

AN AMERICAN TRAVELLER IN GOZO: MATURIN MURRAY BALLOU

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NINETEENTH century travel accounts of the Mediterranean area frequently make mention of Malta, but the sister island of Gozo is often neglected. For this reason the report which follows concerning Gozo, written by a nineteenth century American traveller and journalist, may be of some interest.

Maturin Murray Ballou (1820-1895) was a native of Boston, Massachusetts, the son of a clergyman. Maturin received college preparatory training in the Boston high school and passed his entrance examinations for Harvard University, but then decided not to continue his formal education. He worked for several years in the Boston Post Office and also in the Boston Custom House. He became interested in journalism and served as the first editor and manager of the *Boston Daily Globe* during the years 1872-1874. His work in journalism led to an interest in foreign travel. He made many cruises and journeys concerning which he wrote letters home descriptive of the geographical features of the places which he had visited. Much of the material was later embodied in his books and various periodical publishings. Among his travel accounts particular note may be taken of the following works, many of which went through subsequent editions: *Due West: or Round the World in Ten Months* (1884); *Due South: or Cuba Past and Present* (1885); *Due North: or Glimpses of Scandinavia and Russia* (1887); *Footprints of Travel: or Journeyings in Many Lands* (1888); *Aztec Land* (1890); *The Story of Malta* (1893); *The Pearl of India* (1894).

Certainly Ballou was a great believer in the importance of travel and one who did much to inspire an interest in other lands and other peoples. His many travel accounts made him famous in his own generation. This well-known American journalist and author died on his travels, passing away in Cairo, Egypt, in March, 1895.

Two chapters of Ballou's book on Malta are concerned with the

island of Gozo (namely, Chapters VI and VII). This report by a former Boston editor was one of the first accounts of 'the fabled isle of Calypso' to appear before the American reading public.

GOZO

Gozo, the fabled isle of Calypso, the Gaulos of the Greeks, the Gaulum of the Romans, and the Ghaudex of the Arabs, with its rock-bound, cave-indentured shores, is oval in shape, and has the same general characteristics as Malta, but is much more fertile. The undulating surface of the island gives a casual observer the idea of its being a hilly country, yet at only one place does it reach a height of over three hundred feet above sea-level. This is at Dibiegi, where a hill rises to an elevation of about seven hundred feet. When approached from the sea, Gozo appears to lie much lower than Malta proper, and this is really so. Through the early morning haze, both look like huge marine monsters sleeping upon the surface of the waters. The hills we have referred to are singularly conical, but are uniformly flattened at their tops by the disintegrating process of the elements, causing them to present the appearance of a myriad little volcanoes, though they are very innocent of any such dreaded association. In the Hot Lake District of New Zealand, near Ohinemutu, the author has seen a precisely similar appearance, but in the latter instance the effect was undoubtedly produced by volcanic action. The boiling springs, geysers, and hot lakes of this New Zealand district are almost identical in character with our Yellowstone Park phenomena. Both must be the result of smouldering fires far below the surface of the earth. In the New Zealand district an active volcano is near at hand, which often rages with destructive force.

Gozo is beautified with occasional groves of trees, which is an adornment almost entirely wanting in the larger island. These groves, however, are by no means numerous. The one great deficiency of the group is the absence of arboreal vegetation, and yet an abundance of trees could be made to grow and flourish here with very little effort. There are marl beds which might be utilized for the purpose, situated in various parts of the islands, besides which, the rocky formation of the group, as we have shown, is of a

porous nature, full of fissures and crevices, easily admitting the roots of vegetation. There is a tradition that Malta was once covered with trees, and that they were gradually sacrificed to meet the demand for fuel and for other purposes. The cultivation of shade trees about the villages would add an element of beauty, and would afford needed shade, besides promoting a more liberal rainfall, which is so very limited here. Some of the Grand Masters have done much by their personal efforts to induce the planting of fruit and ornamental trees in and about the city. Several of the squares are thus beautified, the trees forming an agreeable shade where in midsummer the glare is almost intolerable in exposed places.

