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NARRATIVE OF CRUISES  
IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN

*In H.M.S. "Euryalus" and "Chanticleer"*

DURING THE  
GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE  
(1822-1826)

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WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE CLIMATE, AND METEOROLOGICAL AND  
NOSOLOGICAL TABLES

TWO COLOURED AND EIGHTEEN HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS

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## CHAPTER VIII

Arrival Malta—Valetta.

MALTA, *October 20th, 1822.* — Although the cloudless day and long evening had ceased to lighten up the Isles of Ionia and its motherland, and the weather was gradually assuming the more fragile and varied feature of an opposite season, still, before we left the coast of Epirus, and for a time bade adieu to its land of green myrtle, nothing like the strong winds of winter had yet visited us; and the southerly declining sun often maintained all the temperance and beauty of summer, from its earliest dawn to his departure in the west. The last of the isles which we saw was Zante, and richly beautiful as that island is in its great central vale and rich groves of green olive trees, so did we leave it smiling under the redundancy of its gathered crops, and its fresh budding hopes of the future; and while gently we were wafted along between it and the Morea, it was displayed to us in all its insular pride, by as beautiful a day as ever illumined the heavens. So coy, however, was the breeze, as if softened by the

very myrtle through which it had been wafted, that it was long before the island was distanced to our view, and for the greater part of the day, we were moving at no great distance from the rude line of white cliffs, with which the southern shore meets the African wave.

As night approached and obscured the fair scene from our view, the breeze gradually freshened up, and the rude winds of the ocean soon snatched us away to encounter the perils of their open career. The last rays of the evening sun were just seen on the distant outline of Zacynthus and the Morea when the light wandering clouds (which had been seen following up the day's career in the west, and in their constantly varying forms and beauty be-decking out that part of the hemisphere) soon became thickly embodied before us; and instead of the silvered smile which they exhibited at sunset, now brooded the blackest curtain of the night, and seemed only ominously waiting to burst in all the terrors of the thunderstorm over our heads. Fortunately, however, they passed to the southward of us, and, in the very rapid and long-continued discharge of electric fire with which they continued to lighten up the heavens, became for some hours objects of the most magnificent, if not of awful contemplation.

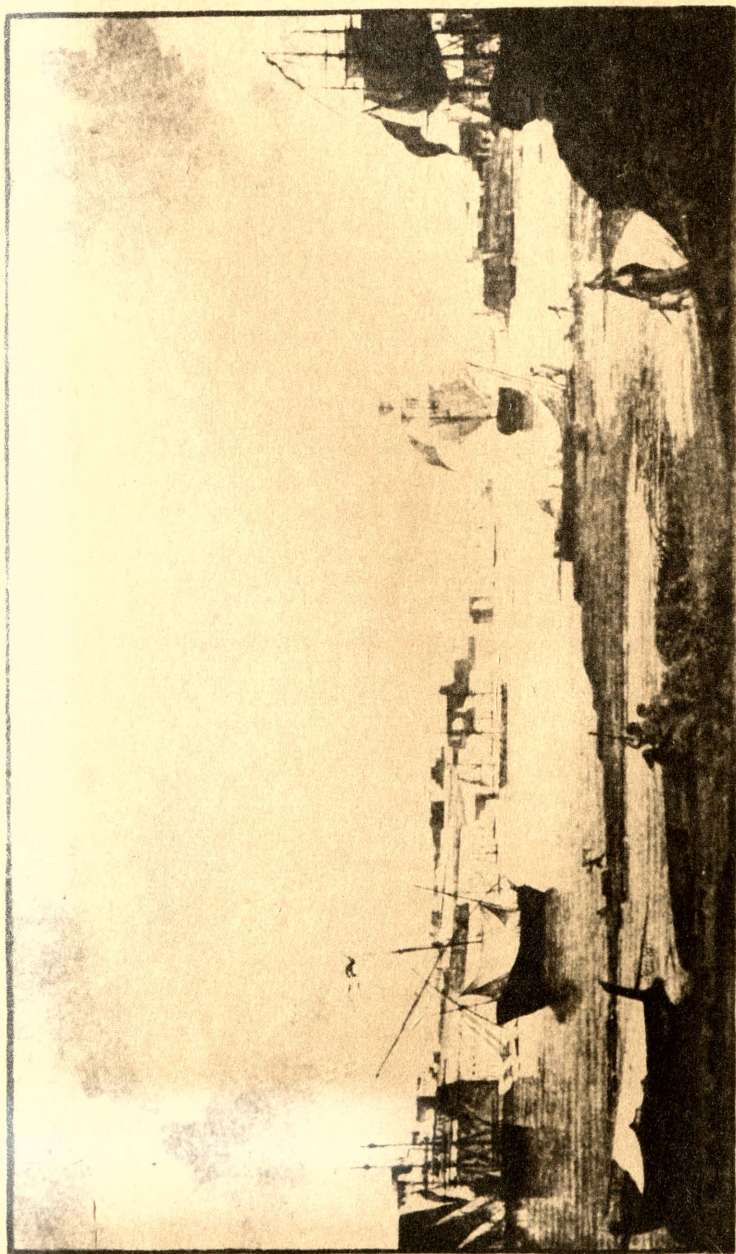
Insulated by themselves, over the wide expanse of sea, and far from the mountain's peak, or any elevated object, these vehicles of nature's fire, or

