

the picture drawn of teaching methods is much the same as that which we know from too many other sources, early and late. We may recall poor little Jane Grey's beautiful tribute to Aylmer as the only teacher she ever had who showed her kindness instead of a numbing, stultifying brutality. *Initium sapientiae timor domini* must have been a sour joke to countless shivering little boys.

ERIC COLLEDGE

THE BUILDING OF MALTA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE KNIGHTS OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, 1530-1795. By Quentin Hughes. (Alec Tiranti; 42s.)

The little island of Malta possesses a wealth of architecture quite out of proportion to its size, and for which it is chiefly indebted to the Knights Hospitallers. After their somewhat reluctant acceptance of Malta in 1530 the knights set about fortifying the Birgu and providing themselves with buildings. Before much had been done there came the great assault by the Turks in 1565, which was heroically and successfully repulsed by the knights and the Maltese, under the Grand Master, Jean Parisot de la Valette. Thereafter, with the threat from the Turks much reduced (it was not removed until Lepanto), the knights began new fortifications within which they built a new city, behind Fort St Elmo. The new city was called Valletta, after the Grand Master, and it has been aptly described as 'a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen'. The great building activity of the knights was halted for a time by want of money, and then the Maltese themselves erected many parish churches to serve their constantly expanding villages.

Under the immediate direction of the knights there arose great buildings such as the Palace of the Grand Master, which is still used as the seat of government, the *auberges* of the various *langues*, a great hospital, a library, and much else, including the crowning glory of Malta, the Conventual Church of St John, in Valletta, Gerolamo Cassar's masterpiece, and now used as the co-cathedral. But besides the great buildings there are smaller structures; for instance, the numerous small churches of traditional Maltese design, with their plain façades and raking cornices, an 'eye' over the flat-headed door, and crowned by a bell-cot.

It is remarkable that the little island, always under foreign government, should have produced an architecture that is essentially Maltese, and that, save for Filippo Bonamici and Stefano Ittar, the architect of every important building was Maltese. It is also remarkable that hitherto there has been no work dealing comprehensively with the architecture of Malta. Mr Hughes' book is, therefore, greatly to be welcomed, for it is the product of a deep knowledge of Maltese building

combined with a sane and balanced judgment. The author deals systematically with the fortifications and town planning, with the churches, the palaces, public buildings and houses, and he has included an interesting section on Maltese building materials and methods of construction which, though short, illuminates the whole book. The buildings are described and discussed with precision, and the text is admirably illustrated by means of photographs, plans and elevations which are conveniently keyed to the text. Malta's architectural wealth has been well served by this distinguished book.

GEOFFREY DE C. PARMITER

ITALIAN ART, LIFE AND LANDSCAPE. By Bernard Wall. (Heinemann; 21s.)

Mr Wall knows Italy well, and his new book (which replaces his two volumes on *Italian Life and Landscape* published a few years ago) is a discursive and friendly commentary on Vespas as well as Venetian Gothic, on food as well as Florence. His familiarity with modern Italian writing gives a contemporary flavour to his comments, and he is not afraid to express personal opinions. It is obviously impossible, in just over two hundred pages, to deal adequately with a country so rich in the three respects indicated in the book's title, and often Mr Wall's sketchy dismissal of a cathedral or a whole city leaves one dissatisfied. But, granted the necessary limitations of a single book on such a subject, this is a valuable companion to the country in which English travellers feel happiest. The illustrations are obvious—the Ponte Vecchio at Florence, the Colosseum, a Sicilian painted cart and so on. It is a great pity that more trouble was not taken to provide fresh and arresting pictures of this lovely land.

I.E.

ARGENTINA. By George Pendle. (Royal Institution of International Affairs; 12s. 6d.)

The revolution of September 1955 which brought to an end the astonishing régime of General Perón had its roots in the stresses of a century and a half of painful national growth. Any judgment on Perón must take into account the facts of Latin American history and its endemic capacity for military revolutions as well as the special problems of an immense country, isolated, of vast potential wealth, uneasily balancing its swollen capital against the thousands of miles of its thinly populated provinces. Mr Pendle's excellent introduction to the history and recent development of Argentina gives full weight to these factors, and does so with a combination of accuracy and readability that is rare. He makes full use of the travel literature of the last