

HOUSES IN KINGSWAY AND OLD BAKERY STREET, VALLETTA.

by

VICTOR F. DENARO

Kingsway, formerly *Strada Reale*, stretches throughout the length of Valletta from Kingsgate to Fort St. Elmo. It is the main street of the city, and during the rule of the Order of St. John was known as *Strada San Giorgio*; the French renamed it *Rue Nationale*.

On coming into the city through Kingsgate we find, on the left, the Buttigieg-Francia Palace built, under the direction of Architect Giuseppe Bonavia, in the middle of last century on the site of the *Ferreria* or *Fianco* (1) of the Order which had been occupied by the British military authorities and returned to the Civil Government in compensation for Admiralty lands valued at £80,000 (2).

Opposite the *Ferreria* was the *Casa della Giornata* probably so called from the family motto, "*Alla Giornata*", of the Lanfreducci family, the original owners of the palace. The building, which occupied the whole quarter where the Royal Opera House stood, and which included an orange garden (3), has been erroneously designated as the Auberge of England by several historians including Ciantar, which error is, perhaps, due to its having been occupied at some time by a Prior of England. In a plan of Valletta by Chev. Francesco Antalla dated 1600 (4) the block was called the *Casa del Comm. Lanfreducci* which leaves little doubt as to the original owner of the house.

Comm. Fra Francesco Landfreducci, Balí of Pavia, sold the premises to Comm. Fra Giulio Accarigi, Admiral of the Order and Prior of Venice (5). On April 22, 1638, Comm. Accarigi sold the block to the Lascaris Foundation for Sc. 2,034 in silver money of Sicily (6).

The Lascaris Foundation owed its origin to the munificence of Grand Master Gio. Paolo Lascaris Castellar who, mindful of the great danger with which Malta had been threatened in 1645 when menaced by a fresh Turkish onslaught, thought, by means of an opulent foundation, of providing the island with sufficient provisions and munitions of war as would enable it to withstand any sudden assault. For this purpose funds, mostly in immovable property, were assigned to the foundation which, on October 7, 1652, was altered to serve for the building and maintenance of a seventh galley which was to be added to the fleet of the Religion (7).

(1) Arsenal and workshops.

(2) ZAMMIT, Sir Them., *Valletta*. Malta, Empire Press, p. 84.

(3) *Cabreo Fondazione Lascaris*, R.M.L. Treas. B. 301, fol. 26.

(4) BOSIO, Giacomo, *Storia della Sacra Religione*, Vol. III.

(5) Records of Notary G. Tolosenti of 3 September 1629.

(6) Records of Notary Michele Ralli of 22 April 1638.

(7) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *Historia della Sacra Religione di Malta*, Vol. II p. 193.

On March 14, 1658, we find that this palace was let to the Prior of the Conventual Church, Fra Luca Bueno (8), later Bishop of Malta, whilst from 1668 to 1680 it was let to the Prior of Catalogna, Fra Michel de Torrellas, at a rent of Sc. 150 per annum (9).

In 1649, subject to his building a tower, Grand Master Lascaris had granted Prior Torrellas, on emphyteusis for his lifetime, the islet of Selmun near St. Paul's Bay, which abounded in rabbits. Previously, during the grandmastership of La Cassiere, this islet had been assigned to Marco de Maria, chief pilot of the Religion, and to his descendants in recognition of his conspicuous services. After Marco's death it was enjoyed by his son Giovanni and his nephew Narduccio. The latter was killed in action during the capture of the Sultana's galleon and the islet had then reverted to the Religion (10).

The *Casa della Giornata* was let for 15 years to Gio. Batta and Florino Dorel in 1680 (11) and from 1693 to 1706 to Comm. Fra Giacomo Duding for Sc. 120 per annum. Comm. Fra Joseph Arnold, Count Nehem, occupied the premises from 1708 to 1709, and in 1709 the palace was leased by the Prior of the Conventual Church, Fra Giacomo Canaves (12).

The block was bought by the Università in 1786 (13), and partly turned into a municipal bakery.

The *Casa della Giornata* was demolished in 1860, and the Royal Opera House built on the site at a cost of £25,000. The architect was Mr. Barry who was also the architect of the Covent Garden Opera House in London, and it was erected under the direction of Mr. Webster Paulson and Mr. Salvatore Fenech of the Public Works Department,

On October 9, 1866, the theatre was inaugurated with the opera *I Puritani* by Bellini. It had but a short life as all the internal decorations were destroyed by a fire which broke out on May 25, 1873, during a rehearsal of the *Vergine del Castello* by Giuseppe Privitera. The Royal Theatre, as it was then known, was repaired and refitted during the governorship of Sir Charles van Straubenzee, and again destroyed by enemy action in 1942.

The block of buildings at the corner formed by Kingsway with South Street, including No. 7 Kingsway, was the old *Casa Pensa* which from the early days of the city belonged to the Langue of Italy.

In 1716 the house was occupied by Comm. Fra Sigismondo Piccolomini after the death of Comm. Fra Vincenzo Gallucci, and in 1717 it passed to Comm. Fra D'Onofrio Riccio. It was then held in succession by Comm. Fra Annibale Vimercati, Balì Fra Fabrizio Ruffo, Comm. Fra Pietro Danieli and Balì Fra Alessandro Ballati. Finally, in 1798, we find it in possession of the Balì Gaetani (14).

(8) *Beni Fondazione Lascaris*, R.M.L. Ms. 1302 fol. 9.

(9) *Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"*, R.M.L. Treas. A. 1., fol. 11t.

(10) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 181.

(11) Records of Notary Aloysio dello Re of 30 July 1680.

(12) *Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"*, R.M.L. Treas. A. 1., fol. 11t.

(13) Records of Notary Vincenzo Grillet of 1st April, 1786.

(14) *Libro Maestro 1800-1807* R.M.L. Treas. B. 97, fol. 343.

