

MALTA, as all readers of the NAVY AND ARMY ILLUSTRATED must be aware, is the headquarters of the Navy in the Mediterranean; the centre of civilisation, the meeting-place of friends, the temporary home of many a wife whose husband is serving in the fleet. And a very gay and pleasant spot it is during the winter months, when the opera is in full swing, and the officers come trooping on shore after mess, all in their mess-jackets and gold-laced trousers, and congregate in the body of the handsome opera house, where they usually find everyone they have ever known, and walk round to greet their fair acquaintances between the acts.

In the snug but commodious harbour no ship is more than a mere biscuit shot from the shore. Every mess has its own hired boatman, who, for a weekly remuneration, runs to and fro at all hours of the day or night.

Modern Malta is, in fact, simply a Naval and Military station, and its existence would scarcely be noticed otherwise, for it has few natural attractions, being a stony-hearted place, consisting chiefly of what Jack calls "holy stones," so that



SIGNALLING FROM CASTILLE STATION.

signalling from Castille Station across the harbour. This is a very common incident at Malta, as the distances, though small, are usually across some creek or harbour, and there are countless convenient eminences for the purpose.

In another we are looking down upon some of the fleet—to wit, the "Hawke," "Dido," "Hood," "Ramillies," and "Royal Sovereign"—in the Grand Harbour, obtaining a capital idea of its shape and extent.

One can, in fact, look down upon the harbours from so many different points that a map might almost be drawn from observation.

The entrance to the Grand Harbour is well shown

in another picture, with the forts on either side; curious combinations of ancient and modern strongholds, with the queer pepper-box sort of arrangements at the angles, a near relation of which, probably dating from Venetian times, is shown in another picture I have enclosed. Note the quaint eye and ear carved over the openings; builders had much more humour in those days than they have now.

Merchant vessels are not permitted to run wild within



THE ENTRANCE TO THE GRAND HARBOUR.



THE FLEET IN THE GRAND HARBOUR.

residents who aspire to keeping pretty gardens have frequently imported soil for the purpose. Oranges, however, as everyone knows, flourish exceedingly, and excellent they are.

The island has a certain interest attaching to it of old, from having been the scene of St. Paul's shipwreck, after his captain had lost his reckoning in a breeze, and described that course, with the curious loop in it, which is familiar to us in Bible maps. You may walk or drive across any day to St. Paul's Bay, where he landed. The island is admirably adapted for a Naval station by reason of the several harbours, of which Grand Harbour is the principal; and it is interesting to look down upon it from the Naval signal station, or other point of vantage, and note the huge ironclads swinging to their moorings and the ramifications of Dockyard and Hospital creeks.

The dockyard has been immensely extended and improved in recent years, a huge dock having been built and plant erected for the repair of the heaviest machinery, etc.

One of the illustrations I send you shows a man

the sacred precincts of the Grand Harbour; they have their place allotted to them on the right as they enter, and here you see them closely packed, their anchors being let go as they get abreast their berths, and their sterns hauled into the wharves with hawsers, so that they all lie parallel to each other, their bows pointing across the harbour, "tramps" all; and at certain seasons every one which arrives from the eastward is laden with grain from the Danube. The officer of the guard, whose duty it is to board every vessel which arrives, has a merry time at Malta during his tenure of office; the signalman's knuckles play a constant tattoo on his cabin door all night—"Steamer coming in, sir," and then he murmurs sundry blessings on that steamer.

In another picture we are looking down on Florian parade ground, a good place for a function, only that the men's feet make such a noise on the gravelly surface as they march that they have great difficulty in hearing the words of command. It was here that the Indian troops were paraded when they came over during the Russian war



From Photos.

THE FLORIAN PARADE GROUND.

By a Naval Officer.