

ANDREW JAMESON IN MALTA¹

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In February 1833 a severe throat complaint, dysphonia,² which was accompanied by breathing problems, compelled Andrew Jameson to suspend his studies in the Faculty of Law at Edinburgh University and seek a cure in the warmer climates of south-west France and Italy. He returned to Scotland in August 1834 and resumed his studies, qualifying as an advocate the following year. Although soon well-established in his career, the illness returned in 1840 and, on medical advice, he left for the south of Spain in September of that year. This was an unwise choice because the weather, instead of being warm and dry as he had been told, was damp and harmful to his health. Remembering the comment of the captain of the vessel in which he had sailed from London to Cadiz, that there was no better place than Malta for people with illnesses similar to his own, he went down to Gibraltar, where he booked a passage for Valletta on the S.S. *Great Liverpool*.

It is improbable that Andrew Jameson was aware that, by embarking on the *Great Liverpool*, he was participating in a new and significant enterprise by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. Earlier that year the P. & O., as it soon became generally known, had secured a government

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1. This paper is based on two letters written to his father by Andrew Jameson when he was in Malta. These letters, together with Lord Lynedoch's invitation to meet him at La Gudja and Andrew Jameson's draft reply, are held in the Jameson Archives, Scotland, that are currently in the care of Mr J. N. St. C. Jameson, W. S., the great-grandson of Andrew Jameson.
2. Dysphonia: difficulty in making sounds.

contract to deliver and collect mail at Gibraltar, Malta and Alexandria but had decided to seek further commercial advantage by attracting passengers to and from its three ports of call. For this, it needed an appropriate vessel and purchased the *Liverpool*, the first two-funnelled steamer to cross the Atlantic, and renamed it *Great Liverpool*. Recognizing that the number of persons likely to avail themselves of this opportunity would be too few to attract sufficient revenue, the company marketed the voyage as offering a new route to India. Up to this time, passengers for India were required to endure a lengthy voyage around the Cape of Good Hope but the P. & O. now offered a quicker alternative to their clients. This was a passage to Alexandria together with arrangements to convey them from there to Port Suez, whence they would sail down the Red Sea and across the Indian Ocean to Karachi and Bombay. Success followed the company's venture and, as increasing numbers chose this way of travelling to India, it led, thirty years later, to the construction of the Suez Canal.

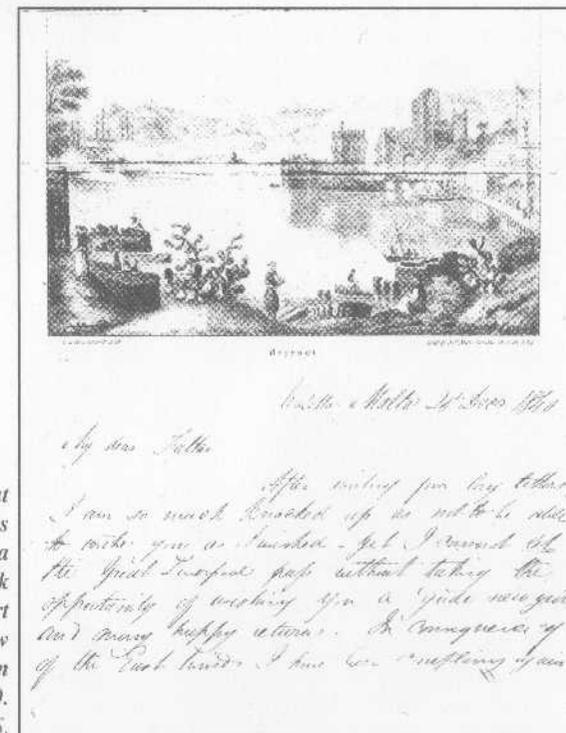
Britain had absorbed Malta into its empire in 1814. Although this was with the acquiescence of the islanders, it was unlikely that Britain, which wielded enormous power at the Treaty of Vienna, would have accepted any other outcome for the island because its location was of immense political and strategic importance. It provided a secure base for the British Mediterranean fleet and it was from there that Admiral Edward Codrington, a veteran of Trafalgar, sailed in the autumn of 1827 to unite with Russian and French naval squadrons to destroy on 20 October 1827 the Turkish fleet at Navarino, the last major sea-fight involving sailing ships. The island served as an army and naval base during the Crimean War (1854-1856) and, by providing hospital treatment for British soldiers wounded in the Dardanelles and Egyptian campaigns (1915-1918), became known as the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean'. Without Malta, it is unlikely that Great Britain could have sustained its control of the Mediterranean during the Second World War (1939-1945). However, it was the contract offered by the British government in 1840 to the P. and O. and that company's decision to combine this with a regular passenger service that added a significant element to the development of trade and commerce in the Mediterranean wherein Malta had always played a significant role.

