

AN ENGLISH ANTIQUARY IN MALTA
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE VISIT OF SIR RICHARD COLT HOARE

By DONALD SULTANA

THE Eighteenth Century was the great period of the gentleman-travellers who made the Grand Tour of Europe. Many of them had independent means and could travel at leisure and attended on by servants in journeys of several years. One of them was the baronet, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, who travelled extensively between 1785 and 1791 before settling down in Wiltshire to write the history of his native county on which his fame largely rests.

As an antiquary he could not but be interested in Italy of which he made a classical tour in the manner of another English traveller, John Chetwode Eustace, who had published a well-known book on the subject. Eustace had planned a sequel but death had intervened. Hoare filled up the gap with his own *Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily*, published in London in 1819 and originally meant for 'the gratification of his family and friends'.

The second volume of this scholarly and well written work deals with Sicily and includes some thirty pages on Malta and Gozo: the record of a week's 'excursion' to the two islands in June 1790. A copy of the book is in the Royal Malta Library and second-hand editions in elegant binding can readily be had from antiquarian book-sellers in England.

As a traveller on the Grand Tour Hoare to some extent broke new ground in extending his journey to Sicily which was then regarded as a remote and wild island. In doing so, therefore, he followed the example of the well-known Scottish traveller, Patrick Brydone, whose own book on Sicily and Malta – a 'best-seller' in the Eighteenth Century – had preceded Hoare's by some seventeen years. These two travellers, in fact, with another fellow-countryman, Henry Swinburne, seem to be the best-known English writers on Sicily in the second half of the Eighteenth Century and their books are complementary to those of their continental contemporaries, namely, the French travellers, de Non and Count Borch, and the German, Baron Riedesel. All these travellers, with the exception of Swinburne, made the crossing from Sicily to Malta and since the last

to do so was Hoare he could avail himself of their writings for he was extremely well read in ancient and modern literature.

This is not to suggest, however, that as a writer he sought to emulate the French travellers, for he did not hesitate to state in the preface that 'I cannot give implicit credit to the travels of Frenchmen, whose vivacity too frequently gets the better of fidelity': a criticism, incidentally, from which Brydone himself, for all his humour and good temper, is not altogether free. The truth is that in his travel-book what Hoare principally aimed at was, in his own words, 'fidelity of narrative and description', which accounts for the strictly objective and informative nature of his work. If, therefore, he does not entertain the general reader, as Brydone does, with the charm of personality, he rewards the scholar with accurate information and learned allusion.

Nor is he displeasing in his style: clear, correct and methodical in expression, he is representative of the classic age of English prose. A contemporary of Jane Austen, he belongs to her tradition of writing, including, in the more conscious passages, her flair for the balanced sentence and the word of Latin origin; indeed as a member of the English country gentry obviously concerned with taste and manners he might have stepped out of one of her novels. Equally representative of the English Eighteenth Century is his classical education – of which, as a traveller, he made judicious but not showy use – and his taste for the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, of which he was reminded in Malta by 'the steep and rocky shore' of Comino.

The plan he adopted as a writer had the merit of neatness; a quality, incidentally, which struck him as characteristic of Malta under Grand Master de Rohan. Rejecting the epistolary form favoured by some of his contemporaries, notably by Brydone, he wrote a series of journals, the descriptive parts of which are preceded by brief personal narratives and historical sketches. If he fails to satisfy to the full the curiosity of the reader, it is because his precision, and perhaps his English reserve, inclined him to be rather laconic, contrary to the chatty Brydone and, even more, to the characteristically expansive French travellers.

It is not fanciful, in fact, to see in these traveller-writers an unconscious display of national characteristics and in analysing and comparing their qualities to come to look upon them as national types. On the other hand, however differentiated they may appear as national representatives, they have one quality which transcends all distinctions, namely, a common cultural heritage. As educated travellers they were all firmly rooted in the European tradition. Although they did not speak the same language, their culture reflects a remarkable unity in diversity, and in re-

spect they confer a note of intimacy, if not of compactness, upon their age. This accounts for the overlapping of material in their writings which travelled from one country to another in the original or in translation: even today, for instance, it is still possible to pick up numerous foreign editions of Brydone's popular book in half a dozen capitals of Europe.

