

# BOOK REVIEWS

Harrison Smith, *Britain in Malta*. 2v. Malta, Progress Press, 1953.

The two volumes on *Britain in Malta* by last year's Fulbright Lecturer in History at the Royal University of Malta form a major contribution to the study of 19th Century Malta. Since the War there has been a growing awareness that the best way of filling in the gaps of Maltese History is to specialise in one particular period or aspect. Architecture and Emigration, to mention two specialised topics, have engaged the attention of students whose publications will continue to be considered as standard works for many years to come. The study of 19th Century political and constitutional history bristles with difficulties and writers before Harrison Smith had only attempted to treat the subject sketchily in general works, such as Laferla in *British Malta* (2v.). Professor Harrison Smith brought a trained mind to bear on the various aspects of this important subject, and his researches have added considerably to our knowledge of what so far has been the *bête noire* of Maltese historians.

Both volumes were prepared as theses, and the presentation of the subject matter suffers from too many quotations and reproduction of lengthy extracts that make the book difficult to digest. Volume I, which treats of "*Constitutional Development of Malta in the Nineteenth Century*", "was originally prepared as a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Georgetown University", while Volume II, dealing with *Italian Influence on British Policy in Malta 1899-1903* was a "thèse présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse) pour obtenir le grade de docteur". That such a work could have been undertaken in America, so far away from the main scene of the political and constitutional struggle it relates, is an eloquent proof of the thorough bibliographical apparatus provided in American libraries. Both primary and secondary sources were available in the new world, as one can see from the extensive bibliographies to both volumes. To write the second volume the author came to Europe in 1950 and 1951 and examined research material in Valletta, Rome and London. Professor Harrison Smith was particularly lucky in gaining access, as he tells us, to the diplomatic correspondence of the Royal Italian Government, which has never been brought to light. Extracts from the Italian Government's Diplomatic and Consular Correspondence are, in fact, given in the form of a useful Appendix to the second volume.

In some cases the author rightly gives an appraisal of his sources for the benefit of his readers. Thus on page 71 (Vol. I) he refers in a footnote to Umberto Galeota's publication *Malta, Fiore del Mondo* (Napoli, 1940) and then adds: "The reader is presumed to note the dates of these Italian sources and give due allowance for the era in which they were turned out". Again he says of Pietro Silvio Rivetta, the Fascist author of *Il Centauro Maltese* (Milano, 1940): "This author has given way from dispassionate objectivity to violent, poetic hysteria" (p. 116). A greater familiarity with the Maltese psychological background and a better knowledge of Malta generally would no doubt have enabled Professor Harrison Smith to weigh more carefully the statements of impassioned politicians before attaching to them a greater value than they in fact deserve. It would also have enabled him to avoid such pitfalls as the following obvious historical errors: "Around 480 B.C. the Carthaginians . . . invaded the islands under the legendary leadership of Hannibal" (Introd., Vol 1, p. xii), or that "in 1571 the seat of the Government was moved from Città Notabile to Valletta City" (ibid, p. xv). It is common knowledge that when the Order came to Malta in 1530 it established its seat of government at Birgu and not at Imdina. Other points calling for correction may be mentioned. The date of Napoleon's arrival off Malta was the 9th June, 1798, not the 12th, as stated in the Introduction (p. xv). Mikiel Anton Vassalli, quoted as "a distinguished historian of the Order" (ibid, p. xv, n. 2) was a grammarian and lexicographer, not a historian; the name should read G. A. Vassallo. As regards the Maltese Language, the author was very unlucky in his sources. Basing himself on such 20th Century non-Maltese unscholarly writers as John Wignacourt he gives it as a fact that "It is now becoming accepted that the Maltese language, like its people, is descended from the Phoenicians" (Vol. I, p. 109). In point of fact, the latest scientific study of the language has debunked the Phoenician theory, but recent material on the subject was inaccessible to the author who, as an afterthought it seems, in a footnote on p. 118, writes: "For additional information as to the origin and linguistic composition of the Maltese language, the reader is referred to Prof. J. Aquilina's "The Maltese Language" (Malta, 1940) and a number of linguistic studies published in *Scientia*, Malta", a reference which can be extended to other articles

published in "ORBIS"—Bulletin International de Documentation Linguistique" (Louvain). It is also surprising to learn (p. 119) that in addition to Malta and Gozo, the Maltese Archipelago comprises "the minor rocks Cominetto, Filfa, Pietra Nera, Scognilo Marfa (!) Salmonetta and Hagiratal (!).

