

PHARMACISTS OF OLD

(Continued)

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46. Pharmacist Joseph Portelli from Valletta, who remained known for his illustrious son Gavino-Patrizio (1795-1865) Professor of Surgery and Anatomy at the University (22.11.1822-1838).
47. Pharmacist Pascal Balzan of Floriana on 8th February 1764. He was an energetic but foolish man: in December 1772 he took part, along with the Professor of mathematics Dr. Philip Zammit, M.D. (1720-1796) and the district medical officer of Valletta/Floriana in a plot against the rule of the Order. As he was also a cleric in minor orders not for love of the Church but as an easy means to escape punishment from the Knights' civil authority, he remained free. Three years later he was also one of the nine ecclesiastics who took part in the so-called "Rising of the Priests" under Reverend Gaetan Mannarino of 9th September 1775 at the time of Grand Master Fra Francis Ximenes de Taxada (1773-1775). With three other companions he occupied St. James Cavalier, but was soon taken captive, tortured at the "Castellania", put to death by strangling, decapitated and his head, along with those of two other accomplices, placed on poles at top of said Cavalier. No more accused were killed. (cf. Arch. No. 1190, Section 461/466 and Arch. No. 1191, Section 69/83 of 29th August 1766 by the Medical Council about him).
48. Pharmacist Francis Pisani from Senglea (1763-20.2.1799), who was married to Theresa, the niece of compatriot Reverend Professor Michael Xerri of Zebbug, Malta, the ringleader of the Maltese uprising against the French rule in 1798, and who, together with his friend Dr. Michaelangelo Adriano from Senglea, were the very first to conspire against Napoleon's rule here, were on 3rd August 1798, unfortunately reported to the foreign rulers by the rogue Simon Bezzina and imprisoned, were however released on 10th August while their neighbours of Vittoriosa were loudly feasting their patron St. Lawrence, but soon again re-arrested on the next 26th November and shot on 20th February 1799. It is thought that his arrest was the chief reason which plunged his bosom friend, the said Reverend Michael, heading into the sacred struggle for liberation, as has formerly done the saintly French national heroine Joan of Arc, alias the Maid of Orleans, against the English dominators of the northern part of her country on 8th May 1429. Others say that he was shot on 19th February 1799 because the French found a sword in the house (cf. Petition of Commission of Public Property made on 20th February 1799 by his brother Michaelangelo and his sister Mary-Antonia to have share of the pharmacy which belonged to their father Lawrence, along with the other brothers Joseph and Benedict and other sister Anne.
49. Mr. Gajetan Mallia already mentioned at "j" in group at No.45). He was from Valletta where he remained,

- when he left the Pharmaceutical Service at the "Sacra Infermeria" after 39 years there in 1979, during the French occupation. It is recorded that he was chosen by the Court, along with others, as one of the tutors of the 4 sons of Giovanna, the very rich widow of Lorenzo Fontani and who was found mysteriously dead on 15th December 1799, only six months after her second marriage to the French Captain Antoine Gastinel (cf. Dr Clo Testa's "Maż-żewg Nahat tas-Swar", III, pp.652-660).
50. Pharmacist Louis Gatt of Valletta, who in July 1799 was banished, along with 150 others, to Comino when the French forced people to leave Valletta because of the scarcity of food and the country people did not want them because of their francophile tendencies (cf. Dr Testa's *ibidem*, page 550).
 51. Pharmacist Augustine Levanzin (1872-1955) who was also a Legal Procurator. He led a very exciting life here and abroad. He edited a semi-political paper "In-Nahla" in 1908, wherein in 1910 he published his very lengthy novel "Is-Sahhar Falzun", etc. He even fasted for 31 days in America in 1912 by taking absolutely no food, while advocating that fasting can cure any internal disease "as cats do" he used to say. In 1927 he returned to Malta but on account of political troubles which he created involving himself in several court libels, he again went abroad in 1928 and died aged 83 in Montecarlo in 1955. He was an Esperantist.
 52. Pharmacist Marianus Agius was in charge of the pharmacy at "Santo Spirito" Hospital in Rabat when the French took over our Islands on 10th June 1798.
 53. Pharmacist Horace Aquilina was in charge of the men's section dedicated to St. John of the "St. John the Baptist and St. Anthony of Padua Hospital" at Rabat, Gozo during the short-lived French occupation there and where he remained for some more years on the subsequent British rule.
 54. In the year 1849 Government established 17 Government Dispensaries besides that at Valletta, at Police Stations to cater for the then 23 districts. Dr. Saviour Bezzina M.D., Ph.C. from Zejtun was appointed to Luqa and was also responsible for the inhabitants of Safi and Kirkop. They were called "Spizjar u Tabib tal-Pulizija" and were intended for the use of the poor people free of any charge. On 18th September 1885 said officials were called District Medical Officers.
 55. Pharmacist Calcedon Baldacchino who qualified in 1854 and exercised his profession at Luqa.
 56. Pharmacist Joseph Mamo (1793-1865), born of Maltese parents at Agosta near Syracuse in Sicily but who grew here in Malta at Birkirkara. He studied at the Government school in Valletta and at the University. He served as Assistant-Chemist during the plague epidemic of 1813 at Lazzaretto and later at the Civil Hospital having formerly obtained his diploma in 1819. He was even chosen Professor of Chemistry at the University when the eccentric Dr. Cleardo Naudi, M.D. of Ghaxaq, who had even become a methodist of Wesley, died and was stoned by the people on his being carried to be buried and who had been Professor of Chemistry from June 1805 to 1834. Pharmacist Mamo was a member of the "Accademia Gioenia di Scienza Naturali" of Catania, member of the "Cabinetto di Storia

