

A fine monument was erected by King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, and the Order, in memory of the members of St. John's Ambulance Brigade who died during the South African War.

Suspended from the galleries on each side of the main aisle are the silken embroidered banners of the Bailiffs Grand Cross of the Order.

The Crypt.

And now we descend to the ancient crypt, which consists of five bays, of which three are Norman and two Perpendicular in character, with a total length of 62 feet.

Here is the Chapel of the Order, where Holy Communion is celebrated annually on St. John the Baptist's Day.

Here is the recumbent effigy of a Spanish Knight of the Order of the Langue of Castile named Vergara. It is of

a sum only exceeded by Westminster and Glastonbury Abbeys.

St. John's Gate.

Leaving the Church, we now pass to the Great Gate House of the Priory which stands across St. John's Lane, and is now the Headquarters of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of which the Order resumed possession in 1873.

The Towers are four storeys high and were built by Grand Prior Docwra in 1504. This beautiful ancient building with a Tower on each side of the fine Archway is most arresting, found in the midst of so much that is modern.

As we reach the entrance in the East Tower of the Great Gate House, we are cordially welcomed by the Librarian, Mr. H. W. Fincham, F.S.A., Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John.

A guide conducted the party through a series of beautiful apartments. The Guard Room, now the Library of the

Order, is panelled in modern oak, but the beautiful ceiling of ribbed oak is the original ceiling. A very valuable collection of books line the walls. The Priory was used in Elizabeth's time as the headquarters of the Drama, and Shakespeare must have often visited this room, as here some 30 of his plays, beginning with "Henry IV" and ending with "Antony and Cleopatra" were licensed.

Passing up to the second floor, the Chancery is entered; this fine room is hung with a number of 18th century water colour drawings of Malta, and a very remarkable feature is a beautifully carved Elizabethan chimneypiece.

The large room over the archway, now known as the Council Chamber, was probably the Guest Hall in the days of Henry VIII, when de l'Isle Adam was the Grand Master. This beautiful room is full of interesting data: paintings of earlier Grand Masters, memorials to past members of the Order, old pharmacy jars of majolica ware from the hospitals of Rhodes and Malta, a wonderful ebony cabinet of rich Spanish workmanship, was the gift of Pedro, King Regent of Portugal, to Grand Master Nicolas Cottoner about the year 1670, and came to England from the Grand Master's Palace in Malta about the middle of the last century.

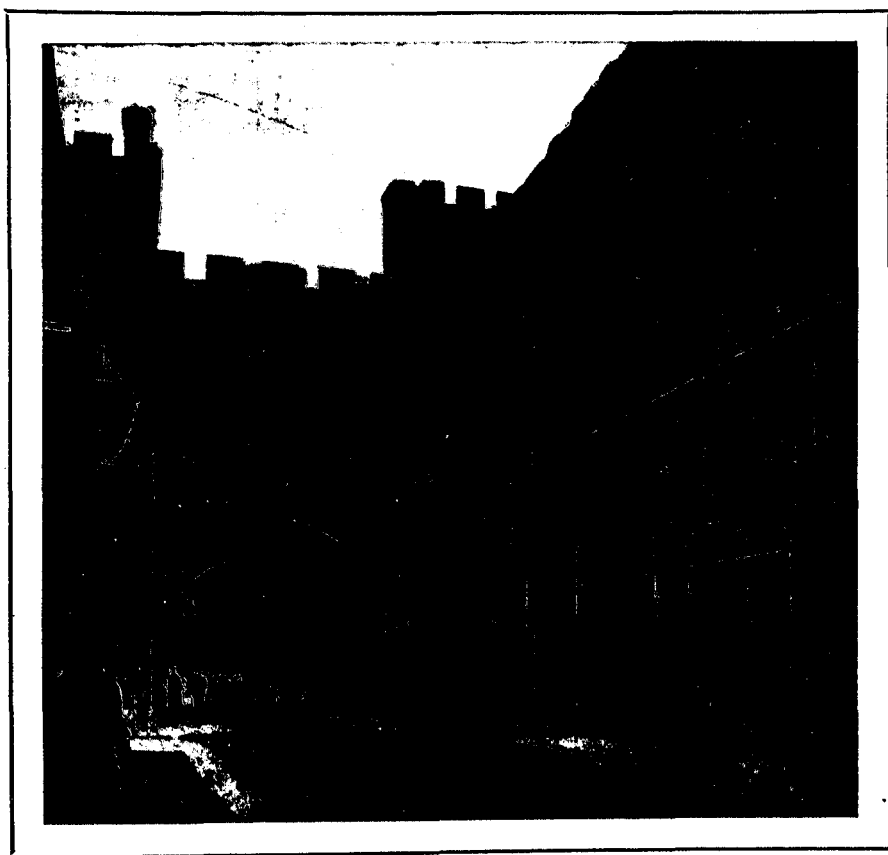
The last of these beautiful apartments to be visited was the Chapter Hall on the second floor of a large and beautiful extension which the Order

found necessary in 1905. This magnificent hall is altogether in keeping with the old building, and of this magnificent hall a few points must be recorded.

On the walls hang fine paintings of the portraits of many celebrities of the Order, conspicuous among these a painting of His Majesty the King, the Sovereign Head, and H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Grand Prior.

Around the oak wainscoting very beautifully painted are the Shields of Arms of the sixty-two Grand Priors of England since Walter of the 12th century.

Attracting much attention are three tattered silk flags hanging from the roof: These were taken by the French when Napoleon captured Malta on June 12th, 1798. On June 27th the flags were recaptured by Nelson and finally discovered in 1932 by Major C. J. Ffoukes, O.B.E., Keeper



ST. JOHN'S GATE FROM THE SOUTH.

the 16th century and very beautifully carved in hard white alabaster; the Knight is dressed in full plate armour, he bears the eight-pointed cross upon his breastplate and on the left shoulder of his large robe, and a little page is kneeling at his feet. This effigy was the gift of Sir Guy F. Laking, M.V.O.

In the two most northerly chambers there is a Museum, where many interesting things are to be seen, ranging from pieces of masonry, mediaeval tiles, and pewter alms-dishes, to worked stones of the old Priory bearing "masons' marks."

A description found in an old manuscript, recently discovered, gives some idea of the original grandeur of the Priory.

The Order became very rich, and at the time of the dissolution the valuation of the Priory was £2,304 19s. 11d.,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)