Professor Harrison Smith goes out of his way to stress that his thesis "does not purport to be a definitive or objective work on the subject of the history of the Church vs the state in Malta". In point of fact, however, he has covered the ground pretty well and the main points are all there. Of course he was working under a drawback, for he tells us: "The Hankey Mission Papers were not available, the Vatican conversations between Maitland-Consalvi are not available; and the paucity of material available in America precludes more than references to the issues" (p. 81). The subject of Church vs State relations has been imperfectly treated by historians so far and it is only recently that it has received any serious attention. Mgr. A. Bonnici's studies on "Reasons for the delay in the appointment of Bishop F. S. Caruana", published in *Melita Historica*, Vol. 1, No. 3; and his unpublished lectures on the Oath Question and on the Church and the Freedom of the Press in Malta throw much new light on this hitherto dark corner of Maltese History.

A pleasant feature of the work is the sound judgment displayed by the author in summing up events and trends in happily phrased sentences, as well as the correct stress on essentials. We give a few examples: "There have been many false starts (i.e. of political self government) under Imperial Britain" (Introd., p. X). "Malta went straight from medieval feudalism into the status of royal absolutism without any of the intervening steps that characterised European development — the reformation, the rise of the bourgeoisie or the development of municipal government" (p. 8). The civil governor system was swept aside in 1858 "on the notion that Malta is to live and breathe for the sake of military expediency" (p. 42). ". . . During the eighties and after the publication of the Keenan Report on languages, the party system was born in nineteenth century Malta. The Constitution was never altered to conform with the two-party principle . . ." (p. 54). Bishop Caruana "sought to keep the clergy out of politics, a fact not always appreciated by certain Italian politicians in Malta" (p. 83). Speaking about the language question he writes that in 1901 "the Governor doubtless took pleasure in his despatch when he wrote that over eighty per cent of the speeches defending Italian had to be delivered to the crowd in Maltese — in order that it might know the subject of the meeting" (p. 214). Serious-minded Maltese will not quarrel with his concluding remarks: "While Malta was too often treated as a mere pawn in European geographic and strategic chess boards, Malta also was the victim of short-sighted Maltese politicians, a fact more easily seen now in the light of world developments than was evident in 1903. Malta was to enter the twentieth century with a heritage of political strife and a deep seated constitutional bitterness far in excess of that of most other colonial out-works of empire and was to wreck subsequent constitutions with the bitter forces lingering from her nineteenth century political ruins" (p. 239).

On reading this work various subjects suggest themselves for more specialised biographical treatment. There is a general dearth of well-documented, authentic biographies of important people in Malta, and this is especially true of such 19th Century politicians as Camillo Sciberras, Giorgio Mitrovich, Sigismondo Savona, Fortunato Mizzi and Sir Gerald (later Lord) Strickland. Students of local history will no doubt look forward to Professor Harrison Smith's announced biography of Lord Strickland.

It is a pity that such an important work as *Britain in Malta* is not provided with an index.

J.C.P.

**Charles A. Price**, *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*. Georgian House — Melbourne, 1954. Pages xvii — 272. Price 45/-.

Today when so much depends on carefully planned emigration, Dr. Price's survey of Nineteenth Century Emigration is of special importance and should be perused by those interested in the problems of emigration.

Dr. Price has done much research work in this field and the Appendices are most informative. His work covers the period 1798 to 1885. The author brings before us the

problems that beset these overpopulated Islands and he divides the whole question of emigration into two parts: "unorganized" and "organized". Unorganized emigration took some of our people first to Africa and the Levant, and later as far as Canada, Australia and the United States. Under organized emigration an attempt was made to settle our people in various places such as Cephalonia, the West Indies and other countries. The difficulties and failures of the migration schemes are ably brought to the fore by Dr. Price who makes use of all possible sources in the compilation of his work.