A modern survey shows the circumference of Gozo to be a trifle less than twenty-five miles. It has been famous from time immemorial for the large amount and the delicious quality of the honey which its inhabitants send to market. The thriving fields of red-flowering clover, which is called *sulla* by the natives, and which grows to an average height of three and a half feet, together with an abundance of wild thyme and purple blooming vetch, afford rich food for the industrious bees and the gaudy butterflies, 'Yellow bees, so mad for love of early-blooming flowers.' The peculiar clover of which we speak is indigenous, and a well-grown field, each upright stem surmounted by a large crimson flower, looks more like cultivated roses than simple clover blossoms. When the breeze sweeps gently over these fields, the eye is delighted by broad waves of rich color rising and falling in the warm sunshine, while an indescribable, ripe, harvest smell permeates the atmosphere. The geranium grows to a mammoth size on this island, and tall, dense, and secure hedges of it are not uncommon. In full bloom these form a most striking feature of the landscape, as peculiar as the agave hedges of Mexico. The former, when wearing their full-dress of scarlet, seem like a fiery cordon drawn about the spacious area thus inclosed. The latter, with their pale blue-green sword-like leaves, are as repellent as a line of fixed bayonets, and absolutely impervious to man or beast. The byways of the north-western part of Gozo are delightful, verdant, and pastoral, while the air is redolent of clover, violets, and hedge roses.

One of the ancient titles of this island was *Melita*, a name which is believed to be derived from the excellent honey which it has al-

ways produced. We can honestly testify to the delightful aromatic flavor of this delicate article. Truly, it is a land flowing with milk and honey, — Mel-ita, 'Isle of Honey', — its choice goat's milk being also a staple commodity. As for butterflies, to which we have incidentally referred, graceful, leisurely, aerial creatures, nowhere outside of southern India can finer specimens of this beautiful and delicate insect be found. An enthusiastic German naturalist in Valletta told the author that he had secured a rich collection in Gozo, and that he was then on his way to the little Island of Filfla to reap a harvest in another line, namely, among the curious lizard family, which thrive upon its few square rods of rocky soil.

Who ever traveled in out-of-the-way places abroad, without meeting some quaint German naturalist, wearing a green woolen cap with an impossible leather visor, a sort of Domine Samson, in search of ugly centipedes, stinging ants, extraordinary spiders, or other hideous bugs? These 'Innocents Abroad' are all alike, wearing gold-bowed spectacles, and having a chronic disregard for clean linen. One can easily forgive the butterfly enthusiast, these delightful, innocuous insects, exquisite in their frailty and variety of colors, are so like animated flowers; but pray spare us from poisonous bugs, with innumerable crooked legs.

One has not far to go, after landing upon Gozo, before small flocks of well-conditioned, silky-haired goats begin to appear, intelligent-looking animals, with large, gazelle-like eyes and transparent ears. They are generally tended by a barefooted lad or a young girl having the slenderest amount of covering in the shape of clothes. These boys and girls, nine or ten years of age, are often strikingly handsome, the latter betraying a perfection of youthful promise as to form, distinctly seen through their scanty rags. The boys have the blackest of black eyes, and the brownest of brown skins, such as one sees among the Moors who come into Tangier with the caravans arriving from Fez. These sheep tenders would answer admirably as models for an artist, often unconsciously assuming artistic poses, forming grand pictures, and reminding one of the subjects which Murillo delighted in. The quiet self-possession of these children of nature is both impressive and significant. They are utterly untaught, but how graceful in every

movement! It would be as impossible for one of them to be awkward as for a young kitten. Every attitude is statuesque and full of repose. They have borrowed somewhat of the grandeur of their birth-place, bounded by wide, untamed waters and limitless sky. As is often noticed among European peasants thus employed, the girls are always supplied, though never so young, with some knitting or crochet work which keeps their fingers fully employed. In the populous centres, men may loaf in the laziest fashion, and remain quite unemployed, unless it be in the arduous occupation of smoking rank tobacco, but the women seem to be instinctively busy at all times.

We are reminded in this connection of another article of production for which Gozo enjoys a certain and favorable reputation, namely, goat's cheese, a delicate dairy compound, which should be eaten while it is quite fresh. It is so well appreciated by the people of Valletta that little, if any, of the article is ever exported, though choice packages sometimes find their way to the larder of the P. & O. steamers, much to the satisfaction of traveling gourmands. The goats raised upon this island are of a breed which, it would appear, is specially adapted to the local necessities, having singularly well-developed udders, which reach nearly to the ground, and yielding milk profusely, while subsisting upon the most common and inexpensive nourishment. Small herds of these animals are driven by their owners about the streets of the capital, and milked at the doors of the consumers, just as one witnesses to-day in Paris and other continental cities. There is no chance for adulteration when served after this fashion; and we all know that milk challenges our credulity more seriously than nearly any other article of domestic use, where water is so very cheap and accessible.

