, the smaller being the earliest caught, as Sardines a kind like our sprats, but thicker and richer called in Maltese «Voppy», these succeeded in March by abundant shoals of Herrings and Mackerel, and a fish as large as our salmon called «Cherner» whose flesh is peculiarly white and delicate, being either boiled into a rich soup, or prepared with Tomato kethup sauce. The kind appearing in May and June, is of a peculiarly useful and satisfactory character; so much so, that its advent is always signatized by a procession being formed to honour its arrival, consisting of the fish as large as a good sized calf, followed by bands of music and crowds of fishermen, and the populace of the place. The fish is called «Tunny» fish, and by a Wise Providence's Ordi-

nation, annually visits Malta in shoals in its progressive course round all the ports of the Mediterranean Coast, leaving abundant supplies not only for immediate use, but also large quantities to be prepared for Winter, being preserved in skins like sausages.

After the Tunny, immense shoals of smaller kinds of fish are daily caught, of eels, congor and other kinds, and in September and October, a most beautiful, delicate flavoured fish called «Lampooky», of which mention is previously made as named of the Dolphin species. The weather being now, to the end of the year much cooler, averaging 60o to 66o flesh, as beef and pork may be safely used, the digestion being stronger, and the constitution broced up by the prevailing W. and N. W. winds.

The Subterranean products of Malta, are but triffling. as from its being nearly the whole of the Island composed of rock,—only

a soft, porous, white stone is obtained from quarries and cut up into slabs for building and exportation; also it is made up by the Maltese Sculptors into Vases for plants, flowers &c, figures of animals, and many other ornamental objects, and which are bought up by visitors frequenting the Island from nearly every part of the known civilised world, such as French, Spanish, German, Greek, Turkish, Chinese, & Japanese, Americans, &c. &c. forming in winter time (that is, the months of October and following ones until end of April, some of the liveliest, gorgeous displays of the most variegated costumes imaginable; and further enhanced by the nearly constant temperate sunshine, and added to which, Carnival occurring for 3 days in February, exhibits numerous flocks of the natives, dressed in all the wildest and grotesque characters that can be devised and accompanied by numerous bands of music, with ma-



ny sets of dancer's the whole to be compared only to scenes related in the Arabian Nights Entertainments, and which requires to be witnessed to be properly applicated.

With respect to animals indigenous to Malta, no wild beasts exist, or wild birds, nor reptles, exepting a few <sup>snakes</sup> hasless makes, and mosquiteos are immensely numerous, the latter a complete plague, more particularly to strangers, who can scarcely get a wink of sleep in the summer and Antumn months.

The ordinary domestic animals abound, except the Cow, whose place is supplied by the goat and whose milk is used by all classes and much prized. Horses are not bred in Malta us they are supplied from the neighbouring coast of Africa, being principally Arabs from Tunis and Bona; English carriage horses are generally brought by their owners (who are resident gentry or officials in Government departments Donkeys of superior breed are com-

mon and much sought for, many being annually exported to America and other ports. Mules are the common beasts of burden, some are employed for light carriage work, as in the caless, a native vehicle, covered, like a glass coach on 2 wheels ; but for the most part, mules are used for heavy draught work, being very strong and hardy. The principal meat used in Malta is pork of superior quality, from pigs reared in the Island and is sold at 6d. per lb. beef is excellent from cattle exported from the African towns of Tunis and Tripoli when young and then stall fed in Malta for the market and sold at 6d. and 7d. a lb.—Mutton is very scarce, but the young of the goat is much used, and greatly esteemed. A kid of 3 or 4 lbs weight fetches 10d. or 1s. Veal is scarce and dear.

Poultry, as Turkeys and Greese, are common and usually sold at 5s and 6s for good sized ones. Capons and fowls 16d. and 1½d.

each, and ducks about 1½d. a pair. The only game are quails from the neighbouring island of Sicily, and Tripoli and most abundant in May, and sold at 6d. a dozen. Ringdoves are exceedingly abundant at this time also, and may be had at 3d. a dozen.

The manufactures of Malta are few, being chiefly Gold and Silver Filegree Work of Earrings, Bracelets, and many patterns of Gold Chains, all of French Gold, except for Wedding rings, which are principally of 22 carat English gold. There is a very superior manufacture of Silk Lace Work, mostly black, as Shawls, collars, Mittens &c. much sought after and bought up by English visitors arriving every winter, and by which numerous Maltese shop-keepers made an independence at the time of the Russian war in 1854—56.

Coarse linen Fabrics, made up by the lower class at their homes, are very ex-

tensively prepared by them, and brought into the town for sale, and which are also used very much by all classes in the formation of light dresses. An Exhibition for native products was got up in 1857, which owing to the peculiar nature of the Island (being so very small,) was not attended with much success, and so has not been repeated. Many other Public Instructions, as Lecture Rooms, have been attempted, but have failed.

