

SEEN IN SUNNY MALTA.

ALONG THE SHORES AND IN HISTORIC CITIES.

The Catacombs with Numberless Cells—Architecture thus Astonishes and Delights the Stranger—Scenes on Land and Water.

(Progress special correspondent.)

The visitor to Malta is a long while in tiring of the historic, architectural and social attractions of Valetta, especially in the sunny winter time when day and night seem filled with an endless round of brilliant scenes and gaiety. But if interest in the splendid old city of the knights should begin to wane, there would still be found an extraordinary charm in the easily-made excursions to various points of interest in Malta and the adjoining islands, and a most pleasing study of the peasantry under their curious conditions of environment.

From Valetta one can reach the remotest points in Comino and Gozo, even by row or sail boats, with donkeys for the interior loitering, and return to the city within daylight hours; and as to Malta itself—whose length is no more than eighteen miles with an extreme breadth of less than twelve—I have often walked from Valetta to Fort St. Lucian on the southeast coast, to Citta Vecchia, the ancient capital of the island, to St. Paul's Bay, and to the simply curious Dingloin, the extreme southwestern coast, arriving still in time for a Maltese breakfast which, if not a meal of dainty perfection, always possesses the aristocratic quality of interminable delay.

The coast scenery of western Malta and all of Gozo is very beautiful indeed, while occasionally it reaches positive grandeur. For the Bible student there are the scene of the shipwreck of St. Paul and several places made famous by the apostle's stay upon the island. For the simply curious traveller there are the many ruined summer palaces of the Grand Masters, ancient and interesting fortresses and palaces of the Inquisition. The antiquarian will discover a larger number of prehistoric remains than upon any other equal area, with catacombs as fine as those of Syracuse and greater than those of Rome. Geologists find extraordinarily favorable conditions for researches, owing to the bare, denuded condition of the island, with its rocky sea-shores and noble cliff exposures. And naturalists haunt the islands in winter for studies of its rich and winsome tenantry of migratory birds.

The most beautiful examples of coast scenery are to be found upon Gozo. It is so near that a day's excursion in a little felucca, manned by two or three picturesque and incessantly chattering boatmen, will give one a continuous feast of change, full scene, and almost a complete survey of all coast points of interest. The shores of Malta are completely lined with fishermen or women and children gathering seaweed for enriching the scant soil of the island, and every little cove is alive with color and sound with song.

Even in winter the sparkling and phosphorescent waters of the Mediterranean are here bland and warm to the touch, and the young Maltese disport in the waves during their arduous labors like beavers of playful seaweed; while the most dangerous cliffs and precipices are so crowded with them in their quest for eggs, the young of the seaweed inhabiting the crannies of the cliffs, and for the various forms of vegetation which are stored with miserably for fuel and manure, that, at some distance, the blending of colors of costume with the grays and greens of the island crags, often gives the curious illusion that the seaweeds are aflame with gigantic tropical flowers.

Gozo, which is called Gaudis by the native Maltese, contains no town, although the tiny island, which is but six miles broad and eight miles long, is thickly inhabited. It has six villages or casals. These with the outlying farms, for it is a very fertile island and under the highest degree of cultivation, are, or were in the old times, protected by an ancient though massive fort called Rabat. It is most picturesquely situated at a great elevation in the centre of the island. From its walls, with a field-glass, I have looked upon the splendid panorama of Malta with its terraced fields, its old walled villages, its massive palaces, and the far white city of Valetta; to the north viewed Sicily with the glistening cone of Etna above its dark and slender thread of horizon line; and seen to the southwest, like purple dots upon the shimmering Mediterranean blue, the lonely islets of Linoia and Lampedusa, half way to the Tunisian shores of Africa.

The topography of Gozo is very beautiful. It is charmingly diversified by hill and dale. Many of its sunny valleys are natural and artificial gardens of wondrous luxuriance. I have nowhere seen their equal, save in those marvelous garden vales behind beautiful Palermo in Sicily. The shores present, save at a very few points, perpendicular sea walls; and on the western and northwestern coasts they often rise straight from the water's edge to a height of over 2,000 feet. These abound in caves of great size and splendor; their sides and brows are the haunts of myriad sea-fowl; their heights here and there show stunted and lonely palms; and the air about them with the sky above are often almost white with millions of the slowly sailing and exquisitely beautiful little Adriatic gulls.