Cows would require too much pasturage to be profitably kept on these islands, whereas the hardy goats, as we have said, are cheaply fed and easily managed. Sheep, which are kept here in considerable numbers, are quite prolific, often having four lambs at a birth, and rarely less than two. The cows and oxen which are imported are designed almost entirely for food, though some few are employed for domestic or farming purposes. Cattle come almost wholly from the Barbary States. These animals fatten quickly upon the rich clover, which is so cheap and abundant here, thus making

excellent beef. Asses and mules are the chief means in use for transportation, and as a rule they are very fine ones. We were told that Malta-bred animals of this class were in special request throughout southern Italy. The native owner has an Arab's fondness for his horse or mule, feeds him abundantly, and cares for him kindly. Animals thus reared naturally present a better appearance, show finer instincts, and bring better prices. Those of Gozo are remarkable for their size and docility.

The gardens of this island supply the citizens of Valletta with nearly all the vegetables which are required for daily use, together with fowls, turkeys, and geese. Large quantities of green fodder come from the same source for the sustenance of the animals kept for use in the town.

An interesting sight may be enjoyed by going into the principal market of the capital of Malta, in the rear of the Grand Palace, at early morning, where one can watch the various products, fodder, fruits, and vegetables arriving from Gozo. The quantity and excellent condition of the supply gives promise of good fare at the average tables of the citizens. Various game birds are seen, also brought from the sister isle, especially quails. This bird not only breeds freely in the Maltese group, but comes hither at times from Algeria in large flocks, driven thence by the close pursuit of the local sportsmen. The Tunisians make a wholesale slaughter of the quails annually in the month of May, shipping the game thus secured to France, it being a favorite bird with the Parisian gourmands. In the mean time the people of Algeria complain of a fearful increase of the all-devouring locusts, indigenous there, which, when young, form the food supply of the quails. So all extremes outrage some clearly-defined law of nature, and entail prompt punishment. Doubtless the securing of a reasonable number of these birds would do no harm; but when the pursuit is carried to the verge of extermination, some penalty must follow.

During the open season, as it is called, the officers of the British garrison — desperately at a loss, it would seem, to find amusement — resort to Gozo for quail shooting. There is also a certain season of the year when a variety of ducks, plover, snipe, and other aquatic birds may be taken. Only about a score of species of the feathered tribe make their permanent home in the group; but

there are hundreds seen resting here from time to time, on their migratory course to other climes. In stormy weather, dead birds are found at the base of the big lighthouse on Gozo, attracted and half-dazed by the staring eye of fire piercing the darkness of the night. When flying at great speed, they are dashed fatally against the stout glass which shelters the lantern. Similar occurrences are known in Massachusetts Bay, at the lighthouse on Minot's Ledge, where the keeper is enabled to replenish his larder with game birds after a hard blow at night. This lighthouse at Guirdan, Gozo, dominates Cape Demetri, looming far heavenward when observed from the sea, above which it stands four hundred feet, at once gladdening and guiding the seamen in the night-watches.

An attempt was made to introduce hares into Gozo for sporting purposes; but the residents of the island, with the dire experience of Australia and New Zealand before them, protested against it, and fortunately succeeded in averting the dreaded scourge. As is well known, the rabbit pest in the two countries named has assumed such proportions as to defy the combined efforts of the settlers to get rid of them. Every green leaf and tender root which comes in their way is destroyed to appease the hunger of these rabbits; and vegetation is as effectually obliterated from the land as would be the case if visited by millions of locusts.

Let us review, for a moment, the geographical and topographical character of this island.