The Natives are of a very peculiar temperament, being composed of a most varied race, springing from visitors from all the surrounding nations of Africa, and southern ones of Europe, as France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Spain, and these marrying and intermarrying with English residents, together with the different branches of the Army and Navy composing the Garrison, have originated a most heterogeneous race, gifted

with every quality of mind ; that of cunning and satire predominating in an eminent degree, causing them to be crafty and subtle in the most difficult and critical situations of life and making most discriminating Councillors, Lawyers and Doctors.

The complexion of the natives is olive colored, but there being such oommixity of breeds, causing a difference of complexion, the aspect of the present Inhabitants, since the English have had the protection of the Island, when the intercourse of the sexes has prevailed, the fair Saxon mixing with the dark Italian, and swarthy Turk and Greek, have produced a preponderance of complexion, more inclining to fair, so that now you meet but very few of the old type of olive colored, a fact overlooked by those thinking to fined the Inhabitants of that colour as affected by the climate. In regard to the manners of the natives generally, they are

very courteous and polite, responding with the utmost civility when accosted in that manner, and most ready to oblige, being at all times perfectly sober, and as such, highly reasonable. Accordingly their habits are strictly regular, attending to their businesses most assiduously, and going to church daily, the first thing in the morning at 4 and 5 before opening their shops; women and female children spending much of the day there, the duty of marketing devolving upon the man of all families, except English ones.

The Maltese are very ingenious, and very apt in learning to excel in practising the Fine Arts of music, Drawing and sculpture, many having succeeded in producing models of Steam Engines, and various other machinery; and also in adopting many of the recent improvements of modern times, and the higher orders are much given to study the history of the Island, and also general

literature, as evidenced by many being appointed by Government to several of the Eminent professions, as Doctors and Surgeons in the army, Astute Lawyers, and even cases in the Clerical and Scholastic:

They also excelled, in Ship building; the fine sailing qualities, and durability of their Sailing Vessels having been highly praised and eulogized by several leading English Journals as being as well constructed in every respect as those of English, American, or any other nation as evidenced by a late eminent Maltese builder named Samuta, who actually introduced many improvements in the art of Shipbuilding in America,—in addition to the Docks for erecting «Sailing» vessels, there is a Hydraulic or Lifting Dock now established in the Quarantine Harbour situated at the Molo Quay, Pietà, capable of lifting Vessels of 3000 tons, recently constructed by an Anglo Maltese Company and now

in constant use, and affording employment to upwards of 200 Artificers and laborers.

## CHAPTER II

On the different Government Departments, Employments, and pay.

The next public buildings worthy of notice, are the numerous Palaces, formerly occupied by the Knights of Malta at the time of the Crusades to the Holy Land (Palestine) in the reign of Richard Ist. (Couer de Leon) King of England. The largest of these palaces, situated in the centre of Valletta, the chief city of the Island, is occupied by the Governor of Malta and his staff, and contains some of the offices of the Government Department, as the Chief Secretary to Government, and that of the Treasury and chief Registry offices, in this building, is the Armory, consisting of many figures, life size, of the Knights in complete armour, also a great variety of arms and implements of war that



were used by the Knights in warfare, a most interesting sight, well worth the visit of the curious in antiquity.

The Royal Engineer's offices and stores, are situated in Strada Mercanti, at a Palace named «The Italia,» where a few natives are employed to assist the R. E. such as carpenters ec. who are paid at the rate of 5s and 6s a day.

The Royal Naval Dock-yard and Arsenal, Royal Victualling-yard for the navy, are situated on the Isola side of the great harbour and contain 2 very large docks with extensive store-houses and commodious quarters for the Admiral Superintendent and other staff Officers of the Navy. In these Departments, many civilians are employed, not amenable to Naval or Military law, a Police force being established in the yard to whom all reports of a criminal nature, are made.

The rates of pay to permanent employed

clerks average from 8s. to 20s. per diem, according to class and seniority, mechanics, such as engineer fitters receive 10s. and 8s., copper-smiths, boiler-makers, and leading hands of Shipwrights get 12s. and 10s. daily; and working shipwrights, carpenters, and blacksmiths are paid at the rate of 5s. to 2|6 a day,—and labourers at 1|6. and 1|8. daily:

Officers and leading men are provided with Free Quarters ; others procure commodious houses, pleasantly situated at a rental of £10 a year for a 6 roomed one, and £5. for a 3 roomed house, generally with a garden attached;—but this sort of houses are scarce in the streets surrounding the Dock and Victualling Yards, being mostly large, and suitable for families of Army and Navy Married Officers,—so that 1|4 hour's walk into the country is necessary to those seeking good sized houses of moderate rents. Of course the time occupied in going and returning is

a great object to labouring people, but where there are several children in a family, the country is preferable, not only for the superior air for the children, but also for economy in rent.