I cannot vouch for the emotions of others, but as I first tramped over the heights of Nasciar, descending into the valley beyond, and saw spread before me the Bay of St. Paul, a sense of awe mingled with glorious elation came with the heroic and beauty of the spot where the heroic apostle was shipwrecked. The bay, which is about two miles long and one in breadth, is situated on the northern coast of Malta, and is hardly distant a brisk two hours' walk from the city of Valetta. Countless excursions are made hither by water from Malta's capital, and often the roads are filled with all manner of vehicles conveying pious or curious pilgrims. I preferred coming in the early morning and alone.

As I stood on Nasciar heights, the sun was just rising above the promontory of Ras el Kaura. A winding road skirts the beautiful bay. An ancient wall half hidden with shrubs and flowers forms a boundary with a second pleasant roadway behind. The fishermen with their nets, some donkeys

grazing at the edge of the hill-slopes, seagulls in countless numbers and a half-naked lad urging along a herd of goats with rocks and pebbles, were the only living things in view. Soon a kindly-faced priest joined me. We wandered down the road together. He had come with the key of the little chapel which is set on that point of the shore on which tradition holds Paul's bark was wrecked.

It is a tiny chapel with an interior of utmost simplicity; but three of its pictures, whose subjects are the shipwreck, the miracle of the viper, and the healing of Publius' father, are remarkable, while the yearly votive offerings, the good father told me, are very great. The priest's adios and blessings followed me from the place, and as I turned my steps towards ancient Citta Vecchia, the last object in St. Paul's bay my eyes rested upon was the ledge of straggling rocks "where the two seas met." It was rimmed with a shimmer of glistening ripples as tiny, shining and slumberous as though but echoing the dreamlike songs of sirens inviting to a haven of endless sleep.

High upon a hill seven miles to the southwest of Valetta stands Citta Vecchia, walled capital of the island before Grand Master John de Valette built the splendid city which now crowns Mount Scieperas. At the beginning of the Christian era it contained the house of the "chief man of the island" who so "courteously entertained" the shipwrecked Paul. Its Cathedral of St. Paul had its traditional origin during the three months' residence of the apostle, as Publius is said to have given a portion of his own palace as a site for the first church and to have officiated in it as Malta's first bishop.

That was a long time ago; but the antiquated character of the city draws one, while to these old and loved traditions. Seen from a distance, its mighty walls, cumbrous structures, flat roofs, vast palaces and immense domes, rising like some far and fanciful mountain of dream-built cubes, pillars, arches and capping domes render it the most impressive structural perspective in Europe. When Valetta was built the former grandeur of Citta Vecchia departed. By and by the great mansions were transformed into seminaries, monasteries and convents, and thus they remain. Its tremendous walls still in few others than monks, religious students, nuns and novitiates. The great statue of Juno, queen of all the gods who presided over marriage, which is embedded in the main gateway, seems strangely out of place as the escutcheon of a city of religious recuses.

The buildings are massive, ashen-colored by time, and strangely silent. The streets are narrow, shadowy and still. The great dungeons beneath the huge Sanatorium, once the palace of the Giurati, or the three magistrates of the city, are no more palpable with silence than are these high-walled narrow streets. No sound is heard save the clanging of bells as the call to endless devotions. Then the thoroughfares are suddenly filled with bowed and dark-robed figures for a moment, and again as suddenly become lifeless, dark and still.

The catacombs beneath Citta Vecchia and the prehistoric rock-hewn tombs of Mnaira are almost a welcome relief from the solemnity and solemn shades of this old place. The passages and chambers of the catacombs are lacking mural decoration, but they are of the same character as those at Syracuse, and are much larger than any single examples to be found at Rome. They are hewn out of the soft stratum of the upper limestone on which Citta Vecchia stands. You reach them through a perpendicular shaft, and a few steps bring you into a perfect maze of tunnels leading in every direction, with crypts on each side and at every possible level.

