

*Al Sig. M. Vaghiarino
Direttore della P. L.
L'Arcivescovo C. C. Garcia*

THE
ROYAL PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF MALTA.

A BROCHURE by Dr. A. A. C.

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THE ROYAL PUBLIC LIBRARY OF MALTA.

I.

Origin and Foundation of the Library of St. John, under the Government of the Knights of Malta.

Under the Grand Mastership of Fra Claude de la Sengle, the Body of the Order of the Kts. of Malta then residing at Vittoriosa, in a General Chapter held on the 24th May 1555, the *Reverend Sixteen* had thus enacted the establishment of a Library for the use of the Conventual Chaplains.

“Che si faccia una Bibliotheca o Libreria nella quale se repongano tutti i libri delli fratelli defunti, che pertengono al Commune Thesoro, per commodità delli religiosi che vorranno studiare”. *

In the II General Chapter met on the 7th May 1612, under the Grand Mastership of Fra Aloy de Wignacourt, in order to prevent the sale of books belonging to deceased Kts. and other Members of the Order, the following Statute was passed by the Reverend Sixteen, in consequence of a petition from the Rev. Fra Pietro Urrea Camarasa Prior of the Conventual Church, and from the Brother Chaplains of the Convent.

“Insuper mandari ut quicumque libri et codices reperientur in dispoliis fratrum amplius non vendantur, sed Procuratoribus Ven. Assemblæ fratrum Cappellanorum omnimodo tradantur, ex quibus tractu temporis una cum aliis libris ac voluminibus Bibliotheca erigatur ad communem usum et utilitatem studentium”. †

It appears, however, that up to the year 1649 the proposed Library was not formed, as the Prior of the Church, then the Rev. Fra Lucas Buenos, and the Procurators of the Ven. Assembly of the Brother Chaplains of the Convent eagerly urged the necessity of the erection of that Library, and solicited the Grand Master Fra Jean Paul de Lascaris Castellar and the Ven. Council of the Order to give effect to the Statute of the year 1612.

A decree was, accordingly, enacted on the 22nd March 1649, enforcing the strict observance of the Statute passed in 1612, both in regard to the conservation of books and codices recovered from the spoils of deceased Kts. and other Members of the Order, as well as in regard to the erection of a Library. ‡

Thus, to the collection of books and codices till then accumulated owed its Origin, and to their arrangement into a large hall owed its Foundation in 1650 the so-called Library of St. John, the nucleus of the present Royal Public Library of Valletta.

2. The place originally chosen for this Library was a hall, still existing without its former floor, over the Oratory of the Decollation of St. John, annexed to the Conventual Church. In that Oratory held its congregations the Brotherhood of the Kts. styled “La Misericordia e la Pietà de’ carcerati,” whose pitiful duties were to tender spiritual assistance especially to criminals condemned to capital punishment.

The Members of this Brotherhood, previously to the year 1602, held their assemblies in the present “Oratorio del S.S. Rosario” annexed to the Dominican Convent of Valletta, which was subsequently sold to the Dominican monks. In the year 1602-4, through the endeavours of the Rev. Prior Fra Pietro Urrea Camarasa, of Bailiff Bois,

* Capitolo Generale, Ordine de Ecclesia, § 7, fol. 12.

† Capitolo Generale, 7 Maggio 1612, fol. 18.

‡ Liber Conciliorum, die XXII Martii, ab Incarnatione 1649, fol. 313.



and of the Kts. Pietro di Gaeta and Borell, the Oratory of the Decollation was built "juxta Cappellam Stæ. Columnæ," the first chapel at the entrance of St. John's, on the left side *, to which place that Brotherhood removed its congregations.

It is the hall over this building that was first fitted for the reception of the Library of St. John.

As the two long galleries siding the two lateral naves of the Conventual Church, both opening in Str. Sta. Lucia, were constructed later on in 1736, the entrance to the Library was, very likely, from the upper landing place of the winding stair-case leading to the left belfry by the side of the said Oratory.

Subsequently, Fra Stefano Lomellini, Prior of England and afterwards of Venice, raised the roof of the Oratory to encase it with the present richly gold-decorated ceiling; and Fra Giovanni di Giovanni, Prior of Sto. Stefano, adorned it with an elevated marble façade exteriorly, and with the red marble pilasters within.

Together with these changes in the Oratory of the Decollation of St. John, were enlarged the premises of the Priory of the Church, siding Piazza San Giovanni and Str. Mercanti, to accommodate the Prior, then Fra Pietro Viani, who like his predecessors until then had not had an official residence †. Two private communications between the Priory, a portion of which has been lately fitted for the Young Ladies' Secondary School, and the Oratory are still walled up, one in the tribune of the organ and another in the choir behind the altar and opposite "la Cereria," which was the Sacristy of the Prior of the Church.

3. By these alterations, it is recorded that in 1680, under the Grand Mastership of Fra Gregorio Caraffa, the Library of St. John was removed by Fra Pietro Viani ‡ to a place over the great Sacristy of the Church, but no mention is made as to which hall.

The great Sacristy had been built in 1598, after the urgent request of Fra Giorgio Giamperti Prior of the Church, during the rule of Gr. M. Fra Martin Garzes; the Conventual Church erected by Gr. M. Fra Jean Le Vesque de la Cassière in 1573-77, having remained without a Vestry up to that time. ||

Its intended original site at the eastern end of the left hand nave, by the Cappella della Madonna di Filermo and the Cemetery, having been changed, the Sacristy was constructed at the western extremity of the right hand nave opposite to the Oratory, with very slight alterations from what it is at present.

A large vaulted hall, bearing on one of its walls the escutcheons of Fra Raimondo Di Veri Bailiff of Majorca in 1598, and of Gr. Master Fra Alof Wignacourt the immediate successor of Garzes in 1601, forms the vestibule of the Sacristy.

Annexed to this are the premises "le sale de' paramenti e del tesoro," in which the sacred vestments and the treasury of the Church were safely kept. The Hall, to which the Library was removed, could not have stood over the vaulted vestibule of the Sacristy, which is of the same elevation as the adjacent nave; nor on "le sale de' paramenti," over which were fitted the apartments of the Vice-priory of the Church and the "Appartamenti de' Predicatori" preaching in the Conventual Church during Advent and Lent, which premises after their removal from the place occupied by the Priory were transferred to the site of the Church Piazza S. Giovanni and Str. Reale.

The place, then, to which the Library of St. John was removed must have been the room over the groin-vaulted minor Sacristy, with windows looking on the Piazza opposite to the Auberge d'Auvergne.

4. The number of books and codices the Library of St. John counted then cannot be ascertained.

* Lib. Concil., Die XX Martii, ab Incarnatione 1602, fol. 213 tergo.

† Ceremoniale; Vol. IV, cap. XVII, no. 1.