The highly important fact of the well developed improvement of the chief places of the Island must be briefly mentioned, as wherein about 22 years back, before the Russian War in 1854—6, such was the poverty of the place, that there was in Gas, or Telegraph, and but little steam traffic, and but few Gentlemen's carriages driving on the roads; whereas now there is Gas and Telegraph established in all parts of the Island, and many Steamers entering and departing daily thereby creating a brisk commerce of Coals and provisions, giving employ to hundreds, who before had no means of gaining a livelihood and causing a much greater circulation among all classes, carriages and poney carts

running in all directions, as the greater influx of gentry visitors together with a numerous Fleet of Ironclads, and about 3000 Troops, continually giving an increased impulse to all trades and the working classes.

The fortifications of Malta are most formidable, and in a great measure impregnable, extending on each side of the entrance to the Great Harbour, where the chief-city, La Valletta is situated, along the North side, and greater part of the East side, being built of massive stone, strongly imbedded in a Mortar called Porcelana, which becomes quite as hard as stone after a slight exposure to the air ;—the walls are of immense width and height, and bristling with heavy Cannon, having numerous Forts at short distances, provided with many curtains, and at Fort St. Elm one side, and Fort Ricasoli on the other side of the Entrance, the Cannon are actually 100 tons each ; and these are almost

joined by another, Fort St. Angelo, consisting of 3 Tiers of Guns, rendering the entrance utterly impossible to a hostile Fleet. These fortifications were originally built in the time of the Knights by almost millions of slaves under their command, so that no labour was spared in rendering them solid and lasting.

### CHAPTER III.

On attention to Diet, prescribed in Chapter 1st,—with advice as to the proper season for using the peculiar products of that season.

Experience of so many years residence in this climate has convinced the author of these remarks, that regular attention to the following rules for taking daily meals with their appropriate articles of diet at each particular season,—will be found most beneficial and conducive to health and which it does in most cases in the Island.

Vizt. Breakfast should be taken by all classes at  $\frac{1}{2}$ pst 7 at all seasons of the year, and which should consist of for Winter, Coffee with dry toast or plain biscuit, that is from November to end of March: varied occasionally by Cocoa or Chocolate, a couple of eggs or a little dried fish. Dinner at 12 Noon, commencing with Beef soup, with plenty of Vegetables, followed by a plate of Macaroni (of any shape, thick pipe, or smaller shaped like a bird's tongue) and seasoned with scraped cheese and tomatoes sauce,—and this followed by a small piece of beef or pork, washed down by a little common wine, and concluded by a small dessert, Marsala, 8d. a bottle is used by some, but it is decidedly too-heavy a wine for dinner.

This hearty dinner should be partaken of only in Winter, and changed in Summer, (from April to end of November) by substituting Fowls and Fish for beef and pork—At 2

p.m: a cup of good coffee is taken, and then nothing more till Supper at  $\frac{1}{2}$ pst. 7 p.m., when first is taken a salad of insalater, a vegetable of a sour acie taste, common to Malta all the year round and resembling our Mustard and Cross,—this is varied by radishes, lettuces, and asparagus, beet-root, boiled cauliflower, used color ;—then follows any kind of fish in season, with a finish of dessert, and all eating accompanied by a little good common wine at 2d. a pint, rather more than at dinner, but in no case, exceeding a pint. Children under 14 years, allowed a little well diluted.

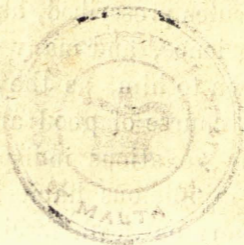
After supper, the family repair outside the front door, the elders smoking 2 or 3 cigars at 8d. a penny, and good Havana 2 a penny,—there not being any duty on tobacco in Malta, so that many families derive a comfortable subsistence by making up cegars from a cask of American tobacco, and ship-

fretfulness engendering disputes and quarrels amongst families ;—whereas the attention recommended as before will be followed by a constant comfortable sensation, producing courtesy of manners, and a kindness in all intercourse with others ; the friends and neighbours with whom they daily come in contact.

FINIS.

Valletta, Malta.

July 1883.





ping great quantities to all the neighbouring ports of Corfu, Athens, and those in the Greek Archipelago, and in the Levant.

### CHAPTER III.

On the effects produced on both mind and body, by a strict adherence to the afore stated rules on diet and on certain habits of life to be observed in Malta.

The author of these remarks cannot refrain from commencing the above heading, as, feeling the immense amount of benefit to be conferred on individuals practising the rules prescribed, as evidenced by his own experience, and many others who have been known to him, as they will produce a constant course of good and exemption from the many vexatious indispositions incidental to the injudicious habits of living, and using deleterious food foreign to the climate of Malta, which last inevitably conduces to different kinds of sicknesses, accompanied by