

THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE ISLAND WHERE THEY HELD SWAY.

The Interesting History of Malta—Its Fortifications and the Conquests of the Past—The Place at Present As Seen By Edgar Wakeman.

Malta is such a very little place that something like a personal explanation is pardonable when one refers to its history. And yet in that history lies nearly all that makes it worth talking about at all. Over 1500 years before the birth of Christ Malta was taken possession of by the Phœnicians, and they held it for nearly 800 years. The Greeks who had founded that important colony at Syracuse then made themselves masters of the island and gave it the name of *Melita*, on account of the delicious honey obtained there; and Maltese honey is a noted delicacy at this very time. During the Punic wars the Carthaginians took Malta and the two contiguous islets of Gozo and Comino from the Greeks. During the domination of the Carthaginians the islands were so thoroughly colonized by the Berber and Arab races that to them can undoubtedly be traced the ancestors of the Maltese of our own time.

The Romans now secured dominion of the islands; lost it for a time; but about 300 years before the Christian era they regained possession which lasted upwards of six centuries. In all this record of barbaric and semi-barbaric conquest there is nothing of greater interest than dreary tale of pillage, rapine, slavery and blood. Then suddenly, shortly after the beginning of the Christian era, one shipwreck makes Malta eternally famous. If you will read the last two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles you will know the whole story: How Paul, after his defence before Agrippa, when in charge of the centurion Julius, was proceeding by sea to the court of Cæsar at Rome, was shipwrecked upon Malta, where he was kindly entertained by the barbarians, among whom he healed Paulus, "the chief man of the island," and many others; that the youngest son of Paul, who was named Paulus, and finally proceeded in a ship of Alexandria, via Syracuse, on his way to Rome.

The Arab races gained dominion of Malta in 833. About 200 years later the Sicilians drove out the Saracen rulers and annexed the islands to Sicily, under the government of Roger, the youngest son of Tancred, hero of the Crusades. Then, in 1194 France took both Malta and Sicily from the Normans; when, at the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers in 1283, French supremacy in all these islands was at an end. They were seized by Pedro Aragon and made a dependency of Spain for nearly 250 years. The only career of glory and independence which ever came to the Maltese island opened in 1530.

After the famous siege of Rhodes by Sultan Mehmet II. in 1522, when the Knights of Hospitaliers were expelled from their shattered towers, though with faithful honor and glory, they retired first to Crete, and then to Sicily. The Emperor Charles V., moved by their heroism and homelessness, as well as by strategic considerations, finally ceded them Malta with Gozo and Comino, the only conditions of the same being that the Knights should suppress the audacity of the African corsairs, and in token of homage, every year present a single falcon to the viceroy of Sicily.

Twenty-eight grand masters exercised the chief authority during the 267 years in which the now Knights of Malta held sway over the island and the various branches of the order which acquired riches and power in every portion of Christian Europe. No order on earth ever attained the same wealth and influence. The latter was secretly fought by monarchs and their aid in all crusades against Moslem countries was invoked. The order was divided into three classes: the Knights of Justice, the Chaplains, and the Serving Brothers of Arms. There were besides persons called Brothers de Stage or Donats, given distinction by the demi-cross for having served well in subaltern positions.

Conceived in the purest and most intense emulation of Christian chivalry, the order, admitting only those of noble blood, and at a period when nobility meant something more than title and inherited possessions, drew into the commanderies of its eight "languages" the very cream of the men and means of the entire Christian world. The chivalrous spirit of the age everywhere lent wealth, lustre and power to the order. Kings and emperors sent splendid embassies to its courts. The property of its commanderies in various countries became enormous. The votive offerings at Malta were of incalculable value. And the grand master of the order possessed not only military and absolute authority over all its members, but sovereign power and regal rights over all his subjects.

From 1551 to 1796, a period of barely two and a half centuries after the first settlement of Malta by the Knights of St. John, nearly all the majestic monuments of their wealth and power which may be found here today, were resultant from their military and ecclesiastical handiwork; while during the same brief period were marshalled the events which have crowned their memory with imperishable glory and renown.