‡ Ms. No. XX., Strom. Melitensium, page 430.

|| The original site fixed upon for the erection of St. John's was at the lower extremity of Strada Mercanti, close to the Hospital of the Order, on a part of which stands the present Church of the "Anime". This site was afterwards permuted for that on which the Church of St. John is constructed, and which had already been sold for the building of a Greek Church to the two papassi Angelino and Manoli brothers Metaxi of Rhodes. These papassi had been invited to Malta by the Gr. M. Fra Jean de la Vallette for the spiritual care of the Rhodiote families, who had accompanied hither Gr. M. Villiers de l'Isle Adam, after the taking of Rhodes by Soliman II in 1522. See Comm. Del Pozzo, Hist. della S. R. di S. Giovanni, Parte 1ma. Lib. II.

The Librarian was chosen by the Prior of the Church from among the Conventual Chaplains. The Venerable Assembly paid tari 6, equivalent to 10*d.* a month for dusting books, to one of the Deacons, as a class of clergymen not in sacred Orders engaged in the service of the Church was called. *

Besides this Library for the common use of the Conventual Chaplains, the Prior Fra Gio. Domenico Mainardi in 1758 established the Priors' private Library, to receive the choice collection of books and codices selected by his two immediate predecessors, Buenos and Viani.

One of the halls in the Priory was chosen for this purpose, and its roof was decorated with the armorials of the Priors of the Church; that hall is now one of the Class rooms of the Young Ladies' Secondary School, with its roof still retaining the escutcheons of the Priors Viani and Mainardi.

II.

Additions made to the Library of St. John by successive Grand Masters, and by private individuals.

5. The growth of the Library of St. John was rather slow in the beginning, and obtained its full development about one hundred years after its foundation, when it became Public.

During this long interval, the only Libraries more or less accessible to the public were those annexed to the monastic Convents, the most conspicuous having been that of the Franciscans Minori Osservanti, established by Fr. Costanzo Vella †; and the Library of the Bishop, founded in the Episcopal Palace by Mons. Fr. Paolo Alpheran only a few years before the Public Library.

6. On the 26th August 1760, the highly valuable private library with the moveable property of Cardinal Fra Gioacchino Portocarrero, who died in Rome in the same year, was inherited by the Order of St. John, the Cardinal being one of its Members

A manuscript Catalogue (No. 264) of the books and mathematical instruments of Cardinal Portocarrero, redacted in Rome at the request of Comm. Fra Costantino Chigi, Prior of the Common Treasury of the Order, of Sig. Abbe. Stefani Arieti, Agent of the Order at Rome, and of Sig. Abbe. Molossi representing the trustees of the Cardinal, is preserved in the Public Library. The total number of works described in that Catalogue is 4670 in 5670 volumes, as stated in the inscription under the portrait of the Cardinal by Favre, now hanging in the Library :

S. Ordini Hieros. IV. M. DC. LXX Codices Testamento legavit ;
and their valuation, as stated by Mifsud || was estimated Sc. 15,000, par to £ 1250.

It is recorded that the pitch-pine book-cases, beyond the pillars separating the large Hall of the Library, were made of the wood of the boxes in which the books of the Cardinal were conveyed from Rome.

7. In the same year 1760, Bailiff Fra Ludovico Guerin de Tencin, who in every respect ought to be held as the founder of the Public Library, purchased from the Common Treasury the collection of books and codices of Cardinal Portocarrero, for 7000 Maltese Scudi, equivalent to £583 6 8. ‡

Besides Portocarrero's books, the private Library of de Tencin, on the 22nd May 1760, consisted of 2834 volumes, at a cost of fr. 25908; and up to the 10th June 1766, date of de Tencin's demise, the number of volumes of his private library was increased to 4030. By the addition of his private library to that of Portocarrero, the Bailiff de Tencin became owner of a rich collection of works. A Ms. Catalogue (No. 265) of de Tencin's books is preserved in the Public Library, divided in the following order, i.e. : Books on Religion; Moral Books; Books relating the Order of St. John; Historical Books; Belles Lettres; Arts and Sciences; Geographical books and Travels.

* Vol. Ceremoniale Lib. IV, Cap. XX, No. 59.

† Decreto del Tesoro, 25 Ottobre 1760, Vol. K. pag. 24.

|| Bibl. Maltese, pag. XXIII.

† Mifsud, Bibl. Maltese XXI

Bailiff de Tencin, having collected altogether 9700 volumes and employed French workmen to have these volumes bound, in the year 1763 made a donation of all his books to the Order, on the understanding that together with the books contained in the Library of St. John they should be merged into one "Bibliotheca Publica," thus becoming a national property. It was, further, understood that a proper place should be prepared for the Public Library, with accommodation for the lodgings of the Librarian, to which appointment he named the Rev. Canon Gio. Francesco Agius Sultana from Gozo, at a yearly salary of £ 10, very nearly the salary of the high employés at that time.

De Tencin, in the meanwhile, received the donation of several rare editions of books, elegantly bound, from Louis XV of France; and the Royal and Perpetual Privilege of having all the new books, edited "Ex Typographia Regia," supplied *gratis* to the new Public Library was granted by His Most Christian Majesty.

The whole number of works collected for the Library in the ensuing year 1764, as stated by a contemporary writer, Bartolomeo Mifsud *, was about 12000, which, if correct, would hardly allow the bare number of 2300 works for the original Library of St. John.

The noble motives, which prompted Bailiff de Tencin to this liberal bequeath, are explained in a preface to his Ms. Catalogue, which deserves to be better known. Entirely repudiating the prejudiced ideas of his *noble confrères*, who considered Science and Literature inconsistent with their military profession, and rebuking the ignorance of the Conventual Clergy, he remarked "that they do with books what savages do with gold, to which they prefer shells and glass beads; and that their lethargy in this respect resembles that of a sick person, who fancying his malady to be without a remedy, chooses to languish rather than take the trouble of seeking a cure".

The portrait of Bailiff Fra L. Guerin de Tencin, with a Latin inscription underneath, over the columnar separation at the extremity of the large Hall of the Public Library on the left hand side, was appended by order of Sir H. Oakes, Governor of Malta, in 1812.

8. The formal foundation of the "Publica Bibliotheca *in perpetuum*" was still protracted until 1776, namely ten years after the death of the Founder.

In the General Chapter held that year, under the Grand Magistership of Fra Emmanuele de Rohan, the Reverend Sixteen, on the petition of Fra Paolino du Guast, Commissioner of the Bibliotheca of the Order, formally decreed the immediate erection of the edifice of the Public Library, and framed several regulations for its management. †

In that Chapter was, further, decided that, besides the books, all the astronomical and mathematical instruments, statues, medals, and objects of Natural History inherited by the Order, should be preserved in that Library.

