



# **The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem: Being a History of the English Hospitallers of St. John, Their Rise and Progress**

*W.K.R. Bedford*

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From the intro: "PRELIMINARY observations are generally uninteresting and undesirable: yet there are two points which suggest themselves as to the present work requiring a few words of comment. The first of these is, that it may be deemed almost unnecessary to produce another book upon a subject so thoroughly dealt with as the history of the Order of St. John has been by writers of high ability and reputation, especially in the comprehensive work of General Porter and the able summary of the Rev. F. C. Woodhouse. As the first mentioned of these valuable books, however, last saw the light in 1884, and the other appeared in 1879, the vast increase in the work and importance of the English Order since the spread of the Ambulance movement has excited a desire to know more about its rise and progress than either volume can satisfy; for the doings of the last ten years are the legitimate sequel of a chain of events dating back to the era of the first crusade, and the home of the Ambulance work in England is still that edifice which was originally founded for similar purposes in the twelfth century. This leads to the second observation, that little field for original authorship is left to be occupied. The statements of former writers have been repeatedly examined and tested; all that can be done at the present day is to repeat facts and to summarize narrative—to lead the reader to conclusions, by directing him to unimpeachable authorities. With regard even to the dedication of the Order it would be possible to occupy space by referring to the controversies of the seventeenth century as to the legend of a hospital, called after the Asmonean prince John Hyrcanus, already existing in Jerusalem when the pious merchants of Amalfi began to establish their charitable design of a refuge for pilgrims, and hence the choice of St. John as patron; it, however, is now generally admitted that the St. John at first adopted as sponsor was the Greek patriarch John, distinguished by the epithet Eleemon, of whose career Mr. Duckworth has recently given a short sketch, and that it was to his charitable fame that the hospital owed its ascription."

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