





## BUILDERS OF GREATER BRITAIN

EDITED BY H. F.-WILSON, M.A.

Barrister-at-Law

Late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge



#### BUILDERS OF GREATER BRITAIN

- SIR WALTER RALEGH; the British Dominion of the West. By MARTIN A. S. HUME.
- SIR THOMAS MAITLAND; the Mastery of the Mediterranean. By WALTER FREWEN LORD.
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Builders of Greater Britain

SIR THOMAS MAITLAND





· LIEUTENANT GENERAL THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR THOMAS MAITLAND.

## SIR THOMAS MAITLAND

#### THE MASTERY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

BY

#### WALTER FREWEN LORD

AUTHOR OF
THE LOST POSSESSIONS OF ENGLAND
AND
THE LOST EMPIRES OF THE MODERN WORLD

With Photogravure Frontispiece and Maps

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
MDCCCXCVII

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#### PREFACE

In this volume it is not proposed to narrate the emotions of the Countess of Lauderdale on receiving her son's first letter from school. Nor shall we be concerned with the good advice given to Thomas Maitland on entering the army. We shall not occupy ourselves with Thomas Maitland's favourite books or pastimes, or with his spiritual difficulties (if he had any), or with his social successes and embarrassments.

The boyhood and youth of great men is a subject over which much time has been spent. One would not say that the time was wasted; for the results of so much labour form a perennial source of consolation for parents. If a boy is dull, they can always recall Clive the scapegrace, Lawrence the dunce, and that very stupid and awkward young man

Arthur Wellesley. If a boy is good at his books they may remember the scholarly Warren Hastings, the brilliant Dupleix, the exceptionally astute Napoleon Buonaparte.

But the very results that offer so much consolation to parents are, from their varied nature, a source of perplexity to historians and historical students. If any general conclusion can be drawn from so much conflicting evidence, it would appear to be this: that if a man has sufficient vital force to assimilate and carry with him through life that immense mass of useless information which is known as the education of a gentleman, his education will perhaps make him a more agreeable companion for a journey, or a more brilliant after-dinner speaker than his unlettered fellow; but it will not help him to succeed in life. He will succeed in spite of his learning, and not in consequence of it. Too many dull and ignorant men have succeeded for this position to be impugned; too many highly trained and brilliant men have failed. Having wasted their force in book-learning, they have not vitality enough to face successfully the hard work of the education of life; and they sink, like

Barbarossa, in the flood, brilliantly apparelled but drowned by the tide.

We have, then, to remark that Maitland, when he commenced his career as a colonial administrator, started with this double advantage, that he was born in the purple and that he was a totally uneducated man. The eccentric scribble that he dignified by the name of his handwriting is not the handiwork of one who thinks himself too grand to write distinctly (according to the foolish sneer, which once had a vogue, that the aristocracy are all uneducated); it is the handiwork of a man who does not know how to write. His signature reads just as well upside down as not. During an age when classical quotations were the only recognised mark of an educated gentleman, Maitland, throughout a long Parliamentary career, and in the course of an official correspondence almost unparalleled for its voluminousness, never once broke out into Latin. He once quoted Swift in the House of Commons; he once referred the Secretary of State to Adam Smith. These were the authors who recommended themselves to his intelligence. Himself a man capable of any quantity of hard work, provided that there was human interest in it, he could appreciate (although he did not agree with) Adam Smith. The masculine common sense of Swift, his savage satire and his consummate knowledge of mankind, appealed to one whose lifelong study was man, and who brought to that pursuit a savage and domineering temper.

Throughout an official career of twenty-seven years his labours were Herculean, and he had no intervals of learned leisure. He was quite incapable of turning good English into indifferent Latin, or of discovering new species of plants or animals, or of tracing curves to banish ennui, or of writing treatises on the Apostolical Succession. Life to Maitland meant work; work that it would have crushed ordinary men even to attempt. His diversion, his solace, was gross indulgence. He was not a brilliant or a popular man. He was a great human force controlled and driven by a will of iron. Principles he abhorred; they were to him as a red rag to a bull. 'Detestable principles' or 'ridiculous principles,' he sometimes writes of, but never of principles that deserve respect. But we must not allow ourselves to be led away into the common and totally erroneous view of Maitland's character which condemns him as a gross and brutal tyrant. His life was illuminated and dignified by his unbending devotion to duty. One principle there was to which Maitland owed and rendered the loftiest reverence—the reverence of a life's devotion. It was, in the stately language of the Prayer Book, 'The safety, honour and welfare of His Majesty and his dominions.'