The place provisionally chosen for the first Public Library, which received in the beginning the name of "Bibliotheca Tanseana," was, on the recommendation of de Tencin, the old building "la Conservatoria," at the corner of Str. Reale and Str. Sta. Lucia; and the "Conservatoria" was removed to the contiguous building at the corner of Str. Reale and Str. Teatro, where stood the "Tesoro dell' Ordine" and the Treasury of the Malta Government, until the administration of Sir J. Gaspard Le Marchant in 1858-64.

9. Besides the accumulations of the private libraries of deceased Grand Masters and Kts., of which the most interesting were those of the Gr. Masters Fra Raimondo Perellos and Fra Emmanuele de Rohan, of the Bailiffs de Breuil and Galdino, and the fusion of the select library of the Priors of the Church, the Bibliotheca Tanseana received successively the following valuable additions.

In 1764, the copious and very select library of Comm. Fassion de Sainte Jay, author of several Mss. preserved in the Public Library;

In the year 1773, most of the books of the Library of the Camerata, founded by Comm. Fra Giulio Sansedoni and increased by those of Beneven Bailiff of Dacia, of Bailiff Cavaniglia, and of Fr. Domenico Chijurlia Prior of Sto. Stefano, containing about 1009 volumes, were, on the proposal of Comm. Fra Giovanni Battista Valabres

* Bibliotheca Maltese, pag. XXIII, note 6.

† Capitolo Generale, Dicembre 1776, fol. 102.

Commissioner of the Biblioteca, transferred thither. A Catalogue of the books of the Camerata, in the main religious and devotional works, is found in the Library (Ms. No. 266).

The Camerata was a Congregation of pious Kts., who chose to live in community. Their dwelling was in the right wing of an old building, erected in 1593 under the Gr. Master Fra Ugo Loubenx Verdala and restored in 1696, on the site Str. Mercanti opposite to the Military Hospital. The left wing of the same building was occupied by "La Lingeria," a laundry for the washing of bedding and clothing of the Hospital.

Towards the years 1772-73, the number of works existing in the Library, stated by Count Ciantar, * was about 19000.

10. At the close of the year 1777, the Hospitaler Order of St. Antoine of Vienne, founded in 1096 by Fra Gaston and his son Fra Gerond for the sufferers from "*Le feu de St Antoine*," confirmed in 1218, transformed in an Abbey of regular Canons in 1297, and reformed in 1634, was by a Bull of Pius VI annexed to the Order of the Kts. of Malta, then ruling over the Order the Grand Master de Rohan, and its Members were received in the Conventual Clergy.

The number of these Canons, besides ten Convers, was then twentyone, residing in France, Rome, Turin, and Florence (Ms. No. 268); their property, first shared between the Order of St. John and the Order of St. Lazarus, was in 1781 all settled upon that of St. John, their Library included.

The Library of the Antonians was thus merged in the Biblioteca Tanseana. Among the books and codices reaching from that Library are found: the Ms. parchment book, richly illuminated, detailing the life of St. Antony in 200 miniature paintings; the Gothic book by Fr. Aymaro Falco, containing "*Antoniana historia compendium*," Lugd. Payen 1534; as also the following illuminated Mss. in parchment:—*Meditationes reverendissimi patris domini Joannis de Turrecremata, sacrosancte romane ecclesie cardinalis, continuate rome per Ulicum Han, anno Domini MCCCCVII*, with initials and pages richly decorated, besides 33 miniatures exhibiting the life of Our Lord; *Biblia Sacra* of the XIV century, with microscopical characters and decorated initials; *De vera penitentia, Sinonimia Beati Isidori*, of the XIV century; *Tractatus delectabilis de certitudine futuræ vitæ, MCCCCLXVII*; *Eusebii Historia ecclesiastica ex versione Rufini*, of the XV century; *Sermones, expositiones, epistolæ Reverendi Domini Bertrandi*, of the XV century; *Hermetis Trismegisti, de Sapientia generationis lapidis*, of the XV century.

There are, besides, several books in the Library noted "*ex Bibliotheca Antoniana*," though, from a Ms. of Bailiff de Nobili it is gleaned that the Library of the Antonians was not very copious, at least not many of its volumes reached this Library.

11. In the year 1797, the Library of the Infermeria Str. Mercanti, the former Hospital of the Order of St. John and the present Military Hospital, was also amalgamated with the Public Library. †

The Maltese Fra Giuseppe Zammit, M.D., ‡ whose portrait is hanging in one of the Halls of the Library, was the founder of the Accademia Medica in 1679, and also of the Library of the Infermeria on the 28th January 1687 ||, to which he made a donation of 15000 volumes for the benefit of Medical Students. This Library was afterwards greatly increased by his successor Michel' Angelo Grima, M.D. Many of the Mss. in the Public Library were brought from that of the Infermeria.

On the 31st August 1782, another Maltese Member of the Order, Fr. Gaetano Bruno, Alvernian Commendatore, bequeathed a donation of a capital of 10000 Maltese Scudi, par to £ 833. 6. 8, as it is stated in the Latin inscription under his portrait appended in the Library. That capital was invested at 2½ per cent. in the Ancient "*Massa Frumentaria*," and the interest was to be spent in the purchase of books.

* Malta Illustrata, Lib. I, not. 1, § XXIII.

† Lib. Concil, an. 1796, fol. 64 tergo.

‡ The Rev. Fr. Gius. Zammit was the first Professor named to the Chair of Surgery and Anatomy, instituted permanently in the Sacra Infermeria for phlebotomists and other petty surgeons, by the Gr. M. Fra Nicolas Cotoner, in virtue of his will dated 25th April 1680. The salary of 8s. 4d. per mensem was assigned to the situation. At the advanced age of 94 years, Dr. Zammit died on the 2nd November 1740, and was buried in the Parish Church of Casal Balzan.

|| Liber Concil., 1685, 86, 87, fol. 179.

During this interval, books were constantly being received from the spoils of deceased Kts., and in 1790 the number of volumes stated by De Boisgelin was 60000.

Meanwhile the indefatigable Canon Agius Sultana, author of a Maltese Grammar, of a project of a Pœno-Maltese Dictionary, and other minor works published in Rome, and of a precious collection of Mss. in 12 volumes preserved in the Library, amongst which the "Gozo illustrato Antico e Moderno, Sacro e Profano," was succeeded by the learned Fra Gioacchino Navarro as Librarian.

12. Fra Franz Paul von Smitmer, Comm. of the Order of St. John and afterwards Canon of St. Stephen's at Vienna, in 1781 published an Italian "Catalogo della Biblioteca del Sagro Militare Ordine di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano, oggi detto di Malta," which was unknown to Brunet.

The printing of that Catalogue, although the publication is *sine loco*, was executed in the Magistral typography established in June 1756 by the Gr. Master Fra Emm. Pinto de Fonseca, the only press then allowed in Malta. *

A copy of that Catalogue in 12°, of which a re-publication in German was made in 1802 at Sulzbach, is preserved in the Library, with this note in the hand-writing of the author "Amicus Auctor dedit hoc anno," under the printed date of its publication.