- Naturale" of Syracuse and member of the local "Societa' Medica d'Incoraggiamento".
57. Pharmacist Anthony Emmanuel Caruana (1838-1907) from Zejtun. He had studied at the Augustinian Fathers' school in Valletta, later joined the University and after becoming a pharmacist he worked with his brother-in-law Dr. Andre' Pullicino, M.D. Later he set-up private business, travelled widely and was a good writer, indeed he is the author of the fine historical novel "Inez Farrug" in 1889, of a "Vocabolario della Lingua Maltese" in 1903 and of an unfinished work "Fenici e Maltesi".
 58. Pharmacist John-Baptist Busuttill from Floriana, who ran his pharmacy at Msida with his brother Dr. Gustave who had graduated M.D. in August 1880 and who lived at No. 1, Molo Ta' Xbiex, Msida, because he was the District Medical Officer of Msida and Pietà. They were both Esperantists. Later in life John-Baptist opened a pharmacy at Nos. 40-41, Broad Street, Hamrun.
 59. Pharmacist Joseph Speranza-Parnis of Valletta who obtained his diploma in 1855. He subsequently worked at a pharmacy which he had just set-up in Republic Street Valletta, where the famous Dr. Nicholas Zammit M.D., from Siggiewi, Professor of Philosophy (1876-1890) and of Architecture (1878-1890) who remained famous for his designs of the facades of the Parish Churches of Siggiewi, St. Paul's at Valletta and of Floriana, and who died on 29th July 1899, used to stay more to meet his friends than to practice his medical profession.
 60. Pharmacist Alfred Cumbo, who owned a fine pharmacy called "New Dispensary" in Republic Street, Valletta opposite the Union Club or the present National Archaeological Museum.
 61. Pharmacist Fabrice Borg, who in 1884 took over the direction of his famous pharmacy in Republic Street, Valletta, which remained one of the chief medical rendezvous in the city up to World War II when it was unfortunately destroyed by German bombs.
 62. Pharmacist Alphonse Charbon from Birkirkara who was first in order of merit in the final examination in 1900. He was the nephew of the Canon Precentor Joseph Charbon of the Birkirkara Collegiate Parish Church.
 63. Pharmacist Saviour Speranza of Valletta, son of Pharmacist Joseph just mentioned. He was one of the most busy chemists of Valletta during the World War 1914-1918.
 64. Pharmacist John Mallia from Birkirkara, brother of Parish Priest of Mosta Anthony (1859-1876) and son of Francis, and who exercised his profession at the pharmacy in the Main Square of Birkirkara. He was married and when he died he left all his immovable property of houses and fields to the Collegiate Parish Church as per his last will in the Acts of Notary Peter-Paul Psaila of 1th June 1855, where we find that he also left 800 "scudi" for low Masses in repose of his soul, 1 "tari" to the Governor of Malta, 1 "tari" to the Archbishop-Bishop of Malta, and 1 "tari" to the Provost-Archpriest of Birkirkara Canon Calcedon Agius, S.Th.D. (1853-1866).
 65. Pharmacist Ignatius Sammut from Rabat, Gozo, who remained famous for his invention in 1924 of a specially medicated dusting powder for after-shave use, which he named

