

In 1522 they were driven from the Island of Rhodes by their ancient enemy, and for a few years the Grand Master was like a King without a kingdom ; but in 1530 the Emperor Charles V conferred upon the Order of St. John the perpetual sovereignty of the island of Malta, and there it carried on its great work of mercy until Napoleon Bonaparte took possession of the island in 1797, when the Order for a short time disappeared as an organized body.

In England as early as 1130, the Founder of the Hospital established the Order, selecting for headquarters the village of Clerkenwell, just outside the City of London. They built their Priory and carried on their noble work without interruption for over four hundred years, until in 1540, King Henry VIII suppressed the Order, confiscated their property, and executed such of the Knights as failed to escape to Malta.

The reduction of Malta by Napoleon did not put an end to the work of the Order.