In this common tradition the classics occupied a central position. It was on Thucydides and Diodorus Siculus, therefore, that Hoare relied for information about ancient Malta, while, on arriving in the island, the later authorities whom he consulted were Abela and Ciantar. Ciantar's *Malta Illustrata* had come out only ten years before his visit whereas Abela's *Della Descrizione di Malta* (which he seems to have found particularly valuable for information about ancient inscriptions) was already a time-honoured little classic. He could read the Italian of both books for he had taken the trouble to learn the language in order to travel 'with increased confidence, and I need not add with increased delight'.

It was in Italian, no doubt, that he communicated with his host, 'Signior Mattei, to whom I was recommended', and whom, on landing at St. Paul's Bay, he found waiting for him, with a calesse in attendance to convey him and his servants to Valletta. His knowledge of Italian, again, seems to have been useful to him in conversation with the librarian, 'the Abate Navarro', whom he praised for 'an ingenious and learned dissertation' on ancient inscriptions on view in the library. Hoare, in other words, had an advantage over contemporary and later English travellers who could not mix freely in local society because of the language barrier.

Not that Italian was widely spoken in Malta in 1790. It was the language of education of the upper classes but these, however influential, were a minority in a population of some 120,000 souls. It must have been of use to him, therefore, principally in Valletta and Notabile, where the so-called 'people of the city' lived. The 'people of the country' seem to have had very little education and the vernacular, which was all they spoke, was then thought by scholars to be a blend of Punic and Arabic. Perhaps it is surprising of an antiquary like Hoare that in his description of Malta there is no mention at all of the native language, particularly since he came not long after the emergence of the well-known Maltese scholar Agius De Soldanis. That the latter had enjoyed some standing, even among foreign visitors, is easily deducible from the accounts of contemporary French travellers.

The sharp division between the classes was not one of language only. That it was more general can be inferred from certain passages in Hoare, particularly those which describe the dress and customs of the country people. Some of his information about them might have been obtained

from his host: for instance, the news that 'a spirit of jealousy' reigned among the lower orders, or the report that a pair of shoes frequently descended from one generation to another because the men and women went barefoot in the country and only wore shoes and stockings on entering the city. Undoubtedly the building of Valletta as a city *sui generis* – indeed it had some of the elements of a city-state in the manner of Athens and Florence – accentuated the division between the classes.

This is not to suggest, however, that he snobbishly looked down upon the peasants; on the contrary, he went out of his way to praise their 'astonishing industry and frugality'. One of his most forceful pieces of writing is the passage at the end of the Malta journal in which he compared the Sicilian peasant with his Maltese counterpart. Like many a traveller before him he observed that Nature had been prodigal to Sicily but niggardly to Malta in her gift of soil but whereas the Sicilian was content with bare subsistence the Maltese, 'inured to labour and hardship', had clothed a rocky surface with the fruits of successful toil'. The principal product of this husbandry was of course cotton, a most valuable source of income and manufacture until well into the Nineteenth Century.

It is remarkable how general was this idea of Maltese industriousness in the impressions of travellers and how long after Hoare it was repeated by numerous visitors. More remarkable still is their attempt to represent it as a quality almost peculiar to the Maltese in contradistinction to the other peoples on the Mediterranean littoral. Perhaps it should be explained that they fully recognized that it was to a large extent dictated by economic factors. Certainly it was not a quality against which Hoare both personally and as an Englishman was disposed to carp: his own life seems to have been an exemplary record of studious application – and this in spite of private means.

With this quality of industry he combined another merit: a spirit of tolerance, not always present in travellers, especially towards religion, in the age of Gibbon. He showed this in his remarks on the numerous churches which he observed in the villages: 'the effect', he surmised, 'of the religious zeal which animates the lower class of people'. 'I will not call it superstition', he added, 'for I would not stigmatise the tenets of those who differ from my own church with a term implying some degree of reproach, even though carried to an extreme.' This is the attitude of mind which Newman singled out among the attributes of the 'gentleman' in his celebrated portrait – and which, to their credit, was displayed by successive English visitors to Malta.

