

## Institution Histories.

### ST. JOHN'S PRIORY, CLERKENWELL.

THE foundation of the House and Hospital of St. John, at Clerkenwell, was due, the *Globe* says, to the liberality of Lord JORDAN BRISET, and the buildings were begun between A.D. 1101 and 1110. The church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist—whence the choice of St. John the Baptist's day for unveiling the memorial to the late Duke of Clarence—and was consecrated by Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, on the 6th of the Ides of March, 708 years ago. Clerkenwell at that time was not the wilderness of bricks and mortar it is now, but beautiful "with fields for pasture, and a delightful plain of meadow, interspersed with flowing streams, on which stand mills, whose clack is very pleasant to the ear." Here young London, male and female, loved to wander on summer evenings, and here, once a year, the parish clerks of London acted their Miracle play, sometimes in the presence of Royalty itself. The pleasant suburban character of its situation, together with the princely hospitality dispensed by its inmates, made Clerkenwell Priory a very pleasant place of sojourn, from time to time, for the Sovereign of England. King John spent a month here, and Henry IV. a fortnight. Edward Prince of Wales, Henry V., and Richard III. were guests of the Grand Priors also. A warlike procession of knights, brothers, and followers passed forth from the Priory in 1237, bound for the Holy Land. After leaving Clerkenwell "they proceeded in good order, with about 30 shields uncovered, with spears raised, and preceded by their banner, through the midst of the City of London, towards the Bridge, that they might obtain the blessings of the spectators, and, bowing their heads with their cowls lowered, commended themselves to the prayers of all."

Year by year the buildings of the Priory increased in extent and splendour. One old writer says:—"At this time the building, in its widely varied decorations, both internally and externally, is said to have contained specimens of the arts both of Europe and Asia, together with a priceless collection of books and curios." In 1381, however, the mob, in Wat Tyler's insurrection, attacked and broke into the Priory, seized and beheaded the Grand Prior, and after looting the buildings, set them on fire. The wealth of the Hospitallers enabled them, without delay, to set about the restoration of their headquarters in England, and it soon became more

splendid than before. Camden says, "It resembled a palace, and had in it a very faire church and a towne steeple raised to a great height, with so fine workmanship that it was a singular beauty and ornament to the City of London." The principal gateway, now almost the only remaining portion of the building, was built by Sir Thomas Docwra in 1604. Henry VIII. suppressed the Priory, and confiscated the estates of the Order in England because the Knights "sustained and maintained the usurped powers and authority of the Bishop of Rome, affirming the same Bishop to be supreme head of Christ's Church, intending thereby to overthrow the laws and statutes of this Realm." Several of the Knights were beheaded for denying the King's supremacy, and one of them, after being drawn through Southwark on a sledge, was hung and quartered. Many of the Knights retired to Malta, while the Grand Prior, and others who submitted to the King, were pensioned. The conventual buildings, after their confiscation, were used "as a storehouse for the King's foils and tents for hunting and for wars." The Protector Somerset ordered the church to be blown up, and the stones to be used in the erection of his new house in the Strand. In Queen Elizabeth's time the Priory became the headquarters of the Master of the Revels. The Priory has long since disappeared, but St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, is built on part of the foundation of the old church. St. John's Gateway, after being used successively as the office of the Master of the Revels, and the printing office of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, became a tavern. Here Dr. Johnson manifested his vanity, and his love of a jolly good dinner by eating his food behind a screen, lest the company should see his shabby clothes. The gateway was purchased recently by the revived Order of St. John in England, and is now their headquarters.

## Reflections

### FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.

At Bridgewater, it was proposed to celebrate the National event by founding a "Princess May" Nursing Institute in connection with the Infirmary. But apparently, the authorities of the Hospital do not see their way to carry out the idea, and this excellent scheme has apparently collapsed.

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LEITH is discussing the question of building an Infectious Diseases Hospital at a cost of £22,000, which would, for this important town, be money wisely spent, or rather invested.

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