The S.S. *Great Liverpool* left Gibraltar on 7 December 1840. It encountered rough weather in the Mediterranean and, despite its steam power, took four days to reach Valletta. There, Andrew Jameson found comfortable lodgings at No 53, *Strada Britannica*. In his first letter home



Andrew Jameson.

Courtesy: J. N. St. C. Jameson, W.S.



from Malta, he described the weather as 'like our finest summer' and that there was no need for fires in the houses. He did add that the Maltese had told him that it was 'unusually fine' for December and this may have been why he wrote that 'the country here is bare and burnt up beyond description.' Gradually, his health began to improve but for some time he could not walk about the town because 'the streets of stairs are too trying for me.' Instead, he took a boat and rowed himself around the harbour. He took in the sights and sounds of the island and one day saw on parade, pipes playing and banners waving, the 92nd Highlanders, who were serving as the garrison.³ They marched to 'There's Nae Luck about the Hoose'⁴ and 'it thrilled through every vein and nerve of my body.' He set out to follow them 'till my windpipe stopped me.'

Once he felt well enough, he went about the business of introducing himself. He left his card with the Governor, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Bouverie but, unfortunately, he forgot to add his address. It was some days before he found in the post office a letter from Sir Hector Greig, Chief Secretary of Malta, informing him that they had tried to locate him in all the hotels and had been left with no option but to use the local *poste restante*. The Governor said that he would be delighted to help in any way and, even if this reply would not have been very different from that to any other British subject visiting Malta, it did demonstrate that Andrew Jameson had been recognized at the highest social level. He must have sent his address immediately because, the following day being Christmas Eve, he was invited to dine with Sir Hector. Andrew Jameson always made a most favourable impression on persons older and senior to him and Sir Hector proved to be no different in this respect because he invited him to dine again on 31 December in order to meet Lord Lynedoch.

This was a significant honour for the young Scots lawyer who, it must be remembered, was not yet thirty years old. Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch, was now 92 and had a remarkable career behind him. He had lived the life of a Scottish country gentleman until 1792, when his wife, whose portrait⁵ by Gainsborough is in National Gallery of Scotland, died at sea off the south coast of France. Escorting her remains across France to Bordeaux

3. The 2nd Battalion of The Gordon Highlanders, 92nd Foot, served in Malta between 1836 and 1841. This regiment had previously also served in the island between 1800 and 1801. Cf. J. Bonnici and M. Cassar, *Malta and British Army Infantry Regiments*, Malta 2009, 416.

4. A tale of a sailor's wife awaiting the return of her husband from a voyage. While the authorship is in dispute, the tune was already a well-known hornpipe before the words were written.

5. Known as 'The Gainsborough Lady'.

to take ship for Scotland, he and his party were one day surrounded by French soldiers, who opened the coffin of Lady Graham and molested the body. Graham was so incensed at the treatment of his wife's corpse that, almost as soon as her obsequies had been completed, he joined the army to fight the French. Seven years later, the Maltese were equally outraged with the French. In 1798, France had sent an expedition to Egypt⁶ and *en route* captured the island. They left an occupying force which soon sought to spread their revolutionary principles by seizing church property and closing convents. The Maltese rose up in rebellion against their oppressors, compelled the French to retreat into Valletta but, being ill-equipped for modern siege warfare, sought assistance from the British. Graham, now a brigadier-general and delighted to be Commander-in-Chief of a small army sent to attack the French, landed with his troops on 9 December 1799 at St Paul's Bay⁷ and, together with the Maltese had, by September 1800, starved the garrison into surrender.⁸ Graham later served with equal distinction in the Peninsular War first under Sir John Moore on the retreat to Corunna and then under Wellington, who appointed him his second-in-command. He retained his remarkable vigour well into his old age and, in his nineties, rode his horses on the *Campagna* outside Rome. It was on this last visit to Italy that he decided to visit Malta, the scene of his early military success.

