

A DANISH PHYSICIAN'S VISIT TO SAN GILJAN IN 1644

Thomas Bartholin, whose writings can be found at our National Library in Valletta, wrote a letter to the physician J. Donzelli in Napoli about the many matters which could be seen in Malta and which were of interest to a scientist and medical man. There was time enough for writing since the Grand Harbour was closed to all ordinary navigation because of the preparations for a naval expedition which the Knights were about to make. Bartholin was not idle, even at the time of his departure from Malta.

The letter gives an impression of the rocky island with its white houses, built from Malta's own stone, and of its people, its animals and vegetation. At the harbour of St. Julian was a statue of that Saint. Nearby was also a healing spring in which sufferers from gout (podagra) and renal trouble would bathe themselves; but the monk at the spring said that the healing power would increase if some money were offered to the relief of the poor. Particularly in festo Ascensionis there would be a crowd of people. On the (base of) statue many persons had written their names. Bartholin and his travelling companions also wrote theirs.