Casa Pensa and its dependencies were transferred by the British Government in 1805 to Auditor Giuseppe Nicolo Zammit (Zammitello) in exchange for lands known as "tax-xemx u l-qamar" and "ta' Blat il-Kbir" (15). Auditor Giuseppe Nicolo Zammit was among the first recipients of knighthood when the Order of St. Michael and St. George was instituted. He died on September 7, 1823, and was interred in the chapel of the Langue of Auvergne in St. John's Co-Cathedral.

In this house, in 1833, Baron Azzopardi, who had married Auditor Zammit's daughter, wrote his *Presa di Malta e Gozo*.

The premises Nos. 16/18 Kingsway belonged to the Preziosi Commandery. Gio. Antonio Preziosi, son of Count Giuseppe, wishing to be received as a servant-at-arms in the Order, offered to found a commandery, which was to be known as the *Commenda Preziosi*. He stipulated that he was to enjoy the Commandery during his lifetime with the right of naming, as his successor, one of the sons of his brother, Gio. Francesco, after whose death the nomination was to pass to the Italian langue. For this purpose he assigned the house and two shops near the Church of St. Barbara in Kingsway (16).

On March 31, 1729, the Italian langue accepted this foundation, subject to the payment of one *zecchino* by way of recognition.

Teresa, Caterina and Maria, sisters Giappone, in the year 1791 founded, by testament, the primogeniture fideicommissum Giappone, assigning to this primogeniture the house at No. 24 Kingsway and its dependencies (17).

Passing the Auberge de Provence, premises Nos. 271/280 all belonged to the Testaferrata Family.

At the corner of Kingsway with St. John Street (No. 268 Kingsway) stood the palace of Fra Federico Caccia, Admiral of the Order in 1582, who later was nominated Ball of Venosa. On the death of Ball Caccia the house passed to the langue of Italy.

On March 15, 1636, we find that the house was let to Comm. Fra Cesare Falco for the duration of his lifetime at a rent of Sc.90 per annum, with permission to his effecting any improvements he might desire (18).

In 1782 the house was sold by the Langue of Italy to the Langue of Auvergne (19), and the deed of sale was ratified by a decree of the Council on November 7, 1782. At the time of this sale *Casa Caccia* was the residence of Chev. Fra Giacomo Ildaris, who had the house on lease for his lifetime (20). Part of the palace was incorporated with the Auberge d'Auvergne, which would explain why the Auberge had six windows on the left and only three on the right (21).

(15) Records of Notary Diego Vella of 20 July, 1805.

(16) *Fondazioni della Lingua d'Italia* Vol. III R.M.L. Arch. 2161 fol. 47.

(17) Records of Notary Ignazio Saverio Bonavita of 12 February, 1791.

(18) *Deliberazioni della Lingua d'Italia* R.M.L. Arch. 2129 fol. 211.

(19) Records of Notary Ignazio Sav. Bonavita of 17 October 1782.

(20) *Lib. Concil.* R.M.L. Arch. 162 fol. 115.

(21) DARMANIN DEMAJO, G., *Archivio Storico di Malta*, Vol. II, 19, p. 203.

Casa Caccia was let on April 7, 1839, to Sir Agostino Portelli K.C.M.G., who was the first President of the Malta Chamber of Commerce. It was later given by the Government to the De Piro family in exchange for Palazzo Parisio.

This building, together with the Auberge d'Auvergne, was totally destroyed by a German parachute mine.

The house at Kingsway No. 251, at the corner with St. Lucia Street, belonged to Fra Tommaso Hozes (22), Bali of Toro, later Bali of Lora, who was sent as ambassador to the Viceroy of Sicily when the Royal Tribunal of Sicily allowed to be brought before it the case of Comm. Fra Stefano Sciattini, who had been deprived of his habit for disobedience, during his absence. Before leaving Malta, Bali Hozes was furnished with the Privilege and Declaration of Philip II of Spain, given in Brussels on June 7, 1559, by which confirming the Donation of Malta to the Order he not only declared that feudal cases appertained to the Religion but also commanded that the judges of the Royal Courts of Sicily should not interfere in matters concerning the Order; this was confirmed by Philip III on June 1st. 1608, and by Philip IV in 1642 (23).

Bali Hozes died in the Convent on March 3, 1661, and this house formed part of a rich *soglio* of over Sc. 100,000 left to the Treasury.

In 1761 we find that this house was known as "*Il Forfantone*" and that on May 1st, 1761, it was let to Bali Fra Louis Guerin de Tencin (24) who here instituted a Public Library consisting of his books and those of the library of Cardinal Portocarrero numbering 9,700 volumes which he had bought at a cost of Sc. 7,000. To these were added the books forming the library of Comm. Sainte-Jay, and those which, until then, had been kept in the sacristy of the Conventual Church of St. John. It is said that Bali Guerin de Tencin utilised the wood of the cases used in transporting Portocarrero's books from Rome for the shelves of his library. At first this library numbered over 19,000 volumes, but this number was augmented by books bequeathed by members of the Order (25).

Bali de Tencin appointed Canon Agius de Soldanis as his first Librarian paying him a salary of Sc. 10 per month out of his own pocket and giving him free quarters (26); however, the Bali died before being able to assign to the library sufficient funds for the maintenance of a librarian and clerks. The Religion then appointed a knight as Commissioner to supervise its management.

Adjoining the *Casa Hozes* was the *Casa Ribera* (Nos. 249 and 250 Kingsway) which originally belonged to Ignazio Ribera, and which was bought by the Treasury for Sc. 525 in an auction sale held on August 7, 1744, by the *Pio Ufficio della Fabrica di San Pietro* (27).

Both the *Casa Hozes* and the *Casa Ribera* were destroyed by enemy action and have been totally rebuilt.