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
DESCENT — THE LAW — THE ARMY — INDIA — MAITLAND THE	
LITTLE ENGLANDER,	1
CHAPTER II	
HIS CONVERSION AND ACTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CAREER TO ITS	
Close,	18
CHAPTER III	. **
San Domingo — The West Indian Interest — Toussaint	•
L'OUVERTURE-Maitland 'RESCUES AND RETIRES,'.	26
CHAPTER IV	
THE UNITED STATES-BELLEISLE-THE BOARD OF CONTROL-	
THE PRIVY COUNCIL - ESTIMATE OF MAITLAND AS A	
Soldier and as a Statesman,	50
CHAPTER V )	
CEYLON—ZEAL AND ENERGY—DISASTROUS EFFECTS ON THE	
Colony of Ceylon of Frederick North's Activity-	
Impending Ruin,	72

CHAPTER VI	
Ceylon — Common Sense — Maitland's Restorative Action —He will not be Goaded into War —He reforms	PAGE
THE SERVICES,	80
CHAPTER VII	
CEYLON—THE MUTINY AT VELLORE—INTERRUPTION OF MAIT- LAND'S WORK BY BENTINCK'S INEPTITUDE—MAITLAND RESCUES	
MADRAS, AND LECTURES THE GOVERNOR GENERAL	98
CHAPTER VIII	
Ceylon — Internal Administration — Quarrel with the Chief Justice—Victory of Maitland,	107
CHAPTER IX	
CEYLON—CONCLUSION OF HIS TERM—HE IS CALLED A 'PAGAN'  —MR WILBERFORCE URGES LORD CASTLEREAGH TO REBUKE  THE GOVERNOR—CASTLEREAGH'S COLDNESS—THE MUTINY  AT SERINGAPATAM—MACKINTOSH'S ESTIMATE OF MAIT-	
LAND'S WORK,	117
CHAPTER X	
MALTA—ANCIENT AND MODERN RIVALRIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN—THE ROUTE TO THE EAST—THE PLAGUE—AN ATMOSPHERE OF ARSENIC AND BRIMSTONE—QUARREL WITH THE DOCTORS; THEY ARE ROUTED—QUARREL WITH	
THE ADMIRAL—Success of Maitland's Measures,	130
CHAPTER XI	
MALTA—INTERNAL AFFAIRS—THE BARBARY STATES—SANCTUARY —AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SEE—LAND REFORMS—THE	
Universita—The Hospital,	148

CHAPTER XII	
THE IONIAN ISLANDS — EARLY DIFFICULTIES — ANARCHY AND	PAGE
BANKRUPTCY OF THE ISLANDS—CONSTITUTION-MONGERING	
-Maitland is spied upon-His Revenge,	176
CHAPTER XIII	
THE IONIAN ISLANDS — THE CONSTITUTION — EXTREME COM-	
PLEXITY OF THE SITUATION—RATIFICATION OF THE CON-	
STITUTION — THE MOST DISTINGUISHED ORDER OF ST	
Michael and St George,	193
CHAPTER XIV	
THE IONIAN ISLANDS—CESSION OF PARGA,	215
CHAPTER XV	

xix

#### CHAPTER XVI

THE IONIAN ISLANDS - CAPODISTRIAS V. MAITLAND - CAPO-DISTRIAS AT CIRENCESTER—CASTLEREAGH AT CRAY—THE 

CONTENTS

THE	IONIAN	Island	s—Rev	OLT IN	THE M	OREA-	ATTACKS	ON	
	MAITLA	ND IN	PARLIA	MENT-	Gross 1	Misrepr	ESENTAT	IONS	
	of Josei	н Ним	E,					•	243

#### CHAPTER XVII

THE	IONIAN	Islands	Interna	L Affairs—	CHARAC	TER OF	THE
	People-	-Their	Winning	Manners-	THEIR	FAILIN	GS—
	SUDDEN	DEATH	OF STR TH	MATE	AND		