It is interesting to observe Hoare's judgment, as a man of taste, on these churches. He considered them 'magnificent and in good taste', thus

showing that, although he was a northerner, he had no prejudice against baroque architecture. It is true that he judged the walls of St. John's Cathedral to be 'in a heavy taste' but 'handsome' was the epithet he had for the great cathedral at Mdina which Lorenzo Gafà had designed at the beginning of the century. From the architectural point of view Hoare could not have timed his visit more admirably, for all that is best in Malta's building heritage had been completed by then, and this included not only the great erections of the Knights in the city but the notable works of Cassar, Gafà and Dingli in the villages. Hoare, then, would have dissented from the rash statement in the book of a fellow-countryman, Adolphus Slade, that 'Malta has produced no architect'. The only thing he found fault with, aesthetically, were the heavy wooden balconies of Valletta which he thought destroyed the symmetry of the houses and had 'a dingy hue' out of keeping with the colour of the stone.

Valletta itself was comparatively 'modern' in 1790 and like the residence of the Grand Master and the Knights was 'improving daily in beauty and convenience'. At the very time that Hoare made this statement a large new building – the last important erection of the Knights – was under construction. Hoare described it as 'a handsome structure, near the palace, for the mint, and other public uses'. The allusion is obviously to the *Bibliotheca*, now the Royal Malta Library, in Queen's Square (formerly Piazza Tesoreria). Hoare's statement that it was meant 'for the mint, and other public uses' does not contradict this, since the large building was originally designed to house the library on one floor (the upper) and the mint and other public offices on the other. Hoare goes on to give a piece of information which seems to have escaped the notice of those who have written on the history of the *Bibliotheca*, namely, that 'it is, as I am informed, to be ornamented with some antique columns brought from Egypt and taken in an English vessel, and they are to be newly moulded for the purpose'. Whether this intention were carried out, and, if so, whether any of the numerous columns of the building, happily still standing, be 'antique' or not is a nice point for investigation by the inquisitive and the expert.

Hoare throws some light on another point which seems to have become a subject of controversy: the exact date of completion of the *Bibliotheca*. In *The Building of Malta* Mr. Quentin Hughes, apparently basing himself on Mr. Hugh Braun in *Works of Art in Malta*, states that it was completed in 1786 and suggests that the date 1796 given by Sir Hannibal Scicluna in *Malta and Gibraltar Illustrated* is 'a misprint for 1786', while Mr. Victor Denaro in *Houses in Kingsway and Old Bakery Street* gives an even later date, namely, 'just before the French invasion', which presumably

means 1797 or perhaps even 1798. Since Hoare wrote in 1790, it would appear that Mr. Hughes's and Mr. Braun's date is incorrect but the question remains whether it took six or even eight years to complete a building which in 1790 was already described as 'handsome'. It seems to be a fact, however, that the expulsion of the Order by the French in 1798 interfered in some way with the new building, for, as the novelist Galt testifies, it was in the early years of British rule – a long time after Hoare's visit – that the transfer of the books took place.

The *Bibliotheca* was built to take the place of an earlier library which had been founded by the Bailli Guérin de Tencin and which Mr. Victor Denaro has identified as the house 'known as *Il Forfantone*... at Kingsway No. 251, at the corner with St. Lucia Street'. This explains why Hoare, who could not but visit it, described its rooms as 'small, and by no means well adapted for the purpose': a shortcoming which the Order itself seems to have perfectly realized. Hoare himself was well aware that the library, which had been formed by the private bequests of a number of Knights, was of comparatively recent foundation (1760) and that measures were being taken to make it more 'respectable' by exchanging the duplicates for new works. Thus his attitude to it was more considerate than that of the poet S. T. Coleridge who came to Malta fourteen years after him when its stock had been considerably increased and condemned it in *The Friend* as 'contemptible'.

