

Art
in
Malta

ART IN MALTA

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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**NOTES FOR A HISTORY OF
ART IN MALTA**

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C O N T E N T S

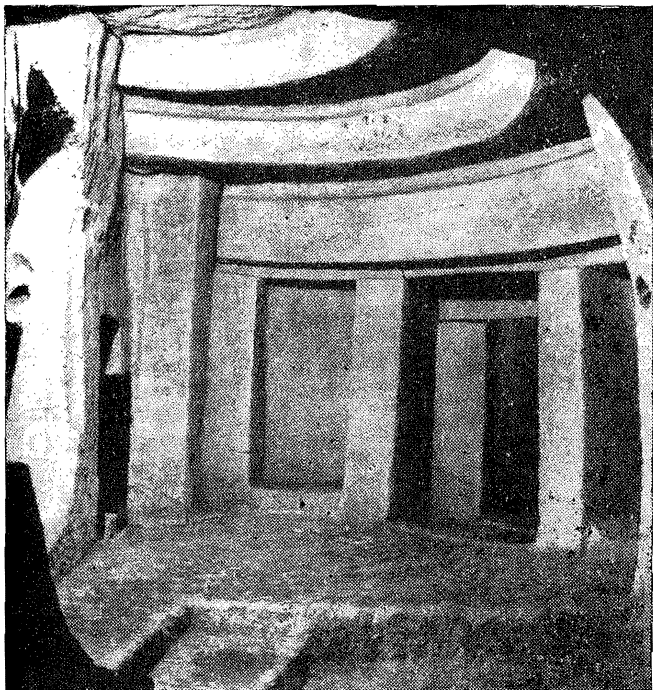
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FOREWORD

Lest the admittedly vague title of these "notes" be too misleading, a word of explanation and of warning to the unwary reader may not be amiss. In the first place, the words "Art in Malta" instead of "Maltese Art" mean to imply that, apart from certain local characteristics and influences which will be described in due course, the writer has often found it impossible to draw a neat line between the Art of the Maltese and that of their various rulers, and has therefore found it advisable to describe the various tendencies of art in Malta independently of the nationality of the artists. For that reason, the inclusion of such names as Preti and Favray, who exercised such a great influence on local artists, should cause no surprise. But, on the other hand, no hard and fast rule has been observed in this respect and Melchior Gafà, for instance, who should logically be left out because he worked almost exclusively in Rome, has been included because he was not only the greatest but also the most misrepresented of Maltese artists.

Finally, these sketches have no desire to be any more than their name implies. They are not a history in any generally accepted sense, but a collection of data, compiled by a layman and documented where possible, which, it is hoped, will make the task of future historians easier.

E. S.



Halsafieni: detail of Hypogeum, showing roof.

I. THE STONE AGE

In his monumental "History of Architecture on the Comparative Method", Sir Banister Fletcher mentions six main influences which contribute to the formation of particular styles and to the general development of Architecture. They are geography, geology, climate, religion, social conditions and history.

In the development of every form of Art in Malta, it will be seen that the overriding influence through the centuries has been geography. One might almost say during every decade of each century, Maltese art faithfully reflects the unending pageant of history which, in its turn, has always been a direct result of the unique position of the Maltese Islands astride the world's principal commercial routes.

To a lesser degree, the abundance of excellent building stone, the temperate climate, scarcity of rain and almost complete absence of timber, the staunch Roman Catholic faith of the Islanders and the precarious, often chaotic, social conditions in which the people lived for long periods, have all influenced the development of Maltese art. As far as possible, the extent to which these influences have been brought to bear from time to time, will be shown when each style or period is being described.

The most important group of monuments to be found in the Maltese Islands, is the unique series of megalithic temples of the New Stone Age, the approximate date of which has been fixed at about 3000 B.C., a period far beyond the narrow limits of History,



Tarxien: detail of Neolithic Temple.

when it is impossible to establish who the inhabitants of Malta were. (1)

Such, however, is the importance of this period of Maltese Art, even when considered in relation to every other corresponding phase in the Mediterranean or on the European mainland, that Ugolini declares: "If it did not seem a paradox, I would say that the Maltese Neolithic phase ... might very well be considered the Classic period of primitive archaeology" (2).

Where a publication to which reference is made here is included in the Bibliography at the end of this book, only the author, date of publication and page are given in the footnotes.

1. Sir T. Zammit: "*The Neolithic Temples of Hal Tarxien*"; Malta, 1929.

2. Ugolini, 1934, p. 133.



Tarxien: detail of Neolithic Temple.

There is a large number of these temples, the most noteworthy being those at Ġgantija, Gozo, and at Mnajdra, Hagar Qim and Tarxien in Malta. Although they are all of one type, it is obvious that they were built at various dates, often at considerable intervals of time. As a result, it is possible to follow the development and sometimes even to observe the origin of certain details of building technique which, with some slight modifications, are in use to the present day.

Besides the surface buildings, there is also the subterranean temple, or Hypogeum, of Halsafieni, at Pawla, which reproduces several of the details of the others; so that its discovery has made it possible for one to examine a most important feature, namely the

roof, which has entirely disappeared from all the surface temples.

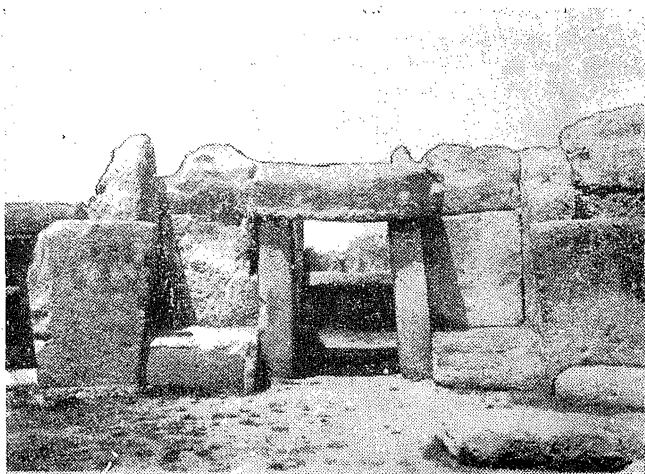
As far as can be deduced from a stone model found at Mgarr, the temples were originally mono-cellular, but at a later period two or more intercommunicating apartments were added, probably when the original hall became too small to hold its congregation. All the buildings that have so far been discovered are of the same type. They consist of a series of elliptical chambers paved with huge blocks of stone which are sunk into the ground and smoothed till their upper surfaces look like flagstones. In most cases they also have a semicircular forecourt and a retaining wall of immense upright orthostats.

The walls of the apses are usually built with rows of huge vertical slabs at the bottom, generally of coralline lime-stone, six or seven feet high, surmounted by several rows of horizontal slabs. At the corners of the entrances and of the corridors between each apse, the upright slabs are high enough to cover the width of the lowest horizontal layer, and thus form a sort of binding for the whole structure. Most of the slabs, especially those at Tarxien, show signs of having been dressed with some kind of flint instrument and, usually, the edges are fitted together with astonishing precision. In some of the uprights there are holes through which primitive hinges made of rope or sinew may have been threaded, and to which was attached a door which could be made fast from the inside. These holes are also to be observed in a more primitive state at Ggantija.

The roof was probably a kind of vault, as can be gathered not only from the reliefs in Halsafieni Hypogeum but also from the remains of vaults which are still to be seen in some of the apses. Two varieties were in use, the corbelled vault, which was practically barrel-shaped, and another which is very much like a real dome. The first, which is more clearly shown

at Hagar Qim and Mnaidra, was obtained by gradually projecting the horizontal layers of the walls towards the centre until the two sides were near enough for the space between them to be covered by a single slab. The type found at Tarxien, on the other hand, is a much more scientific piece of work. Not only do the horizontal slabs project inwards, but they are also properly shaped and smoothed so that, instead of being covered by a slab, the aperture at the top is closed by a regular keystone.

Certain parts of the temples, notably the altars and their surroundings which, it appears, were inaccessible to the general public, are richly decorated with reliefs, often of a high artistic standard. Usually they consist of very elaborate spiral designs. In some cases, however, there are superbly executed reliefs of fishes and animals, from which a fairly good idea of the ritual and ceremonies of those remote times can be obtained. The usual bulls, pigs and sheep,



Hagar Qim: detail of Neolithic Temple.

symbolical of strength and fertility and later to be adopted by the Romans in their "*Suovetaurilia*", are well in evidence. Quite a number of the uprights are decorated with innumerable small holes, as though they had been prepared to take some kind of stucco.

The domestic architecture of the Neolithic age can only be conjectured at, as, apart from the great monuments already described, no trace remains of the buildings in which the people actually lived. However, some light is shed on the matter by a carved fragment from Tarxien which, on reconstruction, was found to be part of the ground plan of a large house with spacious rooms, ample forecourts and a retaining wall which may very well prove to be the forerunner of those massive stone country houses with open loggias and uncovered staircase, which gradually developed into the great city palaces and Auberges. (3)

The allround impression given by the Maltese Stone Age monuments is one of such aesthetic sensitiveness in the arrangements of detail and the composition of masses, and of such absolute functionality, as though every stone had been placed and every line carved for a definite purpose, that one can safely say, with Zammit, that they are "the result of a refinement of primitive culture developed after centuries of trial and adaptation." (4)

The excavations carried out in the main temples have also yielded a fine crop of sculptures of a very high artistic standard, especially when due consideration is had of the age in which they were produced.

Maltese neolithic sculpture is a fascinating subject, only the fringes of which have yet been studied, though some attention has been devoted to it in an interesting and well-documented article by Zammit

3. *ibid.*, and illustration.

4. Zammit, *op. cit.*



Valletta Museum: *statuette from Halsalfieni.*

and Singer (5). The majority of the figurines which have come to light are made of the yellowish, easily carved, globigerina limestone, of which the temples themselves are constructed and still the most widely used building material in Malta. Other statuettes are made of rough clay, a layer of which is to be found between the globigerina and the lower coralline stone.

The sculptures may be divided roughly into two main categories, those which appear to be idealized representations of the human form and others, much less numerous, which seem to be portraits. The idealized types were evidently meant for some definite purpose, probably religious. Usually they represent seated female figures, either completely nude or wearing a sort of skirt. The workmanship of these sta-

5. v. Bibliography.

tuettes is conventional and not very much different from that of the present day. First of all they were roughly carved to shape with flint instruments; then they were smoothed over and, finally, the finished work was polished with some kind of fatty substance to make it glossy.

The terracotta statuettes, on the other hand, are pure works of art in which the artists were able to give full play to sentiment and imagination. Two of them, in particular, are gems of primitive art which deserve to be studied in detail. The first, which was discovered at Hagar Qim, is a remarkable figurine of a woman past her prime, made of red earthenware and standing about twelve centimetres high. Despite the vast adipose accumulations such as are to be seen in nearly all local sculpture of the period, the skilful treatment of skeleton and muscles is amazing. Particularly in the sculpture of the back, a sound knowledge of anatomy is displayed by the sculptor with a wealth of realistic detail.

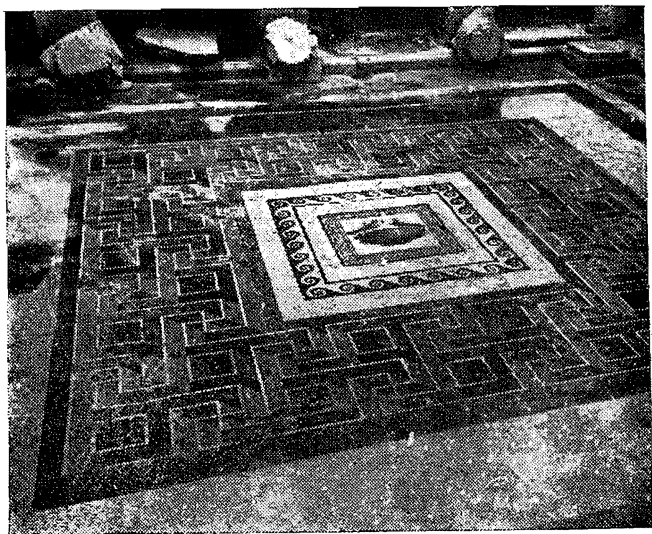
The second statuette is in two parts, showing a female lying on a couch, variously described as a sybil or prophetess, and a sleeping devotee. It is worthy of note that the figure was found in the Halsafleni Hypogeum, in which there is an oracular chamber with remarkable acoustic properties. The figure is nude to the waist; but the legs are enveloped in the ample folds of a pleated skirt. Even here the usual masses of fat are to be observed, contrasting grotesquely with the extreme smallness of the hands and feet. The graceful pose of the sleeper, despite her bulk, and the expression of unruffled serenity on her face, are remarkable.

II. ANCIENT ART AND THE MIDDLE AGES

The exact date of the Greek domination of Malta cannot be determined with any sort of precision; but it seems clear that Malta formed part of the Greek dominions towards the 7th century B.C., when the highest peak of Mediterranean culture had been reached in the cities of what came to be known as *Magna Graecia*. Unfortunately, although the magnificent structures at Selinus, Segesta, Paestum and elsewhere show that Greek architects were active all over Sicily and Southern Italy, up to the present no trace of their work has been discovered in these Islands, nor, for that matter, is it possible to say whether classic art was known to local craftsmen before it was introduced by the Romans.

Malta fell into the hands of the Romans under Tiberius Sempronius at the beginning of the Second Punic War and, at that time, must have been particularly rich and flourishing, as testified by various contemporary historians, whose statements are fully borne out by the numerous and excellent fragments of architecture and sculpture which have come down to us. Towards the middle of the 5th century, Malta was captured by the Vandals and, when the latter had been driven out by Belisarius, the Islands formed part of the Eastern Empire until they were overrun by the Arabs in A.D. 870.