The problems of migration cannot be surveyed separately, but should be taken together with all other problems confronting the social life of a community. That this is so may be seen by the work under review, how its author has analysed the Maltese structure in its entirety, i.e., economic, political, cultural and religious. The author has also shown how other characteristics of our daily life, such as "occupational training, thriftiness and industry, dislike of loneliness and pioneer farming, sanitary habits, dietetic prejudices, tenacity to the faith, readiness to intermarry, and so on", have affected the venture, successful or otherwise, of Maltese migrants wherever they settled.

Another aspect of Maltese migration is the interest it awoke in Maltese politicians of the time who showed their views either by speeches in the Council or by letters in the local press. Such views were not always shared by the British officials in Malta, or by British Consular Officers abroad, and their impact upon one another reveals to us to what an extent progress was made in emigration.

As stated above the work covers the period 1798-1885, less than a century in the long history of these Islands. This work opens up a new line of research on a very important subject in the social history of our population: the struggle for existence. We hope that this book will not only induce others to undertake a deeper study of the subject, but that it will also stimulate Maltese and other scholars to compile similar works by extending the period covered by this book and also by treating more deeply the many questions raised in this field of study.

E.R.L.

**J. Quentin Hughes** (M.C., B.Arch., Ph.D., A.R.I.B.A.) *The Building of Malta during the period of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem 1530-1795*. London, Alec Tiranti Ltd., 1956; pp. viii, 242; ill. 332.

The Author of this excellently written and superbly produced volume is already well-known to the readers of "Melita Historica" through his article "The influence of Italian Mannerism upon Maltese Architecture". In spite of a few inaccuracies in the dates and attributions of certain of the lesser known buildings, the book is a most important contribution to the history of Maltese Architecture, nothing on the same scale ever having been attempted before.

It is astonishing how, in the relatively short period he spent in Malta, the Author was able to enter into the spirit underlying the Maltese building of the Knights of St. John. In spite of the fact that the leaders of the Order were members of the most influential and affluent families of some of the most powerful countries of the time, they invariably employed Maltese architects for their civil and ecclesiastical buildings, and rarely allowed their own taste to influence the builders to a greater extent than the latter may have been influenced by what they saw during their travels. As a result, Maltese architecture, from the middle of the 16th to the end of the 18th century presents, on the whole, a logical and homogeneous sequence, which it is possible to follow with clarity and simplicity from the late Renaissance which the Knights introduced in 1530 to the early Neo-Classic which they left behind in 1798.

Dr. Hughes has an analytical eye and a sensitive mind and is able, without too many technicalities, to explain exactly how the progress was achieved, pointing out variations and innovations in style as well as in technique. How such things as the construction of roofs, the development of church plans and facades, the decoration of panels, the design of mouldings and cornices and the construction of domes, progressed from the immaturity of Birgu and the early building of Valletta, to the Baroque majesty of Gafa and Cachia, may be followed with ease by the most uninstructed layman.

The buildings described are classified under three main headings: military, ecclesiastical and civil. The chapter on military architecture is a rapid but comprehensive survey of the fortifications of Malta and Gozo, from the hastily erected bulwarks of St. Elmo and St. Angelo on the arrival of the Knights, until the construction of Forts Manoel and Tigne more than two centuries later. It was only in this class of building that foreign craftsmen predominated: with the sole exception of Girolamo Cassar, the men who worked on the ramparts of Malta and Gozo were Italians, Frenchmen or Spaniards. The survey is interesting as far as it goes, but the subject is important enough to merit a volume for itself.

The next important part of the book is the chapter on the Churches of Malta, which is a masterly review of local ecclesiastical architecture which, for the sake of convenience, the Author has subdivided into various sections, according to period, style and planning, followed by a summary of the characteristics of Maltese churches. The pages on the development of the smaller monocellular churches of the 16th and early 17th centuries I found particularly interesting.

The chapter on civil architecture is less comprehensive than the other, possibly owing to the relative inaccessibility of many of the buildings described, especially the interior of the private houses. But the drawing of plans and facades which illustrate the article, many of them published for the first time, are of great interest; and the whole chapter is, without doubt, a most important contribution to the study of the subject.

There is no doubt that the book is a "must" for all students of the history and art of Malta, as well as for all collectors of *Melitensia*.

E.S.

