

THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM IN ENGLAND AND ITS WORK OF BENEFICENCE.

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The tendency of modern times is to scoff at Orders and decorations, and knightly and kingly trappings, and to declare that all such gew-gaws should be relegated to oblivion, or to museums of antiquities. Demos is king, and his courtiers, suppliant and subservient creatures, would make a mocking of all that is knightly and chivalrous. But chivalry is not quite dead in men's hearts, and there is at least one ancient order of knighthood which is known by its works. Although founded eight centuries ago, A.D. 1048, the Order of St. John is still carrying on in a large and imperial way the work of its founders. It is true that it no longer limits itself to the narrow confines of the Holy Land, but has spread over the four quarters of the globe, and is to be found busy in its work of mercy in every colony and dependency of the British Empire.

Founded by Peter Gerard as a religious fraternity at Jerusalem, at the time of the Crusades, for the relief of the sick and needy who should visit the Holy Sepulchre, the Order of St. John was known as the Hospitallers. The brethren were bound by vows of charity, poverty and indissoluble brotherhood, and healed the sick, fed the needy, and exercised an unostentatious hospitality toward all. Sympathetic and religious people subscribed liberally to their funds, and they thus became the almoners of Europe—as indeed their patron saint was St. John Eleemon.

They were finally driven from Jerusalem, and it was in consequence of this that, in self-defence, the fraternity developed into a band of soldier-monks and warring physicians. Space will not permit me to trace the history of the Order in detail, but suffice it to say that, driven from one stronghold to another by the Turks, they at length reached the Island of Malta, which was presented to them by the Emperor Charles V., of Germany, where they grew and prospered and became one of the richest and most powerful brotherhoods in the world; but, having no warlike duties, they lapsed into idleness and luxury, although they still adhered to the original idea of the founder, of distributing charity and maintaining a great hospital at Valetta. The final disaster came when, through the treachery of Von