The premises at present housing the *Casino Maltese* were known, during

(22) *Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* R.M.L. Treas. A. 1, fol. 18.

(23) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 78.

(24) *Libro Esigenziale dei Beni del Tesoro 1767-81* Treas. A. 2. fol. 3.

(25) CIANTAR, Giovanantonio, *Malta Illustrata*, Lib. I., Not. I. xxxviii.

(26) R.M.L. Ms. 386, fol. 61.

(27) *Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"*, Treas. A. 1, fol. 365 & 366.

the rule of the Order, as the *Casa del Commun Tesoro*, namely the Treasury of the Order.

Here were kept only the accounts, contracts and records of the Treasury, but no specie. This institution was presided over by the Grand Commander who was helped in his task by two Procurators of the Treasury, the Procurator of the Grand Master, the Conventual Conservator and the Secretary. Meetings were held at regular intervals and if the Grand Commander was absent his place was taken by his lieutenant and if the latter was also unavoidably absent the meeting was presided over by a knight of the Langue of Provence delegated for this purpose.

The Secretary resided on the premises in an apartment with a separate entrance. It was the duty of this official to supervise the clerks and accountants, and to see that the interests of the Religion were properly cared for. His position was one of the greatest trust as he delivered and paid all bills of exchange and replied to all letters. In this he was assisted by three under-secretaries for France, Italy and Spain. As his office demanded the greatest intelligence, his post was permanent; however, the Secretary's pay was small when compared with his duties, as he received a yearly salary of only Sc. 300.

During the early days of British rule the premises were appropriated to various public offices. Here were housed the Chief Secretary's Office, the office of the Collector of Land Revenue, the Government Treasury and the British Packet Office, whilst the Island Post Office occupied the site where the *British Dispensary* (No. 245 Kingsway) stands today.

Later, the block was converted into the *Grand Hotel*, and during the first decade of this century it was taken over by the *Casino Maltese*. In 1914 the structure was greatly modified under the direction of architect Nicola Buhagiar. The premises suffered very heavy damage during the blitz in 1942.

On the site at present occupied by the Royal Malta Library or *Bibliotheca*, as it is more commonly known, was the *Conservatoria* where gold and silver bullion and specie were conserved. All receipts and payments were made from here according to the orders received from the officials of the Common Treasury. A knight, who was appointed by the Grand Master for the term of three years, resided on the premises, this official being chosen from one of the seven langues according to seniority.

In 1785, Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan ordered the erection of the *Bibliotheca*, the Roman architect Stefano Ittar being commissioned for this purpose. As the new palace was completed just before the French invasion, it was never used by the Order for the purpose for which it had been built, and we find it used as a club for army and navy officers up to 1812, when Sir Hildebrand Oakes, the Commissioner of these Islands, ordered the transfer of the books in the library established by Bali Guerin de Tencin to these new premises.

The house on the Palace Square adjoining the Main Guard, corner with Old Theatre Street, at present housing Scicluna's Bank, was bought by the Religion in 1662 from Marc'Antonio Pettiguiet for Sc. 1,950 (28).

On the other side of the Main Guard is the Malta Garrison Officers' Library which was formerly the *Cancellaria* or Chancery of the Order. This building was erected by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt in 1602, and the following inscription can still be read on a marble tablet set over the main door:—

“To the Grand Master F. Alof Wignacourt who, mindful both of his Civil duties and his military concerns, removed to a more suitable place, that is to the palace, the public armoury, and brought here the records of the Chancery. To the excellent Prince who took the greatest care that the country should be always arrayed with arms and armed with laws, the Order of Jerusalem unable to adequately express its gratitude, can only wish him perpetual happiness (29).”

The Chancery was the most important institution of the Order, and was presided over by the Vice Chancellor, which dignity was one of the most lucrative enjoyed by the knights of the small cross. Originally it was reserved to the Conventual Chaplains, who were considered to be more fitted to fill the post than the knights who were trained in the profession of arms. The Vice Chancellor was required to be a man of letters well versed in jurisprudence, as it was he who directed the Council and drew up a report in all cases of litigation. This official managed the Chancery in which were kept all the records, acts, documents and titles of the Order.

In 1686, the dignity of Grand Cross was conferred by Pontifical Brief on Vice Chancellor D. Emanuel Arias. The Grand Chancellor Brandao pretended that, in view of the pre-eminence now enjoyed by Bali Arias, another person was to be nominated to the Vice Chancellorship, which he held to be vacant, as he considered that it was incompatible for the same person to be both councillor and minister of the Council. It was further pointed out that past Vice Chancellors had renounced to this post when invested with the Grand Cross. On the other hand, Bali Arias maintained that the Vice Chancellorship was to be considered equal to any other dignity, and showed that it was in no way incompatible for the same person to be both Grand Cross and Vice Chancellor; however, in view of his dignity, it was ordained that when he was exercising his duties as Vice Chancellor he was to sit on a chair similar to that of the other Councillors instead of on the customary stool, and that he was to write the acts of the Council at a table. The decrees were, in future, to be proclaimed by the Secretary. It was further decreed that the Secretary was to assist at the taking of the oath by the religious, whilst the Bali Vice Chancellor was to assist at that taken by the Grand Crosses. In this manner the office was adapted to the the Grand Cross and not the Grand Cross to the office (30).

The Staff of the Chancery consisted of the Vice Chancellor, his lieutenant (always a Conventual Chaplain) and numerous clerks. This office was charged with the registration of Papal Bulls, Briefs, Orders and Decrees, as well as with the execution of the decisions of the Council, including matters appertaining to the Commanderies, Pensions and Benefices.

On the site at present occupied by the Chamber of Commerce (No. 65

(29) ZAMMIT, Sir Them., *op. cit.* p. 47.

(30) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 481.