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRA	IT <sup>#</sup> of	SIR T	HOMAS I	AAITLA:	ND, FRO	m an I	INGRAVING BY	
Тн	OMAS I	LUPTON	i, AFTER	J. Ho	PNER,	R.A.	. From	ispiece
Map of	CRYL	ON IN	1805, si	OWING	Exten	т ог В	RITISH OCCU-	
PAT	rion,	•	•	•	•	•	to face page	74
Map of	тнв 1	Mediti	ERRANEA	N, ILLU:	TRATI	NG THE	GROWTH OF	
Br	тізн І	nfluer	NCE, 166	1-1897,		٠	to face page	139
Note.—	-* The .	Editor	desires 1	o expre	es his a	cknowle	dgments to the l	Earl of
i	Laudera	lale (th	e owner	of the o	rig inal	picture)	and Sir Arthu	Lyon
i	Fremani	le (the	Govern	or of 1	Malta),	for t	heir assistance i	n con-
1	nection	with th	is portra	it.				

#### INDEX

A

ABERCROMBY, Sir Ralph, Maitland reinforces him, 65. Aberdeen, Lord, desired as Lord High Commissioner, 174. Abolitionist movement, 28. A'Court, British Ambassador at Palermo, 163; at Naples, 189. Adam, Sir Frederick, 250, 252; succeeds Maitland as Lord High Commissioner, 285, 288. Adams, John, 26. Addington, Henry, 67. Agio on Ceylon Bills, 94, 95. Allert, H.M.S., seizes corsairs off the Galloper, 223.
Alexander, The Tsar, 178, 182, 183, 190, 200, 227, 233. Alexandria, The plague at, 146. Algiers, Treaty of, 226. Ali Pacha, 173, 182, 215, 219, 220, 221; declares himself independent, 244; and is assassinated, ib.; his private fortune and avarice, 245, 246, 249. Alien Bill, Dundas's, 11. Amiens, Treaty of, 21. Army Estimates, Debate on, 13. Aux Cayes, 41.

BALCARRES, Earl, Governor of Jamaica, 39; corresponds

with Maitland, 43; views on San Domingo, 44; scanty concessions by, 48; his helplessness, 58. Bank of England suspends payment, 27. Barbary States, 161, 169, 278, 279, 286. Barlow, Sir George, 124; appeals to Maitland for help, 125. Batavian Republic, 88. Bathurst, Lord, 5, 147, 153, 158, 164, 169, 185, 197, 198, 202, 231. Belleisle, Expedition to, 60 et seq., Bennet attacks Maitland, 265. Bentinck, Lord William, 98; his dealings with the Madras army, 99; appeals to Maitland for help, 100; his grati-tude, ib.; recalled from his government, 105; Plenipo-tentiary in Sicily and appeals to Maitland for help, 144; affronts Murat, 154; in difficulties with Genoa, 163; appeals to Maitland for, help, ib., 287. Berkeley Square, Maitland in, 58. Board of Control, Maitland sworn of, 67; its working, 68, 69. Bosset (De). See De Bosset. Brest, 61. Bridgewater Canal, 77.

Brougham, 194.

patam, 100.

Buchan, Colonel, ordered to Nega-

Bunbury, Sir Henry, 145, 153, 161, 162. Butrinto, 216. Byron, Lord, 246; 'the semidelirious lord, 271. Byzantine Constitution, 178, 187.

C

CALCUTTA, Anxiety in, 27. Cape Dame Marie, 41. Cape of Good Hope, Cession of, 22. Cape les Trois, 41. Cape Mole St Nicholas, 31 et seq. Capodistrias, Count John, 183, 189, 190, 191; 'the worst of Radicals,' 194, 195, 199, 227; the only evil we ever had in these Islands, 228; 'a very superior man,' 229, 231; travels to England, ib.; interviews Bathurst, ib., 232 et seq., 258; his assassination, 230. Capri, 137.

Castlereagh, Lord, 67, 118, 153, 199, 215, 218, 231; replies to Capodistrias, 232, 240, 259; replies to Joseph Hume, 261.

Cayemite, 48.

Ceylon, State of, in 1805, 74; Civil Service of, Maitland's views on, 86, 87; native army of, 89; litigious character of the inhabitants, 90, 91; the Survey Department, 91; military importance of in Maitland's day, 95, 96, 97; settlement of, by Europeans, projected by Maitland, 126; De Quincey on, 281.