These tunnels and their branch tunnels seem interminable. I counted upwards of 800 separate sepulchres, and there are no doubt many thousands. One passage or gallery of very large proportions was found which opened into capacious squares or chambers, where the crypts were fashioned as though for the more distinguished dead. Their proportions were more ample, and they were better formed in every respect. In many a rest for the head and neck was raised and hollowed in excellent contour; and by the side of others were excavated niches for urns and the lamp for votive and other sepulchral offices.

However ancient was the race that excavated or required such vast area for burial, it is certain that these crypts were equally as extensive in the days of the Romans, 2,000 years ago. They are completely barren of all remains, as they were for a long time used as abodes for the living, the primitive Christians having fled to them for refuge; and they have been on various occasions the abodes of the early Maltese when flying from the swords of the Goth, Vandal, Moor and Turk. No one has ever fully explored them; and I find from the natives that the belief among them is universal that subterranean passages lead to Valetta and to other remote points in the island.

These are not the only prehistoric remains of great interest to be found on the islands. Diminutive catacombs and rock hewn tombs are accessible in nearly every important valley ravine or rocky gorge in both Malta and Gozo. Extensive catacombs are found at Micalha, Tower Nadur, St. Paul's and Mellia bays, and Mnaira; while at Ilhagiar-Kim and the Giant's Tower in Gozo, I saw megalithic monuments rivaling in massiveness and mystery the Stonehenge of England and the vast pagan monument of New Grange, on the Boyne in Ireland. I was shown a great and solitary monolith standing near Har Hassan cave, on the south coast of Malta. There is a domelike ruin on Cordino Hill overlooking Valetta. And I measured upright blocks in the Ilhagiar-Kim ruin 24 feet high, while in the cyclopean Giant's Tower I found several with a height of 28 and 30 feet. Their additional length beneath the debris surrounding them must have been considerable. All of these tremendous monoliths were put in place thousands of years ago by a people capable of quarrying and transporting them from sandstone beds nearly a mile distant, for the purpose of some form of adoration. They did their work so well that while all other traces of their race are lost, these mute monuments have brought the story true from almost unrecorded time of the eternal principle of worship in the heart of man.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

"ASTRA" AND HER CRITICS.

What "Sarah" Knows About "Good and Bad Grammar."

The subjoined letter, which appeared last Friday in one of the Moncton daily papers, is published, not, it is needless to say, on account of any merit of its own, but merely because I think it may afford some amusement to the readers of my column:

"ASTRA" CRITICIZED.

MONCTON, March 17, 1892.

EDITOR TIMES: I am so great a lover of elegant language that I feel pained on my reading the Moncton correspondence in PROGRESS to see so much space occupied with matter that consists so largely of long, fat, cumbrous, and ungrammatical sentences, and I feel that I am entitled to my share of the same. I have given you a most glaring example of how far this ignorance can be carried. Here is the first item:

"It seems almost impossible that there can be a dearth of social news in Moncton, and yet the fact remains, and is so depressing that when I read the long, fat, cumbrous, and ungrammatical sentences, and I feel that I am entitled to my share of the same. I have given you a most glaring example of how far this ignorance can be carried. Here is the first item:

"Can you, Mr. Editor, enlighten your readers on the meaning of that polished expression 'along, far, cousin'?" No! Again, how does she know how it feels to tumble out of a balloon without being hurt and lie gasping in the mud? What does she lie gasping for when she is not hurt? Then think of her lying perch on terra firma! I am sure she is entitled to our sympathy for having such a miserable thing to perch upon.

Here is another sample of polite composition: "I mention a very pleasant party, but I suppose I was still a little dizzy after the splendours of the ball, and that all smaller events slipped out of my mind. The entertainment referred to was a skating party given on Shrove Tuesday."

After the skating there was a supper and dance, she tells us, "which broke up just in time to avoid treading upon the approaching toes of Ash Wednesday."

Who ever heard that Ash Wednesday had toes? You must know that this epitome of news is dated Moncton on March the ninth. Shrove Tuesday fell on the first. The splendid ball alluded to came off some time previous to that. We can safely say twelve days had elapsed from the date of the ball till the ninth and on that day the lady's mind was so deranged that, taking all things together—the gasping in the mud and the dizziness—leads one to think that "Astra" instead of being perched on terra firma, was on a hot air balloon.

