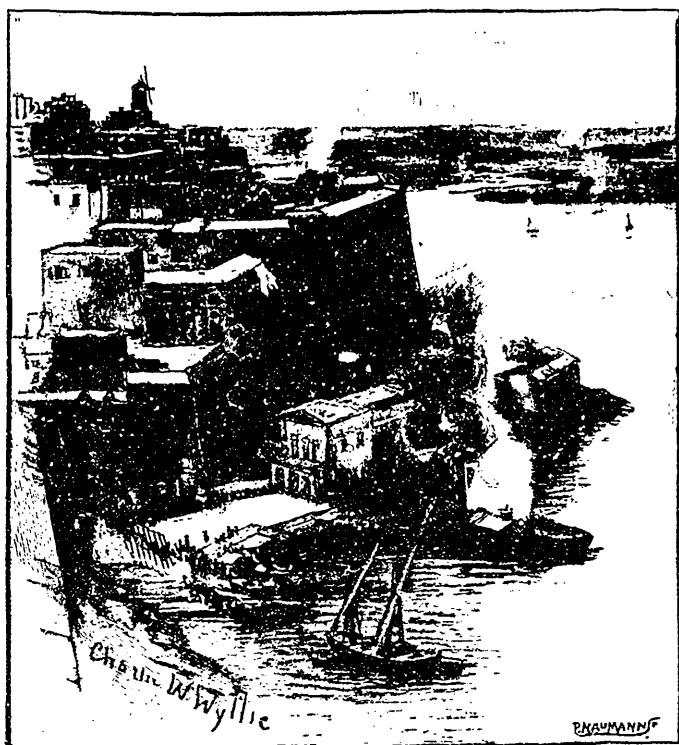


BRITAIN'S KEYS OF EMPIRE.

II.—MALTA.



HARBOUR OF VALLETTA, MALTA.

In the great line of fortresses which guard the route to India, Malta is the second of Britain's keys of empire, and after Gibraltar the most important.

There is a difference of opinion among voyagers as to whether it is best to approach Malta by night or by day; whether there is a greater charm in tracing the outline of "England's Eye in the Mediterranean" by the long, undulating lines of light along its embattled front, and then, as the sun rises, to permit the details to unfold themselves, or to see the entire mass of buildings and sea

walls and fortifications take shape according to the rapidity with which the ship nears the finest of all the British havens in the middle seas. Much might be said for both views, and if by "Malta" is meant its metropolis, then the visitor would miss a good deal who did not see the most picturesque portion of the island in both of these aspects.

Valletta is only one of the four fortified towns of this group of four small islands, over whose surface are scattered scores of villages. The entire coasts are circled by a ring of forts built wherever the