

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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The Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS TWENTY-FOURTH GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 9, 1864.

ALSO

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XIV.

COMPLETING THE SECOND VOLUME.

CAMBRIDGE:

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CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN COMMUNICATIONS

BEING

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

No. XIV

BEING THE FIFTH AND LAST No. OF THE SECOND VOLUME

CAMBRIDGE:

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M.DCCC.LXIV.



XXXI. ON SOME REMAINS OF THE HOSPITAL OF ST
JOHN THE EVANGELIST AT CAMBRIDGE. BY
CHARLES C. BABINGTON, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

[Read 29 Feb. 1864.]

THE removal of an ancient building which stood to the north of the chapel of St John's College has directed attention to the ancient Hospital of which that College is the successor, for it has brought to light some very interesting architectural remains: and as these and all the other known remnants of the old House must be removed, to make way for the additions now being made to the College, it is desirable to place on record their existence and character.

The remnants of the Hospital consisted of the shell of the present chapel (A) and the building which recently stood on its north side (B). We must first discuss the latter, and afterwards the chapel will require some notice. (See the Ground-plan annexed.)

That building (B) was 78 feet, 4 inches in length, with a breadth of 22 ft. 3 in. internally. Its eastern end formed part of the front of the College, but was completely masked by a casing of red brick. The northern side was in St John's Lane (which has now been closed) and was so much patched and altered as to show very little trace of its original appearance. I know nothing of

the western end. The southern side was partly hidden by the erection against it (c. 1524) of Bishop Fisher's chapel (K), and partly altered to meet the wants of the students' rooms into which the building was converted (1587-8). With the exception therefore of the traces of an ancient door-way and of two or three lancet-windows, which were faintly visible in St John's Lane, there was nothing to lead an observer to consider this part as at all older than the rest of the front of the College, which is a work of the first decade of the xvith century. There is no reason to suppose that this building was ever different in dimensions from those which it retained to the last; for the four walls were all original, although grievously patched and altered. It once formed a single long room, lighted by a range of lancet-windows on each side and (as we are told, for they were only seen by some of the workmen during the hurried demolition of the building) by a triplet of lancet-windows at the eastern end. Certainly the many stones found amongst the rubbish which had formed parts of windows, renders this statement of the workmen highly probable. I had made endeavours to learn the real character of the walls after the building was partially gutted, but without much success: for those who altered it from one fine room into three floors of students' chambers had effectually hidden all the architectural features, internally as well as externally: internally by filling up every hollow, levelling all projections, and covering the surface of wall thus produced with a coat of excellent and very hard plaster; and externally, as has been already stated, by adding a new face of red brick-work, through which the three perpendicular windows were pierced which severally lighted the three inserted floors. This eastern end and these windows may be seen in any view of the front of St John's College; it is the gabled building to the north of the chapel.

Fortunately it is necessary to retain for a time a portion of the southern wall to prevent the back of Bishop Fisher's chapel from being laid open, and it is there that the removal of the

plaster has exposed to view some beautiful remnants of the old edifice.

