

REVIEWS

EDGAR ERSKINE HUME: Medical Work of the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem. Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1940. pp. xxii, 371.

Innumerable books have been written about the Order of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, but curiously enough very little has been published with particular reference to the main object for which that Order was originally founded, i.e. the care of the sick. Any contribution to the literature of this important subject is welcomed, so long as it is carried out in a scientific manner. This book satisfies a long felt want.

Colonel Hume was well qualified to undertake this work. He was a distinguished Officer in the Medical Corps of the United States Army and saw much active service during the First World War. After that war he was engaged on relief work in Central Europe and spent some years on the Adriatic seaboard, where he became acquainted with the various branches and activities of the Sovereign Order in Rome. He became interested in the history of the Order, and was given facilities to search in the archives in Rome and in Malta. He gained the confidence of the Grand Council of the Order and in 1937 he was appointed by the Grand Master as Delegate of the Order to the International Congress of Military Medicine in Bucharest.

This book contains much material which is not, strictly speaking, descriptive of the medical work of the Knights. Apparently the author did not think it fit to separate the medical from the general activities of the Knights. His method is to describe the progress of the Order from its birth, and to emphasize its medical aspects. He dwells at great length on the description of the hospitals, and the rules and regulations governing their administration; he gives biographical notes on some of the outstanding doctors and administrators of the hospitals, but gives very little information about methods of treatment, clinical or surgical practice and precautionary measures.

The description of the Knights' hospital in Rhodes is interesting and informative because that hospital is much less known than the one established later in Malta; however, the hospital in Rhodes was not open only for the treatment of patients, like the one in Malta. Originally it was a Xenodochium and as such it provided care and treatment for the sick, gave shelter to the weary pilgrim and offered refuge to the maimed and the crippled.

In the book mention is made of a pathological condition which affects the hands and feet. The malady is sometimes known as St. John's disease, **Morbus Sancti Johannis**, and used to be considered as a form of epilepsy. The author does not feel inclined to identify the disease as epilepsy, and he is quite right; most probably the condition was due to some form of avitaminosis which one would expect to find amongst poor pilgrims and destitute persons.

Some information is also given about the Public Health measures which the Order adopted in Rhodes and in Malta. The author mentions the "**Domini Sanitatis**" in relation with the creation of a Health Commission in Rhodes, but he does not make it clear that the commission created by Grand Master d'Aubusson (1503-1512) constituted a department of health in the true sense of the word and its Officers were called the "**Domini Sanitatis**". (1)

The author likewise mentions regulations governing the burial of the dead, but he seems to be unaware of the fact that in 1780 the Grand Master had asked the **Société Royale de Médecine** of Paris to appoint a commission to study the question of inconvenience arising from the burials in parish churches in Malta. A very famous French doctor, Vicq D'Azyr, whose name is still met with in text books on anatomy, signed the report of the commission, which was published in 1781 and makes very interesting reading.

Reference is also made to the "Order's medical men on the galleys of the fleet". One would have liked the author to expand more fully on this important aspect of maritime health, but admittedly there are few sources from which to draw as regards sanitation on board the galleys of the Knights. The fate of the slaves chained to the rowing benches must have been pitiful and brutal according to modern ideas.

The book is divided into three sections or periods of which the last one is perhaps the

(1) FEDELI: *L'Ordine di Malta e le Scienze Mediche* Imprimé au depens de la Religion, Malte, 1781.

best as it deals very profusely with the work of mercy undertaken by the Order after its expulsion from Malta. It may be stated that following the loss of its territorial possession, the Order concentrated on the main scope for which it was originally founded, and rapidly expanded its hospital and nursing services. The author gives a detailed account of the organizations run by the Order for the benefit of suffering humanity in the various countries where Branches, Grand Priorities and Associations have been established. The hospitaller activities of the Order assumed great importance during wars, disasters and epidemics; in peaceful years, too, the Knights Hospitallers never slackened in their efforts to benefit humankind; they have established clinics, out-patient departments, homes for the sick and medical schools.

It is interesting to read that the hospital built by the Order at Tantur in Jerusalem in 1873 was erected on the site which once had been granted to the Knights Hospitallers by King Baldwin of Jerusalem in 1110. One also reads with pleasure that a section of that hospital was reserved for the care and treatment of poor and undernourished babies, and it must have proved of great value in combating infant morbidity and mortality, so high in Palestine during the last century.