Gozo is situated off the northeast end of Malta, from which it is separated by a deep channel, less than four miles wide, known as the Straits of Freghi. The principal town and capital is Rabbato, a sleepy, Old-World metropolis, of very little consequence to the outside world. It has been named Victoria by the English. The place contains some five or six thousand inhabitants, besides which there are nine thrifty, though small, villages upon the island. Lacemaking is the almost universal occupation of the people of Rabbato and its vicinity. The incessant clicking of the bobbins, driven by deft fingers, greets the ear on all sides. Of course there is a 'Calypso' Hotel ready to capture the innocent tourist. It is worthy of note that this special industry of fine lacemaking should have prevailed so long in Gozo. For aught that is known, it may have originated here. It is certain that its popularity dates long

prior to the Roman colonization in the Maltese group. Common usage does not retain the title given to the capital in compliment to Queen Victoria of England, and in honor of the Jubilee year. It is popularly known, as it certainly should continue to be, by its original name.

Rabbato is situated very near the centre of the island, on one of a group of conical hills. The citadel overlooking the place is partially in ruins, but was once quite a substantial and extensive fortification, being over half a mile in circumference. Whoever selected the spot as a stronghold could hardly have realized that it was commanded by more than one elevation in the immediate vicinity. Where its walls are not raised upon the edge of a precipitous cliff, it is approached by very steep stone steps, which could only be surmounted by an enemy under a concentrated fire from several points. The place has a deep ditch after the style of the Valletta fortifications, but this old stronghold is rapidly crumbling to pieces. It was a mistake to select this spot for the capital, if for no other reason than on account of the absence of a good water supply. At the Bay of Marsa-el-Forno, near at hand, there is not only a good harbor, but excellent drinking-water in abundance, while the fertile soil makes a charmingly verdant neighbourhood. There are some delightful summer residences on the shore of this bay, the resort of citizens who come hither from Valletta in the 'heated term'. Only those foreigners whose official duties compel them to do so brave the summer heat of Malta in the capital. The naval vessels which have wintered here disperse to their several stations at that season, and invalids return to England or elsewhere.

Rabbato was chosen as the capital of Gozo for the same reason, doubtless, that Madrid was made the seat of government for Spain, because it was so nearly the exact centre of the country, while almost every other recommendation is wanting in both instances. The same remark applies to Città Vecchia, the ancient capital of Malta proper. The small city of Rabbato contains a couple of fairly good hotels, a Jesuit college, a cathedral, and two or three convents. Without wishing to discourage the curious traveler from doing so, we would suggest that when he visits the capital of Gozo, he go prepared to repel an army of mosquitoes. The neighborhood is

famous for this insect pest. The guide, native and to the manner born, remarked that they never troubled him, but devoted their attention entirely to strangers, which affords no consolation to the afflicted.

The visitor finds in this neighborhood some very interesting Phoenician and Roman remains, but mostly of the former and earlier race of colonists upon the island. Among the antiquities is one very remarkable ruin known as La Torre de Giganti, 'the Giant's Tower', which is probably the remains of a prehistoric sacred temple, whose builders bowed before the image of Baal. The careful study of antiquarians points to the fact of its having been formerly the temple of Astarte, the Phoenician Venus. There are others who attributed this ancient monument to a people who inhabited the group before the nomadic tribes of Tyre and Sidon formed a colony in Malta. This singular edifice, be its original purpose what it may, is constructed of stones laid in a very skillful manner, no mortar being used. The builders must have possessed admirable and efficient tools; there is evidence enough to prove this in the careful finish shown in many places. They must also have used powerful machinery to properly adjust such heavy blocks in place. The great antiquity of the Giant's Tower is undisputed. Its style antedates both the Greek and the Roman examples which have been spared to us, and it is plainly the work of a primitive people. It is situated on an eminence not far from Casal Shaara, and forms a large inclosure with walls of great thickness. In shape it is a circular tower open at the top, not unlike the 'Towers of Silence' which form the Parsee edifices near Bombay used for the disposal of the dead. In this tower at Gozo, doubtless, the rites of fire were celebrated; human victims were probably sacrificed here, and their bodies burned. Fire, it will be remembered, was the symbol under which ancient tribes worshiped the sun. The character of this tower is also emphasized by a carved serpent cut in the solid stone, an emblem of religious veneration among the ancient people of the East. Egyptian gods were often represented with the bodies of serpents.

Even in our day, certain sects among the Japanese venerate this reptile as sacred. In Benares, India, bulls, elephants, and monkeys are held to be representatives of divinity. The author has seen in

the Temple of Honan, at Canton, China, a pen of 'sacred' hogs! In the sincere struggle to find some element as representative of the Great and Good, before which to bow down and worship, for these singular devotional freaks seem to be the outcome of such a purpose, one would think that the wildest fanaticism must surely stop short of such excessive grossness.

