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PAUL CASSAR, M.D., B.Sc., D.P.M., Documents Written on Wood During the Plague of 1813 in Malta. (Reprinted from the British Medical Journal, August 5, 1961, Vol. II, pp. 377-378).

Dr. Paul Cassar has written an interesting article on the manner in which wood was used as a medium on which to write during the plague in Malta in 1813. The author explains how paper was considered a means of spreading infection, whilst wood was thought to be comparatively immune to this danger. Therefore documents such as wills, receipts, letters and other documents were written on wood.

Dr. Cassar in his usual learned and clear manner explains various interesting details relating to his subject. He has successfully traced some of these interesting documents on wood and illustrations of two are reproduced with the article.

E.R.L.

[p.59] Rev. PHILIP CALLUS, D.D., B.A., The Rising of the Priests, Malta University Press, 5/-.

The author deserves our congratulations for the comprehensive manner in which an interesting and intriguing period in the history of these Islands has been surveyed.

The subject is introduced to the reader in simple language giving the historical background of the gradual suppression by the Knights of St. John of ancient privileges enjoyed by the Maltese since the days of the Argonese which generated strong resentment. This state of affairs prompted many to place themselves and their property under the protection of the Bishop or that of the Inquisitor; thus rendering the administration of these Islands more difficult and complicated due to the exercise of the various immunities.

Considering the presence, in the limited physical space available, of three separate ruling bodies, albeit all religious, that is, the Knights of St. John, the Bishop and the Inquisitor and keeping in mind the temperaments of the period it is easy to conclude that friction was unavoidable. In fact provocations and reprisals were too frequent from all sides. In a way it appears justifiable that the Knights would attempt to centralize within their grasp as much executive control as was possible since theirs was the final responsibility for the defence of this Island-Fortress.

The situation crystallised in 1775, by what has become known as the Rising of the Priests. This episode by the speculation of so many different and conflicting interests has rendered the protagonists particularly Don Gaetano Mannarino in the light ranging from a traitor to a patriot according to the feelings of, the party.

Due to inadequate independent authoritative sources of information and Rev. Philip Callus quotes Francesco Laferla — “Una Giustizia Storica — Don Gaetano Mannarino nella Luce

Dei Documenti” — as the only complete historical account of this ill-advised and badly executed event. A signal service to historical interests has been rendered by the publication as appendices, in many instances for the first time, of various documents notably the three reports on the rising, viz. that submitted by the Vicar General to the Bishop of Malta, the Inquisitor's and that rendered by the Judges commissioned by command of the “Order” to examine the prisoners. Also, published are the "Briefs" authorising the trial and the Motu Proprio of Pius VI.

Notwithstanding a promise of impunity one of the rebels was executed, two were imprisoned for life, and, eleven were exiled.

This is the sort of book which commends itself to all those who interest themselves in the serious study of the history of their homeland. Readers would be amply satisfied with the authoritative material contained therein.

W. F. Bellizzi

[p.60] Rev. A. ZAMMIT GABARRETTA, D.D., B.A., Canon Theologian of Vittoriosa. The Presentation Examination and Nomination of the Bishops of Malta in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Malta University Press, 1961, 5/-.

Diamo il cordiale benvenuto a questo interessante lavoro del Can. Ant. Zammit Gabarretta. Ai cultori della storia della Chiesa di Malta non torneranno nuovi gli accenni, i numerosi nomi e le fonti elencati, ma piacerà sicuramente di ritrovarli uniti e ordinati. Con questa tesi di laurea l'A. si propone di illustrare particolarmente un periodo della Storia Ecclesiastica di Malta ed un argomento non ancora esplorato. Dimostra le pratiche in uso per la presentazione l'esame e la nomina dei Vescovi di Malta nel decimo-settimo e decimottavo secolo. Dopo aver sottolineato con una rapida rassegna dell'epoca pretridentina la prassi della Santa Sede nelle elezioni dei Vescovi l'A. si sofferma ad illustrare i decreti del Concilio di Trento, le Costituzioni “Immensa” di Sisto V e l’“Onus Apostolicae Servitutis” di Gregorio XIV intese alla scelta di ottimi Pastori di anime. Passa poi ad elencare le fonti principali del suo studio, quali l'Archivio Vaticano, i processi dei Vescovi, i processi Concistoriali, la Dataria Apostolica, l'Archivio di Stato di Palermo, i Volumi Manoscritti dell'Ordine dei Cavalieri di Malta, conservati nella vostra Reale Biblioteca, come pure l'indispensabile e poderosa opera la “Hierarchia Catholica” dei miei confratelli i PP. Eubel, Gauchat, Ritzler e Setrin O.F.M.Conv., ed altre fonti a stampa.

Dimostrato il diritto di presentazione da parte della casa reale della Sicilia, essendo la Diocesi di Malta de jure Patronatus regni Siciliae, osserva l'A. che anche Carlo V, cedendo nel 1530 Malta ai Cavalieri di Rodi, non rinunziò a questo diritto ma lo trasmise ai suoi successori sovrani della Sicilia. Nel contempo investì il Gran Maestro dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano del diritto di presentazione di tre candidati da proporre al vice-re di Sicilia, il quale a sua volta ne sceglieva un nome da presentare alla Santa Sede per la definitiva scelta e conferma del candidato. Infine espone i documenti della presentazione, dell'esame e della nomina dei Vescovi del periodo in parola. Un'appendice corona l'opera e un indice onomastico facilita la consultazione e l'uso del libro.

Ci auguriamo che l'A. continui simili utilissimi studi, tanto rari nel campo della Storia della Chiesa di Malta, rallegrandoci per il presente svolto con acutezza e con vero interesse scientifico.

P. Bonaventura Fiorini, O.F.M.Conv.