

CALCULATED TO UNNERVE EVILDOERS.

The skeleton on a wall of the small room.

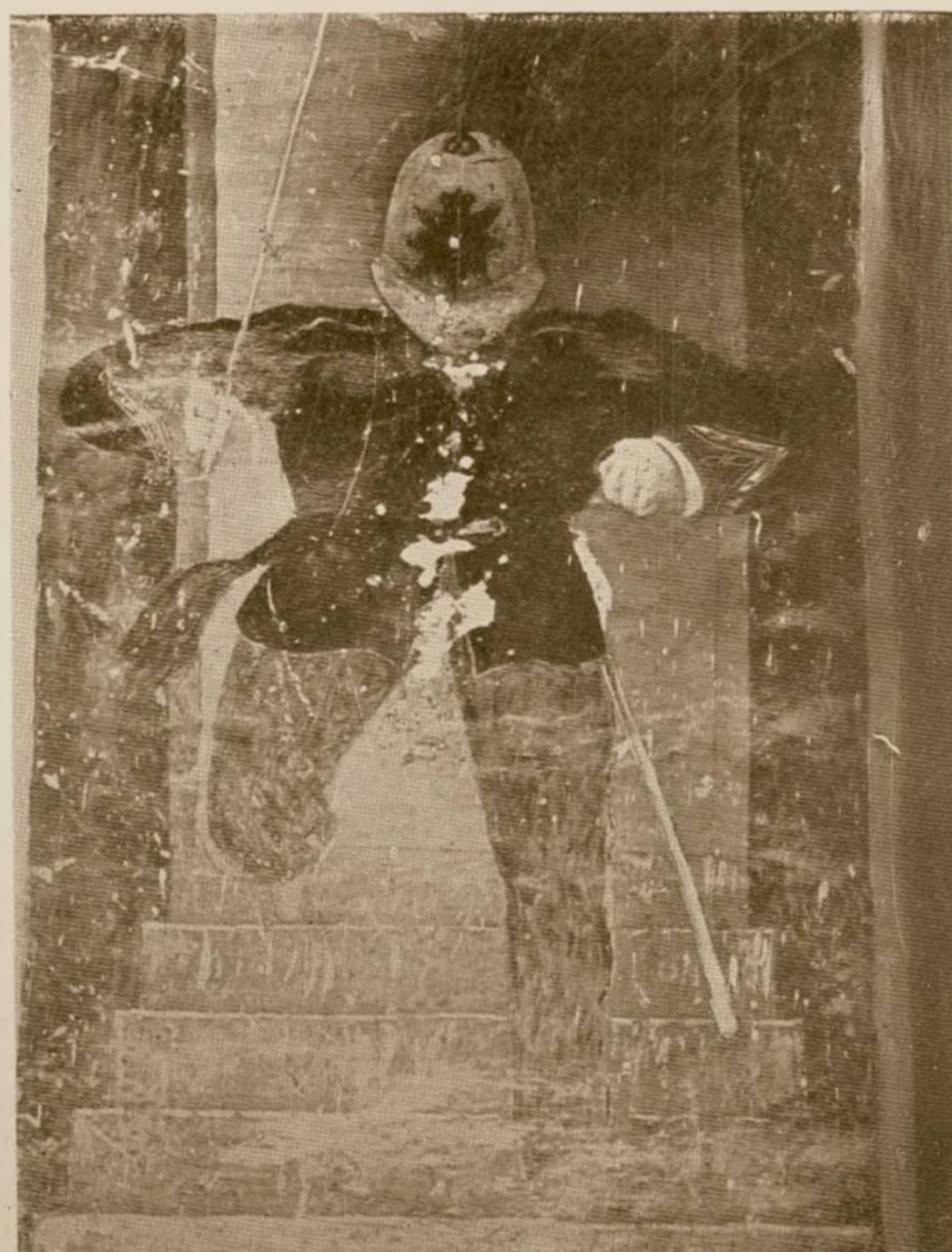
OF all the quaint and varied sights shown to the passing stranger and the P. and O. passenger bent on "doing" Malta, perhaps there is none more attractive to the travelling Briton than the officer's quarters in the Mainguard of the citadel of Valetta. It is an unimposing edifice, this old guard-room standing on the very spot where once the ancient Knights of Malta kept their watch. Facing it across the wide space of asphalt known as St. George's Square is the Governor's palace, and on either side it is joined by the Garrison Library and a Maltese club. It is a low building, with a wide portico, supported by pillars and surmounted by a clock and the Royal Arms. Beneath the clock is a Latin inscription carved in the stone, "The love of the Maltese and the voice of Europe confirm these Islands to Great and Invincible Britain." Behind the pillars are the sergeant of the guard and his men, waiting and watchful, and in front for ever paces the red-coated sentry. A narrow staircase on the right leads to the second storey, occupied by the officer on duty, consisting of the well-known long narrow guard-room, opening on to a verandah over the portico, and some smaller rooms leading off it.

Into possession of this building comes every day at ten o'clock a subaltern of British infantry, accompanied by a sergeant and fifteen men to relieve the guard of the past twenty-four hours. They change the guard with customary ceremonies, giving over and receiving all Government property, fixed and portable, about the place, pass on the standing orders and pay the usual compliments, and when the old guard marches off the new one soon settles down to its twenty-four hours' spell of duty. The subaltern betakes himself up his little staircase and makes himself as comfortable as may be. He finds a scanty allowance of furniture in the big room,

and less still in the smaller ones. His servant is there to attend to his wants, and see that he gets his meals sent in to him, for he has to provide himself with food. He is not lonely, for he has many visitors, on duty and otherwise, and in the afternoon his friends frequently remember him, for tea in the Mainguard is a very popular institution, especially when the band is playing in the square, or any other function taking place. When His Excellency the Governor is in residence at the palace opposite, he very often asks the officer on duty to dine with him, he being allowed one hour's absence in the evening to go out and have his dinner somewhere near at hand.

His duties are not very heavy, but they require attention. For instance, the guard must turn out and present arms whenever the Governor passes in or out of his palace or His Grace the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Malta drives along. The sentry has to be always on the lookout for them, for it takes him all his time to pass the word so that the guard may present arms before the smartly trotting horses are out of sight. As soon as he catches a glimpse of them in the distance he breaks off his measured tramp, and, rushing to the portico, shouts, "Guard, turn out!" at the same time pulling a bell which rings into the rooms upstairs. Down comes the subaltern, dragging at his gloves and belts as he comes, the men turn out, the bugle sounds, but with all their smartness they are lucky if they are formed up and at the "present" before the back of the exalted carriage is disappearing in the distance.

They must be always on the *qui vive* for fires and riots, both of which are unusual, and for more common incidents of garrison life, such as the passing of bodies of troops, for which they turn out and present arms, and the sudden appearance twice in the twenty-four hours of the field officer of the day, who comes trotting on his rounds, to



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"GUARD, TURN OUT!"

A picture at the top of the staircase.

Forbes Carter