Kingsway) stood a house belonging to the Priory of Castille, which we find in possession of Bali Zarzana in 1798 (31). When the Islands passed to British rule, this house was occupied by the British Authorities until the autumn of 1853 when it was handed over for the erection of the "Borsa" or Commercial Exchange. The premises were modified considerably, the work being carried out by contractor MichelAngelo Azzopardi on the designs of architect Joseph Bonavia. The new Chamber of Commerce was inaugurated in March 1857 (32).

The palace next to the Chamber of Commerce is the *Palazzo Spinola*.

This palace originally belonged to Fra Giovanni de Villaroel, Bali of Noveville, who held several important posts in the Order. In 1638 he was sent as Ambassador to the Viceroy of Sicily on a very delicate mission. France and Spain were then at war, and the Spanish ministers were under the wrong impression that the Religion was not maintaining strict neutrality against the French. The position was aggravated when a French ship was permitted to make good, the damage suffered during a storm, in the Grand Harbour at Valletta, and allowed to proceed to France. Several French knights, wishing to return to France, had embarked on this vessel which had the misfortune of being wrecked off Licata in Sicily. These knights were held by the Viceroy of Sicily, and not allowed to return to Malta. It was in order to settle this matter that the Bali Villaroel was sent to Sicily, in which enterprise he was highly successful (33). In 1644 Fra Giovanni de Villaroel, then Bali of Negroponte, was appointed General of the Galleys, and in 1646 he was elected to the Bailiwick of Noveville.

The Bali of Noveville willed that the palace be administered by the Prior of the Conventual Church, and that the rents be employed in the celebration of masses and in providing dowries to poor spinsters (34).

In 1660 the palace was transferred by Prior Luca Bueno, executor of the will of Bali Villaroel, to Fra Paolo Raffaele Spinola, Bali of Lombardy (35), and it remained in the possession of the Spinola family until 1780. In his disproprium, Bali Gio. Batta Spinola, Admiral of the Order, who died in the Convent on the 19 January 1737, bequeathed the palace together with seven adjoining houses to his brother, Marchese Carlo Spinola (36), who granted the *Palazzo Spinola* together with the other houses on perpetual emphytheusis to Marchese Testaferrata Bonici for a yearly ground rent of Sc.200 to be employed in pious works (37).

House No. 74 Kingsway which, from the earliest days of the city, belonged to the Langue of Italy, was known as the *Casa Rocca Piccola*. A commission nominated in 1784 to trace the origin of the house failed to find anything in the archives and the Treasury of the Order relating to the original owner of

(31) *Stati Beni Urbani*, Vol. II, R.M.L. Treas. B. 90, fol. 57.

(32) PSAILA MANCHE, Capt. J. — *The Development of the Chamber of Commerce* — In "Commercial Courier," July, 1947.

(33) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 21.

(34) Records of Notary Michele Ralli of 27 October, 1652.

(35) Records of Notary Michele Ralli of 12 June, 1660.

(36) *Dispropriamenti Italiani* Lett. G., R.M.L. Arch. No. 927 fol. 71.

(37) Records of Notary Giuseppe Magri of 16 August, 1780;
Records of Notary Felice Camenzuli of 19 August, 1780.

the house (38), though it is quite possible that, like the *Casa Rocca Grande*, this building was once the property of Fra Pietro La Rocca, Admiral of the Order in 1598.

Among the various tenants of these premises we find Chev. Fra Gaspare Ferro (1682), Fra Gaspare Gori (1699) and Chev. Fra Scipione Malaspina (1727). Comm. Fra Baldassare Torres took the house on lease after the death of Chev. Fra Ferdinando Filingieri in 1745. It was then let in succession to Comm. Fra Gio. Antonio Lamberti (1751). Comm. Fra Giuseppe Provana da Colegno (1756). Comm. Fra Amadeo Baratta (1757), Chev. Fra Alessandro Rovida (1757), Comm. Fra Saverio Arezzo (1766), Comm. Fra Andrea Venturi (1772) and Comm. Rovere (1784).

At a Deliberation of the Italian Langue, held on the 16 November 1784, it was proposed to sell the house and the premises were then valued at Sc. 8,358 (39), however, it was decided that the house was not to be sold for less than Sc. 10,000. In 1788 the Langue of Italy sold the premises to Count Francesco Sant, they were acquired by the late Comm. A. Cassar Torregiani about the year 1919, and have now passed to his daughter, the Baroness De Piro D'Amico Inguanez.

The Balbiano family owned house and mezzanino Nos. 89/90 Kingsway. By order of the British Government these premises were handed back to Chev. Alberto Balbiano in 1824, as he was the legitimate owner (40).

At the corner of Kingsway with St. Nicholas Street we come to a very fine house now known as the *Palazzo de la Salle* (Nos. 217/219 Kingsway). This palace was bought for Sc. 11,700 from Comm. Fra Geronimo Basadonne by the Prior of Barletta, Fra Camillo Albertini (41), who in 1684 commanded the galley *S. Antonio* (42). Prior Albertini died in the Convent on the 28 November 1712, without having disposed of his property, and the house and its dependencies then passed to the Treasury.

Grand Master Raymond Perellos Roccafull acquired the premises from the Treasury in 1713 (43), and wishing to show in a practical manner his affection for both the paternal and maternal sides of his family, donated the palace to his nephews the Marquis de Dosaguas, Don Gennaro Perellos and the Count d'Albatera, Don Guglielmo Roccafull, Grandee of Spain, with the proviso that the Treasury was to allow the enjoyment of the house and its dependencies to those knights, descendants of the Marquis de Dosaguas and of the Count d'Albatera, who presented themselves in Malta for service with the Order.

In 1681, Fra Stefano Maria Lomellini, Prior of England, established a pious foundation for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Oratory of St. John's Conventual Church on Quinquagesima Sunday and the two following

(38) *Deliberazioni della Lingua d'Italia* R.M.L. Arch. 2154 fol. 221.