What do you think of that as a specimen of journalism, girls? Fancy anyone making so uncouth an attack upon your inoffensive friend, Astra! But please don't imagine from this, that there is no respectable newspaper in Moncton. I know the paper is town well, and I can assure you it is not the case, there are two, but the letter in question appeared in the third, re-christened the *Simes*.

Rather hard upon an unassuming scribe, is it not? And yet I don't mind for myself but I do feel hurt on behalf of the editors of PROGRESS! To think that these gentlemen after devoting years to the study and practice of journalism should be accused, and by such an authority as "Sarah," of not knowing whether the members of their staff used good English, and correct diction, or not! It is really lamentable, and I should not have been surprised if the paper had ceased publication, as soon as the fact of Sarah's disapproval reached this city. What a blow it must have been to the entire office. And yet strange to say this unfortunate "lover of elegant language" does not seem to be aware that there is no such thing as "good" or "bad" grammar either in or out of the dictionary! Grammar is simply grammar, and nothing else; it can neither be qualified nor intensified. If our friend "Sarah" had possessed sufficient knowledge of her subject to use the terms good or bad English, she would, at least, have been correct, and so made a better impression on those amongst her readers who have had the advantage of a good education. As it is, if the sentence: "Astra was on a hot air balloon" is a specimen of the "elegant English" Sarah so loves, I fancy we should all of us prefer being excused from taking lessons in style or composition from her; as I do not think that particular expression is often heard outside of a kitchen or a bar-room.

Take a little advice, my dear "Sarah," from one who feels too completely out of your reach to bear you any malice, and do tamper with subjects beyond your comprehension. Solomon said a great many years ago, that "A still tongue maketh a wise head," and those words of wisdom apply as well to our own days, as they did to Solomon's. The proverb might even be enlarged upon and the clause added, that a still tongue was frequently a valuable assistant to its owner in concealing the possession of a very foolish head, and if you had only laid that wise saw to heart and retained your anxiety to rush into print over a subject you knew nothing about, you would not have made such a lamentable exhibition of your own ignorance. If you are wise "Sarah" you will go back to school for a little while before you presume to criticize others again! Begin with the primary department my friend, and try if possible to select a school of the good, old fashioned type, where the payment of the very small sum of "twopence extra" insured the scholars a knowledge of at least the rudiments of good manners, and you will not be tempted then to use such expressions as "on a hot air balloon."

One word more, my dear. Try Dyspepticure. "Bile it down," as Josiah Allen's wife said, "and use it for a steady drink" because you will find it invaluable as a cure for indigestion and all derangements of the liver which tend to make one take a jaundiced view of things in general. I am afraid Abraham does not manage you properly "Sarah" or perhaps he has not yet appeared on the scene, and you have grown a little sour from the weary waiting!

Really, girls! I am not disposed to be conceited, but if envy lies slander "loving a shining mark" such an evidence of jealousy on your friend Sarah's part, may well excuse a little vanity. I am very sorry I have failed to please "Sarah," of course, and through her *The Daily Times*, but yet, strange to say, I am quite contented if I can manage to reach the lower standard which seems to satisfy the humbler publications, such as PROGRESS, the New York Press, the Halifax Herald and Harpers' Magazine.

ASTRA.

Where Shakespeare's Ashes Rest.

The Vicar of Stratford-on-Avon writes to a London journal to say that the restoration of the church of the church which holds the dust of Shakespeare has been completed. It has been closed for two years, and the Dean of Lincoln celebrated the first service. Fears had been expressed, observed the writer, that the

building was being spoiled, but his answer is: "Come and see." It is stated that "the work has been conducted with the greatest care, and nothing has been done for which there was not good and ample reason. The worn out pavement has been relaid; the whitewashed walls have been scraped; the windows, from which the last traces of ancient glass were removed in 1791, have been filled with beautiful modern glass from the studios of Messrs. Lavers and Westlake and Messrs. Heaton and Butler; the tomb of Thomas Balsall, who 're-edified the choir,' has been restored; the panelling behind the stalls, which had disappeared altogether, has been replaced; and last, but by no means least, the altar slab of St. Thomas of Canterbury's chapel, erected by John de Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury, has been recovered from the place where it has lain since the Reformation, and is now used as the high altar."