Channel Islands, Maitland in, 7. Cheltenham, Maitland in, 58. Coffin, Sir Isaac, defends Maitland, 266.

Collingwood, Admiral, 27.

Colonial Assembly of Jamaica, 58. Consols fall to 51, 27. Cornwallis, Lord, 8, 124. Corsica, Expedition to, Maitland derides it, 14, 179; Theodore, King of, 176. Cove of Cork, 63. John, appointed Cradock, Sir commander - in - chief Madras, 68; recalled, 105. Critico, Turkish Consul at Malta, 160; quarrel with Maitland, 161. Croix de Bouquets, 36. Cromer, Lord, 229. Cuba, 31. Curmi, The plague at, 146.

D

Dallas's speech on the resumption of hostilities, 23, 24.

Davie, Major, taken prisoner by the King of Kandy, 78, 93; Maitland attempts to procure his release, 93; fails, 94.

De Bosset, 173, 174, 204 et seq.

D'Enghien, Duc, 168.

De Quincey, his views on Byr

De Quincey, his views on Byron and Guilford, 271; and on Kandy, 281. Deputy Secretary of Ceylon, 110,

111, 112.

Downs, Capture of corsairs in the,

224.
Dundas's Alien Bill, 11; instructions to Knox on succeeding
Maitland in San Domingo,
44; gratitude for Maitland's
efforts, 46; his Belleisle despatch, 65; Houat despatch,
66.

Dutch prisoners in Ceylon, 77, 88, 89.

E

EAST INDIES, Maitland in, 7.

Eastern Empire, Preservation of, 8.
Eastern Question, Maitland's early
views on, 10.
Egypt, 23 et seq., 180.
Enghien (D'). See D'Enghien.
Elba, Escape of Napoleon from,
163.
Exmouth, Lord, 225.

F

FALMOUTH, 49.
Finances of San Domingo, 31; of
Ceylon, 122 et seq.; of Malta,
155; of the Ionian Islands,
185.
Flanders Expedition, 62.
Fouché, 168.
French Kingdom of Naples, 138.
'Friends of the People,' Maitland
joins them, 11, 127.

G

GEORGES, General, 61, 65, 66.
Gonsalvi, Cardinal, 243, 288.
Goulburn, Henry, defends Maitland, 261, 265.
Gozo, The plague in, 146.
Grant, Colonel, President of the Emigrant's Board, 42; success of Maitland's instruction to him, 43; accompanies Maitland to Philadelphia, 53; Consul General at Port au Prince, 57; Toussaint refuses to see him, ib.
Grant, John Peter, 266.
Guilford, Earl of. See North.

Н

HABEAS CORPUS ACT, Debate on the suspension of, 17 et seq. Haddington Burghs, Maitland sits for, 8. Hankey, Sir Frederick, 161, 206, 207, 222; Mission to Tunis, 225. Hastings, Marquis of, succeeds Maitland in Malta, 283. Hastings, Warren, Maitland attacks him, 9; defends him, 12. Hawkesbury, Lord, 67. Hayti, 28. Hédouville lands in San Domingo, 34; his position there, ib. Hispaniola, 28, Hood, Admiral, Maitland attacks him, 14. Hotham, Admiral, 14. Houat, Island of, 60, 61, 66. Hume, Joseph, 194; attacks Maitland, 259 et seq. Huskisson, 49.

T

India threatened by Napoleon, 137. Ischia, 137.

T

JAFFNAPATAM, Collector of, 83; his vagaries, ib.; Maitland's dealings with him, 84, 85; effect on the service, 90.
Jamaica, Relation of, to San Domingo, 43, 45.
Janina, Pachalik of, 219.
Joseph, King of Naples, 136.

K

Kandy, King of, 74, 78, 92, 93, 128; High Priest of, 93, 121; High Steward of, 93. King, Rufus, his views on Maitland's Treaty, 50, 51. Kinnaird, Lord, joins the 'Friends of the People,' 11. Kirbey, Suicide of, 123. 153.

