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THE BARRACCA GARDENS.

An Evening Resort of Valetta Society.

"Navy & Army."

connect the place with Gibraltar, Sicily, Alexandria, and other places.

Mention was made of "the average Maltese." Let us understand the meaning of this phrase. The Maltese are a curiously blended race. Every nation that has held sway over the island has left its traces. The Phœnicians colonised the islands. The Greeks drove out the Phœnicians, only to be in turn despoiled by the Carthaginians, who made the most of the fertile spot. Once again Malta became the prize of sea power, and Rome, when mistress of the seas after the first Punic War, made Malta her own. Vandals and Goths were in succession its next masters, but Belisarius restored it to the Byzantine Empire. The Saracens held it for 220 years, and then its possession passed first to Sicily and afterwards to Spain. By the Emperor Charles V. it was given to the Knights of St. John, and from them it passed to Napoleon, only to be wrenched from that great conqueror by the might of Britain, with the assistance of the Maltese themselves. The little group of islands has thus passed through the hands of about a dozen nations. The reason is obvious. The strategical importance of Malta with its spacious harbours

was aroused in Malta in 1898 by the announcement of the Government that after fifteen years the English language should take the place of Italian, in which all legal proceedings are conducted. It was felt to be a hardship that a British subject unfamiliar with the Italian language should be tried by a court of justice in a British colony "in a language which he could not understand, and which is not the native language of the country."

It is impossible to forecast the future—that is on the knees of the gods. There are those who hold that the British Empire will go on increasing in wealth and prosperity, the Mother State and her daughter realms being knit together into some form of commercial and national federation. There are others, prophets of evil, who hold that Britain will fall as Carthage and Rome fell, and that the time of the catastrophe is not far distant. If the latter contention be correct, the vicissitudes of the Maltese group of islands are not yet at an end. But it is certain that as long as this country aspires to be leading Naval Power of the world, it will never be able to afford to yield up possession of its Mediterranean outpost.