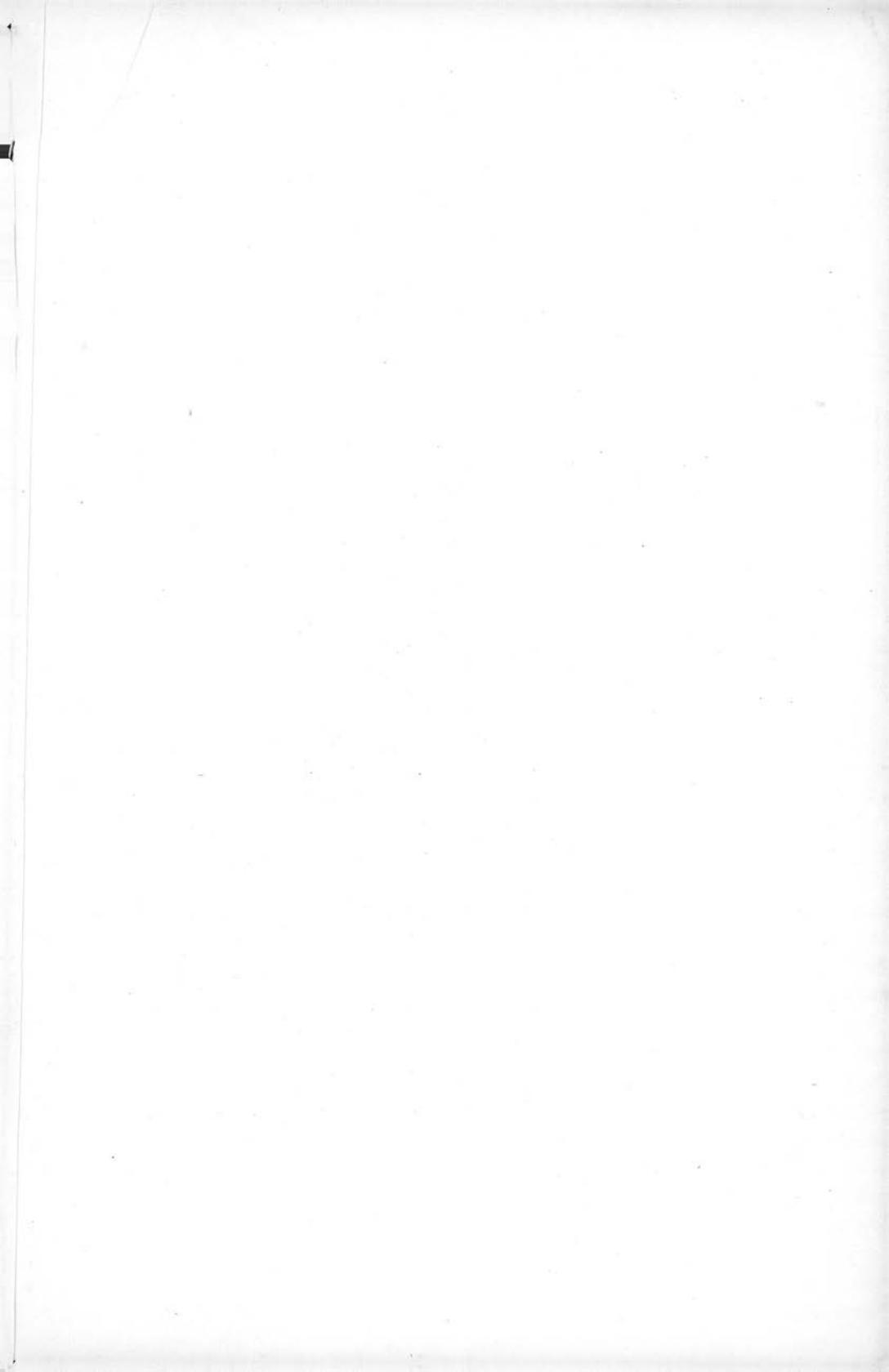
We may probably judge of the range of windows on each side of the room by the remains of those to the south. They were of the earliest type of the Early English style, and placed high in the wall. It is probable, nay, almost certain, that they, together with the rest of the building, were erected between the years 1180 and 1200, and it will be shewn presently that their erection was before 1208. The use of the Norman style of architecture continued unaltered during most of the reign of King Henry II., and the transition to the Early English style took place chiefly in that of Richard I. The range of windows was not continued at equal intervals from one end of the room to the other; neither were they all alike in their amount of decoration. Commencing from the eastern end, the first window (which was 18 inches from the inner side of the eastern wall) is very highly decorated with the mouldings of the period and had a shaft in each of the jambs. The crown of this and of all the other windows is raised 14 ft. 6 in. above the floor; the actual opening is 5 ft. 9 in. in height and 9 in. wide; the window-sill is about 7 ft. from the ground. In this case it is impossible to determine the character of the slope (if there was one), for a doorway has been pierced through the wall exactly under the window and the original sill removed to make way for the crown of its arch. The other windows agree exactly in size with this most eastern window (except that the splay is rather less), but are quite plain. The slope descends from their sill to within 6 ft. 3 in. of the ground.