A great effort was made by the Order during the First World War. There were several groups of Knights at work, and soldiers on both sides were succoured. It is estimated that no less than 800,000 sick and wounded men were cared for by the several branches of the Hospitallers. The author describes in detail the various organizations of the Knights in belligerent countries and gives figures and estimates to show the good work performed. He also records the fact that Mussolini in 1923 had entrusted the Sovereign Order in Rome with the distribution of nearly 2,000,000 dollars for the assistance of refugees from Asia Minor. This was an event of international importance, but the author, perhaps intentionally, does not dwell on its political implications.

One of the main enterprises by the Order in modern times was the establishment in Ethiopia of a Leprosarium comprising a leper colony, a hospital and an institute for the study of leprosy. The author enlarges on the origin, planning and construction of the institution which, after a promising start, ended miserably with the end of Italian rule in Ethiopia.

The author brings his narrative to the beginning of the Second World War and finishes his work with a chapter on the Venerable Order of St. John in England, mentioning the medical work undertaken by the English Order in Jerusalem and giving information on the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and Association, which are connected with the Order and which gave sterling service during the last World War.

The book is well written and makes interesting reading; although it purports to describe the medical work of the Order, it is free from technical discussions, and appeals both to the professional and the lay reader. Perhaps the historical data in the book is more profuse than the mere medical material, but this fact widens the scope of the work and makes it more universally read. It is evident that when the author undertook his work he did not have in mind to produce a book of this size, but his research was so fruitful that he felt reluctant to discard material of general interest. In a letter which the author sent to me from Washington on the 10th April 1939 he wrote "the volume grew to greater length than I had anticipated, being now well over 300 pages."

The author deserves credit for the pains taken to collect information from widespread sources; his references are various and comprehensive, they indicate the thoroughness of his endeavours to consult original records and to obtain information from various sources, but there are one or two books on the subject which must have escaped his attention, and as they may be useful to students, their mention would not be out of place here. They are:—

1. "L'Ordine di Malta e Le Scienze Mediche" by Professor C. Fedeli — Pisa, Francesco Mariotti, 1913. p. 40.
2. **Rapport Sur Plusieurs Questions Proposées à la Société Royale de Médecine, par M l'Ambassadeur de la Religion, e de part de Son Altesse Eminantissime Monseigneur le Grand Maître**". Imprimé au depens de la Religion, Malte, 1781. This report was also translated into Italian by Giovanni Vivenzio and published in Palermo, Reale Stamperia, 1782.
3. "Associazione Dir. Cav. Italiani del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta pel Servizio Sanitario in Guerra" (pamphlet). Roma, Fratelli Zanpini, 1898.

JACQUES GODECHOT: Histoire de Malte. (Collection "Que sais-je?", No. 509) Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1952, pp. 128. Price 120 Frs.

We have already published a review of this interesting book on the History of Malta in *Scientia*, XVIII (1952), pp. 46-48. Though we have praised it, we did so not without some criticisms. The Rt. Hon. Count H. C. de Zeininger, Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, has also published a review of the same work in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique suisse*, 1952, pp. 149-150, in which he says of the author of the book: "L'auteur, professeur à la Faculté des lettres de Toulouse, est avant tout un spécialiste de l'histoire de la Révolution française et, comme beaucoup de ses compatriotes, trop enclin à regarder tous les événements et toutes les institutions sous l'angle révolutionnaire et français."

We have stated that in this book "history is not merely narrated for its own sake: the writer sees in the various historical facts problems created by historical circumstances and out of these problems he builds a doctrine. This is seen particularly in Chap. XI in which he speaks of the economic problem, the demographic problem, the language problem, the political problem." We summarise hereunder one of these problems, namely the language question.

The language question is fully, though concisely, explained in a special paragraph (pp. 100-103) up to 1903, when it was turned into a political argument. The language question strictly speaking is concerned with the usage and the legal status of Maltese, English and Italian in the Maltese Islands. What does the writer of this book think of the Maltese Language?