The most important relic of this period is the Roman Villa, which is to be found within the limits of the ancient city of "*Melita*", more or less the modern Rabat, which, from time immemorial until 1571, was the capital of the Island. Of the original



Notabile: *Mosaics in the Roman Villa*

edifice, generally thought to have been the residence of the Governor of the Island and where St. Paul probably lodged for a time in A.D. 60, all that remain intact are the mosaic floors of the peristyle, with its richly decorated *impluvium*, and of the two lateral rooms. The peristyle has been partly reconstructed with some of the original columns and various fragments of architecture carved in local stone are still to be seen on the premises. The mosaics, with their elaborate designs and brilliant colouring, are minutely described in the local guidebook written by Sir T. Zammit, who was largely responsible for the work of restoration carried out in 1924-25 (6).

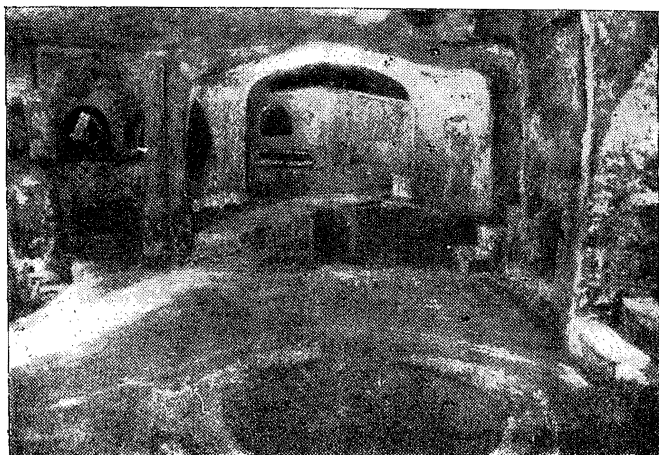
6. Sir T. Zammit: "*The Roman Villa Museum*"; Malta, 1930, p. 28.

The Catacombs, which are to be found in a relatively large number in and around Rabat, date from the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century. This seems to imply that the Maltese were able to practice their religion unmolested for some considerable time, as they had been converted to Christianity by St. Paul in A.D. 60. From the architectural point of view, the Malta catacombs are unique of their kind because, unlike those in Italy, they are not in the shape of long, narrow passages, but mostly in the form of rectangular spaces opening into one another to form a self-contained and easily accessible unit. The well-known qualities of the local limestone made it possible for the architects to hew them out of the solid rock without any additional structural support.

Characteristic features of the local catacombs are the canopied table-graves and the window graves. The first are in the shape of low stone tables standing in the middle of the burial chamber, hollowed out in the middle to receive the corpses and with slender supports rising from the corners to meet a sort of canopy shaped out of the rock of the ceiling. The window-graves, which are to be found nowhere else but in Malta, consist of a shallow alcove in the wall with a little window cut in the middle, behind which a grave for one or two persons, generally placed lengthwise, has been cut in the live-rock. Further interesting details are the large round tables so often to be encountered, and which were probably used for funeral banquets or "wakes", such as are held in some parts of the world to this very day. At one time, the catacombs were covered with decorations and inscriptions, but the action of water oozing through the lime-stone caused them to disappear in a short time. (7).

Byzantine Art, which reached full maturity under

7. Ferrua, 1949, p. 7-8.



Rabat: section of Catacombs.

Justinian, when the Maltese Islands already formed part of the Eastern Empire, may have been introduced at some time between the 6th and 7th centuries. It is difficult to say whether it was able to effect any progress before the Arab domination (870-1090) or even during that period when, as is generally believed, the local inhabitants again took to the catacombs. At any rate, the few mural paintings which still survive, in an extremely dilapidated condition, in the subterranean burial places of the Rabat area and in one or two tumbledown country Chapels, do not even date as far back as that.

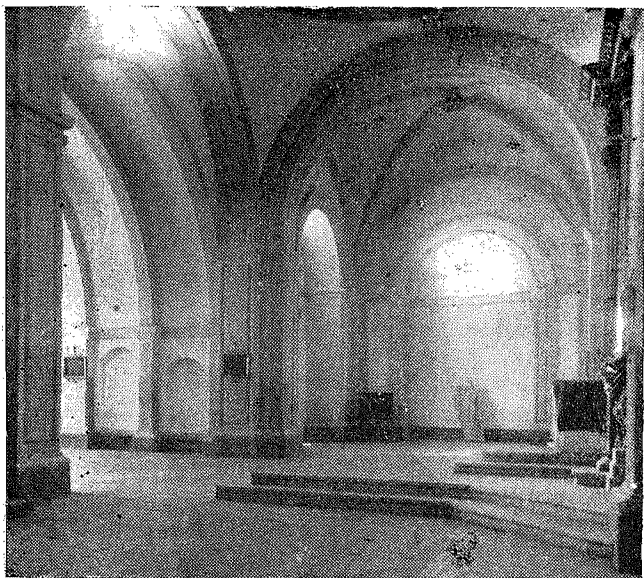
The most interesting are certainly those to be found in the "*Tad-Deyr*" hermitage, on the outskirts of Rabat, which survives from the original Benedictine Monastery which existed before the Saracen invasion. All that now remains is a rambling series of apartments hollowed out of the hillside. Most of them contain elaborately sculptured table-graves, some of

them surmounted by arches which perform the double function of holding up the roof and providing canopies for the *mensae*. However, there is also a large room, the first to be entered, which was obviously the chapel, and which contains a wide absidal niche where the altar used to stand. On one of the walls there is a rather elaborate group of the Crucifixion and, on another, the scene of the Annunciation. In the first painting, which fills the apse, there is a main group showing the Crucified Redeemer with the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist on either side. Two other figures, a second Madonna and an angel, appear to have been added on as an afterthought; in fact, not only are these figures outside the main composition, but the Madonna is also in a sort of niche with a little colonnade or loggia at the left. (8)

Judging by what is left of these paintings, they can hardly date from before the end of the 13th century and, though hardly yet approaching even the fringes of the Renaissance, have already left behind much of the rigid formalism of pure Byzantine art. On the whole, in nearly all the frescoes, including those of St. Agatha, which may be rather earlier, an admirable freedom of interpretation and composition is to be noted and, above all, a marked infiltration of typical Sicilian elements.

Among the earlier mediaeval churches still existing in Malta, some of which have survived in an almost fragmentary condition, there are to be found specimens of practically every architectural style, from the simplest paleo-Christian absidal chapel to Churches that reveal distinct Byzantine, Sicilian and Norman influence. The area in the southern part of the Island, which comprises the villages of Luqa, Imqabba and Zurrieq, appears to have felt the influence of the East most strongly. It appears probable that a colony of Eastern Christians settled here

8. Caruana, 1898, p. 125 and plate XI.



Zejtun: interior of St. Gregory.

after the Moslem invasion of Syria, Egypt and Cyrenai-
ca. (9) Until a few years ago, there existed on the out-
skirts of Zurrieq the ruins of a church dedicated to
St. Cyrus of Alexandria which was the only mediaeval
absidal church to be found in Malta. Old photographs
show traces of a large fresco of Christ in the apse:
and from this and certain architectural features such
as the pointed arches that still survive, it is possible
to date it to the end of the 11th or the beginning of
the 12th century, that is, after the end of the Arab
domination.

The architecture of the Siculo-Norman period,

9. Bonello, 1937.

more than any other, is inextricable from its historical background. It has been variously styled Siculo-Norman, Siculo-Gothic and Arabo-Norman and, at this stage, a word of explanation of this nomenclature may not come amiss.

When Count Roger of Normandy, twelfth son of Tancred d'Hauteville came to Malta in 1090, a great revival of architecture was taking place in Northern Italy, especially in the great cities of Tuscany and Lombardy, which eventually produced such gems as Sant'Ambrogio of Milan, the great monuments of Pavia and the Cathedrals of Parma, Modena and Piacenza. At the same time the development of trade relations with the East was one of the main causes of the blending of Romanesque and Byzantine art which culminated in the splendours of St. Mark's, in Venice.

In Sicily, which had imbibed elements of each of these styles, as well as being influenced by the art of the Arabs, the Normans managed to produce something new, which was a successful blending of all of them, superimposed with an extraordinarily mellowing effect on the rather bleak constructions to which they had been used in their native climate. To quote Corrado Ricci, "Sicilian it might very well be called because, though not possessing any native element, it appears almost exclusively in Sicily; Norman it might also be called because, though not having the slightest trace of anything Norman about, it was evolved during the Norman occupation of Sicily." (10)

According to the contemporary historian Malaterra, one of Roger's first important acts on arriving in Malta was to reestablish the Cathedral in all its pristine dignity and, later, to institute the first ten senior rural parishes. Unfortunately, few, if any, of these primitive churches remain and the Cathedral itself was destroyed by an earthquake in 1683; (11)

10. Arata, 1914; preface by Corrado Ricci.

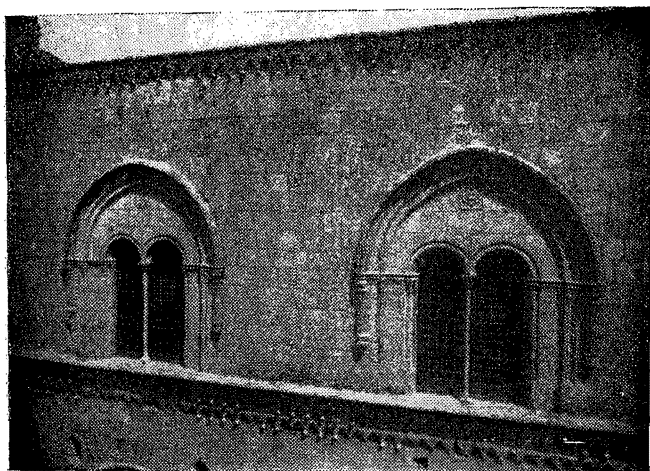
11. A.A. Caruana: "*Monografia Critica della Cattedrale Apostolica di Malta*"; Malta, 1899, p. 5.

even those which are known to have existed before the Arab invasion, such as the semi-troglodytic churches of St. Angelo and Mellicha, have undergone such drastic alterations that they reveal practically nothing of their origins.

The few mediaeval churches which have remained free of Baroque encrustations, such as St. Mary of Bir Miftuh and St. Gregory of Zeitun, although primitive in planning and structure when compared with their Sicilian contemporaries, are obviously nearer to the 15th than to the 12th century. Their main interest from an architectural point of view lies in the use of stone where, in other countries, timber would be the most natural material. In the complete absence of any kind of timber from which rafters



Notabile: *window in Palazzo Gatto-Murina.*



Notabile: *window in Palazzo Falzon; c. 1400*

could be made, an interior of any length had to be divided into a number of bays of the maximum width that could be bridged by a stone slab, which was usually about six feet. The slabs were laid across arches supported by piers projecting from the walls. In St. Gregory, there is a number of these bays, with a larger cross-ribbed bay in the centre which is a later addition, and arches down each side of the nave between the piers.

This simple but effective roofing method was used for many years, undergoing gradual changes but never being entirely abandoned before the middle of the 17th century. As time went on and more space was required, the piers were removed and the walls were thickened to take the strain of the arches, which were often pointed to lessen their downward thrust. As cross-ribbed vault gave way to barrel-vault, even the latter was obtusely-pointed, a feature which was

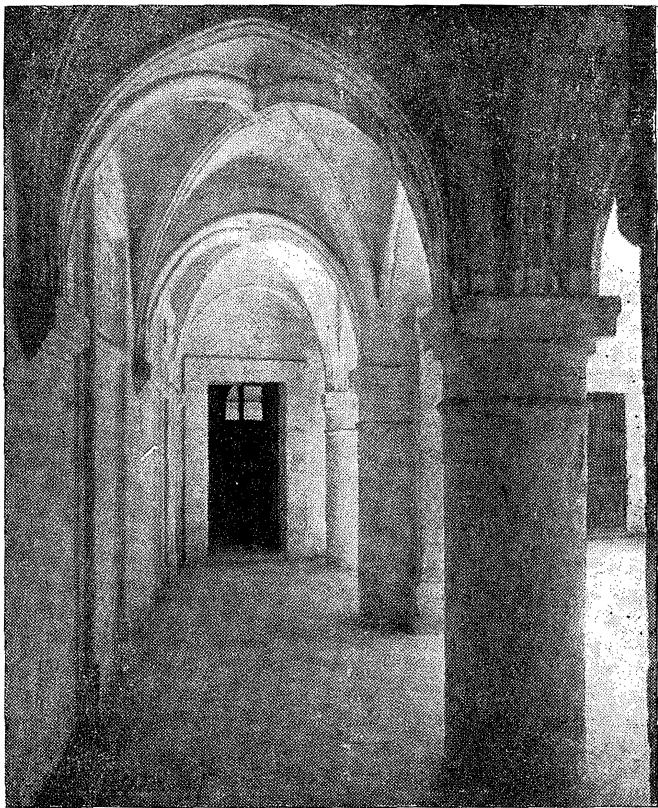
used with great effect by Cassar and Dingli. So that whilst elsewhere the pointed arch had by this time taken on a stylistic, sometimes even a merely decorative significance, its character in Maltese architecture continued to be strictly functional right into the middle of the Baroque.

As regards the domestic architecture of that age, the same simple plan is to be observed which continued in use all through the 17th century and which has been neatly described by Ward Perkins: "courtyard, central stone-vaulted entrance, flanking stone-vaulted store-rooms and stables and, above, the main rooms with their ceiling of Sicilian timber". Only the staircase, which in the early days was built out in the courtyard, much as it is in present-day Maltese farmhouses, was later placed under cover. (12)

The most ancient of these buildings seems to be the Palazzo Santa Sofia, in Notabile, to which an additional story was added recently. Most of the others seem to have been raised within the next few years and, judging by certain structural and ornamental details, which they have in common with Sicilian houses of the period, it is safe to date them to the end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th centuries. There is no doubt that, as was the case in Sicily, the Normans did not import any architects from Normandy but that, on the contrary, they made use of those who were to be found in Malta and who were best suited to work on the local stone which, at that time, must have seemed wellnigh inexhaustible.

