

(November 6, 1933)

The Order of St. John

BY SIR JOHN PRESCOTT HEWETT, G.C.S.I., K.B.E., C.I.E.

PRESIDENT SIFTON: → Gentlemen of the Canadian Club, we are honored again today by the presence of His Majesty's personal representative, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. It is always a great day for us when Dr. Bruce comes to our luncheon. We also have Sir John Prescott Hewett, a man of interesting character. I would like to tell you something about his age and something about what he has been telling me about his long, productive and successful career, but I am sure he would not quite approve, not knowing him as well as I do.

Sir John is Bailiff of Egle of the Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem. In addition to many other important appointments, he was formerly a member of the Governor-General's Council of India, Chief Commissioner for the Central Provinces of India, Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Deputy Secretary of the Government of India in the Home Department, and a member of the Indian Plague Commission. That is all we had room for on the card. He was also a member of the House of Commons. He was private secretary to two former Governors-General of Canada. And in connection with this particular bailiwick that is one of the eight bailiwicks of the Order situated in England, the Bailiwick of Egle is the most important and the dominant one. The Duke of Connaught was Bailiff of Egle for fourteen years and in addition to all that and more interesting, he was in charge of the Delhi Durbar, the famous Durbar that was given for the King. I am going to ask him to speak to you.

SIR JOHN PRESCOTT HEWETT:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, it is a great honor to me to be present here

today as your guest and to be given the opportunity of speaking to you about the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. A brief account of the history of the order has already been put in the newspaper. Originally established in the first Crusade for the purpose of maintaining a hospital at Jerusalem, it later took on military as well as religious character. Its activities were defined by these two mottoes—*pro fide*, for the faith, and *pro humanitate* for mankind: for the faith of mankind. About two hundred years after the institution of the Order, the Knights were expelled by the Saracens from Palestine and the Order had its home successively in Cyprus, Rhodes and Malta.

All this time it was continuously engaged in fighting against the Turks for the Christian faith. After the very valiant defence of Rhodes, after two of the most remarkable sieges of the Middle Ages, the Knights were in 1522 finally expelled from the Island and they took up their residence at Malta, where they remained until they were driven out by Napoleon in 1798. Upon the Continent in the Middle Ages the Order was predominantly French, but in the 12th Century a tongue or branch of it was established in England. There it flourished greatly until Henry VIII had an Act of Parliament passed in 1540, dissolving it and conferring its estates on the Crown. Rescinded by Queen Mary its position seemed secure, but at her death Queen Elizabeth, although she did not suppress the Order, confiscated all its property. While the Priory remained a body corporate with perpetual succession, its work naturally continued dormant, as no funds remained for the maintenance of the retinue. A certain number of members, however, had still held on and in 1858 the Order in England became itself an independent body and thirty years later a petition was presented on its behalf by King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, asking her Majesty Queen Victoria to confer a charter on the Order. This Her Majesty did in 1888. Under this charter members and associates of the Order were given the constitution of a corporate body with a perpetual succession. The Sovereign became the Sovereign head and Patron of the Order and the close connection of the Order with the

Crown has been maintained ever since. The Prince of Wales became Grand Prior and was in turn succeeded by the late Duke of Clarence and Evondale and our present Sovereign while Prince of Wales. At the present time His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught is Grand Prior; His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is Prior of the Order in Wales.

In order to bring the status and regulations up to date a new charter was given by His Majesty, the present King, in 1926, when the Order was declared to be the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in the British realm. This was an extension of its jurisdiction, as it had previously not been applied to the whole of the realm. The ancient status of Knights and Serving brothers has been modified so as to bring it in accord with modern times. The Order has always from the institution of its hospital at Jerusalem had women members. Now that it has no longer to fight for the defence of the Christian faith it devotes its energies to the benefits of humanity. Its objects and purposes were defined in the charter given by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria:—generally, the promotion of all works of humanity and charity, in the relief of sickness, distress and suffering and danger without distinction of race, creed, or class, and the extension of the great principle of the Order, to work for mankind.

The St. John Ambulance Association was constituted under the statute, the foundation of the order, its objects being declared to be the instruction of persons in the rendering of First Aid in case of accident and sickness and in the transport of the sick and wounded; the instruction of persons in the elementary principles of home nursing, the manufacture and distribution of ambulance material and the organization of ambulance corps for invalid transportation and for nursing corps. The St. John Ambulance Association had come into being about ten years before the charter was passed and those engaged in teaching first aid had banded together persons holding certificates into small bodies to attend public gatherings when their assistance might be required. This was the nucleus of what is now known as the St. John Ambulance

Brigade. It is in fact the child of the St. John Ambulance Association, one of whose cares it is to see that it is nourished and kept going well.

The duties of the St. John Ambulance Brigade are to render first aid to the sick and injured on public occasions with the sanction of the police and other authorities, and to maintain in readiness for such duties a body of men and women trained to act together to meet such occasions. It has also another very important duty, namely, the organization in time of peace of technical reserves for the medical service of the Crown. The St. John Ambulance Association and the St. John Ambulance Brigade, which is divided into the Brigade at home and the Brigade overseas, function in every part of the Empire.