L

LAING, Chief Secretary of Malta,

Lampedusa, 139, 153, 154, 157. Langhorne, Admiral, 145, 146. La Plume, 39. Lauderdale, Earls of, 2, 3, 4, 11. Layard, General, officiates for Maitland, 164, 172. Leclerc, General, Death of, 35. Le Mesurier, Mr, 279. Lieven, Prince, accompanies Capodistrias to Cirencester, 231. Lieven, Princess, 229. Liston, Sir Robert, collaborates with Maitland at Philadelphia, 55; Ambassador at Constantinople, 160, 215, 287. Liverpool, Lord, 126. Livingston, 157. Lombe, Sir Thomas, 3. Londonderry, Marquis of, 269. Louisiana, Maitland's views on, 21. Lushington, Chief Justice of Ceylon, 108; interferes with Maitland, 109; quarrels with him, 110 et seq.; dismissed

#### M

to England, 114.

from Council, 113; retires

MACAULAY, Lord, views on the Belleisle Expedition, 59.

Macdonell, Consul at Algiers, 279.

Macfarlane, General, appeals to Maitland for help, 163.

Mackintosh, Sir James, views on Maitland's government in Ceylon, 126, 127; and in Parga, 259.

Madeira, Maitland's views on, 54.

Magdalen, Earldom of, 266.

Maida, Battle of, 137.

Maine, Sir Henry, 74, 81. Maitland Clan, 1. Maitland, Frederick, 70. Malay troops in Ceylon, their behaviour, 89; and character, Malta, Maitland's early views on, 22, 23; reform of the judicial system of, 152; claimed by Sicily, 153; the Università of, 155 et seq.; corruption in, 155; corn supply, 156; Savary imprisoned at, 168; reform of hospital, 171; Maitland dies there, 279. March, Marquis of, 2. Marlborough, Duke of, 114. Martinengo, Count, Rebellion of, 248, 249, 250; attempts to bribe Maitland, 251; tried, condemned and pardoned, 252; championed by Mr Hume, 264. Mavromichaelis, 215. Mediterranean Sea, England expelled from, 27; becomes an English lake, 135; Maitland recommends one commanderin-chief for, 165. Metternich, his hatred of Capodistrias, 229. Midhat Pacha, 178. Minorca, 65, 132, 135, 139; Russian bid for, 178, 179, 180. Minto, Lord, Maitland's correspondence with, 100, 101, 125. Count, 182, 187; Mocenigo, opens Maitland's despatches, 189, 258. Monck, Sir Charles, 257, 258. Moore, Sir John, comparison with Maitland, 70.

Morea, Rebellion in the, 203,

249, 253. Murat to be recognised by

England, 154, 163, Mylius, Suicide of, 123. Napier, Charles, 112, 240, 244; offers to march on Constantinople, ib., 246.; views on the Ionians, 271, 273, 279.

Naples, Rebellion in, 203, 254; Ferdinand of, 243.

Nayler, Sir George, 212.

Nesbitt sails for San Domingo, 29; falls sick, 29; confusion caused by his non-arrival, 43. Nightingall, Sir Miles, accompanies Maitland to Philadelphia, 54; carries his despatches to London, 64.

Nile, Battle of, 135.

North, Frederick, birth, 72; Governor of Ceylon, ib.; Chief Secretary of Corsica, ib.; career there, ib.; character, 73; abolishes feudal tenure in Ceylon, 75; scares native society, 76; his cinnamon contract, 76, 77, 78, 88; his irrigation works, 77; resigns the governorship to Maitland, 79; Maitland's high opinion of him, 90; his views on Kandy, 82; his dealings with the Chief Justice, 108; a favourite with the Ionians, 174, 175; succeeds to Earldom of Guilford, 246; his extravagances in the Islands, 246, 247; 'the semi-delirious lord,' 271.

O

OAKES, Sir Hildebrand, 144.
Oczakoff Debate, 10.
Oglander, Colonel, Consul at
Tunis, 224, 225, 226.
O'Gorman repulses Toussaint
l'Ouverture, 36.
Orkney, Earl of, views on the
Ionians, 277.

P

Paoli, Pasquale de, 72, 73.

Parga, 173, 178, 182, 204, 215 et seq., 253, 258; cession of, resolved on, 259; 'darkest blot on our national reputation,' 268.