ANER and which was excellent as an antiseptic against shaving irritation and for juvenile erythematous rash and similar face troubles. It was reported that he was offered a patent for it by a German Pharmaceutical Firm but that he did not agree to sell its formula which alas disappeared with his death.

63. Pharmacist Lewis Bondi' from Rabat, Gozo, father of our fellow pharmacist Joseph and of Monsignor Edward Bondi' Dalli. Mr. Bondi' was a great philanthropic, good benefactor to the "Ta Pinu" magnificent church and indefatigable member of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows at St. James church of Rabat, Gozo. He was born in 1854 and died in 1928. May I here add that the Bondi' family went to Gozo from Luqa, where Mr. Michael in 1671 had nine fields one of which was in his absolute ownership while the other eight ones belonged to others but were rented to him. Mr. Peter was selected one of the two constables or village representatives in 1647, Mrs. Catherine in 1674 left a sum of money to the Parish Church there so that from its interest the church organist be paid, and Mr. Saviour again selected village representative "by popular Acclaim" in 1730, and who, on becoming sick in 1792, after consulting several medical practitioners to no avail called a Turkish slave who gave him for the price of 20 "scudi" a bad smelling liquid with which to spray his house to drive off the "magħmul" — evil spirit. Pharmacist Lewis was also inter-related with the descendants of the Gozitan Pharmacist Dalli (no. 1), indeed Dalli's fine house (Casa or Palazzo' in the Citadel was sold to Government by Mr. Bondi' in 1937.

67. Pharmacist Archangelo Agius (1880-1964), still another Esperantist, who worked at the pharmacies: "Popular" in High Street, Hamrun, up to 1918, "Msida" at No. 186, Palm Square, Msida, and at "Vilhena" in Floriana. He was the father of the famous bacteriologist Dr. Emmanuel.
68. Pharmacist Henry Micallef, Ph.D., L.P., B.Sc., from Hamrun where he was born in 1918, obtained his diploma in 1945 and was the first local member to obtain the Doctorate of Philosophy in Biology, hence he was appointed Professor of this science in 1959, as well as Curator of Natural History at the Museum Department from 1966 up to his immature death in 1970.
69. Pharmacist Francis Caruana Dingli from Mellieha but who was soon taken to live at Zebbug, where he later practised his profession. He was unmarried and died on 3rd October 1915. He remained famous as the inventor of a special alcoholic aperitif drink called "Ferro Quasio" as well as of a white thick-sugared alcoholic liqueur called "Empire", still produced by his friends Messrs. Salvu Sadson of Qormi.
70. Pharmacist John Gatt, M.P.S. from Zebbug who carried out his pharmaceutical studies in England. He was known to his family and friends as "Ganni l-Iswed" because of his dark skin. After practising for some time at Zebbug, he passed most of his life at a pharmacy in Qormi where he had married, until his death in 1948.
71. Pharmacist Alfred Lupi of Sliema. He was the father of Monsignor Canon Joseph, D.D., B.L.Can., Ph.L., Dom.Prel. He was the Chief Pharmacist and Medical Storekeeper at the Central Civil Hospital, Floriana,