Most impressive of all remains of their tremendous power are the colossal fortifications of Valetta. When the handiwork of man is considered, Gibraltar pales into insignificance in comparison with Malta.

"God made Gibraltar," God's vicars, Malta," once exclaimed an enthusiastic admiral, and his eyes first rested upon impregnable Vallarta. The conformation of the port, or double port, is in shape something like a gigantic mouth with protruding tongue. The latter would represent Valetta proper, the upper and lower spaces the grand and quarantine ports, and the curvature of the upper and lower lips the port and nether harbor sides; the whole water front sweeping away past suburban promontories in either direction and forming one mighty mass of fortifications as defensible as art and nature can combine.

The landward lines are equally as vast and wonderful. They enclose the various quarters of the capital for a square mile and a half. These are called La Floriana and constitute five successive lines, of such extent intricacy that 30,000 men could be required to completely man them, but one line, well manned, is sufficient for complete defence. Many of the ditches are 90 feet deep, excavated from the solid rock, and a great portion of these landward ramparts

have been formed by hewing the conformation of rock into the required shape. Malta could not be taken by combined land and sea forces, save by the aid of treachery and famine.

The Knights of Malta so valiantly repressed the piracy and power of the Moslems that it was determined by combined Turkish, Arab and Algerian powers to exterminate them from the earth. Accordingly one of the most magnificent Turkish armaments ever known, consisting of 180 war vessels and 30,000 select troops, began the investment of Malta on May 18, 1666. Jean Parisot de la Valetta, the grand master, with but 600 knights and 800 Maltese militia, for four months sustained with unparalleled heroism the most savage and persistent siege since the siege of Troy. It has been fully said that only a Homer was lacking to render this heroic event as memorial and its heroes, Christian and Moslem, as immortal.

The decline of Moslem power really dates from this great Turkish defeat at Malta. All the Christian powers, though failing to aid the knights in their extremity, now that they were victorious, indulged in delirious rejoicings, and royal, princely, and private gifts poured in upon Malta's heroic defenders. The city and fortifications, named Valetta in honor of the glorious defender, were entirely rebuilt as you will find them now. The great church of St. John, the Westminster Abbey of Malta, was erected. Palaces termed "auberges" for the entertainment of the visiting "languages," arose on every hand; it seemed that a new and even more glorious era of splendor and power had begun.

But the success of the French Revolution was the death blow to the Knights of Malta. All their property in France was annexed to the republic's demences, and French members of the order were deprived of citizenship. Bonaparte on his way to Egypt seized the islands through treachery, pillaged Valetta's treasures, and garrisoned the fortress with 4,000 men. These finally surrendered to the Maltese and their English allies, having been literally starved out, on Sept. 4, 1800. By this time the famous order was distracted and almost destroyed. It was proposed to restore it at Malta by the treaty of Amiens. The Maltese people strenuously opposed this. The order was never reestablished; and thus faded from existence the most heroic band of knights, bulwark of Christianity to the limit of its need, that ever made resplendent the most glorious days of chivalry. The seventh article of the Treaty of Paris, signed May 30, 1814, was as follows: "The island of Malta, with its dependencies, will remain in full authority and sovereignty to His Britannic Majesty; and Sir Thomas Maitland was Malta's first English Governor."

The three islands contained a population of about 150,000 souls, of which fully 100,000 are found in the city and suburbs of Valetta. Architecturally Valetta is a place of extraordinary interest. The shore fortifications and landward lines are in themselves worthy of a month's study. Their tremendousness, intricacy and even beauty constantly provide new and impressive surprises. Nothing approaching their remarkable proportions can be found in Christian lands. Then the old palaces, or auberges, and the great Church of St. John, with countless public and private structures of minor importance, are massive and princely in character. The treasures of medieval Europe were open to their knightly buyers. And I doubt if there is another place accessible to civilized man where there is massed within the same area an equal evidence of outlay of labor and treasure. In contemplating the proportions, extent, richness and richness of this single stone monument to the ambition of regal chivalry, the mind constantly gropes for equal examples of lavish utilization of wealth and labor, and as constantly recalls the great pyramid at Jeezah. EDGAR WAKEMAN.

