

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; 2Is.)

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

century, with its constant amazement at the vastness of this new land. And, as an experienced observer of Argentinian affairs, he comments on recent events with intelligence. He makes full allowance for the inevitability of a Perón and is fair to many of his intentions. He is not swamped by the violent reaction that has necessarily followed Perón's fall, but he shows how hollow was the gimcrack structure (so like the new buildings in Buenos Aires) of a government which promised much but in fact only achieved every sort of bankruptcy. The future of Argentina can scarcely be free from storms, but Mr Pendle's impartial and informed book provides English readers with the means of understanding the past and so of being prepared for what is yet to come.

I.E.

THE MIND AND ART OF COVENTRY PATMORE. By J. C. Reid. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 35s.)

During the last few years the chief Victorian poets have been undergoing a certain revaluation, but one who has consistently escaped serious critical attention has been Coventry Patmore. With *The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore*, Mr Reid has made generous amends. It has a comprehensiveness, firmness and readability about it which makes it one of the best studies of a Victorian poet since the war.

Mr Reid begins by surveying Patmore's depressing reputation, a reputation caught rather exactly in F. L. Lucas's description of him as 'a combination of a Catholic mystic and Colonel Blimp'. He then goes on to consider the influences on Patmore and his thought, the essentials of his philosophy, aspects of his prose, and finally the development and achievement of his poetry. Only in this final section is Mr Reid a little unsatisfactory. There is a certain externality about his treatment of the poetry which is disappointing after such valuable preparatory chapters. Mr Reid's book is certainly a landmark in Patmore studies, but the way is still very much open for a first-hand appraisal of the poetry in the manner of, say, Mr R. P. Blackmur.

Patmore presents the critic of his poetry with special problems. It was significant, I think, that Mr Reid approached the poetry by way of 'the ideas'. Stimulated by the vitality and depth of the ideas, we might tend to attribute the same qualities to the poetry when we find them embodied there. But, of course, there are two things involved here—the poetry and the 'philosophy'—and in Mr Reid's final section they are insufficiently distinguished. In this respect, Patmore raises problems for the critic similar to those raised by Wordsworth. Patmore's 'ideas' are more profound than Wordsworth's, but their presence in his poetry doesn't make it comparable with that of the author of *The*