Touching this most interesting Gozo tower, which it is not unreasonable to say may have stood here for some three thousand years, it shows that the builders, whoever they were, did their work thoroughly. It is entered by two massive doorways, twenty feet in height and five or six wide. The interior is cut up into various apartments, the use of which can only be conjectured. The diameter of the whole is about ninety feet, a considerable portion being paved with large, hewn stones. The whole is supported by a foundation which no earthquake has yet been able to undermine, though, as we are aware, the island has experienced many shocks.

The Bay of Migiarrò, which means 'the carting place', is the commercial port of Gozo, so to dignify it, and was once considered of sufficient importance to cause the Knights to erect a substantial stone tower or fort for its defense. This is now in ruins, but the place has become a busy and populous settlement, whose interests centre upon the fisheries of this coast. The beach is a fine one, much resorted to for bathing purposes. Close at hand, southward, is the grand cliff of Ras-el-Taffal, a promontory nearly two hundred feet in height, crowned by old Fort Chambray, which was named for the member of the brotherhood of St. John whose liberality built it. He was a very rich Knight from Normandy, and when he died, he left one fifth of his large estate to finish this defensive work. The whole sum was required, and much more besides, to complete the well-designed and elaborate fort. It was begun in 1749, and was many years in course of construction, but it is now gradually crumbling away, not being considered of importance.

Notwithstanding their many ancient monuments, the object which seems to be of the most interest to the inhabitants and to tourists is the Grotto of Calypso. This is a rocky fissure on the north-western shore of the island, situated about a league from Rabbato, and is the spot where the grotto is supposed to have existed. It is now only a simple limestone cavern, presenting no peculiarities

worthy of detail. It has the usual stalactitic incrustations and developments, recalling the much more extensive caves of the same nature which the traveler sees at Matanzas, Cuba. It is quite isolated, but is constantly visited by small parties from Valletta, who drink in romantic ideas from the associations of the place, and refreshment from the clear, sparkling spring which meanders through the cave of the defunct goddess, —

'The fair hair'd nymph with every beauty crown'd.'

While on the spot we seek in vain for those 'verdant groves of alders and poplars, the odoriferous cypresses,' and for 'the meadows clothed in the livery of eternal spring,' with which Homer poetically endowed the voluptuous abode of the Siren whose name he has immortalized. The view presented from the top of the hill crowning the location of the Grotto of Calypso is well worth mentioning, overlooking the Bay of Melleha and most of the island of Gozo, with Comino and Malta in the distance. The surface of the surrounding sea is at all times sprinkled with busy fishing craft, pleasure yachts, row-boats, and large hulls freighted with a wealth of merchandise.

In the neighbourhood of Marsa-el-Fomo, there is a stalagmitic cave of a curious and interesting nature, which was discovered so late as 1888. It is mainly situated under a field that lies close to the village church of Sciara. This cave attracts large numbers of visitors to Gozo, and in many respects is quite unique. It is eighty feet in length and sixty wide, and contains a museum of curiosities which are the wonder and admiration of all who behold them. When the cave is lighted by torches or magnesium wire, the effect is extremely beautiful, the thousands of crystalline stalactites suspended from the ceiling reflecting prismatic colors of extraordinary brilliancy. It is indeed a fairy-like grotto, much more worthy as a dwelling for Homer's nymph than the crude and exposed cavern on the shore, already described. To one at all familiar with these caves, which are found in various parts of the world, it is no special marvel. These cavities are formed by the slow process of well-understood chemical action, the active agent being the carbonic acid gas which is held in solution by the rain-water that percolates through the limestone roof of the cave. This acting upon the limestone dissolves and conveys it away in liquid and gaseous forms.

Not far from here is a curious natural stone arch on the shore, called Tierka Zerka, that is, the 'Azure Window', through which one may look upon the sea as though it were an artificial opening set with clearest glass. It very naturally recalled a somewhat similar freak of nature which occurs on the island of Torghatten, off the coast of Norway, where one gets a sort of telescopic view, through a stone tunnel five hundred feet long, of the blue sea and the islands in range far beyond it.