(39) *Ibid.* fol. 230.

(40) *Libro Maestro Famiglie Estere 1814-1827* R.M.L., Treas. B. 121 fol. 37.

(41) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"*, R.M.L., Treas. A. 1, fol. 348.

(42) ROSSI, Ettore, *Storia della Marina dell'Ordine*, S.E.A.I., Roma-Milano, 1926, p. 150.

(43) Records of Notary Giuseppe Callus of 21 January, 1713.

days for the repose of the souls of deceased Members of the Order. The foundation was also to serve for the provision of candles for the illumination of the Altar of Repose on Maundy Thursday. For this purpose Prior Lomellini assigned house No. 205 Kingsway which he had purchased from Ignazio Cassiera for Sc. 3,300 and also house No. 198 Old Bakery Street, Valletta (44).

On the 26 November 1687, Prior Lomellini presented a memorial to the Council petitioning that in exchange for the house in Bakery Street, already applied to the foundation, two others (Nos. 208 and 210 Kingsway) be assigned. He also stipulated that the executors of this foundation were to be two knights, one a Grand Cross and one of the small cross (45).

In 1679 Prior Lomellini lavishly decorated, at his expense, the ceiling of the Oratory of the Conventual Church, the paintings being executed by Mattia Preti.

Whilst serving as Lieutenant General of the Papal Galleys (46) the dignity of Prior of England was bestowed on Fra Stefano, which dignity he ceased to hold in 1685 on his nomination to the Priory of Venice, in possession of which he died on the 7 September 1699.

Casa Savina (Nos. 187/189 Kingsway) belonged to Martinica Savina who in 1668 donated the house to her brother, Fra Antonio Savina, a Conventual Chaplain of the Order (47). In 1677 Fra Antonio Savina donated this house to Canon Gio. Carlo Muscat (48), from whom the premises descended to the Baroness Xara and from her to the De Piro family.

This house has been completely rebuilt and today consists of apartment dwellings.

Old Bakery Street, which was first named *Strada San Giovanbattista* and later *Strada Forni*, runs from St. John's Cavalier to the Curtain of St. Lazzarus overlooking the entrance to Marsamxett Harbour. This street was and has always remained a residential quarter, and in it we find none of the institutions as found in Kingsway and Merchants Street.

From the earliest days of Valletta the French Langue owned houses Nos. 3 to 7 at the head of this street. All these, together with the Auberge de France in South Street, were destroyed by enemy action in 1942.

Up to August 1803 house No. 3 was still in the possession of the Balí de St. Piox (49), and for this reason this palace was referred to as the *Pa'azzo de St. Poix*. From December 1803 to May 1807 it was let to Dr. Stoddard, then King's and Admiralty Advocate, who in 1826 was appointed President of the High Court of Appeal.

On the 18 May 1804, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge arrived in Malta on board the "Speedwell" and lived with Dr. Stoddard. On the 6 July of the same year, Coleridge, now Private Secretary to the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, took up his residence at San Anton Palace until the 27 September 1805,

(44) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 485; *Liber Conc. Status* 1681, R.M.L. Arch. 262, fol. 137.

(45) *Liber Conc. Status* 1687, R.M.L. Arch. 263, fol. 20.

(46) MIFSUD, Monsignor Alfred, *Knights of the Ven. Tongue of England*, Malta, Malta Herald, 1914, p. 118.

(47) Records of Notary Michele Attard of 7 April, 1668.

(48) Records of Notary Michele Attard of 14 November, 1677.

(49) *Registro Libro Maestro* 1800-1807 R.M.L. Treas. B. 97, fol. 190.

when he left Malta broken down in health (50).

The house was then leased to Dr. Moncrief, Judge Advocate, and Lord Byron resided here when he visited Malta in 1809. Later, it became the residence of the eminent Maltese jurist, Sir Adrian Dingli, President of Her Majesty's Court of Appeal. In 1931 it was converted into the Central Telephone Exchange.

The Palazzo de St. Poix, which has been completely rebuilt, has lost all its original charm.

At the corner of Old Bakery Street with Britannia Street was a house known as *La Peintressa* (51). This house was owned as to $\frac{1}{3}$ by the St. Augustine Priory of Valletta, as to another $\frac{1}{3}$ by the Rev. Leopoldo Enriquez and his mother, Maria, whilst the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ was owned by Anna Leonora, daughter of Bernardo Tanniti. In 1726 this house was bought by the "Manoel Foundation" for Sc. 3,300. The premises were later divided into two houses, one having an entrance at No. 11 Old Bakery Street and the other at No. 119 Britannia Street; the latter house was occupied for some time by the late Sir Augustus Bartolo.

As on several of the buildings of Valletta a tablet can still be seen recording that the premises belonged to the "Manoel Foundation", it will not be out of place to record that Fra Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, on his being elected Grand Master, wishing to provide for the greater safety of Valletta, built, at his own expense, a fort on the islet of Marsamxett, the foundation stone of which was laid on the 14 September 1723. He also thought of providing for the maintenance of the fort by funds deposited in the *Massa Frumentaria*, and by the purchase of immovable property, stipulating that the Foundation was to be managed by three commissioners, one always belonging to the Portuguese Priory. The president of the commission was to be a Grand Cross of the Order. On the 1st July, 1731, the Grand Master chose his nephew, Balí D. Francisco Sousa y Meneres, as the first president, and Chev. Fra Fabrizio Franconi and Chev. Paolo Vion as the other members.

The whole site opposite St. Augustine Church, where the Vincenti Buildings stand today, was occupied by the *Forni della Signoria* or Bakery of the Order where the bread for the hospital, prison, galleys and troops was baked. This was built at the expense of Grand Master La Cassiere (52). It continued to be used as a military bakery for the British troops until it was demolished to make way for the new block of flats.