It was a *public* Library with a Maltese cleric in charge, the occupant at the time being Abate Navarro whom Hoare seems to have met. Navarro was the second holder of the post, the first having been Agius de Soldanis, of whom de Non, on visiting Malta a few years before Hoare, had declared that 'this very amiable young man, who has rendered very essential services to this institution by his talents and activity, will one day perhaps become the father of Maltese literature'. Navarro himself earned a tribute from a fellow-countryman of Hoare's named Blaquiere, who described him as 'a man of great piety, learning and virtue'; but this was in 1813 for Navarro outlived the Order in Malta by many years and continued as librarian even under the British.

The library also housed a few pieces of sculpture with Phoenician and Greek inscriptions which naturally engaged Hoare's attention. Among them was the famous statue of Hercules which he described as 'the best specimen of antique sculpture in Malta, but (which) has been extolled much beyond its real merit'. He concurred with de Non, therefore, about the mediocre aesthetic value of this statue but perhaps one can see the reason for the fuss which had been made about it because, together with two other monuments and a few medals, it was thought to be the only survi-

ving relic of the Phoenician settlement and perhaps connected with the celebrated temple of Hercules to which the ancient writers had alluded. A seeker of truth like Hoare obviously did not have the playful wit of a Brydone or, even more, of a Thackeray: otherwise he would have made much play with the story that a mischievous slave had broken off the head of this statue and sold it for that of St. John!

Seriously, however, this story of a heinous act by a slave must have been one of many, for the Saracens, who had numbered some 4,000 under Grand Master Pinto, were then as much a part of the Malta scene as the Knights themselves. Whether as crews in the galleys of the Order or as forced labour at the dockyard or as domestics in the auberges and private houses of the Knights, they seem to have been the object of countless rumours and public alarms. Their most infamous piece of mischief was the plot to poison their masters and overthrow the Order. This was in 1749, and the deliverance of the island from this conspiracy was celebrated annually on 6th June with a special thanksgiving service in St. John's. Hoare just missed the service by four days, but not Brydone whose account of the episode the later traveller might have read.

The library, therefore, also served the purpose of a small museum. The fact is, however, that there was no museum proper and that, according to de Non, 'the Grand Master has lately laid the foundation of a museum which will become the property of the Order, and will be annexed to what they already possess in the treasury'. The Treasury of the Order was housed in what is now the Casino Maltese so that it appears that the antiquities on public view were scattered in three buildings: the palace, the treasury and the library. The intention was ultimately to bring them together under one roof, namely, in a section of the *Bibliotheca* which was then under construction and which was meant for 'other public uses' in addition to that of a library. Boisgelin, a historian of the Order, suggests that this intention was carried out.

The 'museum' visited by Hoare was located in the Grand Master's palace which also had 'a small cabinet of pictures', among them, according to Count Borch, works by Durer and Preti; but Hoare dismissed them as 'too indifferent to deserve particular mention', although he wrote differently about the paintings of Preti on the vault of St. John's. (Incidentally, about the roof of St. John's he made the curious statement that it was 'bomb-proof'; if so, it certainly proved its worth in the last Great War!) It is obvious that the fame of the Maltese sculptor, Melchiorre Gafà, reached and, apparently, impressed even Hoare: he is the only native artist whom he mentioned – not correctly, for he attributed to him the 'colossal figures' forming the statue of the Baptism of Christ in the Choir of

St. John's Cathedral as well as the two slaves supporting the mausoleum of Grand Master Nicolas Cottoner in the Chapel of Aragon. It is common knowledge, however, that in Hoare's time, and indeed many years after, the Baptism was repeatedly attributed to Gafà instead of to Mazzuoli, even by Boisgelin in *Malta Ancient and Modern*.

It is evident from the accounts of all these travellers that the best-known Maltese collector at the time was a certain Marchese Barbaro to whose title Hoare, unlike Borch and de Non, referred with characteristic English attention to form. Hoare was informed or perhaps had read that the marchese had a fine collection of Roman coins and natural history but when he attempted to call on him in Valletta – for he seemed to keep open house to foreign visitors – he was told that he was indisposed and absent in the country. De Non wrote of the 'affability and politeness' of the marchese but Borch, while acknowledging the great interest of his collection, took him to task for attributing to Malta a number of foreign objects which he had picked up in his travels.