The next largest town to Rabbato is Casal Nadar, the only one on the island whose population approximates in number to that of the capital. This place is famous for the fruit which is raised in its neighborhood, and especially for its excellent apples and choice ornamental trees. It has nearly four thousand inhabitants. The cultivation of the land is brought to a much higher standard here than in the larger island, but the dwelling-houses are inferior to those of the villages of Malta proper; and yet in estimating the general thrift of the country population of the two islands, the result is decidedly in favor of Gozo.

A pleasant drive of three or four miles from Rabbato, through a garden-like region where poppies, clad in imperial scarlet, peep out from among the hedges to delight the eye, brings one to the Bay of Scilendi, whose perpendicular cliffs contain many rocky caves, few of which, probably, have been explored within the memory of living residents hereabouts. They are believed to have been, in olden times, the rendezvous of corsairs, where their ill-gotten wealth was stored, where they held their revels, and where their prisoners were confined until they were sold into slavery at Constantinople, or on the Barbary Coast. The manifest fertility of the soil lying between here and the capital is owing principally to the irrigating capacity of several invaluable and never-failing springs of pure water with which this region has been exceptionally favored. The tangled masses of kelp and seaweed, which constantly accumulate on the shore, are regularly collected by the thrifty natives and liberally applied to the land as a fertilizer. This material, becoming duly decomposed, imparts its rich chemical properties to the soil, and thus repays the laborer tenfold.

Malta has been pronounced by an act of the English Parliament as belonging to Europe, but the fact that the stratification of the

southern part of the island corresponds exactly with that of the coast of Barbary indicates a similar origin. Ptolemy thought it was African, but Pliny gives it to the Italian coast. Geologists of our day not only believe that the Maltese group was once a part of Sicily, but that in the far past it was also joined to Africa. In evidence of this deduction, carefully prepared maps of soundings taken between the islands and the continent on either side of the group are produced, while in the soil of both Sicily and Malta the skeletons of hyenas and other animals indigenous to Africa are frequently to be found, besides other fossil remains indicating a like conclusion. If this supposition be correct, how great must have been the changes which have taken place in the physical geography of southern Europe and Malta! What a general upheaval and subsidence must have agitated this famous sea in the remote past! That important topographical changes have taken place in these waters and in their relative connection with the land during historic times is well known. A little more than two thousand years ago, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea were united. De Lesseps' canal was no new proposition. Nature had already half done the work by means of the Bitter Lakes, and the modern engineer had only to restore a connection which time had destroyed.

Among many other interesting fossil bones, teeth, and complete skeletons unearthed at Gozo by naturalists, those of a pygmy species of elephants were found, which must have stood but about four feet in height; these were manifestly of African origin. The Ceylon elephant is distinctly different, in size and in several other features. The latter is the species universally met with in India, the beautiful island named having yielded a regular supply to this country from time immemorial.

Dr. Andrew Leith Adams, a distinguished English surgeon and naturalist, who resided for a period of several years in Malta, found fossil bones and teeth of hippopotami in various parts of the group. He says in a published account that he 'unearthed hundreds of elephant's teeth, together with those of other tropical animals'. He also discovered, in caves on the south side of the larger island, vestiges of aquatic birds of a species now extinct, and which in life must have been larger than the swan of our day. The presence of such remains indicates a great change of climatic conditions

between the far past and the present time. It is difficult to imagine that Malta was ever the native land of elephants and sea-horses, but Dr. Adams shows, at least to his own satisfaction, that it was once covered with a productive soil and luxuriant vegetation. According to the same authority, it must have had lakes, rivers, and lagoons; trees and shrubs must have flourished in profusion, and it was doubtless part of a land the principal portion of which is now hidden beneath the surging waters of the Mediterranean.

Some of the most remarkable of Dr. Adams' discoveries were made in the neighborhood of the village of Melleha, north of St. Paul's Bay, on the principal island of the group. Here, in the sides of the ravine below the hamlet, are numerous caves of various sizes, both natural and artificial. Some of these are thought to be Phoenician tombs, as lamps and lachrymatories have been found in them. A few of these caves are now occupied by Maltese as dwellings. The village of Melleha has a very ancient church, partly excavated in the solid rock, which is held in great veneration, as it is said to have been consecrated by the Apostle Paul. It contains a very ancient picture of the Virgin, believed to have been painted by Saint Luke! Penitential pilgrims come from all parts of the group to kneel and pray in this church, a service which, according to the local priests, carries with it absolution for any amount of sin and wickedness. It is needless to say that a good round fee is also contingent thereon.