The title of the Catalogue led several bibliographers to presume that the works described in it belonged to the Library of the Order, in fact, the author in the preface states that he wished to present a complete Catalogue of the "Maltese Biblioteca," whereas it is simply a Catalogue of Books, concerning to or published by, Members of the Order of St. John, of which a good number were found in Smitmer's private Library, those marked with an asterisk being wanted.

Neither I, nor M. De Hellwald, have been able to trace in whose possession, passed Smitmer's precious and complete collection of books, papers, and Mss. relating to the Order of St. John.

A recent note from Vienna states that they are to be found in Malta. It can, however, be ascertained, after a careful search, that most of the books described in Smitmer's Catalogue are not among those existing in the Public Library. They may be in Sulzbach or Vienna, where Smitmer as Canon of St. Stephen may have retired after the French conquest of our islands in 1798.

De Boisgelin, who had the opportunity of examining Smitmer's collection, published a much more complete classified catalogue of the same nature as that of Smitmer, into 23 divisions with a Supplement. †

Lately in 1885, another "Bibliographie Méthodique de l'Ordre Souv. de St. Jean De Jerusalem par Ferdinand De Hellwald, Secrétaire Du Gr. Magistère," was published under the auspices of the Gr. Master Fr. Jean Baptiste Ceschi Santa Croce, Rome.

III.

Transfer of the Library to the New building.

13. Until the year 1811, the Library room remained in the old building of the Conservatoria.

From "A Journal of the Forces, which sailed from the Downs in April 1800, on a secret Expedition under the Command of Lieut. Gen. Pigot" by Æneas Anderson Lieut. 40th Reg., London 1802, are gleaned the following particulars :

December 1800.

"In the same street (Strada Reale) is the building which contains the Library, but at present in a very ruinous state, and supported by strong props of timber. Adjoining to the latter is the Treasury. Opposite to the Treasury is a very handsome modern edifice, called the Conservatoria, it joins the Grand Master's palace, and was intended, previous to the surrender of the island to Bonaparte, for the reception of the Public Library, which at that time promised to become a very splendid collection of literature".

* A private press had been permitted before in the island, towards the year 1644, under Gr. M. Fra Jean Lascaris, in one of the "Sale de' forni", by Sig. Pompeo del Fiore. (See *Raccolta di varie cose antiche riguardanti Malta*, pag. 174).

† Hist. of Ancient and Modern Malta.

The handsome building referred to above, which is one of those adorning Valletta, was decided upon by the "Veneranda Camera del Tesoro," under the Rule of the Gr. Master de Rohan, on the 16th April 1785:

"Avendo Noi chiamato in Convento l'architetto D. Stefano Ittar per fabricare la nuova Bibliotheca abbiamo convenuto col medesimo di dargli l'assegnamento annuale di Sc. 1500 (£ 125), che deve principiare a decorrere dalli 2 Ottobre 1784, con pagargli inoltre lo affitto di casa". *

The upper story of the edifice was intended for the reception of the "Biblioteca e del Museo delle Antichità," and for the lodgings of the Librarian; the lower story for the office of the Conservatoria, and the custody of gold plates, and other valuables belonging to the Order.

The architect D. Stefano Ittar was a native of Rome. Having subsequently lived in Malta, he died at the age of 70 on the 18th January 1790, and was buried in the Church of Stæ. Mariæ de Jesu, apud P.P. Minores Observantes".

14. Though the new edifice was completed, and fitted up with the presses paid for by Bailiff Perez de Sarrios, the French invasion of Malta in 1798, and the successive British occupation in 1800, prevented the translocation of the Library thither, until the year 1812.

I quote from the above mentioned Journal of the Forces :

"The new edifice during this period, when Malta was subject to the British Government, was employed as a public coffee-room for the British Officers.

The general apartment was very spacious, and a billiard table was erected in an adjoining chamber. The agreeable institution was supported by the payment of four dollars per annum by each subscriber, which was sufficient to defray the expenses of the rooms, and provide the English newspapers and foreign gazettes. The whole was managed by a Committee, of which General Pigot was the President".

H. E. Major General Oakes, on the 24th May 1809, wrote a private letter to General Pigot "informing him that, it would soon be necessary to apply the Conservatoria (the new edifice) to the use for which it was originally destined, viz: the reception of the Malta Government Library, as several thousand volumes belonging to that valuable collection, were rotting from want of accommodation". †

At last, under the Administration of Sir H. Oakes, Civil Commissioner of the islands of Malta, whose portrait is on the left side of that of Bailiff de Tencin, the Library was transferred to the present edifice on the 4th June 1812.

A Latin inscription under the portrait of Sir H. Oakes states, that the Library then counted 30000 volumes.

This shows, evidently, the enormous loss of half the number of volumes stated by Comm. de Boisgelin, the Library has sustained in the meantime of those political changes.

15. The Librarian Fr. Gioacchino Navarro, publisher of several literary Memoirs, was during this change succeeded by the Very Reverend Canon Giuseppe Bellanti, and a Committee was appointed by Government to undertake the management of the Public Library. One of the active Members of this Committee was the Right Honorable Sir John Hookham Frere, whose marble bust by Frasoni in the large Hall of the Library, is a present of the Revd. Wayne in 1877.

Canon Bellanti bequeathed a very valuable collection of rare editions to the Public Library, amongst which are the following:

Aldine Editions.

Theodori Introductivæ grammatices libri quatuor, et de Mensibus; Apollonii grammatici de instructione; Herodianus de Numeris. Ed. pr. 1495.

* Registro delle Deliberazioni della Camera del Tesoro, marcato colla lettera A, fol. 315.

† Gov. Letters in the Chief Secretary's Office, 24th May 1809.

- Theocriti; Pythagoræ; Hesiodi; Ed. pr. 1495.
 Thesaurus cornucopiæ et Horti Adonidis; Ed. pr. 1496.
 Dictionarium græcum; Ed. pr. 1497.
 Julii Firmici, Astronomicorum; M. Manilii, Astronomicorum; Arati, Phænomena;
 Theonis, Commentaria; Procli Diodori, Sphæra, Ed. pr. 1499.
 Julius Pollux; Ed. pr. 1502.
 Stephanus, de urbibus, Ed. pr. 1502.
 Æsopi vita et fabellæ; Gabriæ fabellæ; Phurnutus, de Natura Deorum; Palæphatus;
 Heraclides; Orus Apollo; etc. Ed. pr. 1505.
 Rhetores Græci, Ed. pr. 1508.
 Platonis, opera omnia, Ed. pr. 1513.
 Hesychii Dictionarium, Ed. pr. 1514; Athenæus, Ed. pr. 1514.
 Cœlius Rhodiginus, in antiquarum lectionum lib., 1516.
 T. Livii Decades, 1520.
 Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini; 1564.

Birmingham Editions.