On page 11 he simply says: "Ajoutons-y la langue, d'origine sémitique dont les consonnances rauques évoquent l'Afrique du Nord". On p. 16 the question of the Maltese Language is taken up more directly: "Peut-on penser que l'actuelle langue maltaise, qui est, nous l'avons dit une langue sémitique, dérive du phénicien?" The answer to this question is simply political: the English in order to suppress the Italian feelings of the Maltese try to persuade them that the Maltese language is of Phoenician origin; and the Italians who, particularly during the epoch of Fascism, developed an active propaganda in favour of Malta being Italian, deny the Phoenician origin of Maltese which is merely Arabic: at the beginning there was one single race in Malta and in Italy and it was only in the IXth and Xth centuries that the Arabic language was imposed on the Maltese. The writer, on p. 27, deplors the fact that a scientific question has been thus misconstrued on mere political grounds. Leaving this aspect of the problem he discusses the problem not of course from a philological point of view, but from the historical angle. It is astonishing, he remarks, that the Arabic occupation of Malta, which does not exceed four hundred years, has left such a profound trace in the toponomy and language, when over one thousand years of preponderant Roman domination hardly left any vestiges of the domain!

He is, therefore, definitely inclined to the doctrine of the Phoenician origin and brings forth other arguments to prove his contention. In the first place he quotes the Acts of the Apostles where St. Luke calls the Maltese "barbarians", namely people who did not speak either Latin or Greek. At that time there could be no question of Arabic, but only of Punic or Phoenician. The appearance of Arabic in the Maltese can easily be explained by the fact that the Maltese people being very few in number, the Arabic-Berber immigration could easily make itself felt soon after the Islamic domination of the Island. The Italians who later chose to live in Malta were easily assimilated by the Maltese.

On p. 33 the writer mentions again but very briefly the language question: "L'italien est devenu la langue du commerce; bientôt il remplace le latin dans l'administration et la justice. Les classes cultivées se piquent de parler italien tandis que le maltais est relégué à l'état de patois".

As we have already stated, the language question is treated at certain length on pp. 100-103: the people of Malta speak a dialect of Semitic origin, but the more cultured classes employ Italian, a language which since the middle ages has substituted Latin in the administration and justice. In the XVIII century French (of which some expressions are still current in the Maltese dialect) became wide-spread in the island. When in 1800, the English established themselves in Malta, they did not change the situation: their official journal, substituting the *Journal de Malte*, the first printed journal of the island, published by the French in 1793, was entirely in Italian, and it remained so up to 1816, when it became bilingual: its title became *Gazzetta del Governo*. In 1838 the Statute of the University acknowledges Italian as the cultural language of the Maltese and it was considered as essential for admission to Secondary and higher education. English being required for corresponding with the British authorities, civil servants had to know it and it was the official language for the Forces, and, since 1840, even if composed exclusively of Maltese. But the language question did not really arise before 1860.

The language question in Malta is similar to that of many other countries, like Belgium, Catalogna and others. It is strictly bound up with the progress of democracy and primary education. In 1860 primary education was being given liberally to all classes; the difficulty was which language was going to be selected as the medium of instruction. At that time many Maltese were of the opinion that the medium should be Maltese. And which other language was going to be taught besides? "Il faut reconnaître, que dans les classes populaires, l'étude de l'italien ne semblait pas très utile. Les Maltais en général étaient appelés à fréquenter des fonctionnaires, des militaires, des commerçants anglais, combien en contraire auraient affaire à des italiens?" Casolani in 1867 opined that the Italian language should be replaced by English, and Maltese should be the medium of instruction in the primary schools. These same views were included in the Keenan report. But those who favoured Italian fought strenuously for the preservation of that language. Between 1850 and 1860 Malta was flooded with Italian refugees who founded literary and political circles and published papers of their own and contributed to Maltese papers such as the *Mediterranean* and the *Corriere Maltese*; these events had great bearing on the language question and strengthened the knowledge of Italian among the Maltese. After the unification of Italy many of the foreign refugees went back to Italy; but others came, expelled by the new rulers, who like their predecessors sustained the cause of Italian in Malta. In 1880 Fortu nato Mizzi founded his political party which introduced in its programme the retention of Italian. The language question became a political matter.

The Professor of Toulouse does not go any further. Though the Maltese language, in the History of Malta, is not the principal object of the historian, it has been given in this work an important place, though never treated from the angle of philology. One may not agree with the writer, whose conclusions are logically drawn from the historical point he had in view.

Professor S. M. Zarb, O.P.

GATT, Guze: Nuqqas ta' Kotba ta' Malta fi-Biblijoteka: Kalendarji u Almanakki. In "Il-Berqa", January 7 and 8, 1953.

This informative article was prompted by a correspondence appearing in *Il-Berqa* of the 24th December, 1952. The writer is well known for his various writings on local historical topics and he treads the byways of Maltese history with an assurance bred of long familiarity with the subject matter of his research.

