

VALETTA IN MALTA.

Although our stay in Malta was so short that we could not do more than see Valetta and its environs, we yet found enough to make us wish that we had more time at our disposal. The city itself is a curiosity in many respects. It is, perhaps, next to Gibraltar, the most impregnable position in the world. It appeared to us, on entering the harbour, that the fortresses which guard its narrow mouth might not only resist, but even annihilate, any naval force that could be brought against them. The frowning forts of St. Elmo on the right, and Ricasoli on the left, could crush the most powerful vessel in passing through the narrow entrance. The city is neat, well built, and contains about 40,000 inhabitants. Its massive walls rise from the water's edge, and are surmounted with heavy ordnance, so that on all sides it appears like a fortress rather than a town.

Such, indeed, its founder, Valette, the most celebrated of the grand masters of the Order of St. John, intended it to be. Driven from Rhodes by the Turks in 1522, the knights established themselves in Malta, and determined to fortify their position against any possible attacks of the Saracens. Solymán the Magnificent, who had driven them from Rhodes, determined, in 1565, to accomplish their expulsion from Malta, and sent Mustapha Pacha, with 30,000 men and ample munitions of war, to execute his purpose. The siege, which is the most memorable, perhaps, in history for its severity, was raised at the end of four months, and the knights were left in peace, but their town and fortress were battered to pieces. La Valette laid the foundation of the new city which bears his name in 1566, and commenced the marvellous fortifications which are still the wonder of the world.

The history of the Knights Hospitallers, up to the seventeenth century, is a splendid one, full of all the elements of romance. After that period their exploits were comparatively insignificant, though their wealth and splendour continued to increase. The city of Valetta contains abundant monuments of their taste and magnificence. Each grand master attempted to excel his predecessors in beautifying the capital, and adding to the strength of its fortifications. The order was divided into eight *langues* or nations—the German, Italian, Castilian, Aragonese, Provencal, Auvergnese, French, and English. The English branch of the