The most noticeable features of the Notabile and Vittoriosa Palaces are the singularly beautiful window openings and decorations, the elegance of which is in striking contrast with the forbidding severity of the facades. The graceful double window of the Captain's House in St. Angelo, and of Palazzi Falson and Gatto-Murina in Notabile with their decorated hoodmoulds,

12. Ward Perkins, 1942.



NICCOLO' FLAVARI: Courtyard of Inquisitor's Palace, Vitoriosa; c. 1535.

are the counterparts of those on the Montalto (1397) and Bellomo Palaces in Syracuse, and of numerous other buildings in Palermo, Taormina and elsewhere. Certain decorative details, such as the double row of triangular mensulae along the string-courses of Santa Sofia and Palazzo Falson across the way, seem to be of local origin, as also do the peculiar miniature arches on Palazzo Gatto-Murina.

When, in 1530, Charles V. granted the Maltese Islands in fief to the Knights of Malta, who duly arrived with their own particular ideas of ecclesiastic, domestic and defensive architecture, this style did not die out at once. In fact, the *Castellania*, later used as the Inquisitors' Palace, which was one of the first public buildings to be erected by the Knights on their arrival, contains a small, dignified, and unmistakably Gothic cloister. It is the work of NICCOLÒ FLAVARI, an architect who followed the Knights to Malta from Rhodes. (13) The "*Siculo-normanno*" continued to influence local architects until the early 17th century and even Girolamo Cassar used the Norman column with its cushion capital as a decorative feature, whilst other elements, such as the obtusely-pointed arch and the flying buttress, helped him to solve the most serious roofing problem he ever had to face, that of the vault of St. John's.

13. I am indebted for this attribution to Chev. Vincenzo Bonello.

III. THE RENAISSANCE AND THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA

The revival of classical learning in Europe which followed almost immediately upon the capture of Constantinople in the early 13th century and reached its climax a couple of centuries later when Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) abandoned the Gothic forms and reverted to the classic style, found Malta, to say the least, unprepared. The Renaissance, as this new movement came to be called, was not merely a stylistic phenomenon, it was a complete and universal return to the study of Antiquity which so impressed itself upon the scholars and craftsmen of the period that they called it *la Rinascita*, or the rebirth, of art and letters in general. Its most important effect was, therefore, not only to modify the work of writers and artists but also to alter the spirit in which the work itself was approached. Of course, the birth of the Renaissance in Tuscany was made possible by the peculiar social and historical conditions in which the Republic found itself at the beginning of the 15th century, which in turn were brought about not only by merely physical elements but above all by the national character of its citizens. (14)

A glance at the historical and political vicissitudes of Malta at that age will show at once that, up to the third quarter of the 16th century, the Maltese were hardly in the mood to give a thought to, much less to recreate the spirit of Antiquity. In 1420, at the height of the Renaissance, they were scraping together 30,000 gold florins to redeem their islands

14. N. Pevsner : "*An Outline of European Architecture*"; London, 1945, p. 90 *seqq.*



Fort St. Angelo: staircase of Captain's House.
(From an old engraving.)

from Don Consalvo Monroy, to whom they had been mortgaged by Alfonso the "Magnanimous" and, barely four years later, they were desperately resisting an attack by a horde of Barbary corsairs.

Some respite was gained in 1530 when, on the initiative of Pope Clement VII, the Islands were granted in fief to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem; but the latter had hardly settled down when, in 1565, they were subjected to a terrific onslaught and were almost overcome by the whole armed might of Suleiman the Magnificent. When at last it was decided to end such an impossible state of affairs once for all by building a new and impregnable city on the strip of land between the two principal harbours, the Renaissance was approaching its gorgeous but inexorable sunset and other more fanciful creeds were being proclaimed in the world of Art. So that, in spite of what is said by Flower, Braun and others, there is no Maltese art of any kind that can be called Renaissance in the true sense of the word. Apart from sculptural decoration which is lavishly, and sometimes anachronistically, employed both on ecclesiastic and civic buildings, the structures themselves are still mediaeval in conception, planning and design, and it is not till the beginning of the 17th century that local art emerges slowly and painfully from the Middle Ages into the full-blooded bloom of the Baroque.

However, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, for the decision to build a new city resulted in an architectural boom which has never since been equalled and which enabled at least one great craftsman to rise to the occasion. In fact, with the birth and glorious history of Valletta is indissolubly linked the name of GIROLAMO CASSAR (1520-1586), military architect of the Order of St. John who, on being placed in overall charge of public works, was to design, practically single-handed, the first nucleus of the

grandiose monuments which were to earn for Valletta the title of "City of Palaces".

Cassar's early training was received at the hands of those architects who, in the short interval between the arrival of the Knights in 1530 and the Great Siege of 1565, were engaged in converting the small maritime suburb of the Borgo, later known as Vittoriosa, into the administrative centre of the Island and in making it strong enough to withstand the Turks who were expected to follow up their success at Rhodes with an all-out attack on Malta. The division of the Order into eight separate languages necessitated the erection of Auberges, or hostels, for each one, and these early buildings in Vittoriosa are perhaps the most important signpost on the road between mediaevalism and the new architecture of Valletta.

The Auberge d'Angleterre, which must have been well on the way to completion before Henry VIII confiscated the property of the English Langue in 1534, may be taken as a typical example both of the planning and of the decoration of the period. In groundplan it follows the traditional layout round a central courtyard, with stone-vaulted rooms on either side of the main entrance. The surviving Auberge de France is also built on the same lines. As regards detail, it will be noted at once that the pointed Norman arch has completely disappeared from doors and windows. Thus as regards lighting, the date of the Knights' arrival in Malta may safely be accepted as the border-line between the mediaeval hoodmould and the square-headed window surmounted by an architrave which, with its wellknown triple-roll moulding, is henceforth to be the most prominent feature of Maltese architecture. Pointed ceilings and an occasional obtusely-pointed doorway may still be met with as late as 1610; and although the triple moulding,

15. Occhini, 1937, p. 19.

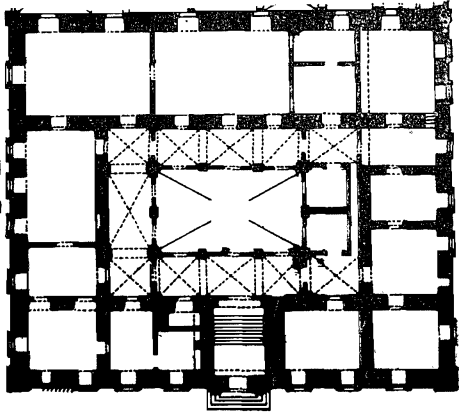


Francesco Laparelli da Cortona (1521-1570).

which is reputedly of local origin, does not appear before this period, it remains in vogue for some considerable time so that, by itself, neither of the two features is sufficient to date a building.

External decoration up to the middle of the 16th century is, generally speaking, conspicuous by its absence, for the Knights seem to have been overcome by the deeply-rooted local traditions as also perhaps by the cumbersome, albeit pliant nature of the available building materials. A further possibility is that they were in too great a hurry to have their defences ready in time for the impending invasion to pay any great attention to external embellishments. At any rate, after a comparatively short breathing space, in May 1565 the Turks launched their long awaited attack which not only brought the Knights' building schemes to an abrupt end but also demonstrated very forcibly that what had already been achieved in the way of fortification could be considered obsolete. The Middle Ages had taken an inordinately long time to fade away; but at last a new sun was rising to shine on what was to be the Golden Age of Maltese Art.

When at last the Great Siege was over, the military power of the Order of St. John was at its last gasp; the fortifications lay in ruins and a large percentage of the defenders had become casualties. At the urgent insistence of Grand Master La Vallette, Cosimo dei Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, with the consent of Pius IV, decided to send his foremost military engineer to review the situation. CAPTAIN FRANCESCO LAPARELLI DA CORTONA (1521-1570) was at the height of his career when he arrived in Malta and was particularly well known for the assistance he had rendered to Michael Angelo in St. Peter's. A man of grim and indomitable character, Laparelli's whole personality may be summed up in the famous sentence he wrote at about that time: "*Gran cosa è il fondar nuova città, metterla in difesa, abitarla, honorarla et*



GIROLAMO CASSAR: Auberge d'Aragon, Valletta; 1571

difenderla: tutte cose figliuole dell'Immortalità". (16) It does not seem to have taken him long to grasp the state of local affairs; for he presented his first report to the Grand Master on the 3rd of January 1566. In spite of this, the building of the new city hung in the balance for some time. The Grand Master himself, of whom the exasperated architect said: "*lungo di corpo così è lungo all'eguire e alle risoluzioni*" was doubtful and irresolute even after the first stone had been laid. However, much of the work had already been completed when, in April 1568, Laparelli left for Rome, leaving Girolamo Cassar to carry on in his stead, and intending never to return. He did so, however, on the election of Grand Master del Monte, and he remained here till 1570 when, having volunteered to fight for the forces of Venice, he died.

16. *ibid.*, p. 17.

of a plague at Corfu, just missing the battle of Lepanto. (17)

“Mastro Geronimo”, on whose capable shoulders the entire work now rested, was fifty years old and had served with considerable bravery throughout the Great Siege, being promoted chief engineer in succession to Mastro EVANGELISTA MENGA OF COPERTINO, whom he had also assisted in the Borgo. A year previously, obviously in anticipation of his future responsibilities, he had been sent on a tour of the principal cities of Italy to acquaint himself with the architecture of the Continent and, to repeat the words of his instructions: “*per auualersine in suo essempla nell'opre ch'egli hauera' da far per seruitio di nostra Religione*”. (18)

The concluding pages of Bosio's history of the period give detailed and often amusing accounts of the progress of work under Cassar's direction. From a certificate granted to him by Grand Master La Cassiere in 1581 we find that his principal works included the seven Auberges of the Languages, the Magisterial Palace and the Conventual Church of St. John, as well as the designs for the Churches of St. Paul, St. Mary of Porto Salvo, St. Mary of Jesus, the Carmine and St. Augustine.

Of the original seven Auberges, those of Castile and Italy were drastically altered during the 17th and 18th century, that of Germany was pulled down in 1839, whilst those of France and Auvergne were completely destroyed during the last War. Of the two survivors, the Auberges of Provence and Aragon,

17. The best known architect of this period was Bartolomeo Genga (1518-1558), architect to the Dukes of Urbino. He was chief engineer of the Order from about 1550 and worked extensively on the buildings and fortifications of Vittoriosa.

18. Archives of the Order of Malta; “*Liber Bullarum*”, vol. 432, fol. 253; 23rd April, 1569; v. Appendix.

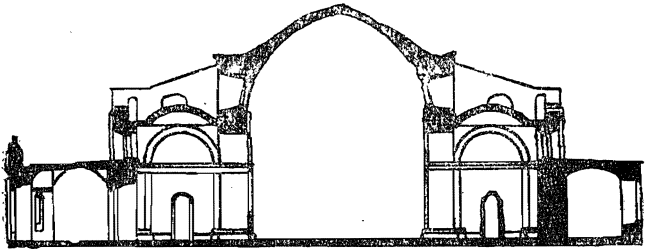


GIROLAMO CASSAR: St. John, Valletta; 1573-77.

the latter may safely be taken as a typical example of Cassar's idea of domestic planning. It is a one-storied building of the utmost simplicity, both in design and construction, and adheres faithfully to the traditional mediæval plan of a central quadrangular patio surrounded by open arcades leading on to the living-rooms. A close examination of the other Auberges shows that Cassar's ideas were still mediæval in other details besides the above. For instance, although the importation of timber enabled him to use rafters instead of arches for his ceilings, his use of cross-ribbed vaults in the ground-floor of the Palace and of flying buttresses to support the upper storeys of certain buildings shows that he had not completely grasped the strength and elasticity of his materials.

Whatever its defects, and they are neither as many nor as serious as some would make out, Cassar's masterpiece is without doubt the Conventual Church of St. John, in all its aggressive simplicity. It was built, at the entire expense of Grand Master la Cassiere, between the 1st of November 1573 and the 23rd of June 1577. It is about 180 feet long by 120 feet broad whilst the centre of the vault is over sixty feet high. In the centre of the facade is a lofty ceremonial loggia supported by a formidable pair of Tuscan columns and surmounted by a rather feeble tympanum which now contains Algardi's bust of the Saviour. This portal is flanked by two massive square towers which, but for the decorative pilasters at the corners, would hardly be out of place in a Norman castle. The top storeys of these belfries are reminiscent of those of the Annunziata, Vittoriosa, the upper part of which may be a later addition, perhaps by Cassar, as indeed a contemporary repetition exists in his Church of St. Mary of Jesus, in Valletta, overlooking the Grand Harbour.

The interior which, in its original state, must



GIROLAMO CASSAR: *St. John, Valletta; section through nave.*

have been considerably darker than it is now, is a vast, rectangular, barrel-vaulted chamber. In spite of its semi-circular appearance, the roof is obtusely-pointed, and the strength of its downward thrust must have been so tremendous that, besides this rather naive method of breaking up its force, the architect found it necessary to construct a number of flying buttresses between the sides of the vault and the top of the walls dividing the side-chapels. These walls, it is obvious, are nothing else but additional buttresses in disguise for, even after Mattia Preti's structural alterations, the passageway between them is hardly wide enough to be called an aisle. A further interesting point is that the vault springs straight from the architrave of the nave, thus allowing the eye to travel uninterruptedly from the walls to the ceiling and adding considerably to the sense of width and height of the building.

Girolamo Cassar died at the age of 66, but not before he had seen the town he had wrested from the reluctant wastelands of Scerberras rise and flourish until she was ready to take her place among the fairest and most powerful cities of the Mediterranean. The time may yet come when his compatriots will be moved to raise a stone or inscribe a line to his memory.

IV. ARCHITECTURE OF THE 17TH. CENTURY

That particular style of architecture which a modern writer has so aptly called "flamboyant classic", made a rather belated appearance in Malta towards the middle of the 17th century and continued to develop until the end of the 18th, when it gave way to a short-lived and relatively unproductive classic revival.