Between the internal edge of the splay of the first windows and that of the second there is a space of 7 ft. 6 in.; or between the actual openings of 10 feet. The second, third, and fourth windows are 4 ft. 6 in. distant from each other, their inner jambs being 2 ft. 3 in. apart. Proceeding still towards the west we meet with a broad blank space of 9 feet, which was followed by windows similar in all respects to the second, third and fourth.

We do not possess any knowledge of more than two of this series, for those that doubtless formerly existed to the west of them have long since been completely altered or destroyed in adapting the building to domestic purposes. The internal jambs of the fifth and sixth windows were 4 feet 3 inches apart. As the wall extended 25 ft. 5 in. beyond the sixth window to the return at the western end of the building we may reasonably conclude that there were at least three more openings to the west of that window.

The uniformity of the range of windows is therefore broken in two places, (1) by an interval of 7 feet, 6 inches between the first and second openings, and also (2) by a blank space of 9 feet between the fourth and fifth openings. In the latter of these spaces the remains of an ancient pointed doorway may be seen from which the ashlar has been removed and therefore its architectural character destroyed; but it seems to have formed an entrance into the chamber from the south, as a similarly situated and apparently similar doorway did from the north. The former probably communicating with the private part of the Hospital and the latter with the town. This doorway must have been closed (circa 1524) when Bp. Fisher's chapel was built so as to render it useless, for a communication between these two places could hardly have been required.

In the space intervening between the first and second windows we find the most beautiful of the scanty remains of this ancient building. It is a double piscina much resembling that at Jesus College. These piscinæ are of nearly the same date, but differ in some respects. In that at Jesus College the shafts are carried down below the drains in front of and just touching a solid mass of stone: the lateral shafts are attached to the walls throughout their whole length: and the whole is in a compartment having mouldings with dog-tooth ornaments. The piscina at St John's College is not so lofty as the other; although somewhat wider: the lateral shafts are quite free: neither they nor the central shaft are continued below the drains:



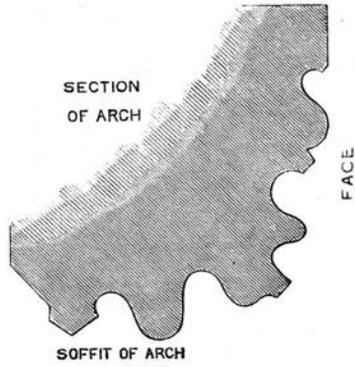


Fig. 1.

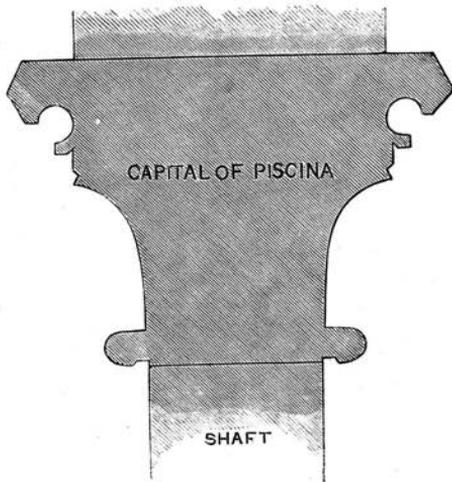


Fig. 2.