Paris, Treaty of, 181, 192, 194, 197, 199, 257; Maitland's views of, 200.

Parker, Sir Hyde, assists Maitland, 41; opposes the evacuation of San Domingo, 48.

Pellew, Sir Edward, supports Maitland, 62.

Petrides, Plato, 183.

Peyrade, Execution of, 41.
Peystre (De) repulses Toussaint
l'Ouverture, 36.

Pitt, William, 29; views on San Domingo, 44; and the Mediterranean, 134, 140. Plague in Malta, 142 et seq.

Plasket, Sir Richard, 156, 161, 279.

Ponza, 137. Popham, Sir Home, 19.

Prevesa, 216, 219, 255.
Prince Regent ratifies the Ionian
Constitution, 202, 212, 214.
Privy Council, Maitland sworn

of, 69. Procida, 137.

Q

Quincey (De). See De Quincey.

R

Rigaud opposes Toussaint l'Ouverture, 29; his relations with Maitland, 35, 42; menaces Jérémie, 48; supplants Toussaint, 57; and breaks with him, ib. Rome, Appeals to, from Malta, 148. Rovigo, Duke of, imprisoned at Malta, 168, 169.

S

SAINT ANNE'S, Soho, 179. Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of, 143, 180; Church of, 148, 151; throne of the Grand Master of the Order of, 150; Order of, 210. Saint Michael and Saint George, Order of, 159; 209 et seq. Saint Spiridion, 210. Saint Vincent, Battle of, 27, 177. Saint Vincent, Earl, 63. San Domingo, Instructions for the evacuation of, 31; Maitland lands there, 34; evacuation of commenced, 38; completed, 48; to be retained as a protection for Jamaica, 44; climate of, 32, 36, 46, 94. Sanctuary, Right of, in Malta, 148. Santa Lucia, 70. Savary, Duke of Rovigo, imprisoned at Malta, 168, 169. Sawbridge, Alderman. ally of Maitland, 10, 11. Sebastiani, 23, 187. Seringapatam, Mutiny at, 122, 123. Shee, Sir George, 106. Sheridan, R. B., ally of Maitland, Sicily, Lord William Bentinck in, 145; refuses pratique to Malta, 146; Macfarlane in, 163; representative government in, 167 et seq., 180. Smyrna, The plague in, 146; trade with, 160.

Spenser, Colonel, 40, 49. Surinam Expedition, 70.

T

Talleyrand, 73. Texel, Battle of, 27, 177. Theotoky, Baron, 214. Tiburon Expedition, 41; it fails, 42, 70. Tilsit, Treaty of, 138, 187, 216. Tippoo Sahib, Maitland's defence of, 8, 9; connection of his family with the Vellore Mutiny, 102. Toulon Expedition, Maitland's views on, 14, 15, 177. Toussaint l'Ouverture masters San Domingo, 28; his character, 35; attacks the English, 36; accepts Maitland's terms, 37; his ignorance, 52, 53, 70. Trincomalee, Importance of, in Maitland's day, 96. Tripoli, Pacha of, 162. Tunis, The plague in, 146. Tyers, Henry, 153.

U

Università of Malta, 155 et seq.

v

VALETTA, Maitland lands at, 142; the plague in, 146. Venice, Fall of, 176. Ventotiene, 137. Verona, 176. Vonizza, 216, 219. Volterra, 251. w

Walfole, Horace, 179.
Walthamstow, Maitland at, 32.
Warrington, Colonel, 162.
Washington, George, 26.
Wellington, Duke of, 46, 47, 62,
231.
Whitbread, Samuel, ally of Mait-

Whitbread, Samuel, ally of Maitland, 10, 11, 15; attacks him, 23.

Whyte, General, commands in San Domingo, 29; resigns the command to Maitland, 30.

Wilberforce, William, his anxiety for the missionaries in Ceylon, 118; interviews Castlereagh, 119; Maitland's resentment at his interference, 120. Wilkes, 19. Wilson, Robert, 23.

Wood, Alexander, placed on special duty in Ceylon, 85, 161, 173. Wright, Doctor, accompanies Maitland to Philadelphia, 54.

Wright, legal assistant to Maitland, 153.

, 02

Y

York, Duke of, 207.

Z

ZANTE, 173, 175, 248, 249, 253.

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