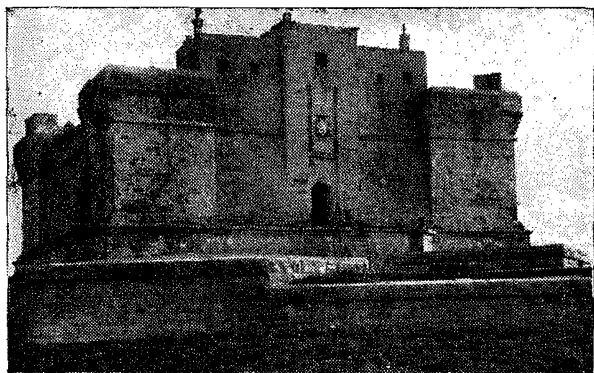
To understand the particular case of Maltese Baroque, it is necessary first of all to consider it in relation to its historical antecedents. As has been seen, Maltese artists were unable to take part in the greater glories of the Renaissance mainly because of circumstances resulting from Malta's geographical position. In the 15th and 16th centuries, architecture all over Europe was still under the influence of the Middle Ages and the builder's main preoccupation was defence. The austerity of the Florentine and Roman palaces of that period shows that their designers were still obsessed with the idea of building fortresses. As a chronological milestone, it is worthwhile remembering that Michelangelo, who was not only the greatest figure of the Renaissance but also, as proved by some of his last works, such as the Laurentiana staircase, the father of the Baroque, died in 1564, a few short months before the Great Siege of Malta.

The introduction of the new style in Rome at the end of the 16th century practically coincided with the building of the first churches and civic palaces of Valletta. But if at that period Roman architects were building, to quote Piacentini, "with a new feeling,

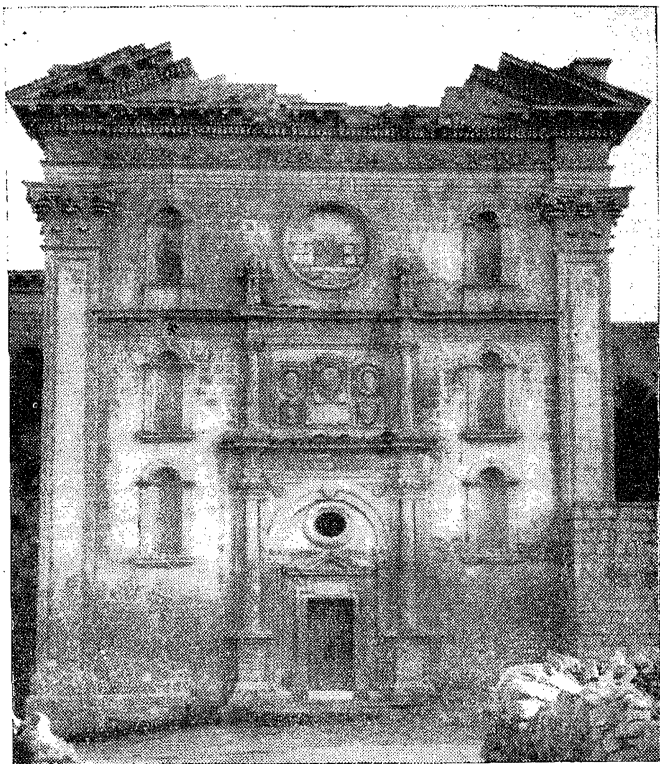
with the need to astonish, to delight", Girolamo Cassar and his assistants were still faced with the necessity of making the new city an impregnable buttress against the inroads of Islam and could only design buildings with facades which, like that of St. John's, were in reality nothing but an extension in height of their mighty bastions.

Although in 1571 the Victory of Lepanto had broken the back of the Ottoman Empire as an aggressive force, it was only in 1683 that the coup-de-grace was administered by John Sobieski at the gates of Vienna and, before that date, it could hardly be said that Malta was safe, especially from the danger of raiders from North Africa. So that, all through the 17th century, the foremost architects, Cassar and Dingli, Barbara and Gafà, were above all military engineers, forced to hold themselves constantly in readiness and on the defensive, and designing their works accordingly.

In the following century it appears that Maltese artisans were feeling sufficiently safe from interruption and, both in design and decoration, their work



VITTORIO CASSAR: Fort St. Lucian, 1610.



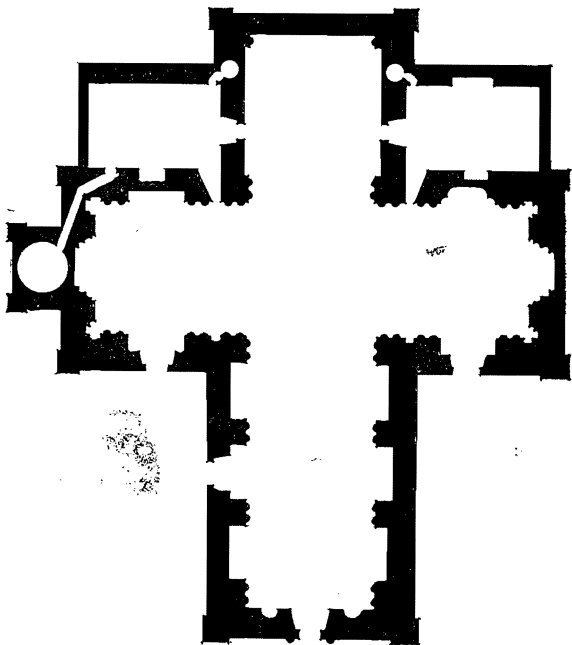
VITTORIO CASSAR: Old Parish Church, Birkirkara;
finished 1617.

shows a greater breadth of outlook and a greater freedom of interpretation. Under the grandmastership of the Spaniard Perellos, the Portuguese Vilhena and Pinto, and the Frenchman Rohan, such men as Cachia, Bonnici and Ittar showed a considerable mastery of technique and originality of ideas and were capable of producing works which deserve to be included in any history of Baroque art.

The first architect of note to appear at this period was VITTORIO CASSAR (1550?-1607) son of Girolamo, who lived during the period of transition between the foundation of Valletta and the spread of the building boom to the towns of the interior. It is not surprising therefore, that the long years he spent at work with his father on the formidable city ramparts, in such brilliant company as that of Laparelli and his father, should have made a deep impression on his style which is noticeable in many of his buildings. He is known to have erected at least three of the forts with which the Island was at that time being encircled as a protection against invasion. Of these, "*St. Thomas*" at Marsascala and "*St. Lucian*" at Marsaxlokk are particularly impressive in the neatness of their design and the sense of security and compactness emanating from their granite walls. Both, however, were considerably modified during the following century under Grand Master Rohan. (19)

Vittorio Cassar is also the designer of the old Church of the Assumption, or "*Santa Maria*", at Birkirkara, the ruins of which have stood in silent reproach to successive administrations for nearly two hundred years. The west front of this Church, with the exquisitely carved Corinthian capitals of its giant orders and of the columns flanking the doorway, its

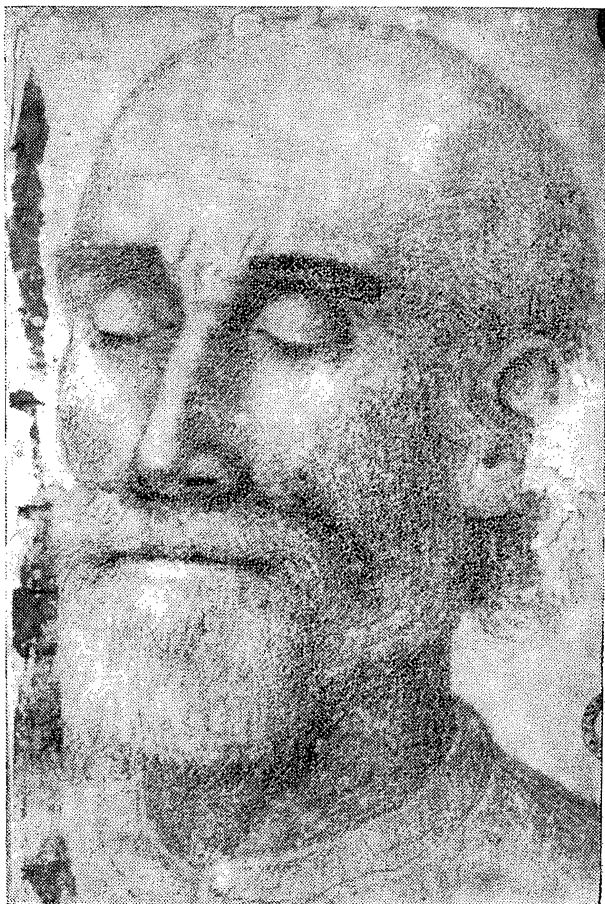
19. A memorial tablet in St. Barbara, in the Citadel of Gozo, gives the date of Vittorio's death as 1607; this means that he did not live to see the completion of either of the two forts, which were finished in 1610 (Abela-Ciantar).



VITTORIO CASSAR: *Old Parish Church, Birkirkara.*

carved entablature and imposing bracketed pediment, is one of the most beautiful architectural creations to be found in Malta. Though extremely graceful and ingeniously fitted into the scheme of the building, the triumphal arch motif in the central portion of the facade seems rather flimsy for an external decoration, and almost as if it were an afterthought.

The architecture of the interior, which is in the form of a Latin cross with a rather short nave and no less than eleven altars, is as fine as that of the exterior, the effect of shortening the nave and placing two lavishly decorated altars in each transept is to



TOMMASO DINGLI (1591-1666).
(from a manuscript in the Royal Malta Library)

make the Church look much larger than it is; this effect being further heightened by continuing the double tiers of columns which are placed in pairs along the walls of the nave, round the transepts to the beginning of the chancel. The roof, a few fragments of which are still visible, was a coffered barrel-vault, and the altars, which are of a later date and less impressive workmanship are decorated with a profusion of putti, festoons, garlands and arabesques.

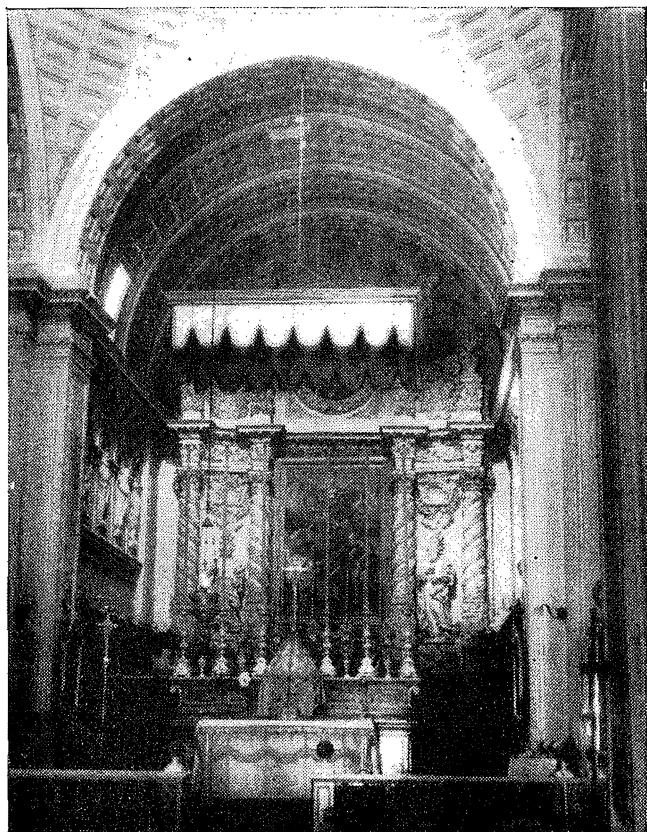
"*Santa Maria*" was completed by TOMMASO DINGLI (1591-1666) who added a graceful dome which disappeared when the roof caved in through neglect. This remarkable man was responsible for many of the 17th century churches in Malta, and seems to have got through the bulk of his work before thinking of anything else. According to family records which have recently come to light, he was married at the age of sixty and had several sons of "gigantic stature". (20)

Even if not actually a pupil of Vittorio Cassar, Dingli was greatly influenced by the work of the former and two of his earlier buildings, the Parish Church of Musta (1614), demolished in 1860, and that of his native Attard, are obviously based on Cassar's "*Santa Maria*". The main features of the facade, including the giant orders at the corners supporting the crowning pediment, the double line of niches and the circular central window are identical; but instead of Cassar's double tier of columns flanking the main entrance, Dingli has a pair of columns supporting a broken pediment. Attard Church is cruciform in plan with a coffered barrel-vault that is slightly pointed, and the side altars are placed in large arched recesses in the nave. These recesses are supposed to be the architectural forerunners of the aisles which were built in later churches; but it should be remembered that Buonamici had already shown the advantage of

20. Royal Malta Library, Ms. no. 1123; unnumbered page at end of volume.



TOMMASO DINGLI: Parish Church, Attard.