- Johannes Bosherville.
 P. Virgilii Maronis, Bucolica, Georgica, et Æneis, 1757.
 Junii Juvenalis et Auli Persii Flacci Satyræ, 1761.
 Q. Horatii Flacci Carmina, 1770.
 P. Terentii Afri Comediæ, 1772.
 T. Lucretii Cari, de rerum Natura, 1772.
 Catulli, Tibullii, et Propertii Opera, 1772.
 Crispi Sallustii, quæ extant; 1773.

Dutch Editions.

- Josephi Flavii, opera omnia quæ extant, græcæ et latinæ, 1726.
 Dionis Cassii, quæ extant, græcæ et latinæ, 1592.
 Bavaria Sancta.

Pauli Orosii historiarum lib. VII per Æneam Vulpem, Vicentiæ 1475, which at the time of Brunet fetched 200 fr.

16. In 1831, the Committee of the Public Library, in order to obtain funds for the acquisition of new books, ruled that an annual fee of 10s. should be paid by subscribers for the circulation of books at home.

In 1839, the Library was annexed to the University. These two measures, observes Mr. Miège, had assimilated the Public Library to a "Cabinet de lecture," and deprived the Establishment of its public feature.

About two years later, the Establishment of the Public Library was again separated from that of the University; and in the year 1856, the fee for the circulation of books was abolished.

On the 1st January 1839, the late Cesare Vassallo, LL.D., was appointed successor to Canon Bellanti, which appointment he held up to the 14th December 1880.

On the 15th December 1880, Dr. A. A. Caruana was named Librarian till the end of the year 1896.

Dr. Caruana was succeeded by the late lamented Dr. Filippo Vassallo, on the 1st January to the 17th March 1897.

In December 1854, the Evening Reading branch of the Public Library was instituted. In February 1856 a free circulating Library was attached to it.

In 1887, under the Government of Sir J. Lintorn Simmons, the Library was paved with marble.

In November 1853, the Library of Gozo was established by Governor Sir W. Reid. Each of the Public Libraries is at present placed under the charge of a Librarian and of a managing Committee appointed by Government.

IV.

General Classification of the books contained in the Public Library of Malta.

17. In the large Hall of the Library, measuring 138 ft. in length by 42 ft. 10 in. in breadth, are mostly placed the books belonging to the old Library of the Order of St. John.

Another Hall, 44 ft. by 31 ft. 8 in., adjoining the main Hall, is destined for the Modern Department of the Library. This Hall had been used as a Garrison Library until its removal in 1854 to the "Cancellaria" of the Order, at the corner of St. George's square and Sda. Vescovo.

A suite of three other rooms serve for the preservation of local Antiquities, beyond which there are the private lodgings of the Librarian.

A series of presses extends along the sides and heights of the two Halls, in which the volumes lined on the shelves with regard to size show an arrangement nearly uniform. The presses are marked by letters, and the shelves in each press, and the places of books in each shelf, are pointed out by numbers. The press-letters, and the shelves and book-numbers, being correspondent to those in the Catalogue of the Office and in that of the deliverers of books, a complete accessibility is afforded to an aggregation of over 52956 volumes.

This is very short of the number of 60000 volumes stated by De Boisgelin to have existed in the Library, nearly 100 years ago. It is beyond doubt, that during the disturbed state of Malta 1798-1810 the Library was plundered as well as the Museum of Antiquities.

18. The Public Library possesses two sets of Catalogues, one Classed and one Alphabetical, both compiled by Dr. C. Vassallo. The Classed Catalogue arranged with reference to the subject-matter of the books, on the system of the Jesuit F. Garnier improved by M. Martin, was published in the Government Press in 1843-44, and contains four volumes: i.e.

1st Volume: Oriental and Polite Literature, and Grammar.

2nd Volume: Sciences of General Information; Medicine and Surgery; and Arts.

3rd Volume: Religious Sciences, Sacred Scripture included; and Jurisprudence.

4th Volume: History; Travels; Geography; Heraldry and Archæology; Biography.

Supplementary Catalogues have been published in 1853 and 1873.

The Alphabetical Catalogue, published in 1857, is divided into 5 volumes; i.e.

1st Volume: Oriental and Latin Languages.

2nd Volume: English Books.

3rd Volume: Italian Books.

4th Volume: French Books.

5th Volume: Spanish and Portuguese Books.

A fresh Supplementary Catalogue is urgently required.

The Library possesses, besides, a Catalogue of Mss. and another of Miscellanies.

At the close of the year 1896, the total number of works was 26579, namely

Printed Works	25609
Mss. Codices	23
Mss. unpublished,	484
Miscellanies,	463
Total Works	26579*

* V. Government Gazette No. 3922, 5th June 1897.

These works are thus classified, with reference to language and date of Edition :

	Works of the					Total	
	15th Century	16th Century		17th Century	18th Century		19th Century
		1st half	2nd half				
In Oriental Languages	8	38	30	124	121	204	525
Latin Language	22	151	453	1322	1646	383	3977
English „		„	„	12	197	4102	4311
Italian „		89	323	890	1876	4817	7995
French „			48	1608	4754	1116	7526
Spanish and Portugese Languages			40	280	563	12	895
Other Languages			1	31	83	32	147
	30	278	895	4267	9240	10666	25376

The Library is also supplied with a choice of English, Italian, and French Serials, Reviews and other Academical publications (V. Govt. Gazette, No. 3922, 5th June 1897).

19. The character of the Publica Biblioteca is that of a learned library, namely of a deposit of books of science and research, and of works of reference, though the advantages of a lending library, on sufficiently protective conditions, for the general reading and circulation of books, are combined with it. Entire accessibility is granted free, without any registration of Visitors or Students, which is generally acknowledged to be a cause of restriction.

The readers may, of course, be divided into two classes : those consulting the Library for scientific or literary purposes in connection with their lines of study, and those frequenting the Library for literary amusement simply.

The average number of 29312 works is delivered to be read during the year; besides an annual average of 7383 books allowed to remain out of the Library on loan, for the period of 7 days fixed by the Regulations.

20. Some selections of the choicest Editions of old works, from a few classes, may give an idea of the bibliographic value of this Library.

In ancient Greek and Latin Classics and Philosophers, the Ciceronian series shows ten Aldine Editions; and one ad usum Serenissimi Delphini elegantly bound, present of Gr. M. De Rohan.

The Aristotelian collection comprehends eight Aldine Editions, of which six are Editiones principes ; besides the Commentaries of Aristotle by Peter Tataretus, a Venetian Gothic Edition of 1520; the paraphrasis per Jacobum Stapulensem, Friburg 1540; the London Edition of 1580; and nine others, mainly of the 16th century.

The Platonian series shows two Aldine Editions, one of which *rarissima* by Card. Bessarion; one Florentine ex versione Marsilii Ficini, which according to Brunet is prior to the Venetian of 1491; one ex interpretatione Serrani and St. Stephani, of 1578.