House No. 24 Old Bakery Street belonged to Balí Fra Balthassar Demandolx, a favourite of Grand Master Lascaris, who was twice elected General of the Galleys. In 1652 Balí Demandolx sold this house to Grand Master Lascaris, (53), but in 1736 it passed to the Cottoner Foundation through an exchange by which 22 rooms in the Market Square, belonging to the Cottoner Foundation, were exchanged for 16 rooms in the *Bucceria Vecchia* (Old Slaughter House) and two houses belonging to the Lascaris Foundation (54). The Cottoner Foundation was instituted in 1647 by Grand Master Nicholas Cottoner for the maintenance of the Cottoner Fortifications.

(50) SULTANA, Donald, *Coleridge in Malta*, in "Sunday Times of Malta", 11. XI. 56 and 25. XI. 56.

(51) *Repertorio della Fondazione Manoel* R.M.L. Treas. A. 25 fol. 33.

(52) *Repertorio de Decreti* G. J. Compendio Istorico de Gran Maestri fol. LXXIV.

(53) Records of Notary Michele Ralli of 8 April 1652.

(54) Records of Notary Bernardo M. Callus of 6 February, 1736.

Opposite the Demandolx house is the *Casa Lomellini* (No. 198 Old Bakery Street). In 1654 this was bought for Sc. 900, from the Common Treasury, by Comm. Fra Antonio Tancredi, later Balli of Venosa and Admiral of the Order (55). In 1663, Balli Tancredi donated these premises to his nephews, Fra Ottavio, later Prior of Messina, and Chev. Fra Pietro (56). Comm. Fra Ottavio Tancredi sold the house for Sc. 1,700 to the Prior of England, Fra Stefano Maria Lomellini (57).

As we have already seen, Prior Lomellini had assigned this house, together with one in Kingsway, to the pious foundation which he had established in 1681; however, this house was freed after his petitioning the Council to assign two other houses in Kingsway in exchange for that in Old Bakery Street. The Prior then donated the house under review to the Assembly of Conventual Chaplains, subject to the celebration of masses for the repose of his soul and for other pious works (58).

The Tressina Commandery owned house No. 173 Old Bakery Street. This house originally belonged to Comm. Fra Giovanni Tressina, who died at Vicenza on the 18 April 1650. In his disproprium Comm. Tressina stated that this house and several others had been granted on lease to Caterina Scappi, the "Senese", foundress of the Hospital for Incurable Women, to be enjoyed by her for the duration of her lifetime. Comm. Tressina ordered that, on the death of the said Caterina, a Commandery was to be founded in Malta, and that the rent of these houses was to be enjoyed by a knight of the Tressina family, the nearest to the main line being always preferred. Should there be no knight of the family in the Order, the rents were to be invested so as to increase the revenue of the Commandery until there was such a knight. In 1686 the Grand Master gave his approval for the erection of the Commandery, the juspatronage of which was to belong to the Tressina family of Vicenza (59).

Adjoining the Tressina house is the house of Gaetano Bruno (Nos. 170/172 Old Bakery Street) (60). Born in 1740 of Maltese parents, Bruno was admitted into the Order as a Conventual Chaplain in the Langue of Auvergne. On his election to the Grandmastership, Emanuel de Rohan soon perceived Gaetano Bruno's diplomatic acumen, and as he wished to institute important reforms in the then discredited administration, appointed him Secretary to the Chancery and also his private adviser or "Auditor". As Secretary to the Chancery, Bruno attended the Chapter General called by de Rohan in 1777 which revised the Statutes of the Order. He also had an important part in the compilation of the Diplomatic Code of the Order, for which work the Venerable Council, at the Grand Master's request, bestowed upon Bruno a gold eight pointed cross set with diamonds, and also granted him the sum of one thousand zecchini (61).

(55) *Cabreo dei Beni Appartenenti all'Assemblea dei Capellani* R.M.L. Treas. A. 73 fol. 33.

(56) Records of Notary Michele Ralli of 23 November, 1654.

(57) Records of Notary Giovanni Callus of 14 May, 1681.

(58) Records of Notary Pietro Fiore of 29 April, 1689.

(59) *Fondazioni della Lingua d'Italia* R.M.L. Arch., 2160 fol. 225.

(60) *Libro Maestro, Beni Urbani*, Valletta, Lib. I., R.M.L., Treas. B. 130 fol. 170.

(61) *Zecchino* — gold coin equivalent to 6s./3d.

When the establishment of the Anglo-Bavarian Langue was decided upon in 1784, Bruno played a very important part in the negotiations conducted by the Balí Sagramoso, in recognition of which service the Elector of Bavaria presented Auditor Bruno with an enamelled gold snuff box.

The death of Grand Master de Rohan in no way affected Bruno's position as he retained his post under Hompesch.

As apparently Bruno did not meddle in politics, the French Republican Government left him in charge of the Chancery, and it is for his work during this period, in preserving the archives from destruction by the French, that Gaetano Bruno deserves the gratitude of every Maltese. On taking over the administration, the British Government reconfirmed him as Auditor.

He is further remembered with gratitude for his generous donation to the library or "Bibliotheca" of the sum of ten thousand scudi, the interest of which sum was to be employed in the purchase of books.

Bruno died in 1808 and was interred in St. John's Conventual Church. As he was a Conventual Chaplain his property, including this house, passed to the British Government which considered itself to be the successor of the Order of St. John in Malta.

The house under review was sold to private ownership on October 15, 1826 for the sum of Sc. 6,666.

At the corner of Old Bakery Street with Old Theatre Street is the Bonnici Palace (No. 70 Old Bakery Street) now the property of Marquis Testaferrata Bonnici Ghaxaq. This was partly destroyed by enemy action during the blitz of 1942.