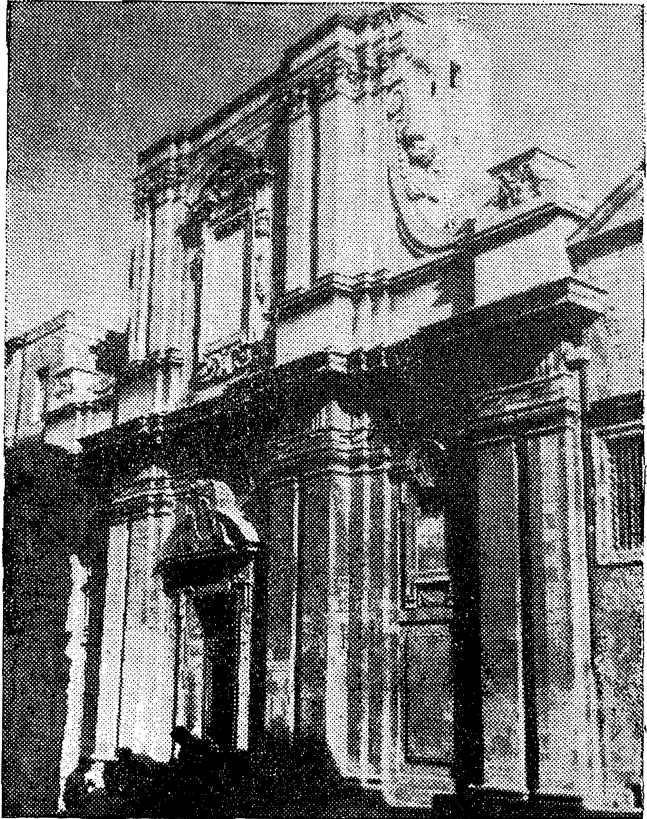
TOMMASO DINGLI: Interior of Parish Church, Attard.

having aisles to contain side chapels in his "*Gesù*", in Valletta. Tommaso Dingli's churches are specially noteworthy for the beauty of their stone carving. The west front of Attard church is outstanding in this respect particularly for its exquisitely carved main doorway. The statues in the apse of the church are the work of a Sicilian named CASANOVA, and it looks as if the carvings of the doors are by the same hand.

One of the first architects to work in Valletta after Cassar was FRANCESCO BUONAMICI (late 16th cent.), who completed the Church of the Jesuits during the last decade of the 16th century. The first stone was laid on the 5th of September, 1595; but its construction was protracted well into the 17th until, mainly owing to lack of funds, it came to a stop with an unfinished facade. For his groundplan, Buonamici adheres very closely to Vignola's *Gesù*, in Rome, which was the normal plan for longitudinal churches of the period; a nave, aisles with side chapels and short transepts and a dome over the crossing, though by designing the nave narrower, he makes the transepts look more than proportionately longer and gives greater importance to the chapels. The sculptured decorations of the interior, including the spiral columns flanking some of the side altars, is obviously of a later date and rather overdone.

Buonamici also built the Church of the Annunciation at Vittoriosa, only a small part of which survived the War, including a section of a handsome colonnade and a campanile which was probably the work of Cassar himself, at least in the upper storey, as the lower part appears to be much earlier, with traces of Siculo-Norman and Romanic elements in evidence. (21).

21. Since the above was written, what was left of the Church and campanile has been demolished by the Public Works Department.



BUNAMICI: Church of the Gesù, Valletta; begun 1595:

The next prominent architect to make his influence felt was LORENZO GAFA' (1630-1704), engineer of the Order and brother of the celebrated sculptor Melchior, of whom more anon. (22) The beginning of Gafà's career coincided more or less with the election to the Grandmastership of Raphael Cotoner who, together with his brother Nicholas, was to inaugurate the great building programme which produced some of the Island's best architecture. It was the period when the interior of St. John was being carved and gilded, whilst richly sculptured altars and monuments were adding a sumptuousness to local churches which they had never previously possessed. The greater secular buildings were also being more richly designed, and most of those already existing were further embellished by the addition of an elaborate trophy of arms over the main entrance.

Remarkable and typical of the period is Gafà's *Cathedral* (1697) at Notabile, though its general appearance is slightly marred by its squat bell-towers. His masterpiece, however, is his great *Church of St. Catherine*, at Zeitun, completed in 1692, where an effect of quiet dignity is obtained with a striking simplicity of line and an admirable balance of composition. He also rebuilt the imposing church of *St. Lawrence*, at Vittoriosa in 1691

From every point of view, Lorenzo Gafà is one of the most outstanding figures in the whole of Maltese art history. He was dignified both in his work and in his personality; he was held in high esteem by the Knights and was for a time *Capo Mastro* in charge of public works. It is not known whether he studied abroad, but in 1699 he was sent to Rome to supervise

22. The date of Gafà's death is usually given as 1710. But, in the *Ordo Divini Offici* of the Metropolitan Cathedral there is an entry under the 21st of February which reads: "*In Cath. Ann. D. Laurentii Gafà, ob. 1704.*"



LORENZO GAFA'; Parish Church, Zeitun; 1692.



LORENZO GAFA': Cathedral, Notabile; 1697.

the preparation of the marble works for the altar in the Choir of St. John's, which further research may very well show to have been designed by Gafà himself (23).

23. *Archives of the Order of Malta, "Libri del Comune Tesoro"*, vol. 646, fol. 644-5; quoted in Bonello, 1934, p. 9.

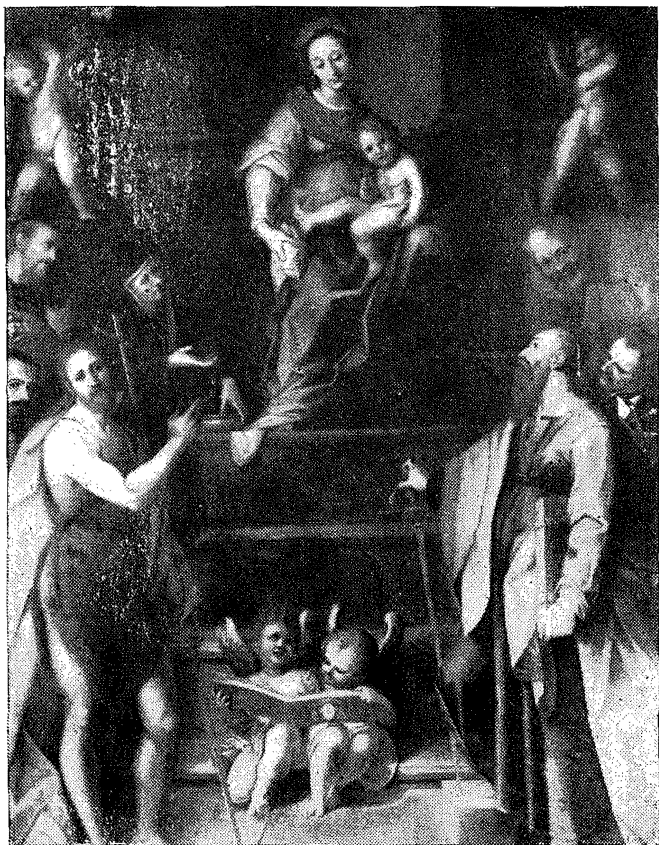
V. PAINTING IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

The position of Painting in Malta, even in its barest outlines, is very hard to define before the end of the 16th century. If, during the preceding years the turbulent political situation and the ever-present need for defence exerted sufficient pressure on local architecture to retard its development by several decades, *a fortiori* painting, which had none of the utilitarian aspects and practical values of military or ecclesiastical building was, to all intents and purposes, practically strangled at birth.

As a result, if one excepts the fragmentary paintings existing in a couple of surviving Siculo-Norman chapels, there is a yawning gulf in Maltese art history between the nondescript murals of the late Middle Ages and the first visitors from the Continent towards the end of the 16th century. Recent attributions of certain works executed in Malta before that date to various minor artists of the Sicilian and Neapolitan schools are hardly more than conjectural, though it seems probable that SALVO D'ANTONIO, a nephew and follower of the great Antonello da Messina, may have worked in Malta for some time towards the end of the century. (24)

Maltese painting of the 17th century is completely overshadowed by the work of three great Italian Masters who lived for some time and produced some of their greatest masterpieces in our Island. The first of these was FILIPPO PALADINI (1544-1614) who was banished to Malta during the Grandmastership of

24. Bonello, 1949, p. 8.



FILIPPO PALADINI: *Madonna and Saints*: Archbishop's
Palace, Valletta.

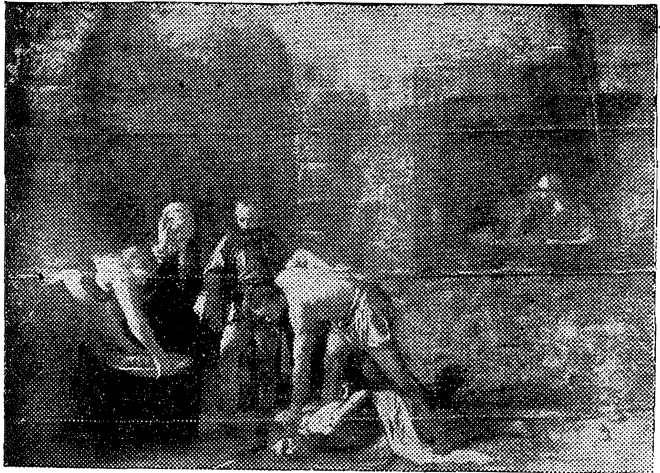
Verdala, for participating in some obscure plot in his native Florence. Later on, the limits of his exile were extended to include Sicily, so that it is in these two Islands that most of his work is to be found.(25) As an artist, he moved in the circle of Andrea del Sarto, sometimes rather too closely for originality. Among his best work in Malta are the "*Madonna and Child with Saints*" in the Archbishop's Palace, which includes a self-portrait in the background, "*St. Paul's Shipwreck*" in St. Paul's, Valletta and the monumental figure of "*St. James*" in the church of that name, also in Valletta.

The next arrival was MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO (1573-1610), whose visit at that precise date was an incredible stroke of good fortune for local art. By the end of the 16th century, painting in Italy had worked itself practically to a standstill and all the most influential patrons were agreed that the last word had been said by Raffaello. With one or two exceptions artists were content with imitating the work of the great Renaissance Masters or at best, like the Carracci, with picking and choosing line, colour and composition from here and there to suit the needs of the moment.

Though the Carracci undoubtedly played an important part in stemming the tide of Mannerism, the real out-and-out rebel was Michelangelo da Caravaggio who effected, practically single-handed, the most far-reaching changes in the field of art before he died, like Raffaello himself, at the age of 37. His art exerted a profound and lasting influence not only in Rome, Naples, Genoa and other centres in his own country but, even more remarkably, on the art of Spain, Holland and France all through the next couple of centuries.

The story of Caravaggio's brief but crowded stay

25. *ibid.*, p. 20.



CARAVAGGIO: *Beheading of St. John*; St. John's, Valletta; 1608.

in Malta in 1608 is too well known by now to require any further elaboration. His biographer Bellori gives a list of the pictures he painted here, including two portraits of Grand Master Wignacourt, a Maddalena, a St. Jerome and the "*Beheading of St. John*". Of the two which are still in their original position in St. John's, the "*St. Jerome*" is a good example of his later style and technique, whilst the "*Beheading*", which has been rightly called a major monument of European painting, has probably exerted a greater influence on local art than any other single work before or since. (26)

Caravaggio's flight from Malta in December, 1608, was followed by another long break in the continuity of Maltese painting, during which one or two small voices struggled to make themselves heard. The best

26. Sammut, 1949.

of these was GIUSEPPE ARENA (c. 1630) of whom very little is known, a recent critic even denying him Maltese nationality. He is said to have studied in Bologna in the studio of Gianfrancesco Barbieri, il Guercino, and his best works are the episodes in the life of St. Sebastian in the Auvergne Chapel of the Co-Cathedral, particularly the lunettes showing the Saint receiving the Pope's blessing, and his martyrdom, and the two Nativity scenes in the Oratory of the Carmine, Valletta.

It was not till half a century later that Malta was at last to achieve her glorious artistic reawakening at the hands of the third of the great strangers, MATTIA PRETI, familiarly known as "*il Cavalier Calabrese*", who spent the last thirty years of his life in the Island, painting and training local talent. Mattia Preti was born in Taverna (Calabria) in 1613; and studied in



GIUSEPPE ARENA: *Adoration of the Magi*; Oratory of the Carmelites, Valletta.

Naples where he immediately came under the influence of the new art of Caravaggio. Before settling in Malta in 1661, he wandered a good deal in Northern Italy and in Flanders and his later works reveal his admiration for Rubens and the Masters of the Venetian Cinquecento. (27)

In spite of, or rather, besides these influences, however, Preti has a strong enough personality, aided perhaps by his long isolation, to emerge as a great Master in his own right with a particular style which is, in a way, a synthesis and a revaluation of the best elements in early Seicento painting. He retains and develops Caravaggio's idea of composition, grouping his figures along diagonal lines which give the scene he depicts height, breadth and depth at the same time. His canvases have much of Merisi's drama without his sordidness, his chiaroscuro without his impenetrable darkness, and a sense of pathos very rarely encountered in his predecessor. Above all, il-*Calabrese* perfectly understood the technique of using his light to the best possible advantage and his colour schemes, even when in a subdued key, are unforgettable.

His most striking achievement is the ceiling of St. John's Co-Cathedral which he painted from end to end with scenes from the life of St. John. The technique of these paintings deserves special consideration as it appears to be unique. Realising the difficulty of planing down the surface of the ceiling, as is it one of the characteristics of the Malta limestone that it will not stand being dressed a second time with metal instruments, the artist decided to take advantage of the porous nature of the stone and to paint directly in oils. For this purpose the whole surface of the ceiling was soaked in linseed oil with sponges and the paintings were then executed in oils.