Of the Orations of Demosthenes, there is one Greek and Latin Edition, Aureliae Allobrogum 1607; one Latin, Romæ of 1612; and one Greek of Padua 1621; besides four French translations of the 17th century.

Two Græco-Italian, Bodonian Editions, of Callimachus, the one of 1692, of which only 160 copies were drawn, the other in italics of 1792, of which only 162 copies were edited. One Bodonian Edition of Hesiodus of 1785; F. Quintilianus, a Milanese Edition by Larothus of 1476, with all the initials coloured, and an Aldine Edition of 1514; Longinus, a Bodonian Edition of 1793.

The works of Seneca are represented by one Antwerp Edition, ex off. Plantiniana of 1632; another Edition *sine loco* of 1628; two Elzevir Editions of 1640 and 1672; and by three French translations of the beginning of the 17th century.

The Homeric collection shows eleven Editions, of which one Aldine of 1524; one of Basle, of 1567; one of Leipsig, of 1759; one of Amsterdam, of 1742; one Padovan, of 1744. There are, besides, the *Ilias* in Latin verses by Hessius, Paris 1550; *Quinti Calabri derelictorum ab Homero*, Aldine Ed. pr. of 1505 on parchment; and thirteen French translations, of which the one edited by M. Didot in 1786, is *ex dono M. M. de Rohan*.

The Horatian series is represented by two different Aldine Editions of 1566; by one Bodonian, very neat, of 1791; besides the "Odes Horatii Epodon secunda, ab Aldo Manucio, Bononiæ 1586; seven other Latin Editions of the 18th century; and twelve Italian, English, French, and Spanish translations.

The works of Aristophanes, of Euripides, of Plautus, of Terence, of Lucanus, of Lucretius, of Juvenal, of Martial, of Ovid, of Persius, of Tibullus, of Propertius, of Catullus, of Manilius, are represented by several Aldine Editions, and old Editions of Lousanne, Basle, Amsterdam, Frankfort, Florence, Parisi Cantabridgian, and Oxonian.

The Virgilian series comprehends thirteen Editions, inclusive of the "Georgica Hexaglotta," present of the Marquis of Northampton to the Library of Malta; a Bodonian Edition of 1790; and about 27 Italian, French, English, and Spanish translations.

21. In the class of Italian Literature, the Public Library possesses the following gems:

A group of early Editions of Dante: i.e. Aldine Edition of 1502; Florentine Edition by del Giunta of 1506, col dialogo di A. Manotti; Florentine Edition by Doris, of 1547; Venetian Edition by Sessa of 1564, con esposizione di Landino e Vellutello; Florentine Edition with the Commentaries of G. Boccaccio, of 1724; the splendid Venetian Edition by Zatta, 1757, 5 vol. 4°, copiously illustrated and dedicated to the Empress of Russia Elizabeth Petrowna.

Modern Editions: The French translation of Dante by Pier Angelo Fiorentino, illustrated by G. Doré, edited by Hachette et Cie; the Milanese Edition by Pagnoni, with numerous engravings and notes from Tommaseo; the Milanese Edition by Moretti, with the commento of Giov. dalla Lana; the London Edition, illustrated by Foscolo; a prose paraphrase by Trissino; besides two English translations by Longfellow and Wright, and other minor Italian Editions.

A group of the following early Editions of Ariosto, i.e.: Venetian, Giolito of 1542, with Gothic initials; Ligon Onorati of 1556, with silographic figures; Venetian, Valgrisi of 1603, with wood cuts; Parisian, Prault of 1746; one Castillian translation by J. Urrea, Anvers 1549; and two French translations of the 17th century.

Two Editions of Pietro Bembo, le Rime; one Venetian, da Sabbio of 1530, supervised by Bembo himself; and another Roman, of 1548.

Giov. Boccaccio, Il Decamerone, Milan in Æd. Lanetti, 1521, Ed. pr.

The following Editions of Petrarca: Con l'esposizione di A. Vellutello, Giolito 1547; con le osservazioni di M. F. Alunno, Venetian 1550; con le annotazioni di B. Daniello, Venetian 1549; con l'Esposizione di G. A. Gesualdo, Griffio 1581, besides other Editions of the 17th century.

The group of T. Tasso's early Editions contains:—an Aldine of 1583; the Genoa Ed. of 1590, with cuts by Agostino Caracci and Giacomo Franco; the Genoa Edition of 1617, with the drawings del Castillo; the Venetian Edition degli Albrizzi of 1745; the Elzevir of 1652; and the splendid Edition of Didot 1784, of which only 200 copies were edited, *ex dono M. M. De Rohan*; besides 4 French translations, one of which edited by Le Brun, 1775.

22. Theology, Patristic and Scholastic, is one of the leading classes.

The Maurine Editions, the old Venetian, Parisian, and Milanese Editions, those of Louvain, Lyon, Genoa; the Editions of Antwerp ex off. Plantiniana, Rome, Basle, Coulogne, of the following Fathers:

“Opera Omnia” of the Latin Fathers: St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, St. Hilary, St. Leo, St. Optatus, Tertullian, St. Pier Damianus, the Ven. Bede, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventura, St. Thomas, P. Lombardus, Allatius, Bellarminus.

The “Moralia” of St. Gregory the Great, Rome, De Luca of 1575, of which only four copies are known existing; and the “Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum,” Lugduni, 1677.

The Patrologia Latina et Græca of Migne. The Greek Fathers: St. Athanasius, St. Basil, Cl. Alexandrinus, St. Dionysius, St. Ephrem, St. Cyrillus, St. Epiphanius, Eusebius, St. Greg. Nazianzenus, St. Greg. Nyssenus, St. Joan. Chrisostomus, Origenes, St. Joau. Damascenus, &c. &c. of the Coulogne, Parisian, Roman, Venetian, Ingoldstad, Mans, &c. Editions.

23. In the series of Bibles the Library contains: the Polyglot Version of Walton, London 1657, with the dedication, in red characters, to Charles II, inserted in the work after the death of Cromwell; this Copy was originally a present to St. John's College, Oxford, by Juxon, the Archbishop of Cambridge.

