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EDITORIAL.

A GOODLY HERITAGE.

The Order of St. John of Jerusalem, founded by two rich merchants of Amalfi, who built a hospital in Jerusalem, under the protection of St. John the Almoner, about 1050 A.D., is one of the Military Nursing Orders which has survived to the present day, and we, of this country, may hold ourselves fortunate that, though shorn of much of its magnificence, we still have a branch of the Order at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, where an Annual Service is held in what remains of the Priory Church of St. John, attended, when possible, by the Grand Prior of England, and by Knights, Members and Associates of the Order in England.

It is a goodly heritage to which the Order has succeeded for, as Miss Dock reminds us in "A History of Nursing," this 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 Paynim wars, and whose achievements shed a long tract of splendour through time."

At the time of the Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII, the Priory and Hospital of the Order suffered grievously, for the King drove out the majority of the Knights and executed four of them for refusing to recognize the Royal Supremacy, and King Edward VI (or was it his advisers?) blew up the Priory Church to provide the Duke of Somerset with building materials for his house in the Strand.

The Order had fallen on evil times, for though Queen Mary granted them a new Charter, they were again ejected by Queen Elizabeth, who, however, omitted to revoke the Charter under which they subsequently worked until Queen Victoria the Good granted them a new Charter in 1888, since which time King Edward VII and the present King, when Prince of Wales, held successively the Office of Grand Prior of England, at present occupied by the Duke of Connaught.

The high traditions of the Order were maintained during the Great War, when once again its banner, a white cross on a red field, floated over a hospital maintained by its members and supporters—the Brigade Hospital at Etaples—which, as all the world knows, was in great part destroyed in the bombardment of the hospitals on Corpus Christi Day, 1918. On that dread occasion the Matron, Miss Constance Todd, who subsequently received the Military Medal, went from ward to

ward, as the bombs were falling, and shells bursting, cheering the patients and encouraging the heroic Sisters who remained at their side, braving death in the discharge of their duty, in order to cater for the wounded men whom they served.

His Majesty the King last week showed his appreciation of the work of the Order by holding an Investiture at Buckingham Palace, and its various distinctions are from the great traditions it inherits, a special honour to hold.

THE HOUSING QUESTION.

With the Housing question is fundamentally bound up the health, the morality, the sobriety, and contentment of the nation, and the Minister of Health, in giving the Presidential at the Conference on Infant Welfare, on Tuesday last, at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, showed that he realized the gravity of the problem by his statement that we should never have a satisfactory state of affairs in this country until we had homes in which it was safe for children to be born. The steady rate of maternity mortality was causing the very gravest concern to observers of our social life, and was engaging at the moment the closest attention of the Ministry of Health. Much of this mortality was preventible, and he hoped that the Conference would pool its experiences in a national and international effort at prevention. At present a large amount of suffering was associated with motherhood, and it was their business to make it a less hazardous matter. He further stated that he was appealing to the local authorities to consider how they could improve conditions locally, and asking their co-operation in the delineation of a national policy.

Under the auspices of the Women's Housing Councils Federation, a Women's Housing Demonstration will be held at the Queen's Hall, Langham Place, W., on Thursday, July 17th, at 8 p.m., when the speakers will be Lady Astor, M.P., Miss Margaret Bondfield, M.P., Mrs. Wintringham, M.P., Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, and others. Further particulars, and tickets, from 1s. to 5s., can be obtained from the Organising Secretary, 92, Victoria Street, S.W.1.

We have every sympathy with the demand for decent houses for all members of the community, but we must remember that the industrial classes can, for the most part, afford to pay an economic rent, if houses are provided, and, we believe, are ready to do so. The limit of taxation which the middle classes can pay has surely been reached.

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