In the present article he traces the development of Maltese calendars and almanacs from the days of the Order of St. John. As the story unfolds the reader is presented with material at once fascinating and rich in detail. With the introduction of the printing press in 1642 the importation of almanacs was prohibited, ostensibly with the object of encouraging the local printer Pompeo del Fiore. After a few years, however, the press closed down and it was not re-established before 1756. Meanwhile the restriction was removed and foreign almanacs once more flowed into the island under a system of State monopoly whereby the Order gave the sole and exclusive right to sell almanacs to certain individuals who held this privilege at the pleasure of the Grand Master. For the use of the Clergy there were the calendars known as "Ordo", printed in Latin, while the almanacs were in Italian. The writer refers to an almanac in French purporting to have been printed in Malta in 1741 and shows how this is evidently a false imprint as the printing press was only re-introduced in 1756. With the re-introduction of the printing press in 1756 these publications, which used to be printed in Italy, or, more rarely, in France, began to be printed locally at the Government Press. The first "Ordo" appeared on the 29th August, 1756, 250 copies being printed for the use of the Clergy in St. John's. This was followed on the 16th September by the more popular kind of almanac known as "Lunario". During the French Occupation two almanacs, for 1799 and 1800 respectively, were published, besides a *Calendario Perpetuo della Repubblica Francese col confronto dei giorni secondo il sistema del Martirologio Romano*, of which one copy is known to exist in the private collection of Dr. Joseph Galea. Following the expulsion of the French the printing of almanacs in Italian was resumed in 1801, and this continued to appear up to and immediately following the introduction of the freedom of the Press in 1838. The first almanac in English appeared in 1844 under the title *Muir's Almanack for 1844*, followed in 1849 by the *Calendarju tal-Bidui* — the first almanac in Maltese.

By far the best part of Mr. Gatt's article is his account of calendars and almanacs issued in Maltese. From the material he collected it is possible to set out a list of such calendars from 1849 to 1923:—

Years	Title
1849-1850	Calendarju tal-Bidui (In Maltese and in Italian)
1861-1871	L'Almanacc Malti
1866	Pronostcu Universali tal Gran Pescatore ta Chiaravalle (translated)
1870	Il-Bidui
1870-1872	L'Anterna — Almanacc Malti
1873-1922	Il Habib Malti
1876	Don Basilio — Almanacc Profeticu
1887-1888	San Paul
1888-1890	Il Calendarju Nisrani ghall'usu ta li nsara
1890	Strina Maltija. ghall 1890
1890-1898	Various almanacs issued under saints' names by Messrs. Giov. Muscat.
1891	Mannarinu — Almanacc ta' Malta
1897	Il Habib ta' Malta — Almanacc
1898-	Il-Pronostku Malti — Almanakk ta' Malta u Ghawdex
1900-1901	February issues of "Kari mill'Annali tal Propagazjoni tal Fidi"
1900	Il Habib tal Maltin
1900-1907	Il Profeta Habib tal Maltin
1902	Il Habib Almanacc Nisrani
1903	Il Habib tal Poplu Malti
1904	Pio X — Almanakk ta' Malta u Ghawdex
1908-	San Gusepp — Almanakk Malti
1909	Il Habib tal Maltin
1914	Bin il Habib Malti and L'Aimanacc il Gdid
1915	Il Habib tal Poplu and Il Pronostcu ta' Malta
1916	Il Calendarju ghal Parrocca tal Hamrun
1917-1921	L'Almanakk tal "Malta Taghna"
1919	L'Almanacc tal Paci and Il Veru Almanacc Malti u Ghawdex
1923	San Paul — Almanacc ta l'Istitut tal Missjoni

For each of the above almanacs Mr. Gatt gives information regarding printer and publisher, when available.

It is a pity that Mr. Gatt could not bring the list up to date. However, one feels grateful to the writer for having opened up such a fresh and original field of research.

J. C. P.

FIORINI, J., The History of Maltese Dentistry. Malta, Giov. Muscat, 1953. pp.30.

This pamphlet contains useful information on the rapid development of the dental profession in Malta within the last thirty years or so. The survey is well written and portrays the progress achieved in lifting the practice of dentistry from a state of quackery to one of dignity and respectability. Details of the first qualified dentists, mostly British, who practiced in Malta in the first decades of the present century are given. Much of this progress, as one gathers from the pamphlet, has been due to the personality and initiative of Professor E. Lapira, the actual Dean of the newly established Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal University of Malta.