Unfortunately, no account of this dinner survives nor that of a dinner given by the Governor the following day at which Andrew Jameson was among the guests. There followed another invitation to dine with Sir Hector on 9 January 1841 and, on the morning of Sunday 10 January, he received an invitation from Lord Lynedoch to see him that morning. Lord Lynedoch's hand was very shaky and his script is difficult to decipher. The first sentence reads, 'Dear Jameson, if this day holds up I shall be down at my old Quarters at La Gudja⁹ which we talked about the other day.' The rest of the letter is illegible. It says much for the character of

6. As is well-known, the expedition was ultimately a failure, mainly as a result of Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile.

7. These first British troops to land in Malta consisted of two regiments: the 30th East Lancashire Regiment and the 89th Regiment Royal Irish Fusiliers.

8. By this time, Graham had been superseded in his command by a superior officer, Major-General Sir Henry Pigot, who actually signed the 1800 French capitulation. Regrettably, the British soon forgot the contribution made by the Maltese to the expulsion of the French from the island and denied them even basic democratic rights until well into the nineteenth century.

9. This is a village well outside Valetta from where he had directed the siege of the harbour fortifications occupied by the French. It is now known as simply Gudja, without the 'La'.

Andrew Jameson that he had to decline this offer because he had already accepted an invitation to lunch from a clergyman, perhaps one of the protestant missionaries, whom he had met at church. A lesser person might have sent his apologies to the clergyman and gone out to La Gudja but Andrew Jameson would have deemed this ill-mannered. His reply to Lord Lynedoch has obviously not survived but what was clearly a draft was written on the reverse of the invitation that he had received from Sir Hector Greig. It reads:

“My dear Lord,

I am extremely sorry that I have an engagement with a clergyman's family for today, which will prevent me having the pleasure of availing myself of your Ld's great kindness. It is the greater disappointment that I have been looking forward to the visit to your Ld's old quarters, which have so much interest in the history of the British possession of Malta.”

We can infer from this letter that Lord Lynedoch had told Andrew Jameson at the dinner on 31 December that he would invite him one day to La Gudja. There is no record of any subsequent invitation from the old general, although the possibility cannot be discounted.

Andrew Jameson was again the guest of Sir Hector Greig on the evening of 11 January 1841. Four invitations within three weeks to dine with the Chief Secretary, as well as one dinner as a guest of the Governor, was a remarkable honour for a young man of 29, who had just arrived on the island. It is almost certain that the state of the law in the island was raised by the Chief Secretary with Andrew Jameson at one or more of these dinners because, two years later, on the recommendation of the Maltese government, Jameson was appointed by the Colonial Secretary to revise the Criminal Code of Malta.¹⁰

Jameson's account of the ships in the harbour of Valletta reflects the strategic importance of Malta in British foreign policy. It was the headquarters of the British Mediterranean Fleet and in a letter to his father he described the island as ‘a great political, naval and military station’ and said that he was finding everything expensive. He considered that this was on account of ‘the number of men of war’, a term used at that time to describe the most powerful armed vessels, which were in the port. He

10. The present author's account of Andrew Jameson's revision of the Criminal Code of Malta was published in *Melita Historica*, XV, 2, 2009, 109-134.

wrote a second letter to his father at the end of December 1840, saying ‘my expenses have been much greater hitherto than I had hoped’ and that he was paying more for his lodging in Valletta than he had been paying in Edinburgh ‘in consequence of so many of the fleet being here.’

