

## THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM.

Now that so many trained nurses are going on active service under the auspices of the St. John Ambulance Association, and wearing its brassard bearing the distinctive eight-pointed cross of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, it is well that nurses should be acquainted with the history of that Order, and know something of the wealth of devotion to the sick shown by members of the Order in whose steps they are following.

The Order was one of the most celebrated of those of Military Hospitallers "which for seven centuries held the attention of the civilized world, and even now rise before us in splendid and soul-stirring recollection," for a full account of which we must refer our readers to the first volume of "A History of Nursing," by Miss M. A. Nutting and Miss L. L. Dock, a work which should be in the possession of everyone intelligently interested in trained nursing.

To understand the origin of these Orders one must study the history of the Crusades which gave them birth. Many devout persons, women as well as men, in the Middle Ages thought time and labour well spent if they could at length visit the scenes of the Crucifixion, and the cave hollowed out in the rock where the body of their Divine Master was laid. The Empress Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, was the first woman to accomplish this labour of love, and built a church at Jerusalem. Paula followed, who built a series of hospitals, that "no one need suffer for lack of shelter on the road where Mary the mother of Christ had no shelter but a stable." But later, the Holy City became the scene of contention and warfare, until in the seventh century the Star of Islam held sway, and the pilgrimages of the faithful were attended with great dangers. "Their ill-treatment at the hands of the infidels, the miseries and indignities which they suffered, at length (about 1050 A.D.) led certain rich merchants of Amalfi to establish in Jerusalem two hospitals (one for each sex), under the protection of St. John the Almoner and St. Mary Magdalene. . . . The hospital of the Almoner was the cradle of the illustrious fraternity the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta, who for seven centuries continued to be the sword and buckler of Christendom in the Paynim War, and whose achievements shed a long tract of splendour through time."

The history of the Crusades led by Peter the Hermit and Godfrey de Bouillon is one to stir the pulses of all who read. When Godfrey was at length (in 1099) made King of Palestine, one of his first acts was to inspect the Hospital of St. John (no longer the Almoner, but the Baptist). "The admiration excited by the devotion of the brethren, who were caring for the sick induced several crusaders of noble birth to lay aside their arms, and join them in their merciful work, and Godfrey was so grateful for the benefits which he and his crusaders had received that he endowed it richly with lordships and dependencies in various parts of Europe. His example was followed by other wealthy and powerful crusaders, and in a short time, we are told, the Hospitallers had the revenues of a great number of rich manors, both in Europe and Asia, at their command."

At first the government of the hospital was secular, Peter Gerard, the administrator, having the title of Rector. A women's branch was as old as the men's, for their services in the care of the sick and wounded were necessary from the very first, and the sisterhood which served the hospital of St. Mary Magdalene had as their head a noble Roman lady named Agnes. They were not originally separated as nuns, but joined the knights at table and in church and by the couch of sickness, and attended strangers of their own sex. "Before the siege of Rhodes they wore a red robe with a black mantle, and afterwards all black. When the Order was first dispersed after the re-capture of Jerusalem by the infidels, it is not clear what became of the Sisters of St. John, but they were subsequently found in Spain, where they possessed valuable lands and buildings. They also reappeared during the thirteenth century in France, in the hospital of Beaulieu."

When Jerusalem once more became tranquil, the Brethren and Sisters formed themselves into a religious Order dedicating themselves at the altar as the servants of the poor and of Christ, under the rule of St. Augustine. "The brotherhood assumed a regular habit: a black robe, having a white linen cross of eight points, symbolical of the eight Beatitudes, embroidered on the left breast—what we now call the Maltese cross. Fuller, in describing their dress, said they wore on a black cloak the white cross of Jerusalem, which is a cross crossed, or five crosses together, in memory of our Saviour's five wounds."

Under the government of Raymond du Puy the Order became distinctly military in character—a body of warrior monks, who com-

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