**Mifsud Bonnici, Robert**, *Mużiċisti Kompożituri Maltin u Għawdxin tal-Bieraħ u tal-Lum*. Giov. Muscat, 1951, 155 p.

This work by a writer who is already well-known for his various contributions in Maltese is likely to arouse interest in our past achievement in the Arts. A Dictionary of National Biography for the Maltese Islands has long been a desideratum and Mr. Mifsud Bonnici's work very opportunely fills in the blank in so far as Maltese musical achievement is concerned.

This collection of biographical essays on Maltese lay musical composers supplements that published by the same author dealing exclusively with sacred music and with "Maestri di Capella". It covers the period from the beginning of the 18th century to the present day; the essays follow a more or less uniform plan and for each composer mentioned the information given may be grouped roughly under the three headings: life, education and a list of works with date of composition. No indication, however, is given as to whether such compositions are still extant, and if so, where they can be seen.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into the compilation of this book, and it is a pity that information could not be supplied to the compiler which would have enabled him to include those other contemporary composers whose names do not figure in this book. Our INNU MALTI deserved more than a mere mention in the final paragraph of the essay on Jos. Mallia Pulvirenti. Dun Karm's article "Kif sar l-Innu Malti", telling how the Maltese National Hymn originated, may be read in LEHEN IL-MALTI (September-December 1947).

The word "Maltese" has been extended to include all Maltese born composers who achieved prominence abroad as well as foreigners whose compositions were inspired by or written in Malta. As regards the criterion adopted for inclusion, output rather than quality seems to have been the guiding factor — but of course the writer's intention was to present as complete a list as possible.

The illustrations showing Maltese composers form a pleasant feature of the book while the one-page bibliography and the list of operas by Maltese composers put on in local theatres since 1796 add to the practical reference value of the work.

J. C. P.

## OTHER BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

The following is a list of studies or articles of local interest which appeared in foreign learned reviews or in local papers and periodicals. The list, which is by no means complete, records a considerable amount of material that would otherwise lie forgotten in unindexed newspaper files or in reviews that are often too specialised and therefore inaccessible to the average student in Malta.

- AQUILINA, J. *Maltese Lexicography*. Offprint from "Orbis — Bulletin International de Documentation Linguistique", Tome II, No. 2, 1953, pp. 474-483.
- AQUILINA, J. *A Brief Survey of Maltese Semantics*. Offprint from "ORBIS" Tome III, No. 1, 1954, pp. 68-88.
- AQUILINA, J. *Some historic phonetic changes in Maltese*. Offprint from "ORBIS", Tome IV, No. 2, 1955, pp. 514-521.
- B. J. F. *Sliema at the turn of the Century: Memories of Bygone Days*. In "Sunday Times of Malta" (6.5.56; 13.5.56).
- BARRINGTON, Bro. Leo. *Memorial to La Valette*. In "Times of Malta". (19.4.55).
- BORG, Rev. Vincent. *On Fixing the Foundation-Day date of the Royal University of Malta*. Extract from "Seminarium Melitense", No. 10, 1955.
- BRUNO, G. A. *Maltese Composer's Work: Nicola Isouard alias Nicolo*. In "T.O.M." (10.1.56; 12.1.56).
- BUONTEMPO, Can. A. *Relations between Church and State — History of Anglo-Maltese Legislation*. In "T.O.M." (16.9.55).
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Social Aspects of Maltese Nicknames*. Offprint from "Scientia", Vol. XXII, No. 2, 1956, pp. 66-94.
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Canti sulla Passione nelle Isole Maltesi*. Estratto da "Lares", Anno XX, Pasc. III-IV, 1954, pp. 138-158.
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *L-Imnarja*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (26.6.55).
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Maltese Carnival on the Decline*. In "Carnival Committee Programme", 1956.
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Lenten Customs and Traditions in Malta*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (3.4.55).
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *New Year Customs and Beliefs*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (18.12.55).
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Malta after Dark: 18th Century Street Lighting in Valletta*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (18.3.56).
- CASSAR-PULLICINO, J. *Commemorations of the Great Siege in 1665 and 1765*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (.9.56).
- CATANIA, Nutar F. *L-Imnarja*. In "Rabat", April-Gunju, 1955.
- CAVALIERO, Roderic. *When a Madman was Grand Master*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (22.1.56; 29.1.56; 5.2.56).
- CUTAJAR, Luret. *Gawhra tal-Antik Minsija: Il-Knisja Normanna ta' Han Millieri*. In "Il-Berqa" (29.5.56; 30.5.56; 31.5.56).
- GALEA, B. *Il-Konfraternita tal-Kuncizzjoni fil-Proto-Parrokkjali tar-Rabat*. In "Rabat", Ottubru-Dicembru, 1955.
- GLYN JONES, tr. *Hans Christian Andersen in Malta*, translated from Chapter XXV (Malta) of Andersen's "A Poet's Bazaar" and introduced by John D. Evans. In "Sunday T.O.M."; (22.5.55; 29.5.55; 5.6.55).
- IANFRANCO, Guido. *The Legend of the Maltese Viper*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (20.5.56; 27.5.56).
- LEOPARDI, E. R. *Past Pilgrimages to Mellieħa*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (4.9.55).
- LEOPARDI, E. R. *Mattia Preti — The Knight Painter from Calabria*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (6.5.56).
- LEOPARDI, E. R. *St. Joseph and the Oldest Confraternity in Malta*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (18.3.56).

