

# Malta and Gibraltar

ILLUSTRATED



GIBRALTAR, THE KEY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. (From the "Queen of Spain's Chair.") [Photo: A. Beanland.]

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE  
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL  
FACTS, FIGURES, & RESOURCES

Compiled and Edited by ALLISTER MACMILLAN

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## THE MALTESE NOBILITY.

**T**HE fact that Malta, a mere speck in the blue Mediterranean, has had a Nobility from very remote times is not the least of the many interesting and uncommon characteristics that distinguish the island from all other oversea possessions of the British Crown. Indeed, there is no place on earth comparable in this respect with the little country that has figured so much in the world's history, and that had a highly-developed civilization when the great lands of the British Empire were absolutely unknown, and Britain itself had not yet emerged from primeval barbarism.

Mention is made in the works of Livy and Cicero of the Maltese Nobility; but the local Aristocracy as constituted to-day was founded in 1090 A.D. by Count Roger of Normandy, who divided the population into Barons, Nobles, Knights, Citizens, Burgesses, and Rustics. The ancestors of many of the present Maltese families were amongst his followers, and he conferred fiefs on several of the most distinguished of them for their brilliant exploits against the Saracens.

After its conquest by the Normans Malta formed part of the Sicilian Monarchy, and the Aragonese Kings of Sicily augmented the Nobility by many new creations.

Margaret of Aragon, who died in 1418, and from whom the Testaferrata, Sceberras, and Stagno families descend, was a daughter of Count William of Aragon, natural son of Frederick III. Clear proof that she was of blood royal is afforded by the words used by Frederick III. on April 7th, 1365, in his Diploma granting certain prerogatives to her husband, James Pellegrino, a Maltese Noble, as follows:—*Fredericus, etc. Presentis scripti serie notum fieri supplicationem noviter Excellentia garitam de Aragonia, Consortem saneuineam, familiarem et fidelem gratiose, etc.*

During the four hundred years of the Maltese Nobility, the history of Malta to the after the grant of Malta to the Emperor Charles V. in 1530, and Sicily were identical, as the held Malta only in fief from the The governorship of Malta almost hereditary in the family of and Bucana; and the keeper- was strictly hereditary in that of

The Governor of Gozo, the administrator of Government pro- tors), the Commanders of various who kept both horse and foot at their own expense. They military commands and all execu- had an hereditary right to sit in Council. The Barons, or possessors century the right to sit in the Nobles were entitled to elect and that Council a certain number of The exclusive privilege of the Nobility by King Ferdinand the special right of keeping galleys, whereby they rendered signal

The historian Bosio, describing the state entry into the City of Notabile of Grand Master L'Isle Adam in 1530, when the Knights of St. John came to Malta, mentions that the Nobles received him at the gates of the city, and that one of them, after reading an address, handed over the keys of the city, the Grand Master promising to respect the rights and privileges of the Maltese. This ceremony was repeated on the election of every succeeding Grand Master. Canon Panzavecchia, in his work *L'ultimo Periodo Della Storia di Malta*, says that Grand Master de Rohan was received at the gate of Notabile by four Noble Senators of the ancient families of Xara, Cassia, Bonnici, and Muscati, with the Capitano di Verga, Baron Pasquale Sceberras Testaferrata, at the head of the Civic Cavalry. Previous to the advent of the Knights of St. John in Malta, the Capitano di Verga was the Governor of the island, but he became Lieutenant-Governor when the Grand Master assumed power, and as such next held precedence over everyone including the Balis and Grand



The Most Noble  
MARY SCEBERRAS D'AMICO-  
INGUANEZ (wife of Colonel A. C.  
McKean, C.M.G.), Baroness of Diar-  
el-Bniet and Bucana, created by Louis,  
King of Sicily, January 4th, 1350,  
and of Castel Cicciano, created by  
Charles II. of Sicily, June 11th, 1695.

and forty years from 1090 to 1530 of the Nobility of Sicily; and even Knights of St. John of Jerusalem 1530, the Nobility of both Malta Grand Master of the Order Sovereigns of Sicily.

before the advent of the Knights was Inguanez, Barons of Diar-el-Bniet ship of the Castle of St. Angelo Nava, Barons of Marsa. Vice-Admiral, the Secreto, or party, the Jurats (Municipal Sena- regiments, etc., were all Noblemen soldiers and several war galleys were also invested with the chief tive and judicial authority, and the Consiglio Popolare, or National of fiefs, had up to the sixteenth Consiglio Popolare, and the other depute as their representatives in themselves.

keeping falcons was granted to in 1495. The Gatto family had service to King Alfonso during

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The Most Noble  
**FRANCESCO SANT-CASSIA**,  
K.O.M.M., Baron of Gharixem and  
Tabia created by Grand Master  
Lascaris April 16th. 1638; and Count  
by the Empress Maria Teresa of  
Austria December 22nd, 1770

the precedence be regulated

FIRST.—Any person who

said city Notabile and

SECOND.—The Titolato hav-

existing here, though

THIRD.—The Titolato who

fief really existing in our

the title in the Chancery

of our Religion, and in

the High Court of our

Castellania, and the pay-

ment for the respective

registrations of 116 scudi

of our money, to be

divided in equal shares

between the said Chan-

cery and Castellania.

FOURTH.—A descendant in the male line from any person who was Capitano della Verga, if he lives on rent of his own property, and if his intermediate ancestors lived also on rent of their own property.

FIFTH.—A descendant in the male line from a Titolato, with title founded on a fief really existing here, if he lives on rent of his own property, and if his intermediate ancestors lived also on such rent.

SIXTH.—Any person who was First Jurat of Notabile.

SEVENTH.—Any person who was First Jurat of Valletta.

EIGHTH.—The Junior Jurat of the University to which he belongs.

NINTH.—Any person who was Judge of Appeal, Criminal Judge, or Civil Judge of the Court of Castellania, or the Courts Capitanale and Governatoriale.

Crosses of the Order. When the Grand Master was seated on the throne the Capitano stood at his right hand; he was Commandant-in-Chief of the country districts, and was invested with both criminal and civil jurisdiction, having a Court of Justice of his own, with power to banish any persons from the island without reference to the Grand Master. The Capitano di Verga also presided over the Consiglio Popolare. When Sir Alexander J. Ball, the first Governor under the British rule, made his entry into Valletta, he was accompanied by Baron Gauci, the Capitano di Verga, who was afterwards appointed Lieutenant-Governor.

Precedence amongst the Nobles is determined not by the degree of the title but by the date of its creation, which results from a Proclamation of Grand Master Despuig, dated September 16th, 1739, and another in confirmation by Grand Master de Rohan, dated March 17th, 1795. The first Proclamation is as follows:—

THE MASTER OF THE HOSPITAL AT JERUSALEM  
AND OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.



The Most Noble  
**UGO TESTAFERRATA-ABELA**,  
C.M.G., Baron of Gomerino created  
by Grand Master Perellos December  
24th, 1710.

To remove differences about precedence among the persons who will be appointed to the Juratships of the Universities of Notabile and Valletta, it is our will and pleasure, and we ordain and command, that they shall all be preceded by the under-mentioned, and that among the latter in the following order, namely:—

1. The Master of the Hospital of the Holy Sepulchre, who was Capitano della Verga of the

of our Island of Malta.

2. Any person holding a title founded on a fief really existing here, if he may not be in possession of it.

3. Any person who has not a title founded upon a dominions, on the registration of



The Most Noble  
**THE BARONESS OF GOMERINO.**