The Lexicon Heptaglotton by Ed. Castello, London, 1669; the Biblia Hebraica by Pagnini and others, Antwerp, 1619; the Biblia Magna Hebraica by Buxtorff, Basle 1632; Biblia Hebraica cum interpretatione Siricari, ex Ed. Ben-Aria; Hispalensis, ex off. Plantiniana, Raphelengii 1613; Biblia cum annotationibus, Venetiis 1538; Biblia ex off. Rob. Stephani, Parisiis 1538; Pentateuchus, Cantica, &c., hebraice et latine, Venetiis 1551; Biblia with translation by the Zwinglian Theologians, Figuri 1543; Biblia castigata, with figures, Venetiis 1576; Biblia with figures, Venetiis 1587; Biblia juxta qulgatam, Lugduni 1594; Biblia ad institutionem Serenissimi Delphini, by Fr. Amb. Didot, *natu major*, of 1785, of which only 250 copies were printed; two Arabic versions; ten more Latin Bibles of the Antwerp Editions ex off. Plantiniana, Parisian, Cologne, Venetian, of the 17th century; nine French; three English; three Italian; one Spanish, Amsterdam 1542; one German, with figures, Vienna 1734; one New Testament, græce et latine, cura D. Erasmi, Parisian Ed. 1543; Biblia, Theodoro Beza interprete, Parisian ex æd. Sti. Stephani 1567; Biblia, Basle 1531; Biblia by Bleau, Amsterdam 1633; Novi Testamenti Vulgata Editio, Venetiis Schæffer 1541; Novum Testamentum Syriacum, Hamburgi 1663; Novum Testamentum Armenian, M. A. Flamini explanatio, Aldine 1564; Theodoretî Com. in Visiones Davidis, Ezechielis, Canticum, Aldine Ed. 1562, 1563; Theophylacti in quatuor Evangelia, Basle 1525; Tostati opera, Venetiis 1596.

24. In the class of Liturgical Books: three different copies of Officium B. M. V., Mss. on parchment of the XV century, with gold initials and decorated with miniature pictures; Missale secundum usum Anglie, Ms. with coloured initials, of MCCCVIII; Officium Mortuorum, Ms. with coloured initials, of the XV century; Missale totius anni secundum consuetudinem Romanæ Ecclesiæ, Ms. of the XIV century; four copies, on parchment, of Heures à l'usage de Rome: one Gothic with gold coloured initials and silographic cuts, Paris Simon Vostre, 1497, another Gothic with gold coloured initials, full of figures, Paris, Gillet Hardouyn, *sine anni nota*, the third and the fourth, Gothic with marginal figures, one of Simon Vostre, and the other *sine loco et anno*; Horæ in laudem B. M. V., with figures and ornaments, Turin 1531; Sacrarum Ceremoniarum par C. Marcel, with woodcuts, Venetiis, Giolito 1582; Missale Romanum, Gothic, Venetiis apud Juntas 1585; Idem, Antwerp, ex off. Plantiniana 1670; Missæ Episcopales, Gothic, apud Juntas 1563; Breviarum Ord. Sancti Joannis, Gothic, Lugduni 1551.

25. In the classes of History and Arts, there are some old illustrated books and histories of painting, architecture and sculpture, and Galleries, i.e.:

Guillelmi Caorsini, Rhod. Vinc. obsidionis Rhodie Urbis, with silographic cuts, Ulmæ 1496; Omnium fere gentium ætatis nostræ habitus by Bertelli, Venetiis 1563; Antiquarum Statuarum by Cavalleriis, Rome 1569; Opere di Polidoro da Caravaggio, diseguate da Galestruzzi, Roma 1658; Galleria Giustiniana, Roma 1640; Logge di Raffaello nel Vaticano, diseguate dal Camporesi, incise dal Volpato; Torneo tenuto dal Conte di Monfort nel 1553; Cabinet du Ray, 23 Vol. in gr. fol.; Galerie Royale de Dresde, 1753; La Galerie du palais de Luxembourg par Rubens, dessinée par les Nattier, Paris 1710; Cabinet de Crozat, Paris 1729; la Galleria di Torino; Le fabbriche ed i disegni di Andrea Palladio, illustrated by Scamozzi on the specimens of Lord

Burlington, Vicenza 1776; Idem, Venetia 1570; Idem, Venetiis 1740; I cinque Ordini di Barozzio da Vignola, Ed. pr.; Idem, of 1635; Idem, proposta da Stampani ed Antonini, Roma 1770.

This is only a very short notice of the conspicuous contents in the Royal Public Library of Malta.

Some of the old books, having suffered a great deal of destruction by grub and other vermin, in consequence of a Report from the Librarian, dated 20th January 1881 and another dated 9th January 1882, the Government granted £110 in 1881 for beginning the repairing of their binding and preventing their further decay; £70 per annum were subsequently voted in the General Estimates for proceeding on with the work in the following years.

The Modern Department of the Library, looked after by the Managing Committee, was and is every year enriched by new acquisition of books, for which an annual sum of £250 is granted by Government, the interest of the Legacy Bruno included.

V.

Collection of Manuscripts.

26. A full notice of the Mss. preserved in the Public Library was promised by de Boisgelin, in a work on the Knights of St. John, which publication, however, has never taken place.

The importance and a list of some of those Mss. was first noticed and published by Buchon "Nouvelles recherche Historique sur le principauté français de Morée 1843.

That importance would be doubly increased, if the historical Mss. and documents of the Archives of the Order of St. John, at present preserved in the Government Archives, were classified, skilfully catalogued, and fused into one precious collection with the other Mss. existing in the Library.

A recent discovery in those Archives by M. J. Delaville Le Roulx of a certain number of documents referring to the Templars, whose Archives disappeared under mystery, as everything else connected with the Temple, evinces, I believe, the expediency of such a step.

The presence of the "Bullarium Rubrum" in those Archives, compiled in the XVI century by the Chancery of the Hospital, in which are transcribed about 200 Bulls containing privileges granted by Roman Pontiffs to the Templars as well as to the Hospitalers; of transactions executed between those two Orders; and, more to the point, the Bulls concerning the Templars exclusively are sure hints that the General Archives of the Temple were merged in those of the Hospital, and that, at least, several historical documents of the Templars are to be found in the Archives of the Order of Malta.

Indeed, no other hypothesis could explain the disappearance of the Archives of the Templars; they have had the same leisure as the Hospitalers to remove their Archives from the Holy Land, after the defeat at St. Jean d'Acre; and the interest of Philippe le Bel was that of preserving, rather than destroying them on the same pyre, on which Jacques de Molay was burnt: hence, it is most probable that the Hospitalers had become, at least partially, the trustees of the Archives of the Temple, and that from the general wreck of the Templars some important documents may be recovered to illustrate the gloomy history of that Order.

27. The collection of inedited Mss. contains 497 volumes, described in a Catalogue published by the late Librarian Dr. C. Vassallo.

On the main, these Mss. are memoirs, narratives of events which were denied publication by the Government of the Knights, records of local traditions, and historical documents referring to the islands of Malta, the Order of St. John, the Inquisition, and the local Ecclesiastical history.