The title of this pamphlet is ambitious as in effect the survey is limited to the present century. Dentistry is a comparatively new science, but research in this hitherto unexplored field is bound to yield a rich harvest. By way of illustration the following note, recording the name of a Maltese practitioner in the 18th century, is here given. It is taken from I. S. Mitsud's ms. journal preserved at the Royal Malta Library (Ms. 20, p. 35) where we read that in December 1733 "in questo mese capitò in Malta un cavadenti maltese che da tenera età era partito dalla patria di nome Gio Batta Grimaldi Francolino..."

J. C. P.

MORRIS, T. O.: *The Water Supply Resources of Malta.* Government of Malta, 1952. xiv, 125p. 15 tables. 15 plates.

This is the text of the report submitted to the Government of Malta by Mr. T. O. Morris, M.B.E., D.Sc., F.G.S., M.M.G.I. Its publication has been awaited for a long time and it is a good thing that this competent survey is now available in print.

The author states (p. 2) that "the need for organised municipal supplies has arisen only during the last four centuries, since Malta became a strategic base of first class importance, and the change commenced from a relatively static, predominantly rural population, to one predominantly urban and increasingly rapid in numbers".

Part II of this report, which takes up 43 pages, is devoted to "A Critical review of Water Supply Developments in Malta 1610-1945". This extremely important section is followed by other chapters on "The Water Cycle in Malta" (pp. 45-61), "The Development and Conservation of the Main Sea Level Water Table" (pp. 62-75), "The Development and Conservation of the Upper Coralline Areas" (pp. 112-114), "The Present Position of Irrigation Supplies and the Prospects of Deep Boring" (pp. 115-120). A final note (pp. 124-125) is devoted to the prospects of improving the water supply of Gozo. The two-page bibliography (pp. 122-123) gives a useful list of papers consulted.

The report is of topical interest. The present water supply problem amply justifies the author's statement (p. 1) that "a full reconciliation of the present trends of supply and demand threatens to become, within a comparatively short span of years, as much a political and social problem as an engineering one". Of special interest to the historian is Part II where so much material, some of which in the form of unpublished official reports, is here brought together and summarised for the first time. The statistical tables and the plates form an added useful feature of this report.

J. C. P.

SHORTER BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

SAYDON, P. P.: *Bibliographical Aids to the study of Maltese.* In "Journal of Near Eastern Studies", 1953. Vol. XII, No. 1, pp. 20-30; No. 2, pp. 124-133.

This handlist of books dealing with the Maltese language is intended "to give a comprehensive view of all the material available for the study of the language as well as to help the foreign student of comparative Semitic philology and Arabic dialects in the evaluation of his sources". The list includes all books and articles that are likely to be found in foreign libraries, with the exception of those which have no importance. It is enriched with evaluations under the three headings (a) dictionaries, (b) grammars, and (c) language criticism. The author is well equipped for his task and the result is a masterly and authoritative guide which fills a long-felt need for the bibliographical approach to Maltese studies.

The "Journal of Near Eastern Studies" is available for perusal at the Royal University of Malta Library.

J. C. P.

ZAMMIT, George, *Prelate who made History: Tribute to a Maltese Diplomat.* In "Times of Malta", September, 3, 1952.

This is a short essay on Mgr. Salvatore Imbroll (1590-1650). The writer traces the ancestry of this Maltese diplomat, outlines his career as Ambassador and gives a list of the most important writings by this prelate.

CREMONA, A.: *Ganni Vassallo — Tifkira.* In "Ghawdex", April 25, 1948.

In this commemorative speech delivered on the occasion of the unveiling of a tablet in Gozo, Mr. Cremona pays tribute to the pioneering work of Ganni Vassallo — Maltese grammarian and philologist. The address is based on personal recollections and is rich in historical and bibliographical details connected with the progress and development of Maltese linguistic studies in the past fifty years.

CREMONA, A.: *Id-Djar tal-Isqfijiet t'Ghawdex.* In "Ghawdex", January 4, 1948.

Mr. Cremona writes an informative article, based on the original deeds, on the residences used by the Bishops of Gozo since 1864.

J. C. P.

KENNEDY, L.: *Nelson's Band of Brothers,* London, Odhams, 1951. 352 p.

This book is of special interest to students of Maltese history and particularly to those interested in the early years of British occupation. The book contains biographical material on Saumarez, Ball, Troubridge, Hoste, and other personalities associated with that period of political upheaval in Maltese history. The work is based on original and published sources which are listed in the bibliography at the end.

J. G.