Adjacent to the Bonnici Palace was the *Casa Corogna* (62) (No. 72 Old Bakery Street) now completely rebuilt after destruction by enemy action in 1942. This house was bought by Virginia Fioccarì from Dr. Pietro Defranichis for Sc. 2,300 (63) and left by will to her daughter Anna, wife of Dr. Giacomo Corogna, who bequeathed it to her daughter Olimpia from whom it was bought by the Manoel Foundation (64).

House No. 74 Old Bakery Street, next to the *Casa Corogna*, belonged to Caterina Scappi, the "Senese", and formed part of the foundation of the Hospital for Incurable Women (65).

We now come to the house of Francesco Busto (66) (No. 76 Old Bakery Street). Francesco Busto was the chief purser of the "Capitana" or flagship of the Order who, on the death of his wife Geronima, handed the house to the Treasury in settlement of a debt amounting to Sc. 1,786 (67).

From 1671 to 1692 this house was let to Comm. Fra Martin de Nouar, Prior of Navarre. It was then let to Grand Commander Cristofano de Baroncelles Sauon up to his death in 1714. We later find this house occupied by Comm. Sartory, Lieutenant to the Grand Master, then from 1760 to 1762 by Chev. Fra Philippe Jacques de Barres, and from 1767 to 1791 it was let to Balí Giovanni

(62) *Repertorio di Varie Notizie Giustificanti le Compre di Beni Stabili* R.M.L. Treas., A. 25 fol. 329.

(63) Records of Notary Paschale Debono of 12 December 1660.

(64) Records of Notary Gaspare Domenico Chircop of 12 April, 1734.

(65) *Cabreo Ospedale delle Donne* R.M.L. Treas. B. 307 fol. 35.

(66) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"* R.M.L. Treas. A. 1, fol. 24.

(67) Records of Notary Lorenzo Grima of 19 December, 1640.

Battista Tommasi (68).

On the death of Czar Paul I of Russia, Balí Tommasi was appointed Grand Master by a Pontifical Brief of Pope Pius VII dated 9 February 1803, which was conveyed to the new Grand Master, then residing in Messina, by Comm. Fra Nicola Busi of Velletri. Tommasi accepted the dignity and nominated Busi as his minister plenipotentiary, instructing him to proceed to Malta to take over possession of the island on behalf of the Order, in conformity with Article X of the Treaty of Amiens. As hostilities against France were resumed shortly after, and as the Maltese placed themselves under the protection of His Britannic Majesty, the Articles of the Treaty of Amiens were never carried out (69).

From 1791 to 1798 we find the *Casa Bústro* occupied by Chev. Curo (70).

Another palace which was completely destroyed by enemy action in 1942 was that built by the Balí of Lesa, Fra Antonio Correa de Sousa (71) [Nos. 153/157 Old Bakery Street].

On the 1st July 1647 Fra Antonio was given command of the galley "Santa Catherina" (72) and later, in 1669, he was sent as Ambassador Extraordinary of the Order to the Court of Portugal to congratulate Prince Peter on his marriage and also to settle the matter of the Priory of Crato which the Portuguese ministers pretended to belong in juspatronage to the Portuguese crown (73), Correa executed his mission brilliantly. In 1674 he was nominated ambassador resident in Rome, and in 1679 was appointed General of the Galleys (74).

The Balí of Lesa donated the palace with its dependencies to Don Antonio Gonsalvo Correa de Sousa Montenegro of Oporto in Portugal (75), who in 1732 commissioned Fra Alvaro Pereira Pinto, also Balí of Lesa, to sell the premises to the Manoel Foundation (76).

General Vial, French Minister in Malta, occupied this palace from October 1802 to June 1803 (77), whilst Britain was at peace with France. During his stay Vial tried to create a French party through the services of some old French knights who had remained in Malta, and had been pensioned by the British Government. He also attempted to influence the Archbishop, Monsignor Labini, by telling him that Napoleon would obtain the release of the unfortunate Maltese slaves in the bagnios of Algiers. However, his propaganda had very little effect on the local population. On the fresh outbreak of hostilities in 1803 Vial was given notice to quit the island.

This palace is often referred to as the *Palazzo Hompesch* owing to its having been let, from 1787 to 1798, to Fra Ferdinand von Hompesch, last Grand Master to rule in Malta. Hompesch does not seem to have been too punctual with the payment of rents as, when he was elected Grand Master, we find him still owing

(68) *Libro Esigenziale dei Beni del Tesoro* 1767-81 R.M.L. Treas. A. 2, fol. 45.

(69) MONTERISI, Mario, "Storia Politica e Militare de Sov. di S. Giovanni di Gerusa lemme detto di Malta" Vol. II Milano, Fratelli Bocca, p. 228.

(70) *Libro Esigenziale dei Beni del Tesoro* 1796, R.M.L. Treas. A. 4 fol. 57v.

(71) *Registro di Varie Notizie Compra di Beni Stabili*, R.M.L. Treas. A. 25., fol. 77.

(72) ROSSI, Ettore, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

(73) DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 387.

(74) *Ibid.* p. 450.

(75) Records of Notary Aloysio dello Re of 28 April, 1689 and 16 July, 1692.

(76) Records of Notary Gaspare Domenico Chircop of 18 Oct., 1732.

(77) *Registro Libro Maestro* 1800-1807 R.M.L. Treas. B. 97 fol. 42.

to the Manoel Foundation for eight years of rent (78).

The princely Rospigliosi family owned the palace adjacent the Correa de Sousa palace (No. 150 Old Bakery Street); this, at some period, passed to the *Monte della Redenzione degli Schiavi*. In 1708 we find it let to Bali Fra Ignace d'Argote and in 1786 to Bali Cascaxares.

On the 1st July 1806 it was leased to the British Naval Authorities for £86. 13. 4. per annum, for the use of the Commissioner of the Navy appointed to superintend the shore establishments in Malta. This house was so used until 1832, when this officer took up his residence at the Admiralty House, Vittoriosa.