The reason for the heavier than usual Royal Navy presence at Malta was the Syrian War of 1839-40, one of the more obscure conflicts of the nineteenth century and a typical example of what came to be termed Britain's ‘gunboat diplomacy.’ In 1839, Mehmet Ali, Pasha of Egypt and nominally subordinate to the Ottoman Sultan, sent his army to occupy what is today Syria, Lebanon and Palestine and establish himself as independent sovereign of an expanded Egyptian kingdom. Britain regarded this as a threat to the balance of power in the Middle East and sent its Mediterranean Fleet, conveniently based at Malta, to intervene. Bombardments of Beirut and Sidon in September 1840 followed by that of Acre in November and a blockade of Alexandria forced Mehmet Ali¹¹ to submit to the Sultan. Andrew Jameson was invited aboard some of the ships that, according to him, ‘suffered at Acre and Beirut’ although casualties had been minimal.

Andrew Jameson's second letter to his father from Malta was written on quarto-sized writing paper that he had purchased from a Mrs Muir, whose shop was at *Strada Mezzodi* 43. Half of the first page is taken up with a lithograph print by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff of the bombardment of Beirut.¹² Tall-masted ships are depicted with puffs of smoke representing the firing of their guns at a fortress that has already received some damage. Since the action off Beirut had taken place on 11 September 1840 and Jameson purchased his writing paper from Mrs Muir in December 1840, de Brocktorff had moved very quickly to illustrate the event. Doubtless he recognised that, since all the ships engaged in the action would return to Malta, many of the sailors would be glad to purchase copies.

De Brocktorff (1775?-1850) was a Dane, born at Schleswig-Holstein, who came to Malta in the 1820s when he was commissioned to make some watercolours of parts of the islands.¹³ He remained at Valletta with his

11. Mehmet Ali was not deposed and established a line of succession that ended in 1953 with the deposition of King Farouk II, infant son of the much discredited Farouk I.

12. The caption spells the city as Beyroot. Cf. the illustration of the letter on page 415.

13. De Brocktorff's original watercolours are in the care of the National Library of Malta and his preliminary notes and sketches are in the National Museum of Archaeology. Nineteen of them depict the ancient Ġgantija temples (c.3,600-2,500 B. C.) at Xaghra on Gozo, which a Colonel Otto Beyer had been excavating, sadly for later archaeologists, rather unscientifically. In 2005, Midsea Books Ltd in association with Heritage Malta published reproductions of these 19 plates with a commentary by Dr Reuben Grima, Senior Curator of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites managed by Heritage Malta.

family and painted many of its prominent buildings which, along with his studies of local people, are an important source of information about the islands and their inhabitants before the arrival of photography.¹⁴

By the middle of January 1841 the weather was deteriorating with an east wind that affected Andrew Jameson's breathing. Sir James Clark, a prominent doctor whom he had consulted about his illness¹⁵, had advised that he should not spend more than about three weeks in any one place but the cost of so many short stays would have been an expense that he could not afford. Nevertheless, the combination of colder weather and the cost of living in Valetta persuaded him to leave for Sicily on 23 January. He later crossed over to Naples and, by slow stages, he travelled north through Italy, his health improving all the time, eventually reaching Edinburgh by August.

Although Andrew Jameson spent just under seven weeks in Malta and never returned to the island, he was to make a crucial contribution to its history through his revision of its Criminal Code.¹⁶ He would have played an additionally significant part in the history of Malta had he accepted in 1846 the offer of the post of Chief Secretary that was made to him in person at Edinburgh by Sir Patrick Stuart, who had succeeded Sir Henry Bouverie as Governor. Although small in relation to his eventual involvement in the legal history of Malta, his letters to his father paint a cameo of life in Malta at the precise time when a regular steamship service, providing a swifter route to the Middle East and India, had been inaugurated and Britain's Mediterranean Fleet had just returned from a punitive expedition that had restored political stability to the Middle East.

14. For information about Charles Frederick de Brocktorff, his family and their artistic output see the two volume publication by The National Library of Malta entitled *Charles Frederick de Brocktorff – Watercolours of Malta at the National Library, Valletta*. Volume I was written by B. Scicluna and published in 2007 while Volume II is the work of T. Vella in 2008.

15. Clark was appointed physician to Queen Victoria on her accession in 1837. He was an authority on pulmonary tuberculosis to which Andrew Jameson's illness was related and this was why Jameson had consulted him.

16. v. fn. 10 *supra*.