27. Mariani, 1929, *passim*.



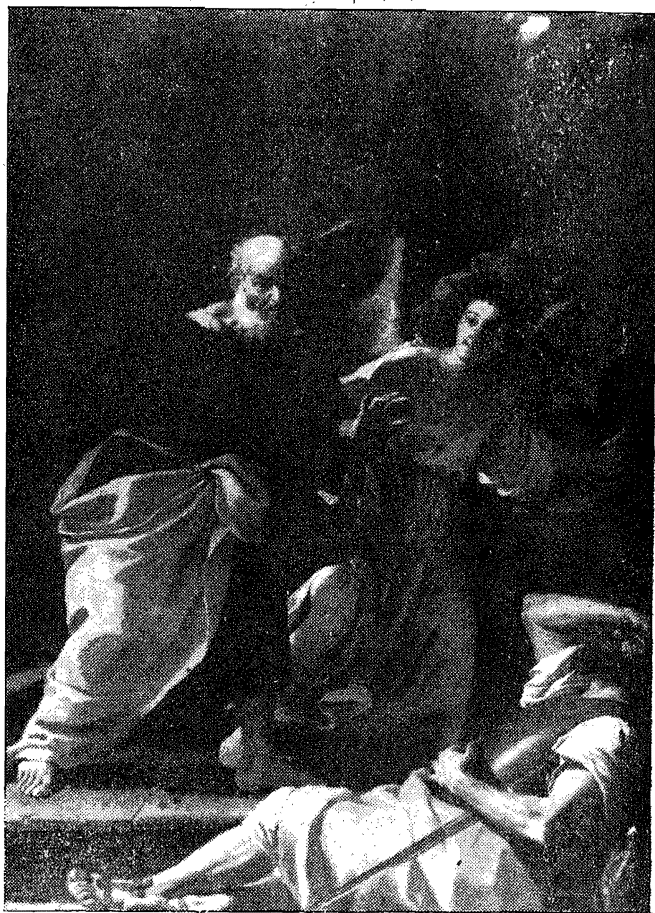
MATTIA PRETI: *detail of ceiling*; St. John's, Valletta.

over this priming. (28) It would take more than these brief notes to do justice to this great work, which besides its overall value, abounds in little masterpieces not only among the principal figures, particularly the Saints and Heroes of the Order flanking the windows of the vault, but also in the minor de-

28. V. Bonello: "*I restauri della volta pretiana in San Giovanni*"; in "*Archivum Melitense*", vol. VII, pp. 61-69.



MATTIA PRETI: *Madonna and Saints; Boschetto*.



MATTIA PRETI: *Liberation of St. Peter*; Jesuits' Church, Valletta.

tails, such as the groups of angels and domestic animals and even among the still life.

Preti remained in Malta until his death in 1699, and there is hardly a church in town or village which does not possess one or more of his paintings. Among his best works outside St. John's are the altarpiece with the "*Liberation of St. Peter*" and the lunette with the "*Martyrdom of St. Peter*" in the Gesù, the "*Madonna and Saints*" in the Chapel of Boschetto, "*St. Andrew*" and "*The Visitation*" at Zurrieq "*St. Nicholas*" at Siggiewi, and "*The Martyrdom of St. Catherine*" in the Governor's Palace, which is one of the most beautiful Pretis in existence.

Among Preti's pupils were included SUOR MARIA DE DOMINICIS who, after painting a number of good altarpieces including "*The Visitation*" at Zurrieq, left for Rome in 1682 where she also worked as a sculptress, and his freedman GIUSEPPE CIANFERLI who painted a good "*Christ at Emmaus*" in the Magisterial Palace and "*The Immaculate Conception*" in St. Francis Church, Valetta.

The last quarter of the 17th century saw a revival of painting which continued to gather strength until it reached its climax shortly afterwards, when most of the Parish and Monastic Churches were being enlarged and redecorated to meet the requirements of their rapidly growing congregation.

The first to emerge was STEFANO ERARDI (1650-1733) who was often to reach a remarkably high standard in draughtsmanship, composition and particularly in his colour technique. Unfortunately, however, he was an unabashed plagiarist, and his works are often nothing but a patchwork of those of the great Italian masters. He painted a large number of sacred subjects and some portraits, among his best works being the "*Adoration of the Magi*" and the "*Massacre of the Innocents*" in the Chapel of Germany, in St. John's,



STEFANO ERARDI: *Adoration of the Magi*; St. John's, Valletta.

the paintings in the Oratory of the Onorati, attached to the Gesù, and a series of paintings of Saints of the Order in the Oratory of the Conventual Church. ENRICO ARNAUD, who flourished at about the same period, produced one or two good paintings, including "*Our Lady of Liésse*", in the Church of the same name; but he too was a plagiarist and was not averse to copying whole figures.

The dawn of the 18th century saw the beginning of a steady flow of young artists to Rome, which was to increase in volume as time went by and was only interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. These young painters and sculptors were usually admitted to the schools of the Academy of St. Luke, where they very often earned the highest laurels and as likely as not found immediate employment either in the Eternal City itself or in some other European capital. Among the records of that period we find the names of the sculptors PIETRO PAOLO TROISI and GIUSEPPE CASHA and, somewhat later, of the painters GIUSEPPE GRECH and MICHELE BUSUTTIL. (29)

However, before they had time to make a name for themselves, two bright stars had appeared in the Maltese art firmament, whose light was not to grow dimmer before the last quarter of the century. They were FRANCESCO ZAHRA (1680-1765) and ANTOINE DE FAVRAY (1706-1792). Zahra was born in Senglea and received his early tuition at the hands of GIAN NICOLA BUHAGIAR (1670-1745) a member of a family of painters at least three of whom, Gian Nicola, Rocco and Pasquale, made a comfortable reputation for themselves as painters of sacred subjects and *portraits d'occasion*. Most writers seem to be in agreement that

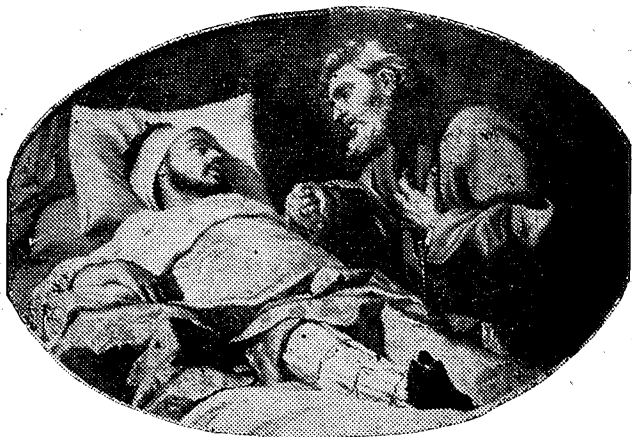
29. A description of the prize-giving ceremony of the Academy of St. Luke, which was traditionally held on the Capitol, was published each year in bookform. Several of these interesting publications are to be found in the Royal Malta Library.



FRANCESCO ZAHRA: *Madonna and Saints; Zabbar.*

Zahra never left his native land; but there is no doubt that the style of his larger church paintings is formed on the Neapolitan school. As a painter he was surprisingly versatile, but his strongest lines were portraits and sacred compositions. Among his best works are the paintings in St. Helen's, Birkirkara, the "*Guardian Angel*" at Lia, the portrait of Bishop Alpheran at Notabile and the "*Apotheosis of St. Paul*" in the Chapter House of the Cathedral, which is considered his masterpiece.

Antoine de Favray was born at Bagnolet, France, and at the age of 32 was taken to Rome by Jean-Francois de Troy, the newly appointed Director of the Academie de France, where he lived for six years. He came to Malta in 1744 and was admitted to the Langue of France of the Order of St. John. The decade between 1761 and 1771 he spent in travelling through Turkey and the Near East after which he definitely settled down in Malta where he died at the age of 86.



ANTOINE DE FAVRAY: *St. Ignatius and St. Peter; San Calcedonio, Floriana.*



ANTOINE DE FAVRAY: *Portrait of a Lady*; in a private collection



ANTOINE DE FAVRAY: *G.M. Emmanuel Pinto*; St. John's,
Valletta.

When Favray arrived in Malta, Grand Master Pinto was just commencing his vast building programme in town and country and most of the religious orders and noble families were following suit. Commissions for altarpieces, portraits, genre pictures and landscapes were plentiful. One of his first commissions seems to have been the series of lunettes with scenes from the life of St. John in the Conventual Church, which was followed by the full-length portrait of Emanuel Pinto in the sacristy. Other paintings of his earlier period are the series in the Chapel of Floriana Seminary. But it is quite impossible in the space at our disposal to do full justice to the achievements of this fine artist; who produced a great many works of art which were to place him in the front rank of his contemporaries. Above all he excelled as a portrait painter, and his numerous portraits of members of the Marchesi family, who were his special protectors, are the best of the period to be found in Malta. (30)

Favray was also responsible for sending the young GIUSEPPE GRECH (1757-1789) to Rome where he obtained the first prize of the Academy of St. Luke. Grech's only known works in Malta are two stations of the Cross at Naxxar, a small pastel in the Bencini collection and a charming self-portrait in Valletta Museum, though it is believed that most of his best paintings were sent to France. Grech's contemporary MICHELE BUSUTTI (1758-1828?) who received his early training in the Academy of St. Luke and in the studio of Mariano Rossi, was also a painter of some merit, his best work being the main altarpiece of Gozo Cathedral.

With the death of Antoine de Favray the 18th century, which had come in like a lion, went out like

30. E. Sammut: "A link with the Euarts"; in "Times of Malta", 19th July, 1946.



GIUSEPPE GRECH: *Self-portrait*; Valletta Museum.

a shorn lamb, the departure of the Knights, followed by the turbulent French period and the coming of the English, bringing to an abrupt end a long period of fruitful activity. The following century was to see a different orientation in the field of art, as in practically every other walk of life. Whether it was for the better or for the worse perhaps it is too soon to judge.

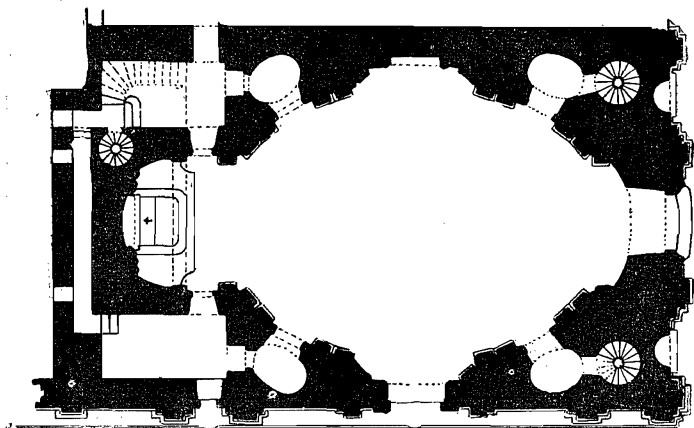
VI. ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE IN THE 18TH. CENTURY

The turn of the century saw no drastic change in the regular rhythm which by that time marked the development of local architecture, except for an increase in flexibility of design and composition and a greater opulence in exterior form and overall decoration. Local builders were breaking down the last barriers of the late Renaissance and henceforth their works were to gain in fantasy what they lost in formalism.

GIOVANNI BARBARA (1660-1730) is best known for his fine, twin-towered church at Lia (1694) which also is designed with sobriety and grace. His best work, however, is the exquisite little church of St. James (1710) in Valletta. Both for the originality of its elliptical groundplan, reminiscent of Borromini's "*San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*" (1633) in Rome, and for the way the best possible use is made of space and light it is a real germ of architecture. Barbara worked for a number of years on the fortifications of Floriana and is the author of that queer, twisted archway under the bastions at *Sa Maison*.

Towards the beginning of the 18th century GIUSEPPE BONNICI (1707-1779?) came into prominence, continuing the tradition of Gafà and Barbara, though with a grace and airiness which neither of them possessed. His first major work was the church of St. Publius, at Floriana, which was commenced in 1733, when he was barely twenty six years old (31). A few years

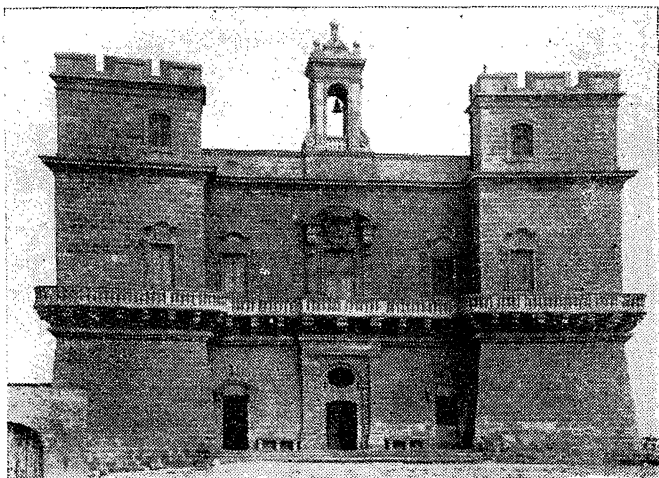
31. The colonnade and pediment are a late 19th cent. addition.



GIOVANNI BARBARA: *St. James*, Valletta; 1710.

later (c. 1746) he was responsible for the erection of the *Custom House* on the shore of the Grand Harbour, for which he had to build foundations on the bottom of the sea. In 1758 he carried on with the construction of the *Gran Castellania*, now Medical and Health Department, in Valletta, which was begun a decade earlier by FRANCESCO ZERFA. In the same year he completed the Parish Church of Nadur, Gozo, to which, however, notable additions, including a dome, were made later.

By the middle of the 18th century, or even slightly earlier, through the influence of Grand Master Vilhena (1722-36) and his Spanish and Portuguese successors, a far greater amount of sculptural ornament began to make an appearance in architectural design though never, of course, to the extent it was used in the Iberian Peninsula itself. The custom of erecting huge trophies of arms over the main doorways, surmounted by the bust of the reigning Grand Master, added considerably to the attractiveness of several



DOMENICO CACHIA: *Selmun Palace*, near Mellieha.

hitherto featureless structures. Other details, such as the window surrounds and the top frieze, were lavishly decorated, sometimes, as in the Castellania, to the extent of adding a separate marble surface which was carved *in situ*.

At this period DOMENICO CACHIA (1710-1790) (32) of Zeitun, chief architect of the Order, produced several works of note. His *Selmun Castle*, built on a site donated to the Order by Caterina Vitale, is interesting as an illustration of the progress effected in this type of building since Vittorio Cassar erected his towers in the 17th century. The ground plan, apart from

32. Cachia's Christian name has been variously given. Some confusion has resulted from there having been a number of architects of that surname who worked during the 18th century. The name Domenico appears on a receipt enrolled in the records of Notary Francesco Dos, for works carried out in the Auberge de Castile.

the size and the increase in the number of rooms, is still surprisingly similar, with its triangular towers at the four corners; but the treatment of the exterior is in a totally different spirit, and the open balcony running round the first floor, the gracefully designed windows and the airy bell-tower over the main facade give it an air of insouciance which is totally absent from its sombre predecessors.