In view of the fact that antiquities were Hoare's *forte* a modern reader of his book might expect to find rapturous passages on pre-history and archaeology in which Malta is so rich. But he came some one hundred years too soon for, as Professor Evans has stated, 'knowledge of Malta's remote past grew slowly'. It is true that only three years before Hoare's visit the royal engraver, Jean Houël, had published his important *Voyage pittoresque des isles de Sicile, de Malte et de Lipari* in which he had underlined Malta's prehistoric remains and made them better known abroad, but it is doubtful if Hoare had read him since he is not in his prefatory list of travel-writers. In any case, even the pioneer work had not yet been done and this is clear enough in his own narrative: there is not even a line on the temples in Malta, and the passage on the *Ggantija* in Gozo contains the common error that this ancient monument had been put up by 'the earliest inhabitants of these islands, the Phoenicians'. This brief runs through the accounts of the travellers, even in such a reputable Handbook for Travellers as that published by John Murray in 1840.

As an Englishman Hoare was naturally interested in observing the arms of England united with those of Bavaria over the Auberge of 'the newly-formed language called Anglo-Bavaria'. The allusion is to Camera Palace at Marsamuscetto which was taken over as the lodge of the newly formed language in 1784. This had been one of the acts of Grand Master de Rohan: another was the building of a subterraneous aqueduct to which Hoare referred as 'lately completed'. (This had nothing to do with the ambitious one constructed by Grand Master Wignacourt.) It is obvious that there was a good deal of building activity in Malta at the time of his

visit and as an acute observer he must have perceived that the 'blessings of abundance, and often of affluence' which he noticed even in the country were attributable not only to the industry of the people but to the money and employment which the Order brought into the island.

One consequence of this, at which he seems to hint, was a sharp increase in population: from 10,000 in 1530 to over 120,000 in 1790 – and this in spite of epidemics and the incursions of the Moors. As far as can be gathered, however, from the accounts of travellers, the Order does not seem to have been confronted with an overpopulation problem, although not long after Hoare's visit the pressure seems to have become serious enough as increasingly to engage the attention of the British administration. It was then, in fact, that emigration began to take place on a considerable scale, thus giving rise to the present-day Maltese colonies scattered on the Mediterranean coast.

One of the problems which had confronted the Order soon after the accession of de Rohan had been that of security: against attack from within. This weakness had been exposed by the rebellion under Mannarino. To counter it the Order had taken steps to raise a so-called 'Maltese Regiment' of regular troops, composed partly of foreign mercenaries and partly of Maltese soldiers, with the Knights themselves as officers. Its duties were the defence of the city and the forts. It was perhaps some of these troops that Hoare observed 'in their white and neat uniforms', the allusion being presumably to their summer wear. Their general appearance had confirmed him in his high opinion of the 'cleanliness' of the country: a quality in which, he ventured to assert, Malta could vie with Holland. In view of the lamentably dirty state of Valletta today, and indeed of parts of the country, it may be difficult to believe that Malta *could* once have been as clean as the repeated testimonies of travellers would have it.

For all the air of security and prosperity on the face of the island under the Order, Hoare seems to have been more attracted to the earlier spirit of the Knights which he specified as 'religious zeal, courage, and simplicity of manners'. Perhaps the gay and more worldly French travellers might have pointed to a characteristically English trait of puritanism in his character. It seems reasonable to infer that even as a traveller his moral sense was not in obedience so that in observing that the Order had departed from its original character he could not help quoting the prophecy of Fazello, the historian of Sicily, foreboding decadence as the price of lost virtue. Only eight years after this forecast the fleet of the French Republic appeared off Grand Harbour and the Knights flung open the gates of the strongest fortress in the Mediterranean to Napoleon.