In 1811 the Commissioner was Peter Fraser and it was from the Rospigliosi Palace that Lord Cochrane, tenth Earl of Dundonald, was arrested by order of the Prize Court Judge. Lord Cochrane had captured many prizes in the Mediterranean, but the Vice Admiralty Court in Malta, through exorbitant fees, had deprived him of his just due. So, in a fury, he sailed into Malta determined to obtain a table of fees and charges. On going to the Court, he asked to be shown the table, but as no one seemed to know where it lay he proceeded to search for it himself, even entering the judge's robing room, until he found the list in a private closet and carried it off. The "Rape of the Table", as the incident became known, caused the greatest amusement in naval circles. The Prize Court Judge was furious and ordered Cochrane's arrest. The Deputy Marshal accompanied by four stalwart sergeants of the Malta Police came to the Rospigliosi Palace, where Cochrane was at the time, and as he refused to move, he was carried away by the police sergeants, chair and all, deposited in a waiting carriage, driven to the Castellania in Merchants Street, and there kept under arrest. After a period of captivity, during which he was treated as befitted his rank and allowed to treat his friends to sumptuous suppers, much to the relief of the local authorities, he escaped through a third storey window, the bars of which had been filed (79).

On its being vacated by the Admiralty the palace was converted into *Morell's Hotel*, and among the many people who lodged here, was the painter Sir Frederick Watts. Later, the premises housed Flores College, and Chevalier Vincenzo Bonello has informed the writer that the famous Italian novelist and playwright, Luigi Capuana, delivered a lecture here during his visit to Malta. During the sale by auction of the effects of *Morell's Hotel*, Chev., Bonello, then a boy, remembers seeing paintings being sold, which bore the "blue lozenge" the arms of the Rospigliosi family.

The premises are today the College of St. Albert the Great, which is run by the Fathers of the Dominican Province in Malta.

During the turbulent days of the Italian Risorgimento there was, in Malta, a continuous ebb and flow of Italian and Sicilian refugees. Among these were the poet Gabriele Rossetti, father of Dante Gabriele Rossetti, the Prince of Capua, brother of King Ferdinand II of Naples, Francesco Crispi, later Prime Minister of Italy and many others.

Among the emigres was Admiral Ruggero Settimo dei Principi di Fitalia.

On the 12 January 1848 an insurrection took place in Palermo, and a pro-

(78) *Conti del Economo Beni Fond. Manoel* — R.M.L. Treas. A. 28. p. 1.

(79) DUNDONALD, Thomas, "*Autobiography of a Seaman*" — London Spottiswoode & Co., 1860.

visional government was set up under the presidency of Ruggero Settimo. The movement was successful at first, as the whole of Sicily shook off the Bourbon yoke; however, the triumph was short lived as in September 1848 Messina was bombarded by the Neapolitans and forced to surrender, the whole of Sicily being shortly after reoccupied by the Bourbon troops. Ruggero Settimo fled to Malta in 1849, and died in Valletta on the 2 May 1863 at the age of 83 at No. 136 Old Bakery Street (80). His remains were conveyed to Sicily, for burial at Palermo, on board an Italian warship specially sent over by the Italian Government.

Grand Master Adrian de Wignacourt, who died on the 2 February 1697, in his disproprium, ordered that two houses belonging to him were to be enjoyed jointly, during their lifetime, by two members of his household, Comm. La Marche and Chevalier Vespi, and that after their death the said houses were to revert to the Religion (81). One of these houses is that which today bears No. 129 Old Bakery Street. This, together with a house in St. Christopher Street, passed to the Treasury on the death of Comm. La Marche, and we find it later in possession of the Cottoner Foundation (82). From 1767 to 1778 this house was let to Chev. Desnard (83) and from May 1778 to January 1787 to Chev. Grimaldi (84). The Conventual Chaplain Antonio Lungo was in possession of the premises from 1787 to 1798.

Opposite the La Marche house is the *Caraffa Palace* (No. 94 Old Bakery Street) which belonged to Fra D. Carlo Caraffa, Prior of Rocella (85).

At the corner of Old Bakery Street with St. Christopher Street (No. 98 Old Bakery Street) is the house which was donated to the Treasury by Chev. Fra Natale Mangual (86). The house was let from 1674 to 1681 to Comm. Fra Domenico Lahoz, and from 1682 to 1690 to Chev. l'Abbatie (87). From 1794 to 1798 we find the house occupied by Chev. Fra Sergio Bovio at a yearly rent of Sc. 100.

In Old Bakery Street, we also find the house of Chev. Fra Daniel Brunet who died in the Convent on the 11 October 1760. In his disproprium Chev. Brunet left his house (No. 107 Old Bakery Street) to the Lascaris Foundation subject to a single payment of Sc. 150 to the Prior of the Conventual Church for the celebration of masses for the repose of his soul (88). Chev. Brunet had bought this house from the heirs of Andrea Scicluna for Sc. 1,050.

The *Casa Brunet* which for many years was the home of the Government School of Arts, was converted temporarily into the Magistrates' Court in 1956.

(80) Act of Death - Malta Public Registry Ins. No. 774 of 4 May, 1863.

(81) *Sproprio Emti*. Lett. B. R.M.L., Arch. 925 fol. 15.

(82) *Libro Maestro Beni Urbani* Valletta 1829-1843 R.M.L. Treas. B. 130 fol. 164.

(83) *Libro Esigenziale Beni Tesoro* 1767-81 — R.M.L. Treas. A. 2, fol. 53.

(84) *Libro Esigenziale Beni Tesoro* 1781-90, R.M.L., Treas. A. 3, fol. 192.

(85) *Libro Beni Stabili del Tesoro "B"*, R.M.L. Treas. A. 1, fol. 64.

(86) *Ibid.* fol. 63.

(87) *Ibid.* fol. 265.

(88) *Ibid.* fol. 46.