Cachia's *Auberge de Castille* (1744), though severely rectangular in outward plan, has an interestingly designed and far from severe west front. There are ten richly decorated windows in each storey. Of these, the three at either side are placed in sunken panels whilst the inner ones are slightly further apart and separated by pilasters. The rhythm increases towards the centre, where a broad flight of steps leads up to the main entrance which is flanked by two pairs of columns. The open balcony over the doorway is hidden behind a rich panoply of arms and banners in the centre of which is a bronze bust of Grand Master Pinto. The sculpture continues up each side of the central window which is surmounted by a coat of arms and the entablature is elaborately carved. The inner courtyard has a two-storeyed arcade which, with some slight alterations, might very well be an original Cassar design; but the staircase is much more grandiose than is usual even at such an advanced date. Another of Cachia's principal works is the Church of St. Helen, at Birkirkara, which appears to be a revised and, so to speak, a romanticised version of Gafà's Cathedral.

MICHELE CACHIA (1760-1839) was also an architect of some renown. His chief work is the hospital at Rabat, Gozo, and he also carried out the restoration of several important buildings in Valletta, notably the Auberge de Provence. In 1799 he was appointed Chief Architect by Sir Alexander Ball, and in 1802 he proceeded to England as one of the Delegates of the



DOMENICO CACHIA: St. Helen, Birkirkara.

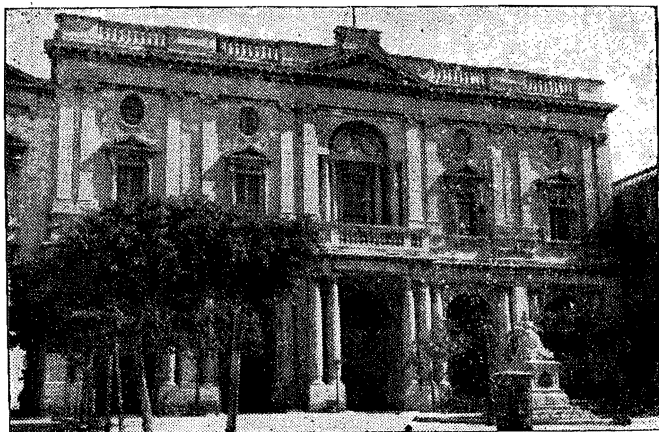


DOMENICO CACHIA: *Auberge de Castile*; 1744.

Maltese People in the discussions which were to end with the inclusion of the Maltese Islands in the British Empire.

The last architect of note during this period was STEFANO ITTAR who, in 1786, came from Catania where, having worked principally on the Collegiata, the Porta Ferdinandea and the Benedictine Abbey, he left a lasting impression on Sicilian architecture in general. His imposing *Bibliotheca* (1793) completed after his death by Cachia, with its ingenious employment of various kinds of stone in the facade, is particularly important for the first definite step it takes towards what was to become the 19th century classic revival. Stefano was succeeded by his son SEBASTIAN, who continued in his father's footsteps as an architect, and was also an engraver and a savant of some repute.

All through the latter half of the 17th century the use of sculpture, especially in the interior decoration of churches, became ever more popular. It ap-



STEFANO ITTAR: Bibliotheca, Valletta; begun 1796.

appears from a letter written by Mattia Preti to Don Antonio Ruffo that *il Calabrese* was certainly responsible for the designs, if not for the idea, of the magnificent bas-reliefs covering the walls of St. John's, which transformed Cassar's bare cavern into one of the richest decorative ensembles in existence. (33)

Such an impressive example did not lack admirers or imitators, and it was not long before several other Churches, such as *St. Mary Of Jesus*, overlooking the Grand Harbour, were similarly treated. It is astonishing that, until then, the art of sculpture as distinct from decoration still lay dormant, and did not come into its own until the rise of MELCHIORRE GAFÀ' (1635-1667) who, however, spent most of his life and produced most of his best works in Rome.

According to his biographer Pascoli (34), Gafà

33. Mariani, 1929, p.

34. Pascoli, 1730, p. 256-8.

went to Rome at a very early age where he studied under the celebrated Ercole Ferrata (1610-1686) with whom he collaborated showing exceptional talent, especially in drawing and modelling. It was not long before he had made such progress in his art that he was put in charge of several other young artists who frequented Ferrata's atelier, among whom was Giuseppe Mazzuoli (1644-1725). Contemporary writers are unanimous in affirming his sound, though morose, character and tireless energy. He was, however, of such a retiring disposition that his nomination to the Academy of St. Luke in 1662 caused him no little embarrassment.

A couple of years previously he was commissioned with the execution of a basrelief of St. Eustace among the lions for one of the side altars of St. Agnese in Agone, in Piazza Navona, and a statue of St. Thomas for the Pamphili Chapel in Sant'Agostino. The former is a rather lifeless piece of work which does not seem to have aroused the enthusiasm of its author; in fact it was still unfinished at his death and was completed by Ferrata. At that time Roman sculpture was under the spell of Bernini and, if some of Gafà's statues are somewhat lacking in originality of inspiration, the explanation is certainly to be found in this overpowering influence. (35)

Gafà's principal works are the high altars of Santa Maria in Campitelli and Santa Caterina da Siena, both in Rome, the latter with its ecstatic figure of the Saint borne heavenwards in a swirl of clouds and draperies, and the beautiful statue of St. Rose, which is now in Lima. In most of these works the great Berninian influence, which our artist absorbed through Ferrata, is highly in evidence.

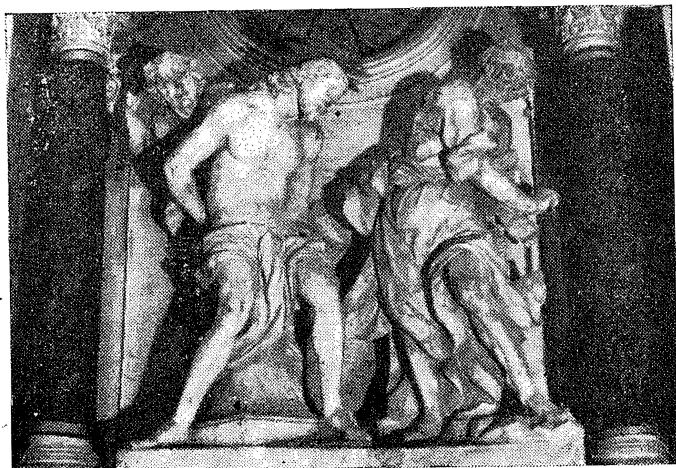
Shortly before his death he was called to Malta by the reigning Grand Master and entrusted with the

35. Fleming, 1947, p. 86.



MELCHIOR GAFA': *Ecstasy of St. Catherine*; Rome.

execution of a marble group of the Baptism of Christ, to be placed in the apse of the Conventual Church. The clay model of this group was already finished when Gafà died as a result of a fall in the Belvedere Foundry, in the Vatican (36) and at least two bronze casts are known to have been made from it. It has still not



GIUSEPPE ZAHRA: *The Scourging at the Pillar*; Oratory of the Crucifix, Cospicua.

been ascertained whether the models were used by Mazzuoli, who eventually carried out the work with some minor alterations. One of his last works was the great statue of St. Paul, which is now in the Parish Church of Valletta. As a point of historical interest, Missirini, the chronicler of the Academy of St. Luke, tells us that, in 1668, Borselli was raised to the "*Principato*" of the Academy, after it had been modestly refused by Melchiorre Gafà. (37)

36. Archives of the Order of Malta, "*Liber Conciliorum Status*", fol. 42-3, 78.

37. Missirini, 1823, p. 123.

Among various other sculptors who made a name for themselves in a small way during the following century was GIUSEPPE ZAHRA, father of the better known painter Francesco, who produced various fine pieces of sculpture, notably the dramatic marble group of the "*Scourging at the Pillar*" in the Oratory of the Crucifix, at Cospicua. Another was VINCENZO DIMECH (1768-1830?) who is said to have studied in Naples and produced, among other things, the rather rococo statue of *St. Publius* in the Parish Church of Floriana, and the monument to Sir G. N. Zammit in the Upper Barracca, which was destroyed during the war.

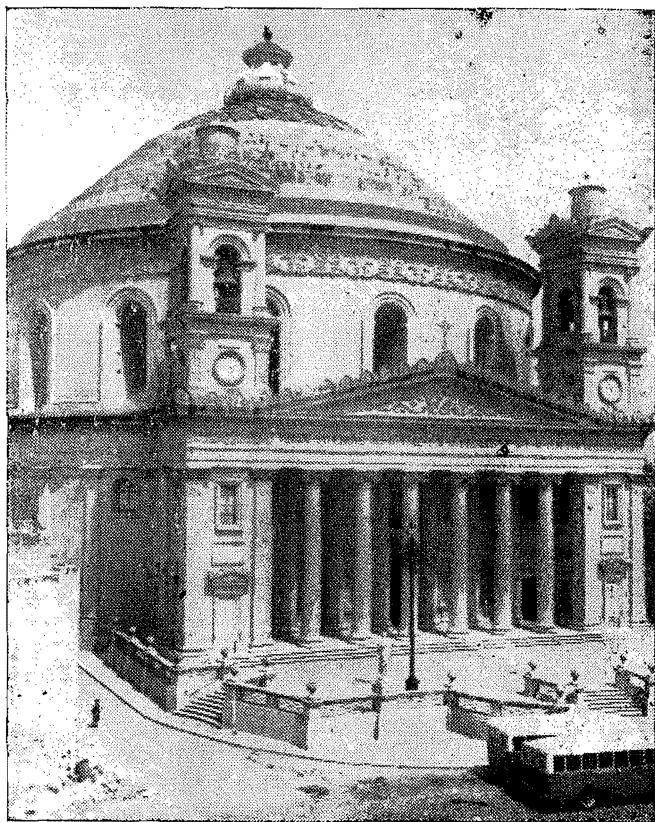
MARIANO GERADA (1770-1823) worked for a short period in Spain and had several followers. He is the author of a number of statues of saints in various churches, among which are the Immaculate Conception at Senglea, *St. Catherine* at Żurrieq and *St. Michael* at Cospicua, all very conventional in technique and inspiration. SIGISMONDO DIMECH (1780-1853) sculptured among other works the bust of the Venetian Admiral Angelo Emo in the Church of Our Lady of Victory, whilst ALESSANDRO FARRUGIA carried on in the tradition of Gerada. It must be said, however, that the sculpture of this period as a whole falls far short of the standard set up in the previous century.

VII. THE 19TH CENTURY AND AFTER

The year 1800 marked the final surrender of the French forces in Malta and the beginning of the Island's connection with England and the British Empire, which so far has lasted for a century and a half. The early years of British rule were years of upheaval, with the Maltese struggling to reap the fruits of their victory and to attain their long-sought emancipation, and the British working hard to consolidate their new position astride the great Inland Sea, which was to become the most important life-line of their Empire. It is not surprising, therefore, that every manifestation of art was at a discount, particularly as the new rulers had little to say for themselves in that direction and the local intelligentsia were completely taken up with the most violently controversial politics.

In the field of architecture, Maltese craftsmen tried for a time to keep abreast of developments on the Continent, as they had done for so many years; but, slowly but surely, they drifted away and found that they had willy-nilly to follow ideas coming from much farther North than they had ever ventured before. In England, more than anywhere else, it was the age of revivals and the first of these artificial reawakenings to visit Malta was the Classic Revival in which the most prominent local figure was GIORGIO PULLICINO (1780-1851), an architect and painter of some repute, whose works include the Doric colonnade of the Main Guard and the decorations of the adjoining buildings, and the monument to Sir Alexander Ball at the Lower Barracca.

GIUSEPPE BONAVIA (1822-1896) of Valletta, produced



GEORGE GROGNET: the "Rotunda", Mustá.

several works in a rather flamboyant style, including the Exchange in Valletta, his most attractive creation being the Belvedere in Villa Depiro, at Lia.

At this point GEORGE GROGNET (1773-1862), architect of Musta Dome, deserves special attention. Born of a French father and a mother who was a member of the Marchesi family, the celebrated 18th century patrons of art, he was educated at the Seminary of Frascati and came under the special protection of Cardinal Henry Stuart, at that time rector of the Seminary and a close friend of the family. George Grognet was by inclination a military engineer and town-planner, and records exist of various projects which he planned but never carried out. He is best known for his "*Rotunda*", at Musta, the great circular church, 170 feet in diameter and more than 200 feet high, which is one of Malta's most familiar landmarks. The facade is a watered-down variation of the Pantheon, in Rome. An Ionic colonnade, flanked by the bases of twin belfries, supports an entablature which extends along the whole frontage of the Church, and a feeble pediment behind which rises the colossal drum supporting what is reputedly the third largest dome in the world. The belfries are weak in design and, in elevation, look disproportionately small; but when viewed from ground level they improve considerably. In the interior, the circular groundplan is broken up by eight deep recesses, one of which contains the entrance while the others contain altars. The whole of the interior is well lit by small windows in the recesses and larger ones in the drum. As the mouldings of the arches over the side altars rise to meet the cornice running uninterruptedly round the base of the drum, when standing in the middle of the church, the impression is gained of being in the centre of a fast revolving globe.

