

The Knights' Hospitallers and Ambulance Work in War.

AN interesting lecture on the Knights' Hospitallers and Ambulance work in war was delivered on Friday afternoon in last week by Major A. C. Yate, of the Indian Staff Corps, at the Royal United Service Institution. The chair was occupied by Earl Egerton of Tatton, Chancellor of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England. The lecture was illustrated by excellent magic-lantern slides, which considerably enhanced its value.

The lecturer traced the history of the Order of St. John from its foundation at Jerusalem, by some Amalfi merchants, in the first quarter of the eleventh century to the present time. A hospital of the Order was also founded in Amalfi itself, which, after the capture of Jerusalem by the members of the first Crusade in 1099, received many of the wounded soldiers.

The Order of St. John was in its early days a religious body, bound by the threefold obligation of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and subject to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who invested the members with a black robe, which bore the eight-pointed white Maltese Cross. The members of the Order were respectively Chaplains, Knights, Ladies, and Servants, and there is no doubt that the ladies took an important part in the work quite early, as they are known to have been in the Holy Land in the twelfth century.

The brethren were pledged to fight Mahomedanism and were strictly enjoined to abstain from taking any part in international war and politics, a rule which they however, did not always strictly observe.

It is not generally known that the Arabs, who are almost invariably Mohammedan, were in early days a strong Naval Power. It is known that they visited Pekin early in the seventh century, and it is supposed that an Arab pilot guided Vasco de Gama to the shores of India. The Order of St. John therefore had to defend itself from naval attacks, and after evacuating Acre they retired to Cyprus, where they turned their attention to organising a powerful fleet. When they felt sufficiently strong, they attacked the island of Rhodes, which they won from the Saracen inhabitants, and surrounded as it was by Mohamedans they held for two centuries. It became a place of refuge for Christian refugees from all parts of the Mediterranean, and later also they held Smyrna. It is interesting to know that at this time dogs were used by the Order much in the same way as they have been used in our own day by the monks of St. Bernard's monastery. In this case, however, it was not to aid distressed travellers, but to seek out fugitive slaves and bring them to the care of the Order.

Ultimately after two prolonged sieges during which the island was splendidly defended, the Grand Master was compelled to capitulate but was allowed to withdraw in 1523, with all the honours of war, to Crete.

Of these sieges, Charles V. of Spain is reported to have said "Nothing in the world has been more nobly lost than Rhodes," and a few years later this same monarch gave the Order the Island of Malta, which in its turn was successfully defended against the attacks of the Turks. The Church of St. John of Jerusalem, the Museum, with its wonderful tapestry, and the hospital which at the present day is used by Tommy Atkins, and has a ward 500 feet long, said to be the longest room in Europe, are all evidence of the power of the Order in those days. After the defeat of the Turks at

Vienna in 1683, when a Bishop was the life and soul of the defence, the power of the order as a military organization declined from disuse, and it decayed until the 18th century, when Napoleon took Malta with ease.

Of the Order in England there is nothing very important to chronicle, except that at the time of Wat Tyler's insurrection, the buildings at Clerkenwell were destroyed and rebuilt. In 1548 Henry Eighth ordered the suppression of the Order in England, and for some time it had no establishment. It was revived in England as a Hospital Order, and raised to its present position in 1827, and in 1863 the Order was represented at the Geneva Conference, from which time it has taken an active part in rendering aid to the sick and wounded in war. It was perhaps in recognition of this work that in 1888 the Queen decided to become the Sovereign Head of the Order.

In the present war the St. John's Ambulance Brigade has not only sent out 1,122 men to work in the hospitals, without which the work of the medical service would not have been what it is, but hundreds of tons of medical stores have also been despatched.

The lecturer then pleaded for the extension of the work of the Order to India, where, he said, it was short-sighted policy to wait for a big war before organizing a strong ambulance reserve. He proceeded to show some excellent slides, including the *Princess of Wales* Hospital ship, the Lady Superintendent, Miss Chadwick, Miss Hibbard, and the Nursing Sisters of the *Maine*, the Nursing Staff of the Edinburgh Hospital, and other interesting photographs.

The lecture was listened to with great attention throughout. Its interest was certainly enhanced by the fact that it was excellently delivered, and spoken rather than read from the printed report which was circulated in the room.

The usual votes of thanks terminated the proceedings.

Professional Review.

BRAIN AND BODY.

"Brain and Body: the Nervous System in Social Life," by Dr. Andrew Wilson, Author of "The Light Side of Science," and published by James Bowden, 10, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, is a book which must possess an interest for many in these days of high pressure and consequent nerve exhaustion. The subject of the nervous system in health and disease is one which has been comparatively little studied, and is still less understood, and yet nervous disorders are the most complicated, the most intangible of all those that flesh is heir to. Any book, therefore, which explains in any degree the complications of the nervous system is welcome. The *raison d'être* of nervous disorders is little considered by nurses, is even sometimes referred to as hysteria, in which case, as a rule, they hopelessly misunderstand their patients.

One sound piece of advice we commend to the attention of our readers "when brain-fag and nervous weariness begin to be apparent symptoms in the life of any individual, medical advice should be at once sought. Nerve troubles are peculiar as a rule in respect that they tend more rapidly than many other ailments to become chronic in nature—a declaration which is tantamount to saying that such cases, through neglect, may rapidly become incurable." The moral is obvious, but how seldom acted upon

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)