concentrated electricity, had not an object to wreak their wrath on, but in various parts appeared at war with each other, and were launching their glowing bolts of liquid fire at every little body of wandering vapour that approached them. This commotion appeared in some measure to be kept up by the breeze which was then blowing, for the forms of the clouds were constantly changing, as was seen by the clear lambent flame, which every two seconds kept playing around the whole electric mass, and by its illuminating effect changing as often the dark profile of the cloud into a glowing body of light, around which every star was extinguished to the eye of the beholder in the sombre ether of night. No thunder accompanied this lightning, perhaps from the circumstance mentioned above, or else from the formation of rain not taking place. From the rapid manner in which the breeze was driving us along, these interesting objects were fast diminishing to our view, but even at a late hour they were observed contending throughout their aerial tract, in all the fiery discord of their insulated situation.

The weather, though squally, proved favourable for our passage to Malta, and on the third morning afterwards the island was in sight, and we were safely anchored in the quarantine harbour of Valetta, before nine o'clock A.M., the same day. Accustomed as we had been to the verdant scenery of Corfu, and the olive-clad mountains of Greece, the low rocky

outline of this island had a most barren and uninviting appearance, and were its history unknown, the world naturally have concluded that on no such rocky soil could man meet with any inducement to reside, and far less would it have been thought that the possession had been contended for with all the energy of religious heroism; and that walls had been raised on it which laughed to scorn the overwhelming power and wrath of Mahomet, and preserve to this day what he wished to have swept from the earth.

Of the all importance of the place the stranger is soon convinced on approaching it; for the elevated churches and thick groups of buildings with which the island is covered, soon disclose themselves, here and there rearing up their summits in the full pride of architectural beauty. The approach to Valetta is a very pretty sight, and especially in a morning when the early sun illuminates it as rising out of the waves in all the impregnability of its mass of walls and sea-beaten ramparts. It then presents a most singular, though beautiful, appearance; for, unlike the more verdant outline of most other islands, or lofty profile of hills, around which the works of art in the distance are entirely lost, matter bursts at once from the horizon in its showy architecture. On nearing the port, the city of Valetta presents a noble and imposing appearance with its ramparts and walls springing up from the waves, and its palaces and streets piled up behind each



VALETTA HARBOR, CYPRIUS

other; while not a rocky spot within the walls is seen uncovered by buildings; all of which, from the nature of the stone, reflect strongly the light; and when seen from sea-ward at sunrise looks like the gilded mass of some fancy-built city.

## 12. ITHACA

Is also a good anchorage in the hot season ; though it is sterile it is dry, and possesses few or no sources of hurtful miasma.

## 13. MALTA

Is perhaps as free as any situation in the Mediterranean from every terrestrial source of unhealthiness ; and Valetta a happy immunity from the disturbing or injurious effects resulting from changes of wind, being situated in the north and having its Sirocco winds, ameliorated by their first traversing the surface of the island.

Considerable febrile sickness, however, has at times obtained in Malta harbour, and in the summer of 1823, the ship's company of H.M.S. *Euryalus* suffered a good deal from these complaints, which I attributed in a great degree from their sleeping on shore exposed to the foul effluvia emanating from the upper end of the creek, where lies stagnant water, and the vegetable market.

In May of this year, the day sun was strong, while the nights were very cold when the wind was from the southward, which it frequently was.

Thus congestions were easily induced in those systems, replete from drinking fluids, and were assisted greatly by their expansion during the heat of the day.

In winter the northerly winds are always rendered more temperate by their passage over the intervening sea after they leave the cold surface of Europe ; while



along the southward of Greece these winds are felt in all their original frigidity.

The opposite results obtain in late summer : the northerly winds are cool at Malta, and hot and dry on the south shores of Greece.

I have seen in March a fall of hailstones lie about an inch in depth, and at this time of the year the winds sometimes from their great and frequent changes lose their distinctive characters. Thus I have seen the S.E. or Sirocco cloudy, cold, and wet, and the W. and S.W. neither mild nor warm, arising from the frequent changes tossing back and forwards the mass of clouds and atmospheric strata.

#### 14. SICILY

The south and south easterly shores of Sicily are liable to great vicissitudes of weather, and the Sirocco there is much complained of by all travellers.

#### 15. NAPLES

It is needless to speak of the beautiful and breezy Bay of Naples ; the refreshing salubrity of it is proverbial ; but remarkable vicissitudes occur nevertheless in the climate on a change of wind, from off the sea or the land ; modified materially again by the Apennine ridge being covered with snow, or reverberating the heat of an autumnal sun.

In November 1822 the weather was very variable, cold and wet, and bowel complaints greatly prevailed.