

A MALTESE DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE XVI CENTURY

By E. R. LEOPARDI

It will interest students, especially those dedicated to social studies, to read how in the 16th century a medical service run by the government was in force in these islands. In MS No. 15 of the *Università*, kept in the Royal Malta Library, is a document: an application made by a Medical Officer regarding a transfer of place of service.

A certain Dr. Giovanni Domenico Mangion, employed at the time as Medical Officer of Vittoriosa, asked to be transferred to the City of Notabile, where a vacancy existed on account of the death of Dr. Rosario Saura. The applicant stated that besides being fully qualified to act as a general practitioner, he was a Surgeon. He stated that there would be no language difficulties as, being Maltese, the citizens would be able to explain their symptoms and understand his directions. This denotes that foreigners were frequently employed as Medical Officers in the government service, and it is easy to understand how the people found difficulty in expressing themselves to a person who could not understand their language nor could they follow his mode of speech.

From the applicant mentioning his nationality as Maltese it seems likely that there were other potential applicants not having the advantage of knowledge of Maltese. It is known that a considerable colony of Greeks from Rhodes followed the Knights of St. John in their wanderings and finally settled with them on the island of Malta. Among them were members of the medical profession. On account of the proximity of Sicily and the continuous traffic between Malta and the larger island, it can be assumed that there were a certain amount of Sicilian Doctors practising in the island and in the service of the Order.

To the best of my knowledge the following document has not been published before. As this Journal of the Malta Historical Society is edited with the purpose of collecting and publishing scattered documents I am giving it herewith, brief as it is, and in its original wording.

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MS *Università* No. 15 (1589-1599) fol. 468.
Supplicatio pro Joanne Domenico Mangion.

Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Monsignore, (1) Joannes Domenico Mangion uno delli medici salariati della Cita Victoriosa humilissimo Vassallo et servitore di V. S. Illustrissima et Reverendissima riverentemente espone come Rosario Saura, medico salariato della Cita Notabile ricorse per la cui morte li citatini di quella

(1) The petition was submitted to the reigning Grand Master who, at that period, was Fra Martino Garzes.

hanno bisogno di un altro in loco del detto Saura, quale sia sufficiente ad esercitare l'ufficio di medico nelle necessità l'occorrino et perchè l'esponente è sufficientissimo per dicto carrigo oltr'ancora intende nella Chirurgia in modo tale che potrà esercitare l'un el altro, et quel che importa più sendo Maltese intende et sa parlare in maltese nella quale lingua parlano tutti di detta Cita Notabile et Rabato, ne altrimenti l'infermi di quella saperanno loche a loro s'ordina per medicamento oportuno alle loro infirmità se non se li parla in maltese, ne parimente il medico intendeva lo che dice l'infermo se non intende in maltese, oltra ancora se a lei piace potrà informarsi da persone fede degne quanto benemerite se sia portato nel carrigo li fu dato di medico della Cita Victoriosa, et con che affectione serviva et al presente serve alli poveri infermi dal che si cava che il simile è per fare nell'avenire, perciò ricorre da V. S. Illustrissima et Reverendissima supplicandole con ogni humiltà resti servita dare questo carrigo di medico di detta Cita al supplicante, et pregherà Nostro Signore Iddio per la longa vita et prospero stato di V. S. Illustrissima et Reverendissima.

Iacobus Muscat. Mag. Hospitalis Hierosolimitani. Magnifici Iurati Nostre Notabilis Civitatis super gratiis in precibus nos informent.

Datum in Palatio Nostro die 28 mensis Februari 1596.

FR. FRANCISCUS CONDULLIUS, *Auditor*.

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