The following are the most conspicuous:

Stromatum Melitensium, sive collezione di memorie patrie, raccolte da D. Ignazio Saverio Mifsud, Consultore del Sto. Uffizio, Malta 1760: it is a precious collection of 23, 4to. volumes;

Annali dell'Ordine di S. Giovanni fino la sedizione contro il Gr. Mr. La Cassière, di Mons. Salvatore Imbroil, 6 vols. 4to. ;

Istoria della Sacra Religione Gerosolimitana, dal Gr. M. Pietro del Monte alla Morte di La Cassière, di Mons. S. Imbroil ;

Storia dell'Ordine, dal suo primo nascere fino a Fra Roberto di Nailacco, di Mons. S. Imbroil, 3 vols. 4to. ;

Concordanza, ordine, e compendio degli Statuti dell'Ordine di S. Giovanni, 2 vols. fol., of the same Mons. Imbroil. I glean from the "Notizie Memorabili di Malta" of Mifsud, Ms. XIX, that the death of this learned Maltese Prelate, Prior of the Church of the Order in 1624, which occurred on the 26th January 1650, was suspected to be occasioned by poison. *

Etat de la Religion de Malte. This interesting Ms. is attributed to the Knight Fassion de Sainte-Jay, whose copious private Library was merged into the Public Library. †

Acta Visitationis Reverendis. Domni. Petri Duzzina in insula Melitæ, 1574. This very interesting Ms. contains a good deal of information about the condition of the Churches of Malta, before the arrival of the Knights.

An *Arabic Dictionary* by the Revd. Giuseppe Calleja, 1798, 4 vols 4to. This learned Maltese Arabist was selected by the College of the Propaganda Fide as a Professor of Arabic in the University of Malta.

Summa juriurum Hierosolymit. Equitum; Continuazione della Storia Gerosolimitana del Comm. Fra Paolo Michallef ;

Raccolta di Scritture per servire alla storia della fusione dell'Ordine di St. Antonio di Vienna in quello di S. Giovanni, del Balio Nobili ;

Raccolta de' Mss. del Canonico Gio: Fra Agius Sultana, 12 volumes 4to. ; and *Il Gozo Antico e Moderno, Sacro e Profano, 1746*.

Two Mss. copies *Delle Opere di Guglielmo Caorsino, traduzione fatta da Treschi per opera del Cav. Aldobrandini*. It is an accurate translation of *Obsidionis Rhodie Urbis descriptio; de casu regis Zizimi, Urbæ MCCCCXCVI*. The only one printed copy existing in the Library first belonged to Fr. Sabba Castigliano, and then to the Comm. Fra Jacomo Bosio ;

Stabilimenta Rhodiorum Militum, jussu M. M. D'Aubussnii, per G. Caorsinum collecta atque edita. The date of this Ms. precedes the date of the Edition of Giov. Giunta in 1534.

Thirteen Vols. of Mss., containing autographic Letters, Notices, and Documents etc. referring to the last period of the Government of the Knights of Malta, late property of the family of the Gr. M. Ferd. Hompesh.

VI.

Collection of Antiquities.

28. A Cabinet for the preservation of local Antiquities was added to the Library by the Gr. M. de Rohan.

This collection, consisting of clay and glass vases of different shapes and dimensions, of sarcophagi, of statues, and of inscriptions, is classified into a Phœnician and a Græco-Roman period.

To this Cabinet is added a Numismatic collection of about 5500 coins, gathered in the islands of Malta, and belonging to the Phœnician, the Greek, and to the Roman Consular and Imperial, the Byzantine, the Gothic, the Norman, the Arabic, the Angevins and the Aragonese periods, and that of the Order of St. John.

A guide to this little Museum was published by Dr. Cesare Vassallo.

29. This Cabinet owes its origin to the learning, patience and perseverance of the

* He was buried at St. John's.

† De Sainte-Jay, dead at the age of 80 in 1765, was buried in the Chapel of the Langue d'Auvergne at St. John's.

Comm. Fra Giovanni Francesco Abela about 1628*, who, together with his "Descrittione di Malta," the first History of our islands, conceived the idea of forming a national Museum of local Antiquities.

The learning and sound criterion of Comm. Abela were amply testified to by Kircher, Carrera, Gualtieri, Paruta, and other contemporaries.

The arrangement of the relics collected had its original place in the Villa Abela, property of that Commendatore, on the promontory of Kortin, now called "il Hotba tal Gisuiti". This site is marked by Marquis Gio Antonio Barbaro on a map accompanying a monograph

We are told by Count Ciantar, that "una galleria opulentissima di statue, bassi rilievi, iscrizioni greche e latine, vasi sepolcrali, lucerne, lacrimatoi di creta e di vetro, frammenti di mummie, vasi di terra Etrusca, medaglie e medaglioni, mettevano da per tutto reliquie di antichità attaccate ai muri del suo casino," which he styled "Gabinetto di S. Giacomo," as he was a Member of the Langue of Castile.

Bulifon, Borguet, Gujot, Maffei, Gori, Lupi, Barbaro and Ciantar saw and examined the relics in that "opulentissima collezione," to which reference is made in more than fifty-four places in the "Descrittione di Malta".

30. In the year 1637, the Comm. Abela bequeathed his Cabinet of local Antiquities, together with Villa Abela, to the Jesuit Fathers, who then held a College at Valletta.

Later on, the Gabinetto S. Giacomo and the country residence of the Jesuits were removed to the Villa of Bailiff Fra Francesco de Sousa, nephew of the Gr. M. Manoel de Vilhena, at Ghain-Dwieli, in the French creek. It was there, that the Museum of Abela suffered a first plunder of its most valuable objects by some thieves (believed French Knights), who assaulted the place at night time. †

After the dismissal of the Jesuits from Naples and Malta, which preceded the general suppression of their Order, the moveable and immovable property of the Jesuits in Malta was settled by Pope Gregory XIII upon the Order of St. John. A second spoliation of the bronze statues, gold and silver medals, mentioned by Abela in his "Descrittione di Malta," was then committed on such a vast scale, that Canon Gio. Francesco Agius Sultana, who had seen the Gabinetto S. Giacomo on former occasions, wrote "oggi ne rimane si poca quantità, che se potesse tal Galleria rivedere l' Abela, ne piangerebbe". ‡

A. A. CARUANA

late Director of Education and Librarian.



* Abela was born at Valletta in 1582, from the noble parents Marco Abela and Bernardina née Vella Xara, who were married in 1566, one year after the great siege. He joined early *i Chierici Conventuali di Giustizia* in the Language of Castille, Priory of Portugal; studied Law at Bologna, where he took his degree on the 21st November 1605. He was ordained priest by Bishop Gargallo in 1610, and having performed his services at sea in the galleys of the Order as Prior, was successively appointed Secretary to the Embassy of the Order of Malta to the Court of Pope Clement VIII, of the King of France, and of the King of Spain; Auditor of the Gr. Master Fra Antoine De Paula; one of the triumvirs in the election of Gr. M. Lascaris; Lieutenant of the Prior of St. John, and Vice-chancellor of the Order for nearly 35 years. Abela died at the age of 73 in 1655, and was buried in the Chapel della Madonna di Filermo at St. John's.

† Ristretto della vita del Comm. Abela, by Count Ciantar, Malta Illustrata.

‡ Biografia del Comm. Abela scritta dal can. G. F. Agius, pubblicata da B. Mifsud nella Biblioteca Maltese, parte I.