

LAPURDIUM SACRA PEREGRINATIO

By E. GALEA

Sic datur optatam tandem contingere metam.
 O quanto ferimur nostrae Genitricis amore!
 Scamno verba facit quamquam moderator ab alto.
 at tamen intentos oculos in Virginis unum
 laetantes vultum, hac donati sorte, tenemus.
 Hic sibi nam sedem caeli Regina sacravit
 qua se praeberet terrena luce tuendam
 et materna daret sanctae mandata puellae!
 Qualibus interea rapiantur pectore flammis.
 sum iam non olim. sed nunc spectare videmur
 haec fieri coram, lacrymae testantur abortae.

Primae post noctis tacitam optatamque quietem
 En ad sacratam rursus procumbimus aram.
 Hostia dum divina sacro renovatur in arce.
 Ardentes Domini nos corpore vescimur ipsi
 et simul aegroti, quorum mirabile visu,
 aequior omnino laetusque relucet in ore
 subridente animus, quamquam tam saepe dolore
 torquentur, lecto ut vix possit membra movere.

His sua tum vero a sociis ad limina vectis.
 nos alio trahimur grato maestoque labore.
 Non longe a templo mons est, quem frondea silva
 vestit, strata manu via lente serpit eundo.
 qua septem et septem pulcherrima signa profantur
 quanta crucem amplexus tulerit Servator acerba
 ad mortem pergens ut nostra nefanda piaret.
 Singula lustramus, rite de more precantes,
 aptis accendit verbis dum corda sacerdos:
 nos neque sol radiis, via nec perlonga fatigat.

Haud vero aegroti sua ducunt tempora tectis.
 Fons est illimis fluxit qui Virginis olim
 iussu, nunc parvo regitur trahiturque meatu

ternos inque lacus lymphas effundere gaudet.
 Hic quos languor habet merguntur: tendere palmas
 auxilioque vocare Deum pia turba vicissim,
 si velit optata miseros donare salute.
 Quot lacrymae tersae! deleti et corde dolores!
 Quam saepe ablutis iam desperata redivit
 membrorum integritas aegris medicamine nullo!

En oculos nostros nova iam spectacula poscunt.
 Undique collectam iuvenumque virumque videmus
 Virginis ante specum turbam, quae, plurima, sensim
 ordine progreditur sacris comitata ministris.
 Extremus aurato Praesul sub tegmine fulgens
 gestat velatum panis sub imagine Christum.
 Carmina promentes incedunt, arboribusque
 summis perque tubas, quas vis electrica pulsat,
 in totum dulcis diffunditur aethera cantus.
 Indequ per medios aegros transire Redemptor,
 implorare omnes certam et sperare salutem.
 Solatur cunctos magno conspectus amore
 Iesus depellit dium his de corpore morbum,
 pluribus illustrat caelesti lumine mentem,
 edocet et cunctos molis perferre dolorem.

Resque diem nobis vere spectanda coronat.
 Primae densatur liquida cum nocte tenebrae.
 millia multa ferunt hominum funalia dextra,
 Virginis dum extollit vox omnis consona laudes
 chartaque ventorum flammam defendit ab ira,
 igneus ut fluvius clivosque viasque pererrat.
 Area stipatos ante aedem denique sacram
 excipit atque fidem laeto modulamine pandunt.

Extinctis alii facibus, se ad tecta reducunt,
 et certant alii vasto succedere templo,
 unde tegunt circum dum spissae cuncta tenebrae,
 omnia dumque silent, praeterquam murmure flumen,
 purpureum iubar et blandi modulamina cantus
 thuris et undantes foribus funduntur odores.
 Hic flexis genibus vigilem perducere noctem
 dulce est, ac Iesu, qui spectans adstat in ara,

divinas laudes grates et solvere dignas,
culpas dum nostras fletu detergimus atras.
Ipseque dat veniam votis curasque serenat.

Hac detur Matris nos semper in urbe morari
et propiore Deo, placida requiescere pace!
At iucunda dies nobis vix quarta propinquat
cum revocare gradum solitosque subire labores
iam nos pacta iubent cunctantes duxque sacerdos.

Dicturique vale, tristes, ad limina Matris
colligimur tandem sub rupe, danusque cavernae
arctos amplexus, libamus et oscula grati.
Haud siccis oculis taciti divellimur inde.

Longe haec hora foret cunctis moestissima nobis
ni blande spectans Virgo solatia ferret
nos maiora docens habituros gaudia caelo.

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF MALTESE.*

By A. CREMONA

The earliest literary records of the Maltese Language do not go further back than the beginning of the sixteenth century. The first attempt to write Maltese was made in the drafting of Maltese sermons of which some handwritten specimens exist in the Royal Malta Library. The first Maltese Grammar was written and published at Rome in 1750 by Canon G. Fco. Agius Sultana (better known by his latinized surname De Soldanis), who was the first Librarian of the Malta Library. His works comprise another grammar, a dictionary which is still in script, and a collection of proverbs which have been published in the *Malta Letteraria*, vol. III, 1928, by Dr G. Curmi.

One of the earliest attempts to write Maltese verse, according to De Soldanis, was during the Grandmastership of Nicola Cottoner (1660-80) when Dr Gio. Francesco Bonamico, a naturalist, wrote, in honour of the Grandmaster, an ode on the Maypole Festival followed by a Latin and French version. The cause of Maltese not having been used as a written language earlier is due to (a) lack of popular education coupled with the absence of any democratic Government. In mediaeval times the people were unrepresented in the local Government until 1428 and, even then, representation was not truly popular; (b) the discouragement of publications of local interest until the freedom of the press in 1838; (c) the usage, prevalent since the Aragonese period up to 1813, of all forensic documents, laws, notarial deeds and correspondence being written exclusively in Latin or in Siculo-Italian, and afterwards in Italian and English.

Although, as we are assured by De Soldanis and by Mifsud in his *Biblioteca Maltese* (1764), there were several Maltese Grammars and Dictionaries, written by local and foreign savants who lived before the seventeenth century, yet up to the year 1838 there is no traceable record to show that any serious attempt was ever made to introduce the reading or writing of Maltese in schools.

In 1825 a school for teaching language was established in connection with the University by the good services of the Right Honourable Hookham Frere (Chairman of the University General Council) and the veteran Michel

* A paper read at an Academic Meeting of the *Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti* in the Library of the Royal University of Malta on the 14th May 1949 on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee when Mr John Pudney, English writer, was invited to attend and read a paper on the 'Difficulties of the Writer in the Modern World'.