- between the two World Wars, and died on 19th January, 1940.
72. Pharmacist Edward Refalo, son of President of the Superior Courts the Chief Justice Sir Michaelangelo, Kt, C.B.E., B.A., LL.D. from Gozo (1876-1923) and father of the Hon. Dr. Michael Refalo, LL.D., M.P. of Sliema. He was employed as Analyst at the Customs Department Laboratory and died in 1941.
 73. Pharmacist Paul Farrugia, from Senglea, father of Monsignor Canon Saviour, S.Th.D., J.C.D., Ph.D. of Mdina and of our fellow-pharmacist Cajetan. He had his pharmacy opposite the "Union Club", now the National Museum, Valetta, and was the chief optical glasses supplier of his time. Died on 18th October 1944.
 74. Pharmacist Amante Marguerat from Hamrun, who was employed at the Central Civil Hospital, Floriana, and then as Analyst at the Customs Department Laboratory. He was also a very good stamp collector. Died in 1944.
 75. Pharmacist Joseph Eugenio (known as Gege') Serge. He was employed at the Central Civil Hospital Pharmacy, then an Analyst at the Laboratory of the Customs Department and later during the World War II years at the pharmacy of the then improvised St. Aloysius College Hospital. He died aged 57 years in 1947.
 76. Pharmacist Godfrey Serge, senior brother of pharmacist Gege'. He was the Managing Apothecary of the Economical British Dispensary of Rudolph Street, Sliema. He died aged 61 years in 1948.
 77. Pharmacist Godfrey Laferla, M.P.S., from Valetta. He had his British Central Pharmacy near the Law Courts in Republic Street, Valetta, He was one of the examiners in the Course of Pharmacy in Pharmacognosy and in Pharmacy with Pharmaceutics from 1936 to his death on 27th May 1949.
 78. Pharmacist Francis-Xavier Muscat of Hamrun, who was the Chief Pharmacist and Medical Storekeeper at the Central Civil Hospital during the World War II and was pensioned in 1949. He tried to enter politics on the side of the then Constitutional Party but was not elected. Died in 1952.
 79. Pharmacist Carmelo Vassallo from Zebbug, brother of Chevalier Joseph O.B.E., K.M. and of our fellow-pharmacist Caesar. He was employed at a private pharmacy in Floriana and then at the Central Civil Hospital Pharmacy in 1937 and subsequently at the Customs Department Laboratory in August 1970.
 80. Pharmacist John Mifsud of Sliema. He managed his popular "Anglo-Maltese Dispensary" at the bottom end of Prince of Wales (Manwel Dimech) Road, near the Strand, Sliema. Died aged 78 years on 5th September 1977.
 81. Pharmacist Dominic Caruana from Valetta, son of Vincent and Annunziata nee' Callus, lived at the beginning of our century, and was brother of Mro Joseph (1880-1931) and of Raphael, L.P.
 82. Pharmacist Carmelo Debono Vella from Mellieha, who remained remembered for having in 1932 composed the hymn of "La Vittoria" Band Club for the occasion of its silver jubilee and which was musically arranged by this Band's Mro Willie Attrd (1932-1948 and 1952-1957). (cf. Banda "La Vittoria" — Mellieha, 75 Sena, Mejju 1982).

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83. Pharmacist Joseph Saydon, from Zurrieq, procurator of "Our Lady of the Rosary" Confraternity, and who was killed along with 10 other persons, when the sacristy of his Parish Church was destroyed by enemy bomb on Thursday 23rd July 1942.
84. Pharmacist Carmelo Callus of Valletta, who died on 23rd July 1958. His son Anthony M. was an M.R.S.H., a Senior Health Inspector, was a fine trade-unionist and did work in Australia; and died on 28.8.1981.
85. Pharmacist Chevalier Oscar Vella, from Hamrun, who had his pharmacies at Hamrun and at Valley Road — Birkirkara, as well as a pharmaceutical store and laboratory at Hamrun. He was also Demonstrator of Pharmaceutics at the University and a very assiduous member and even President of the Marian Sodality. He was made Knight of the Papal Order of St Sylvestre on 2.9.1972. He had a very respectable family of 5 sons and three daughters amongst whom the first born was the Reverend Savior, teacher of science at the Archbishopal Seminary. He died on 7.10.1980.

I end this study about our dead fellow PHARMACISTS, whom we all believe and pray that they all passed to a much better life with their Patron Saint in Heaven the Reverend Pharmacist John Lombardi of Rome who died in 1609, by recording that a Government dispensary for the use of poor sick people was first instituted at Valletta in 1833 after a strong recommendation for that purpose by Dr. John Davy, then serving as Army Surgeon here and later promoted Inspector General of the English Military Hospitals. That much needed social service was greatly appreciated and the poor users of Malta and Gozo ran to it by their thousands.