The inhabitants of Gozo are, as a rule, thrifty, frugal, and industrious; the gipsy-like dark-haired women, who almost invariably have the charm of large, brilliantly expressive eyes, and even the young children, devote themselves assiduously to making the famous Maltese lace, for which a ready and profitable market always exists in European and American cities, especially for the finer quality and more delicate designs. Thus employed, for many hours of the day, they are often seen in family groups, seated by the doors of their humble dwellings, — small, massive, square stone buildings, — singing quaint old songs and gossiping together. Strangers visiting these districts almost always carry away with them, as souvenirs, specimens of this choice article, which has a reputation all over Christendom. The collection of crown laces belonging to the Queen of Italy contains specimens of Maltese lace

reputed to be five centuries old, while photographs of objects found in Egyptian tombs date back the history of this delicate fabric to a thousand years or more before Christ. A choice pattern manufactured from a new material is now being made at Gozo, in small quantities. The basis is a peculiar sort of white silk. The completed fabric of this style is costly, and comes very near to the texture of a spider's web.

The Gozitans speak a language which differs somewhat from that common in Malta proper, and which is generally considered to be a pure native tongue, resembling the Arabic much more closely than does the mixed and confusing dialect of the larger island. The names of places, persons, monuments, household utensils, animals, and articles of food are all Arabic pure and simple. It is curious to realize that this people should have succeeded in keeping aloof from their conquerors so as not only to retain their own language in its purity, but also their personal resemblance to their Mohammedan ancestors. Their complexions are almost as dark as those of the natives of Barbary. Sometimes one detects a tendency to protruding lips and flat noses. When the Knights of St. John took possession of Malta, they found the islanders universally professing the Roman Catholic religion, but yet entirely governed by Arab forms and customs. Their constant intercourse with the Barbary States probably served to confirm them in these inherited proclivities.

At several points on the shore of Gozo where the attempt of an enemy to land might be possible, the Knights during their early sovereignty improvised a sort of ordnance called an earth mortar, after the following process. A hole of the proper dimensions was cut or drilled in the solid rock, at a certain angle trending towards the shore, designed to hold a hundred pounds of gunpowder. The explosive was placed at the bottom, and after a proper fuse was connected therewith, it was covered with a layer of boards to act as a sort of wadding. Upon the boards a ton or more of stones and rocks were placed, which completed the charge. On the approach of an enemy, which would necessarily be by boats, the fuse could be promptly ignited, and a wild discharge of rocks would at once take place, sending the missiles high into the air at an angle which would drop them upon the approaching enemy. These stones,

falling with destructive force upon the boats and upon those who were in them, would scatter death and confusion in their ranks. We have never heard of such a device put in practice elsewhere, but should imagine that it would prove efficacious in a rude way to defend an exposed sea coast. A large or even a small stone descending from a considerable height, under such circumstances, would be sure, if it fell in a boat, to go through its bottom, causing it to fill at once, and would be equally fatal if falling upon the heads or bodies of human beings. The rock, which is of the nature already described, admitted of being easily hewn into such shape as was desired, while exposure to the atmosphere soon hardened it to the required consistency and resisting power. A second discharge of such a mortar might possibly involve as much danger to the defenders as to the enemy. It must be remembered that at this period, between three and four hundred years ago, the use of artillery was comparatively in its infancy, and iron mortars, when they were procurable, were of the crudest manufacture.

As forming a contrast to those days, and to the present means of conducting offensive and defensive warfare, it may be appropriate to mention that the author happened to be at Gibraltar not long ago, when a hundred-ton cannon was landed there. With this extraordinary piece of ordnance, it was believed that an effectual shot might be fired across the strait to Africa! As it is at least twenty miles from the Fortress of the Rock to the opposite coast, we took the declaration of the artillerist who expressed this opinion of the power of the gun with considerable allowance.