the spandrels and central space between the intersecting arches are open, and there is a continuous empty space extending from side to side at the back; but the springing-stones have projections connecting them with the wall, laterally in the case of the lateral and posteriorly in that of the central springers, which is a peculiar and, it is believed, uncommon construction: the whole may have been inclosed within a compartment, as at Jesus College, although no part of it remains, for the projecting portions of the mouldings have been planed down in order to form a level surface for the plaster with which the wall was covered, and there is a chiselled line exactly in the situation where the frame ought to be. The arches not only intersect, but their mouldings interpenetrate similarly in these piscinæ¹. The drains are placed in differently-shaped basins in our piscina; the right-hand basin is circular, that on the left forms a quatrefoil; they are very rudely formed: indeed the whole work, although most beautifully designed and having a very effective appearance, is seen, upon a close examination, to be rather roughly executed throughout. The sill, the shafts, and their bases are of Barnack stone, the arches of clunch. In the church of Histon near Cambridge there are two double piscinæ, one in the north and the other in the south transept, which resemble these at Cambridge by having similar intersecting arches with interpenetrating mouldings. But at Histon the arches spring from three sets of double shafts of Purbeck marble. (See *Cambridgeshire Churches*, p. 73.)

The size of the piscina at St John's College is a square of about 5 ft. 6 in., and the hollow penetrates 9 inches into the wall. It is 3 ft. 6 in. above the floor. The wood-cuts show the form and proportions of the mouldings of the central capital, which

¹ The figure of the piscina at Jesus College, given in Parker's *Glossary of Architecture*, pl. 72, does not represent this and is incorrect in some other respects. The plate opposite page 353 of the *Cambridge Portfolio* is correct and excellent. There is also a good figure in Cooper's *Memorials of Cambridge*, i. 392.

is $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and 9 inches wide at the top; also those of the arches.

Above the piscina there is a rectangular opening through the wall, of 3 feet in height and 1 ft. 6 in. in width. It is nearly plain, and was closed by a shutter. It seems to be original, and may have communicated with some narrow passage connecting this oratory with the dormitory of the brethren; not for them to pass through, but to allow of a sight of the priest, when celebrating mass, being obtained without entering the oratory itself.

I have written in the present tense of these remains, but before the publication of this paper the piscina will have been removed into the new chapel. Other parts also cannot long continue in their ancient position. The photographs by Mr Nichols from which the plates have been engraved were taken before any part of the ruins had fallen or the piscina touched.

If we now direct our attention to the existing chapel (A) of the College we shall find that its walls are much older than the inserted windows, and that it belonged to the Hospital. Prof. Willis long since pointed out the presence of string-courses and mouldings of the Early English style on the northern side, and also directed attention to the traces of the Early English windows which existed above, at the side of, and inclosing the existing perpendicular openings. But the interior of the wall could not be examined until Mr G. G. Scott was consulted about the new chapel, when he caused enough of the face of the wall to be removed to show that the original windows were in the Early English style when just changing into that called Decorated, *i. e.* were erected in the latter half of the XIIIth century, whereas the building (B), about which we have just been treating, was certainly built 60 to 80 years earlier. The great arch, now much hidden by the organ, which divides the quire from the ante-chapel, is of the same date, and has similar mouldings to those of the original windows which are now embedded in the walls. The pointed crown of one of these old windows in the north wall

may be seen rising above the much more obtuse top of the existing perpendicular window. It has been laid open by the direction of Mr Scott. The plate shows this top of the original window to the right of the more ancient remains of the Hospital.

This chapel seems to have been originally 120 ft. long; for we must probably include the space which is not shaded on my plan, and through which is the present approach to the Master's Lodge, and over which those who remodelled the buildings in the xvith century did not extend the new roof of the chapel, but converted the upper part into chambers for the use of the Master. The quire occupied 74 feet of this length. The width is 25 feet. There were originally five windows on each side, or there may very probably have been six, for there is the proper space for one to the north and another to the south in the secularized part above-mentioned. There now remain five windows on the south side and four on the north, but traces of the fifth are manifest over the entrance to Bishop Fisher's chapel. We do not know what was the original state of the east end which is now occupied by a large perpendicular window. It is quite certain that the walls of this building are mainly those of the chapel of the Hospital; they seem to have been very much out of repair when the executors of the foundress took possession of the site; for the removal of the plaster has shown that although some parts are built with fine squared stones, other parts are patched with clunch and brick, and the whole surface rendered rough to furnish an attachment to the plaster, which was used to hide all the defects.