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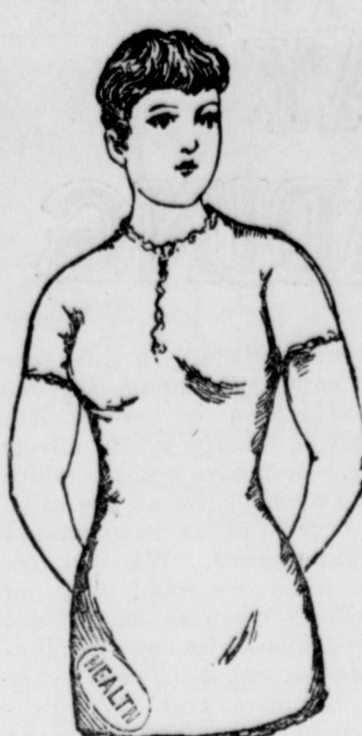
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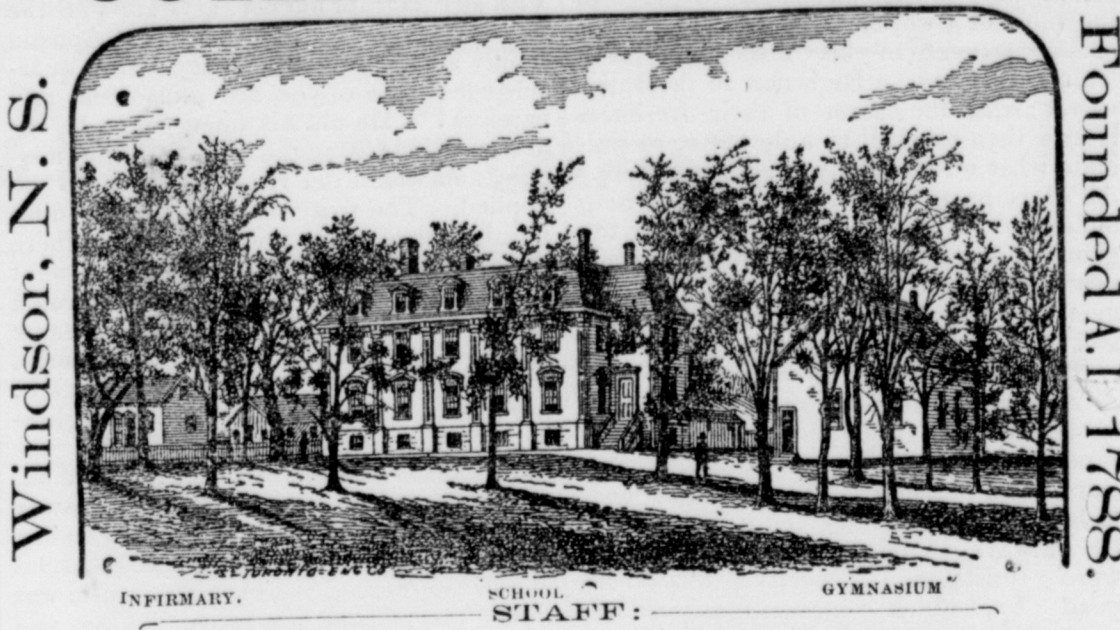
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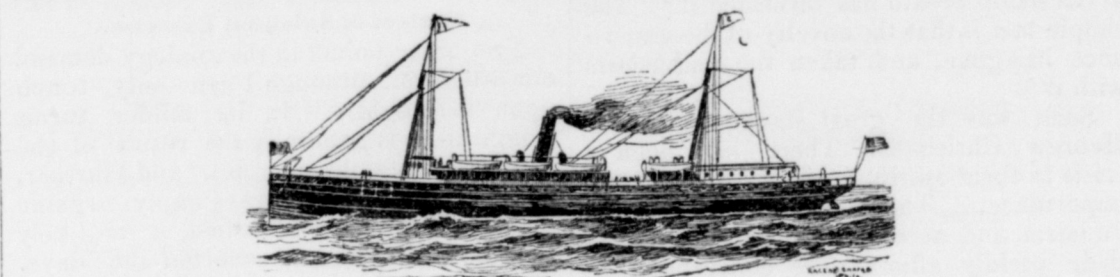
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