Hagar Tal Gimal – the 'General's Rock' – is the name of a small, outlying, and nearly inaccessible ledge off the shore of Gozo, upon which there still grows in profusion, springing from the crevices of the rock, the curious plant known to botanists as *Fungus Melitensis*, Maltese fungus. This was so highly prized by the Knights of St. John as to be most carefully gathered in its prime, dried in the sun, and preserved as a stancher of blood in case of dangerous wounds, and also for the suppression of internal hemorrhage. Indeed, the fungus was believed to possess a variety of valuable medicinal properties. Small packages of it were sent annually by the Knights as precious gifts to the European potentates, it being equally prized by the recipients, who believed it to be

otherwise unattainable. It is certainly a very simple weed, which is in flower about the last of April. When fresh it is of a dark red color, like our sorrel, and is of a spongy softness, but it is no longer held in such high repute either as an internal medicine or as an efficacious dressing for wounds. The famous rock is now seldom, if ever, trodden by the foot of man. It was always difficult of access in rough weather, though it is hardly a hundred yards from the mainland. The nearest village to the General's Rock is Casal Garbo. The people of the neighborhood declare that the famous fungus grows exclusively on this rock, but this assertion is not correct, as we have seen it in bloom on the Mediterranean shore at Leghorn, Tunis, and elsewhere.

The language of the people round about Casal Garbo differs somewhat from that which prevails in the rest of the island, seeming to be more Hebrew than Arabic. It is certainly far from being the latter tongue. This fact has given rise to many suppositions and learned discussions. We were told that the subject was to be carefully investigated by a committee of scientists, linguists, and archaeologists who were specially interested.

One hears about an important alabaster quarry, situated in the northwestern part of Gozo, but the author did not visit it. There are said to be ample evidences of its having been worked in an intelligent manner centuries ago, even before the Roman period, if the indications are rightly interpreted. Among so many nationalities as have at sundry times held possession of this group, it is a very nice distinction to attribute this or that work to any special one.

It has been mentioned that the island of Gozo is much more fertile than Malta proper, though why this should actually be so it would be difficult to explain. There is less rocky surface and more natural soil in the former than in the latter. This is realized at a glance. Certain it is that so far as verdure is concerned, the daisies and the dandelions appear and the grassy lanes of Gozo are aglow with vernal ripeness early in February, while the more drowsy soil of Malta does not awaken until the middle of March. Springtime is the season of the year when the earth sends forth her choicest treasures, even in this semi-tropical, Mediterranean clime, —

'Hanging her infant blossoms on the trees.'

The deep purple vetch which enamels the fields of the islands, especially in Gozo, is beautified by the scarlet poppies which Nature sprinkles here and there with dainty fingers, producing vivid gleams of color in strong and pleasing contrast with the surroundings. Sometimes the ripening wheatfields are made lovely after the same winsome manner.

The rich development and beauty of the tall, stout clover at this early period of the year is particularly noticeable, giving promise of a wealth of harvest calculated to gladden the husbandman's heart, while taxing the industry of the bees from dawn to twilight. We know of but few vegetable products which so richly repay the cultivators as this Maltese clover. Surely writers are not authorized to speak of this group of islands in mid-sea, with all these facts before them, as consisting mainly of a series of bare, weather-beaten rocks. Why mock and mislead us by such misrepresentations? In the wildest and least cultivated districts of Gozo, rosemary and thyme may be seen, showing that regal Nature has her poetic moods even under adverse circumstances, and that she often indulges her fancy in lonely places without regard to the cold appreciation of heedless human eyes, sometimes in her charming caprice outdoing more labored and artistic methods. 'You will find something far greater in the woods than you will find in books,' says St. Bernard.

Regarding the origin of Gozo, Comino, and Malta, we have seen that authorities differ materially. As if still more completely to mystify us upon the subject, Borzesi, a Maltese writer of considerable ability, has seriously attempted to prove that the group is formed of the summits of mountains belonging to the lost land of Atalantis. Signor Grougnet, of Valletta, had formerly in his possession a stone which was dug up from among some ruins near the old capital of Città Vecchia, in 1826, on which was an inscription describing Atalantis, and another to the effect that the Consul Tiberius Sempronius, in the year of Rome 536, ordered the preservation of this stone. This is either an adroitly conceived canard, or it is a suggestion worthy the attention of students of antiquity.

Bidding farewell for a time to Gozo, let us now recross the Straits of Fregghi to Malta proper, there to enjoy the unequalled attractions and delights of beautiful Valletta.