- LEOPARDI, E. R.—*Calendars in Malta from Mediaeval to Modern Times*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (18.12.55).
- LEOPARDI, E. R. *A Rare Book and its Provenance: Source of History of the Knight's Rule in Rhodes*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (22.7.56).
- SAYDON, P. P. *Some unusual ways of expressing the superlative in Hebrew and Maltese*. In "Vetus Testamentum". Vol. IV, October 1954, No. 4.
- SPRETI, Camillo. *Advice for a Young Knight*. Extracts from the "Treatise for the use of a Young Knight of Jerusalem", translated by Averil Mackenzie Grieve. In "Sunday T.O.M." (1.4.56; 8.4.56).
- SULTANA, Donald. *An Anglican Clergyman in Malta: Newman's Letters and Poems analysed*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (20.11.55; 27.11.55; 4.12.55).
- SULTANA, Donald. *Richard Hurrell Froude in Malta*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (5.5.56).
- SULTANA, Donald. *A Friend of Newman's in Malta: Preliminary Account of Dean Church*. In "Sunday T.O.M." (11.12.55; 18.12.55).

J. C. P.

### THESIS LITERATURE ON THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN MALTA

Copies of the following theses submitted by local teachers in part fulfilment of the subject "Experimental Education and Research" for the degree of B. Educ. in 1953 are available for consultation in the Royal University of Malta Library:—

- AGIUS DELICATA, Joseph. *A Brief Account of the Historical development of the Lyceum in Malta from its institution to the present day*.
- BONELLO CONTI, Louis. *St. John Baptist de la Salle's contribution to Education. with special reference to the work of the Brothers of De La Salle in Malta*.
- BUSUTTIL, Felix. *Mikiel Anton Vassalli's Contribution towards Educational Advancement in the Maltese Islands*.
- CAMILLERI, John Breman. *The First Decade of the Twentieth Century in the Education of Malta*.
- CASSAR, J. B. *A Brief Account of the Work of Mons. Paolo Pullicino, Director of Primary Instruction in Malta (1849-1880) and First Lecturer in Pedagogy at the University*.
- CASSAR, Lawrence. *A Survey of the History of Child Welfare with a brief study of the problem of Child Welfare in the Maltese Islands*.
- GATT, Joseph A. *Technical Education in Malta*.
- GIORDMAINA, Anthony. *A Short Enquiry into the History of Education in Malta up to the first Education Act on Primary Schools in Malta of 1946 and the Primary Schools Report of 1948*.
- MANGION, Josephine. *The Period 1835 to 1850 in the History of Education of the Maltese Islands*.
- MANGION, Mary C. *The Early Primary Schools of Malta*.
- VELLA, Joseph P. *The Contribution of the Jesuit Fathers to Education in the Maltese Islands*.
- SANT, Joseph. *The History of the Training of Teachers for the Government Schools of Malta*.
- SALIBA, Evarist. *A Brief Descriptive Account of the emergence and growth of the Status of Teacher in Government-owned or Government-controlled Schools from the inception of British Rule to the present day*.
- ZAMMIT MANION, J. *Landmarks in the Development of Education in Malta*.

The above works cover several important aspects of educational history in Malta. Our thanks are due to these Teachers who have sacrificed much time and energy to fill in some of the blanks in the History of Malta.

J. C. P.