The occasion for Hoare's stricture was provided by his visit to the In-

firmly where he found that only 'a few devout, and perhaps penitent, Knights still observe the ancient custom of attending to the sick in person'. A much stronger charge of slackness in the care of the sick – originally a cardinal duty of the Order – was made about the same time by a fellow-countryman of Hoare's, the philanthropist John Howard, who came on a special visit to the Lazaretto and the Infirmary and did not scruple to make known his views even to the Grand Master. Howard, however, seems to have been too zealous, if not fanatic, as a reformer of hospitals and prisons and his visit to the Infirmary smacks of a fault-finding expedition. Hoare's comments, on the other hand, seem to reflect a more open-minded and balanced visitor. Incidentally, they did agree on one thing: that the easy ascent of the Grand Master's staircase was worthy of imitation in England!

Hoare himself was spared – thanks to his coming from the West and not from the East – the common ordeal of travellers: quarantine in the Lazaretto, which, he was well aware, was rigidly exacted 'on account of the commercial communications of the island with Africa and the Levant, the usual seats of the plague'. The only inconvenience he suffered was from the fleas on board the *speronaro* while he waited at St. Paul's Bay for Signor Mattei to obtain permission for him to go ashore instead of proceeding by sea to Valletta. On the whole, he seems to have come off lightly, in the way of hardship and hazard, compared with the adventures of some of his contemporaries. The crossing to and from Sicily, for instance, which in those days could be a nightmare because of the Barbary pirates, went off smoothly with him except for an overnight delay on the outbound journey.

The *speronaro* was a vital link of communication with the outside world, especially with Sicily, on which Malta was dependent for the necessities of life. This dependence was one of the hard facts of Nature underlined by Hoare in his analysis of the Island's economy. Corn was the most important article of importation, for the crops grown on the island were 'not sufficient for more than three months consumption of the inhabitants'. This explains the thorough measures taken by the Order to preserve it in specially constructed granaries modelled on those at Girgenti. It also explains the importance of the corn monopoly as a cardinal policy of government under the Order, and indeed for many years under British rule. It was this monopoly which was responsible for one of the grievances of the Nationalists in the early 19th Century: a grievance, incidentally, which was shared by the British merchants in Malta who petitioned the Colonial Secretary to do away with it.

Hoare's stay in Malta was too brief to enable him to learn of any griev-

ances on the part of the people against the Order. Grievances no doubt there were, to which the so-called Rebellion of the Priests under Mannarino in 1775 bears witness. The only sign of nationalism of which he heard was that of the native barons who had originally resented the transfer of Malta to the Order by Charles V and found 'themselves excluded from public charges'. Consequently they had resorted to a policy of proud isolation: they had separated themselves from the members of the Order and shut themselves up in Notabile, 'their own metropolis'. However, two things, namely, time and 'the attractions and diversions of Valletta', had gradually brought about a change of heart as well as of residence in these haughty aristocrats so that Hoare found the old city much 'depopulated' in comparison with Valletta.

One of the 'diversions' which may have acted as a means of bridging the gap on the social level between the Knights and the estranged nobility was the Manoel theatre, the work of the munificent Grand Master after whom it was named. In it the native baronesses enjoyed privileged seats, as was customary in other countries: a privilege which could, and still does, work in subtle but effective ways, even over nationalism! The theatre does not seem to have cast any spell upon Hoare: he dismissed it as 'small, and the present company of comedians very bad'. Perhaps, although he was in early manhood when he came to Malta, he was not very sociable or perhaps mid-June was not the ideal season for the theatre. The 'comedians' to whom he referred might have been the Knights themselves for it was stated by Borch that the members of the Order enjoyed acting French and Italian comedies and that the female parts were taken by young Knights: a parallel to the boy-actors on Shakespeare's stage. Whatever he may have thought of the theatre, it is a fact that the Manoel occupied a central position in the entertainment of the Maltese upper class as well as of the Knights. Indeed when the Knights were superseded as rulers by his own countrymen, it continued to be a favourite social centre of many officers and administrators.