As may be gathered from the above, the over-all emphasis is more on size than on anything else and,

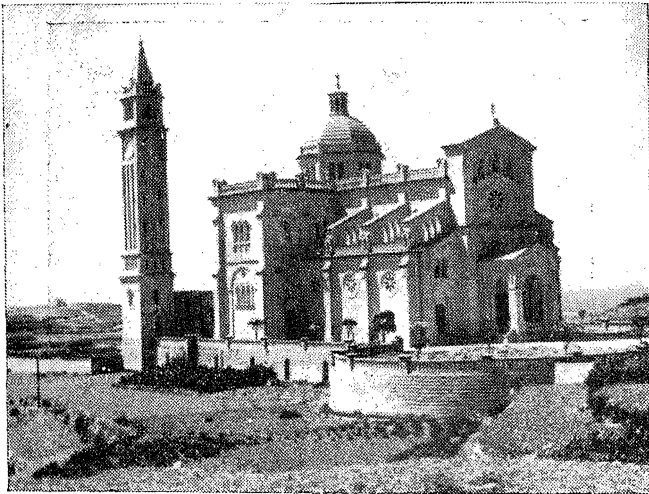
although its interest as a feat of engineering cannot be denied, there is little to recommend either the dome or the Church as a whole from an aesthetic point of view.

Though an occasional classical portico or pediment still continued to put in an appearance here and there, during the third quarter of the century there was an even more exotic Gothic Revival, more or less parallel with that in England, which, nevertheless, again found one or two architects who were equal to the occasion, notably EMMANUEL GALIZIA (1830-1907) who deserves to be remembered most of all for the exquisite little chapel he designed for the Addolorata Cemetery, as well as for the masterly layout of the Cemetery itself. Other works by this architect are the Carmelite Church of St. Julian's and the church of Our Lady of Lourdes overlooking the harbour of Gozo.

The last architect of note was ANDREW VASSALLO (1855-1927) who designed the immense Romanesque Basilica known as "Ta' Pinu", in Gozo, which for symmetry of proportions and the magnificent stone carvings of the interior is worthy of our greatest traditions.

Painting in the 19th century tended to be just as erratic as the other arts. The younger generation of artists still gravitated towards Rome, but there was little there at the time to carry them to any great heights. Most of them frequented the *atelier* of Tommaso Minardi (1787-1871) who, though not very productive as a painter, was a teacher in the best traditional sense of the world. (38) Most of the Roman fresco painters of the century owed their early training to him. Among those who deserve an honourable mention are PETER PAUL CARUANA (1794-1852) who held

38. For notes on the school of Minardi, see Bonello, 1949, pp. 42-47 and 71-79.



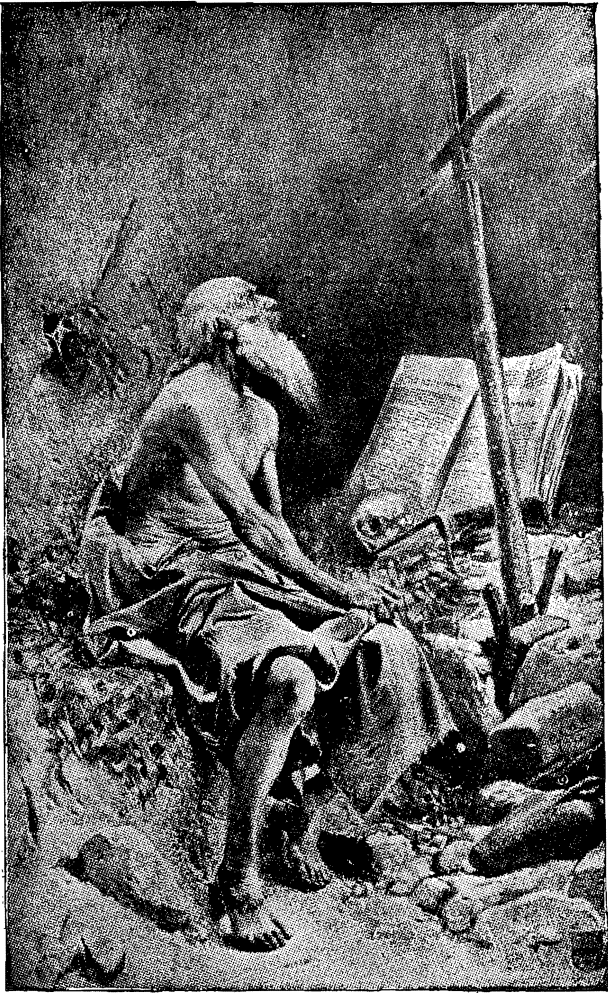
ANDREA VASSALLO: *"Ta Pinu" Basilica; Gozo.*

a life class at the University; SALVATORE BUSUTTI (1805-1854) who produced several paintings in Rome as well as a large number of altarpieces and scriptural subjects in Malta and Gozo; ANTONIO FALZON (1805-1856) painter of portraits and sacred subjects and IGNAZIO CORTIS (b. 1826) whose value as a draughtsman and colourist cannot be denied him, in spite of his unhappy "restorations" in the ceilings of St. John's.

More or less contemporary with the school of Minardi was the "Nazarene" movement led by Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869) in Rome, to which the brothers GIUSEPPE and VINCENZO HYZLER belonged. Their paintings are noted for the cold academism of the drawing and the rather forced classical poses of their figures. Vincenzo's most important work is the altarpiece in the church of the Rosmini institute at Stresa.



GIUSEPPE CALI': *Glory of St. Francis*; St. Francis Church, Valletta.



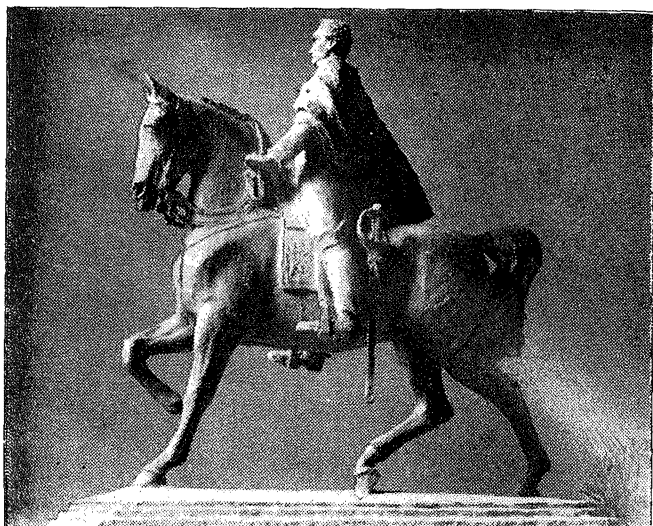
GIUSEPPE CALI': *St. Jerome*; Church of the Sacred Heart, Sliema.

It was not before the last quarter of the century that a really noteworthy painter was to emerge in the person of GIUSEPPE CALI (1846-1930) who studied in Naples under Mancinelli, being later drawn towards the great Domenico Morelli (1826-1901), whose influence soon made itself felt in the young artist's work. During his long and hard-working life Cali produced altarpieces, portraits, landscapes and genre pictures of every kind until there was hardly a church or moderately affluent home in the Island but could boast one of his canvases. One of his first altarpieces was the painting of *St. Jerome* (1881) in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Sliema, which is still generally considered his masterpiece. Of a later period are the large altarpieces and the paintings in the ceiling of St. Dominic's, Valletta, whilst representative of his last period is "*The Apotheosis of St. Francis*", one of his largest works, and the charming "*Death of the Saint*" (1907) in the Church of the Friars Minor in Valletta.

Of his portraits, perhaps the most striking are those of the Zammit-Clapp family, now in Valletta Museum, and that of Sir Adrian Dingli, at the Exchange; whilst "*Le Tre Rome*" (1911) is among the most important of his larger historical compositions. There is no doubt that Cali's forte was Sacred Art; this trend, together with his amazing flair for composition, even in the cramped and irregularly-shaped panels of certain church ceilings, enabled him to produce an incredible number of outstanding works which place him securely in the front rank of Maltese artists.

The last great figure to emerge in the history of local art was the sculptor ANTONIO SCIORTINO (1883-1947) whose career was one long series of triumphs in practically every corner of the world. Early in life he was attracted by the impressionism of Rodin and Meunier, which he later abandoned for a rather

eccentric, streamlined dynamism by means of which he meant to convey the impression of speed, especially when portraying horses, which were his favourite subjects. Among his most outstanding works are his models for the monument to the poet Chevchenko at Kiev (1914), to Anton Chekov at Rostov-on-Don (1923) and for an equestrian statue of Simon Bolivar (1929). His works in Malta include his early group of "*Les Gavroches*" at the Upper Barracca, the "Eucharistic Congress" monument at Floriana and the monument to commemorate the Great Siege of 1565, besides numerous portrait busts and decorative statues.



A. SCIORTINO: *Simon Bolivar* (bozzetto).

APPENDIX

I

Girolamo Cassar's visit to Italy.

Frater Petrus de Monte, custos Universis et singulis praesentes nostras litteris uisuris, lecturis, et audituris, Salutem. Notum facimus et in verbo veritatis attestamur come l'eshibitor delle presenti Gieronimo Cassar Maltese confrate di nostra Religione et uno delli nostri architettori parte con buona licentia da questa nostra Città di Malta per esser a più luoghi d'Italia a uedere alcun edificii massime in Roma, Napoli et in altre parti dove vi son perfettissimi, et degni d'imitatione per tornarsine qui quanto prima et auualersine in suo esemplo nell'opre ch'egli hauera da far per seruitio di nostra Religione, et non per altro effetto. Il quale perchè potrebbe esser che uolesse auualersi dell'agiuto et fauor vostro occorrendo l'occasione, et specialmente nel passar stare et ritornare. Per tanto priegamo tutti et ciascuno di voi prenominati ch'in tutte le cose sudette et in altre licite, et honeste in quali esso Hieronymo ricerchara l'agiuto et fauor vostre le debbiare fauorire et agiutar a contemplatione nostra offerendone noi a tanto et molto più occorrendo il bisogno per seruitio uostro prontissimi. In cuius rei — bulla nostra Magistralis in cera nigra — Datum Melite — Die xxiii mensis Aprilis M.D. lxxix.

(Archives of the Order of Malta;
"Liber Bullarum", vol. 432, fol. 253).

II

Death of Melchiorre Gafà.

Die eadem (1 octobris 1667) Essendosi hauuta notitia della morte di Melchior Gafà scultore, che hauea à suo carico l'abbellimento della nicchia dell'altar maggiore di San Giovanni con statue, giusta il disegno, e risoluzione del Venerando Consiglio unanimi uoto hanno determinato, che l'Imbasciatore e Ricevitore di Roma non facciano partito con altri, diano auviso distinto del danaro, che si sarà sborsato a detto Gafà per cominciare detta opera, ricuperino quello, che hauesse già lauorato, e principalmente le due statue di Christo, e San Giovanni che si dice hauer lasciato di creta; riferendo se potran esser di seruitio col portarli qui, e qual modo dourebbe tenersi nella portatura, ò pure se sarà meglio uenderle in Roma, et à qual prezzo potrebbe trouarsi, et in fine diano auviso d'ogni altra cosa, della quale conuenga hauersi notitia.

(Archives of the Order of Malta;
"Liber Conciliorum Status",
vol. 261, fol. 78 verso).

III

Appointments of Michele Cachia.

Altezza Serenissima — Michele Cachia del Zeitun Umilissimo Servitore, e Vassallo dell'Altezza vostra Serenissima, espone da gran tempo ritrovasi in esercizio di Maestro Muratore, di modo si ritrova attualmente capace si per detta Arte, come pure per esercitare la sua Arte di Agrimensore. Ma perchè si trova un posto de' dodici Agrimensori vacante per la morte di Maestro Antonio Pulicino. Quindi supplica la Benignità dell'A.V.S. perchè si degni accordargli detto

posto, offerendosi esercitarlo con tutta la pontualità, ed esattezza, e della Grazia.

Magister Hospitalis Hierusalem — Commissariis Domorum — Oratorem examinent juxta formam Pragmaticae, et nobis referant. Datum in Palatio Die vj Aprilis 1784. L. Clinchant Auditor.

Altezza Serenissima — Il Supplicante desidera essere aggraziato ad occupare il posto di uno de' dodici Periti Agrimensori, vacato per morte del fu Antonio Pullicino, al quale effetto l'Eminenza Vostra si degnò commetterci il suo esame, ed in fatti fu in nostra presenza esaminato dal Capo Mastro delle Opere, e di questo Ufficio Antonio Cachia, e fu riconosciuto molto abile, e capacissimo a poter esercitare tale impiego di Perito Agrimensore, attesochè diede pronte, e sode risposte, a tutte le domande fattegli in detto esame: E perciò siamo di sentimento, che possa essere aggraziato di quanto desidera: Ci rimettiamo pur non di meno alla più savia deliberazione dell'A.V.S. alla quale facciamo profondissima riverenza. — Di Vostra Eminenza — li 22 Maggio 1784 — Umilissimi Devotissimi Obligatissimi Servitori Obbedientissimi e Vassallo Fedelissimo — Il Commendatore Fra Pasquale Sarriano — El Comendator Don Matthias Bentura — Dottor Gaetano Buonavita Giudice —

Magister Hospitalis Hierusalem = Attentis relatis munus Agrimensoris suprannumerarij Oratori Concedimus. Datum in Palatio Die xxv Maij 1784 — L. Clinchant Auditor.

Altezza Serenissima = Michele Cachia Servitore, Umilissimo, e Vassallo di Vostra Altezza Serenissima espone, che per decreto di V.A.S. in data delli 25 Maggio 1784 fu il Supplicante aggraziato d'esser perito Agrimensore soprannumerario come rilevasi dal compiegato ricorso: e comeche, cessò di vivere Maes-

tro Maruzzo Schembri uno de' dodici periti, Perciò supplica l'oratore la benignità di V.A.S. perchè si degni ammetterlo per uno de' dodici Periti Agrimen- sori del Paese, e della Grazia.

Magister Hospitalis Hierusalem = Fiat. Datum in Palatio Die iij Septembris 1785 —R.C. Xerri Auditor.

Ex suo originali

Bajulivus Frater Ludovicus d'Almeyda Portugal Vicecancellarius.

Pr. registret et pr. i restituat

F. Muscat T. r

Die xxviiij Mensis Julii 1786

registrata et eis Cachia restituta juxta decretationem.

(from the original in the possession of
Dr. Antonio Caruana, Zeitun).

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