THE CHILIAN NATIONAL HYMN.

A People Who Do Not Rush When the Curtain Drops.

Much has been said and written during the past year concerning Chili and her people, much of it in her favor and some in her disparagement, but all have unanimously conceded that she is a brave and valiant little nation, proud and patriotic to the utmost, ready to fight and to die in defence of her flag—a flag somewhat like our own, composed of red, white and blue, with a lone star in a blue field. Their hymn is the outgrowth of this patriotism, its musical air the symbolism of its valor.

In regard to the national hymn, Chili gives an example that would be well for other nations to imitate, and that is the outward respect and reverence shown up on its performance, whether in a private parlor or public assembly. Upon the first chord being struck all present rise and remain standing until its conclusion. On all occasions where the chief magistrate of the nation is present, such as the opening of congress or any other public ceremony, you hear the "Cancion Nacional." One of the most moving and stirring scenes I ever saw, is at the Grand Opera house on the night of the 18th of September, Chili's Independence Day. After the diplomatic dinner at the "Moneda," the president and cabinet, with the diplomatic body, adjourn to the opera, where in the meantime a vast assemblage has gathered. As soon as the president and his guests appear in the boxes the curtain rises, the proscenium is beautifully decorated with flags and streamers, singers and chorus are formed in a semicircle on the stage, the orchestra strikes up the prelude, the prima donna and tenor advance to the footlights, each with the Chilean standard in the left hand, the prima donna sings the first verse, the chorus take up the "Dulce patria," after which the tenor sings the second verse. The applause, the waving of handkerchiefs by the ladies, and general enthusiasm, is something a stranger present will never forget. A nation that thus loves and venerates its national hymn is worthy the honor and respect of all.

The last verse of the hymn may be translated as follows:

O ye beauties and flowers that adorn Our dearly loved, beautiful land! Ye shall never be trampled under foot By foreign, but peacefully stand. Child's sons will forever defend you, Their breasts will be ever your shield, And, if victory fails to befriend you, We'll die, dear, on a battlefield! CHORUS.

Sweet native land, the vows receive Which Chili on thy altars swore That for the free, the tomb shall be An asylum against tyranny.

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

An Unsuccessful Sinner Whose Heart was True.

Most persons (said the doctor) hold to the idea that a physician has by training so blunted the finer sensibilities of his nature that all tenderness and sentiment have flown. You will, therefore, doubtless be surprised that I should so vividly recall the circumstances which I shall now attempt to relate. Twenty years ago I was a struggling schoolmaster in the village of Morley. The residents of Morley were for the most part farming folk, who managed to eke out a fair subsistence. The one man of the village who might be termed wealthy was Mr. Francis Morley, or, as he was familiarly called, "The Squire." He had been left a large estate by the decease of an uncle, a bachelor, with whom he was a great favorite. He carried on extensive farming operations which netted him a handsome income, and also held the position of village magistrate, which appointment he owed to the faint smattering of legal knowledge acquired during a two years' apprenticeship as an attorney's clerk. Upon his succession to his uncle's estate he had married, and at the time of which I speak his family consisted of himself and wife and one daughter, Fannie. Fannie Morley was the belle of the little village, and, in fact, of the entire county.

