

AN INTERESTING BIT OF HISTORY.

YOUR Commandery, Sir Knights, from what I have seen and felt around me, is well named in honor of the renowned Abbot of Clairveaux, who, though old and austere, was an eloquent and honeyed teacher, and led the second crusade against the Saracens in the eventful period of 1146. Though the issue of that crusade, in which an effeminate Pope induced St. Bernard to act the part of Peter the Hermit, was of itself disastrous,—precipitated unfortunately by the dissensions of the Christians in whose hands had been placed the Red Cross we all so well love—yet few men possessed a more extensive and uncontrollable command over the minds of men, or whose influence sprang more spontaneously from personal qualifications. Animated by a religious fury, no less absorbing than that which fired the breasts of the followers of the Cross, the Saracen conquerors in that second crusade erected their hated crescent on the ramparts of Jerusalem—but the Christians still held Antioch, Tripoli, Joppa and Tyre. Other crusades, under the banners of the Cross, followed; but the high hopes of those Christian warriors were again and again doomed to disappointment; and so after six fated expeditions for the recovery of the Holy Land, filling a space of two centuries in the world's history, in their great work of devotion, the crusaders were unsuccessful. In the first crusade they had been victorious—and in that victory they did not forget the purpose of the battle. The streets of Jerusalem were literally covered with the bodies of the dead—over which, after throwing aside their weapons, still streaming with blood, these gallant conquerors advanced with bowed heads and naked feet toward the holy sepulchre—singing anthems to their Saviour, who had there effected their redemption. But they were not to gain *permanent* possession; and when, after that, the infidel threw himself upon the holy city, its streets echoed in triumph to the shouts of the Saracen conquerors. In all these crusades, the East was the melancholy tomb of two million Europeans. Yet the holy wars had their good effect by creating an intercourse between the nations of Europe, which, as it was favorable to commercial enterprise, increased the wealth, improved the arts, and contributed to establish the civilization of the Christian world.

I will not, Sir Knights, in this brief digression, lose sight of your patron Saint, who sprang from a noble family at Fontaine in Burgundy, just 781 years from this great centennial of political and religious liberty.

In the spirit of a devotion to all that is good and generous to-day, he founded the Abbey of Clairveaux which by his zeal became a Seminary of the most distinguished reputation—producing, within his own life-time, one pope, six cardinals and thirty prelates. In this sacred retreat, his influence was greater than if he had been the Pope himself. With the reputation of being a prophet, he was consulted as an oracle; and his censures were regarded with awe in the most distant parts of Europe. While an attendant at the Council of Troyes, in 1128, he wrote a letter to the Pope, urging upon him an act of confirmation of our order, and said of the Knights Templar: "They dwell together cheerfully and temperately, without wives or children, and come or go at a sign from their Master,—one heart and one soul appear to possess and animate them all. They are never seen idle, nor go gadding about after news. There is among them no respect of persons—the *best*, not the noblest, being the most highly esteemed. They endeavor to anticipate each other in respect, and to bear one another's burdens. They hate all jugglers and mountebanks—all vain plays and wanton songs—as being vanities of the world. When they go forth to battle, they arm themselves *without*, with steel; *within*, with faith. They are in *union* strange, being at the same time grimmer than Lambs and gentler than Lions, so that one is at a loss to know what name to give them—Monks or Knights. But verily either name suits them, for they are at the same time as gentle as Monks and as valiant as Knights." With such sentiments thrown into the Vatican, how could the Pope refuse the petition for that confirmation which was granted? As the author also of the "Rules" by which Sir Knights were afterward governed, St. Bernard was ever distinguished in his subsequent life for a warm attachment to the Order; and, according to Burnes, rarely wrote a letter to the Holy Land in which he did not praise the Knights, and recommended them to the favor and protection of the great. To his vast influence, then, which he ever exerted in their behalf, has always been attributed the rapid increase of our Order in wealth and popularity—though reverses still followed, and persecutions came from those in whose cause of the Redeemer so many had laid down their lives. On the 13th day of October, 1307, all the Templars in the French dominions were simultaneously arrested and imprisoned, and the Order, (according to an accredited writer), whose members for 170 years had shed their blood and lavished their treasures in defence of the Cross against the Crescent, was declared heretical; and the knights, who had solemnly sworn never to fly in the presence of the infidels, were denounced as apostates