In March, 1896, the late Deputy Surgeon-General Ryerson was authorized by the Grand Priory to establish a branch of the St. John Ambulance Association in Canada. The headquarters were organized at Toronto and remained here until, in 1910, they were transferred to Ottawa. The general executive committee of the Canadian branch of the St. John Ambulance Association adopted a constitution in 1910, and in 1914 the general council of the Canadian branch was incorporated by the act of incorporation passed by the Legislature. Since it came into operation the St. John Ambulance Association working all over the Empire has issued over 2,200,000 certificates for first aid or home nursing. One of the main objects of these certificates is to secure qualified candidates who wish to serve in the brigade either in the ambulance or in the nursing divisions. But, as will be evident from the number of certificates taken out, it is by no means the only one. In England, for instance, the members of the police forces, numbering over sixty thousand men, are required to hold certificates issued by the St. John Ambulance Association in first aid. And so are large numbers of the railway employes and a percentage of those working in the mines. In Canada the Association has, since it was established at Ottawa, issued more than two hundred thousand certificates. In this great country to develop the work in large organizations such as railways, telephone systems and the

industrial corporations by which labor is employed on a large scale, is most important. Everyone conversant with the effect of education in first aid knows well that it increases efficiency and saves money in industrial work. Men who know first aid do not get into such trouble with machinery and in other ways as those who are ignorant of it. And there is in this country of huge distances and isolated homes a special need for the equipment in the home of a knowledge of first aid and home nursing. The Association has an ideal before it of bringing these benefits into every home in the countryside in Canada, and has thus a practically unlimited scope for its operations.

Turning to the Brigade, there is in the United Kingdom a force of sixty-seven thousand men and women organized in ambulance divisions and nursing divisions as well as cadet divisions, that is of the younger people coming on to join up in the ambulance and nursing division. In a country so thickly populated there is unlimited scope for work in aiding the police and local authorities by both men and women. All this work is done without pay and represents service for others, which is the watchword of the Order. The members of the Brigade pay for their own uniforms.

It is vain for me in the time available to attempt to cover the different kinds of work in which the Brigade is employed in England—race meetings, fêtes, football matches, make a daily demand on their services. Wherever people are assembled in large numbers the police and local authorities have members of the Brigade to assist them. They are linked up with the life-saving and fire brigade services. Last year four hundred and sixty thousand cases were treated by the brigade in England. Occasionally there are very big matters in which they do extraordinary service, as, for instance, during the general strike in 1926 and the troubles in Dublin in 1922. In both cases those engaged in fighting respected the Brigades uniform, when the members of it came to help those who had been injured. And in Dublin, where machine guns and even eighteen pounders were at work, both sides ceased firing when the Brigade came up to pick up the wounded. I

should explain that, while the women units of the Brigade are termed nursing divisions, they in no sense trespass on the sphere of duty of qualified nurses. Qualified nurses cannot gain their status except by going through long courses of several years to learn their work, whereas the members of the nursing division have only been taught home nursing. But among other work done by the nursing divisions in England is the attendance of members to sit at the bedside of patients in hospitals. This is welcomed by the regular staff of nurses in hospitals, because they are very often much overworked and they find the members of the nursing division do relieve them of a certain amount of their ordinary duties. Last year no fewer than twenty-five thousand hours were spent by members of the nursing divisions in sitting at the bedsides of patients.

In Canada conditions are very different from those in congested England. There are naturally not the same opportunities for the work of members of the brigade. But it maintains a very efficient force here and there will always be work it seems to me for ambulance and nursing divisions in the cities of the Dominion. Besides, as I said before, one of these duties is to maintain in peace time a reserve for the medical forces of the crown. We all of us hope there will never be another war, but we all of us should be equally determined to do everything that lies in our power to lessen the suffering of those who may be engaged in defending their homes. And in 1914 the St. John Ambulance Brigade was able to do a great work for our country. When the Expeditionary Force left England in August, 1914, it took with it six thousand of our stretcher bearers. If the Brigade had not had these men available, the force that then went to France would have been very ill equipped in that respect. Eventually the number of qualified men who were supplied from the Brigade throughout the war was twenty thousand.

I turn to another subject. The Order originated in a hospital and the name given to it in the Middle Ages was the Hospitallers. Wherever it has existed—in Jerusalem, in Rhodes, and Malta, it has maintained a hospital. During the Great War it had a hospital with seventy-five

hundred beds at Etaples. When this hospital was bombed by the Germans it was removed to a station above Dauvin. At the same time in England we were maintaining a hospital of five hundred beds for the Indian troops that had come over to serve in the west. The hospital which we maintain now is called the St. John's Hospital of Jerusalem. It seems a far cry, I know, to people in Canada to be connected in Jerusalem with a hospital maintained for the blind of Palestine and the deserts in the neighborhood, but the British Government has the mandate for Palestine. In Palestine there are more blind per thousand of population than in any other country in the world. It is therefore our duty to do all we can to improve their condition and I trust that the generous heart of the people of Canada will not mind my referring to this subject as an important one for our order.

Mrs. Atkinson and I have come on a deputation from the Grand Priory of St. John's Gate to discuss with the authorities of the association and brigade in Canada the improvement of the arrangements in force here, so as to give to the local authorities a position with respect to the Grand Priory in London which will be more in accordance with the increased work that it will have to do in the future. We come with the blessing of an autographed letter from His Majesty the King to our sub-prior and we have also a mandate signed by the Grand Prior, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught. We are here simply to advise and help and not in any way to make proposals or dictate any policy. Those will have to come from the general council of the St. John Ambulance Association in Canada. We hope our visit will be productive of good and trust we have the good wishes of the people of Canada. We have been received wherever we have been with the greatest cordiality and kindness, to which we wish on this occasion to give public testimony.

PRESIDENT SIFTON:—I know I speak for the members of the Club when I express our real appreciation to Sir John for coming here at considerable physical inconcurrence and preparing an address which so fully covers all the activities of this ancient and very interesting Order. Thank you.