She was eighteen years old, tall and stately, and possessed a crown of hair whose ebullience vied with the plumage of the raven. She was endowed with such gentle, womanly qualities that, in her presence, one easily forgot the fact of her marvelous beauty. As may be imagined, Fannie had many admirers, but more persistent than all was Leonard Seely, the son of the village postmaster and storekeeper. He was a large, overgrown sort of a fellow, as good-natured and as kind-hearted as a lad as ever lived, but he lacked that sturdy independence of character so necessary to success in this life, and was consequently a "thorough failure." And, although Fannie Morley admired the young man's many good qualities, she did not feel her heart beat responsive to his, and frankly told him one evening that she felt that she could be no more than a friend to him. A few weeks after this, Leonard Seely gathered up his few belongings and left the village, and the Morleys never heard of him afterwards. Squire Morley and I soon became firm friends, when I became tutor to the juvenile population of Morley, and he would often call in to the hall. In this I was frequently met by his daughter, and in due time became one of her most ardent admirers, and was gratified to notice that she looked favorably upon me. When I first approached the squire in regard to the matter, he was bitterly opposed to me, on account of my humble station, and he sought to dissuade me from my suit, but how his daughter's mind lay, he relented and gave his consent to our marriage, which event was to transpire in one year. Ten weary months had elapsed when Fannie Morley was stricken down with fever, and after lingering for six weeks her frail spirit ceased its fluttering, and she sank to her eternal rest. Broken-hearted, I remained in the village for five years when I grew tired of my vocation and entered a medical college in a distant city and was duly graduated. During the last five years of my stay in Morley was a tragedy from once every year a bunch of water-lilies and pansies was found on poor Fannie Morley's grave. Who placed them there no one knew, but each summer rolled around there would be found the bouquet of her favorite flowers arranged as though with a trembling hand—a touching tribute from an unknown friend. Once a handkerchief was found, but it afforded no clue to the owner. Well, after drifting around I finally settled in the city of Rockford. One day I was sitting in my office when the sound of raised voices and a loud knocking at my door arrested my attention. I greeted my ear, and the wounded body of a young man was carried in for my attendance. It appeared that in attempting to rescue a little child from a runaway horse, he had met with very painful injuries. When I had washed the stains away I recognized Leonard Seely, the son of the man who had disappeared from Morley ten years before. He was conveyed to his boarding house where all that was possible was done to relieve his suffering, but to no avail. One evening I was sent for hurriedly, and when I reached the village I found Leonard Seely lying on his back, his head under his hand, and his eyes closed. He was at hand. Although he had at times conversed with me he did not recognize me, and I did not disclose my identity lest it might recall painful memories. As he reached toward me and took my hand he requested all but myself to leave the room. I did so, but he begged me to tell him his life story—how he had had loved Fannie Morley, how he had left the village and finally settled in Rockford as book-keeper in a large mercantile establishment. "And, doctor," he feebly whispered, "I want to ask a favor of you before I die. Doctor, I want to hear you—to hear you promise me—to get a bunch of pansies and water-lilies—every year—and put them on her grave. She—she loved them so—so well, you know! I have done it ever since—since she died. I have—saved all—my spare earnings—to pay my—fare to Morley every—year unknown to everyone—even my own parents. You—will—do it, won't you—doctor? That's—that's right! Good—good—bye—doctor. God bless—bless you!" "And he was no more. And, gentlemen, that is my story; and should any of you ever visit the little village of Morley during the month of June, any year that I am on earth, you will find on poor Fannie Morley's grave a little bunch of water-lilies and pansies—the flowers she loved so well. And so the doctor's story ended. CASEY TAYLOR.

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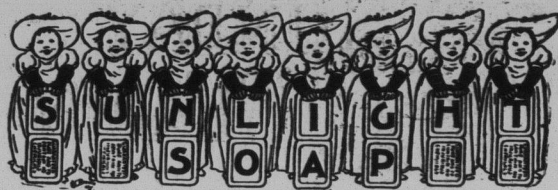
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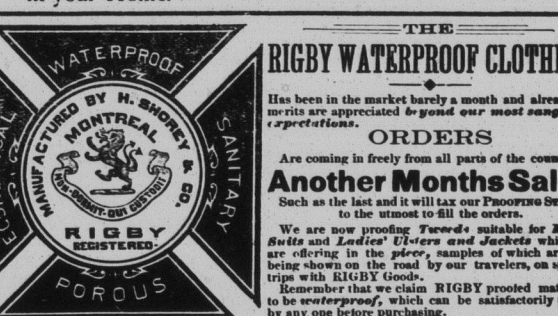
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