Perhaps it is less with the stage than with painting that a student of Maltese History associates certain passages in Hoare's book. If a visual aid were required as a supplement to his descriptions and indeed to the fuller ones in the books of his contemporaries, the ideal medium would be the water-colours and lithographs of Schranz, particularly his little groups of people on the waterfront or in the city. It is true that Schranz flourished some 40 years after Hoare's visit but customs and traditions die hard so that what Hoare wrote about the dress of the town and country people or about the amusing 'aerial voyage' to the rock off Gozo on which grew the *Fungus Melitensis* was all part of the Malta scene as Schranz

subsequently saw and recorded it.

Hoare himself seems to have had some artistic talent, for the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that on the continent 'he filled a portfolio with drawings of the most interesting objects seen', and adds that his great library at Stourhead in Wiltshire contained 'about 900 drawings either by his own hands or copied by superior artists from his sketches, and they are wonderful proof of his taste and perseverance'. Now that the contents of his library (which, incidentally, was famous enough to earn a paragraph from Hazlitt in his *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England*) have long been dispersed by auction, it is probably impossible to determine whether any Malta drawings were in his collection. Certainly at the time of his visit he could have found in Malta an artist as 'superior' as Carlo Labruzzi whom he employed for his Italian drawings. Antoine Favray, long established in the island, was a master of international repute and he could not but have been known to Signor Mattei who belonged to a class of Maltese society of whom Favray made many portraits. It is not known, however, whether the painter accepted from distinguished visitors the sort of commission which became a valuable source of income for Schranz and Brockdorff soon after the change of rulers.

The other query raised by Hoare's visit is: where did he stay in Malta? In a laconic sentence before the entry for Wednesday June 16 he stated that 'I lodged at the house of Carletti: a tolerable inn, but it is not improved since his change of habitation'. Most certainly the inn was in Valletta and he seems to have gone to it (followed the next day by his servants) from St. Paul's Bay in the calesse which Signor Mattei had made ready for him. But who was Carletti? From de Non it appears that in 1778 there were 'two inns at Malta, the *Falcon* and *Three Kings*', but the identification of the inn seems to hinge on the mysterious Carletti.

For the excursion to Gozo, Hoare secured a night's lodging 'in the convent of St. Francis', but since a contrary wind delayed his arrival in the sister-island he had to content himself 'with a room on the sea-shore, where I put up my bed'. The offer of hospitality in the convent was no novelty to him: he had already availed himself of several religious houses in Sicily, presumably at stopping-points without adequate public accommodation. No doubt, his knowledge of Italian facilitated this arrangement. It was an arrangement, in fact, which was common practice in travel to the Mediterranean and the East, as can be seen – to give but one other example – from Kinglake's *Eothen*.

Gozo set in motion the usual academic discussion on Calypso's dwelling. This had become so hackneyed that some innovators, finding that the

island did not do justice to Homer's imagery, had transferred the abode of the voluptuary to Melleha! (Incidentally, Hoare in one of his rare slips made a contribution to hagiography by writing that he skirted the port of 'St. Mellecha'!) The nymph now re-instated in her traditional abode, remains a perennial source of flowery effusion – in travel brochures!

It was from Gozo that Hoare set sail for the customary night crossing to Cape Passaro. He took with him a better impression of the island than he had first formed. Initially 'the cheerless scenery' of the country, especially after the greenness of Sicily, had disappointed him, but by the time of his departure 'the singularity and novelty' of the place as well as 'the manners of the inhabitants' had acted more favourably upon him – even to the extent of drawing out a sententious reflection on the ways of Nature in the best manner of Dr. Johnson. The great doctor, of course, was, above all else, a moralist, and it is he, therefore, who prompts a sobering thought on the date of Hoare's visit. It was 1790. As his *speronaro* moved out of the harbour, he could not but respond, as is clear in his journal, to that grandest of all prospects: the fortifications of Valletta rising tier upon tier on the water. The Order seemed to be so secure, and the Knights in their noble auberges so complacent. Yet the storm had already broken in Paris: the Bastille had fallen: the old order was being swept away, and with it, but eight years after, the power and the glory of its most representative stronghold in the Mediterranean.