

## KNIGHTS OF MALTA.

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BY EMINENT FRATER † HENRY ROBERTSON.  
—*Continued.*

The Order of *Knights Hospitallers of St. John*, together with that of the *Templars*, which sprung from it a short time afterwards, were the chief support of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, during its struggles in the midst of peril and uncertainty. Many and signal proofs of their valour and bravery are recorded of them during their residence in Palestine. They united, in a remarkable manner, religious fervour and austerity of life, with military prowess and fortitude, and deeds of gallant daring.

The celebrated historian, Vertot, says of them : “ Scarcely had they laid down their arms, than they resumed, with the utmost regularity, all the exercises of their profession. Some attended the sick, or occupied themselves in receiving pilgrims, while others kept their arms in order, or with their own hands mended the harness of their war-horses; and, during these various employments, maintained a religious silence, like hermits or anchorets—a manner of life hitherto unparalleled, when, without being entirely attached to the cloister nor engaged in the world, they practiced in succession all the virtues of two such opposite conditions.”

Such were the Hospitallers in the first period of their institution, and thus they continued for rather more than a century. After many engagements with the overwhelming hosts of the Saracens, in which their valour and bravery were most conspicuous, they were compelled to leave the Holy Land. The final struggle took place at the siege of Acre, in 1291, from which, after fearful carnage, but a handful escaped. These, with their Grand Master, John De Villiers, found their way in a small vessel to the Island of Cyprus, where they landed at Limisso. “ And a touching spectacle it was,” says Vertot, “ to see these valiant knights, all covered with wounds, descend from their carrack upon a foreign strand, with countenances suited to their altered fortunes, and overwhelmed with sorrow that they should have outlived the total loss of the Holy Land.”

So deep were their lamentations, and such their remorse at having survived their brethren who fell bravely battling for the Cross, that the Grand Master feared that the Order would be totally destroyed. He therefore summoned the members of the several Commanderies in Europe to repair immediately to Cyprus; a command responded to with the utmost ardour. A council was held, which John De Villiers ad-