These two buildings are the only remains of the Hospital of St John the Evangelist which are known to exist; but it is not improbable that parts of the walls of the first court of the College may have formed portions of the domestic buildings of the ancient house. That court was erected in its present form by Shorton, the first master of the College, A. D. 1511-16; except that the south side was refaced and altered in character in the time of Dr Powell, who was master from A. D. 1765 to 1775. Baker

informs us that the buildings required for the College, including the repair and refitting of the chapel, cost between four and five thousand pounds. He says, "the chapel was leaded, the stalls finished,...in the fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII" (A. D. 1513).

We must now endeavour to determine the use of the earlier of these buildings (B), supposed by Baker, when he wrote the text of his History, to be the chapel of the old house; but in a note added afterwards, to have been the chapel of St John the Baptist, "whereof mention is made both in Bishop Alcock's register and Caius." But is not this an oversight, and that he had in view St John's Hostel, which stood near St John the Baptist's church, on the site of King's College, for I cannot find any notice of it in *Caii Historia*, nor his *De Antiquitate Cantabrigiensi Academiæ*? Or may it have arisen from the mistake made in 1312, when the Master of this house was taxed to a tallage as of the Hospital of St John the Baptist?

The Hospital of St John the Evangelist was founded for the "reception of poor, infirm, and sick persons" by Henry Frost, a burghess of Cambridge, in the reign of Henry II. *i. e.* between A. D. 1154 and 1189, or possibly at a slightly earlier date, for Mr Cooper (*Ann. of Cambr.* i. 25) places it in 1135. Almost immediately after the foundation, religious brethren, subject to the rule of St Augustine, were introduced. It is clear from a judicial enquiry concerning its right to the church of St Peter (now St Mary the Less), which had been given to it by Henry, son of Segar, that the Hospital existed in the year 1194. (Selden, *Hist. of Tithes*, 386.) Before 1197 Hervey, son of Eustace Dunning, gave seven acres of land at Chesterton to sustain "two beds and bed-clothes for the use of the sick in the *stone house* of the Hospital." About 1208 the Bishop of Ely made an ordinance to secure the parson of All Saints' Church from any injury that might be caused to him by the master and brethren admitting the parishioners of All Saints to any sacraments or oblations: and thereupon the prioress and convent of St Rhadegund granted the master and

brethren free and pure chantry in the Hospital for ever. There must, therefore, at that time have been some sort of chapel; but it may have been only the oratory in the Infirmary. In 1280 Hugh de Balsham introduced a community of secular scholars into the house, but they could not agree with the regular brethren, and were soon removed to form St Peter's College.

At a little after the middle of the xvth century, when John Dunham the younger was Master, and Thomas Rotheram was Chancellor of the University, the Hospital was admitted to the privileges of the latter body; as is shewn by the "letter of privilege" entered upon the old cartulary preserved amongst the muni-ments of the College. (Baker, *Hist. of St John's College*, 46.)

Up to the time of the dissolution, the prior or master and brethren were required to allot a considerable portion of their revenue to the support of sick people in the Hospital. We must therefore now consider what was the kind of building usually provided by bodies established for the especial purpose of receiving and supporting sick and infirm people, or by the monasteries for the reception of their sick, infirm, and aged monks. It was usually a large, long hall, lighted by windows on each side, or even divided into three parts by arches (resembling the nave and aisles of a church), and then often furnished with aisle and clerestory windows. In this hall the beds of the sick were arranged along each side throughout the greater part of its length; but at the eastern end a small space was shut off by a screen, and provided with an altar and the other requisites for saying mass. Thus the sick could be present at the service without removing from their beds. Prof. Willis has proved that what used to be called the Saxon Church at Ely was the infirmary of that great House. The remains of a similar building can be traced at Peterborough, and on the sites of other monastic houses. I have seen such an arrangement in several old hospitals which still exist, only that now the altar has become a communion-table, and the beds for the infirm have been separated by wooden partitions, so as to form:

little chambers or cells, one for each inmate. My friend Mr E. A. Freeman tells me that there are a great many hospitals with a chapel at one end opening into the domestic part of the building. The chapel is often a mere oratory, just large enough for an altar. A similar arrangement was frequent in domestic houses where some ordinary room occupied the place of the infirmary, and like it opened into the chapel. He refers to St Mary's Hospital at Chichester as a fine example, in which the oratory was large enough to form a sort of chapel with stalls on each side, and I quote the following short account of it from the *Archæol. Journal* (x. 267). "It consists of a lofty hall. At the eastern end there is a chapel, accessible only through the hall, being separated from it by an open screen. The hall has side aisles, in which are constructed small distinct dwellings opening into it for the poor inmates." Such an arrangement is also not unfrequent in the Roman Catholic countries of the European continent, at the present day. The old Hospital of St Thomas at Northampton had a very small space of this kind at its east end, only affording room enough for the priest who said mass.

When these remains were first exposed, the idea occurred to me that they were part of an infirmary, such as has just been described, provided by the Hospital for the use of the sick people brought to it; and I am very happy to learn that Professor Willis formed the same opinion. It will be remembered that the Hospital contained a very small number of brethren (not more than five or six), and it is therefore quite possible that they may not at first have possessed any chapel for their devotions, other than that provided for the benefit of their patients. It will also be recollected that the date of their foundation was probably considerably before 1195, and that this infirmary must have been built almost immediately after their establishment, perhaps even by their founder.

If, as I firmly believe, this was really the Infirmary, the character and arrangement of the windows is such as we should

expect. The most eastern is highly decorated as being next to the altar; it and the three following belonged to the oratory; those to the west of the space that is there found were the lights of the secular part, or infirmary proper. The screen which separated these two parts of the chamber was apparently placed close to the fourth window, and to the east of the doorway of which traces exist between the fourth and fifth windows. Or, if the oratory was used by the brethren as their chapel, this door may have opened into the oratory itself, so as to admit them without their passing through the secular infirmary in which lay the sick.

Some persons have surmised with much show of reason that this was not the infirmary, but the first chapel of the House: but it must be remembered that the Hospital is not supposed (Cooper's *Mem. Camb.* ii. 58) to have at first had any ecclesiastical character, although it was very soon found requisite to add the brethren, for the purpose doubtless of superintending it. This may or may not be true, for I know of no documentary evidence in proof of it. I believe that this room never was properly a chapel, but an infirmary, and that the only sacred part of it was the oratory at its end. There was therefore no desecration in the uses to which the major part of it was finally applied, whatever we may think of those of the eastern end. If this was the chapel of the house, it seems unaccountable that they should have had another chapel erected for their use as early as the last quarter of the XIIIth century: but if the older building was the infirmary, nothing is more probable than the desire to possess a chapel distinct from it. We cannot avoid some wonder when we find that so large a chapel was built for so small a society.

Let us endeavour now to trace the history of the infirmary after the dissolution of the Hospital. It is not known to what use, if any, it was applied by the earliest members of the college; but in 1560 Fisher's and Ashton's chapels were deprived

of their altars; the upper part of the former was turned into a chamber for the advantage of the master; the infirmary converted into a stable for the master's horses, and its eastern part (the oratory) made into a store-house for the college. This happened when Leonard Pilkington was master (Baker, 153). That this was the position of the stables in 1574 when Caius wrote his work, *De Antiquitate, &c.*, is shewn by Baker (43) from the college books: and Caius (106) says that the stables were in the ancient chapel of the hospital. His words are: "Vetus sacellum fratrum Sancti Joannis Evangelistæ (quod jam Collegii Sancti Joannis stabulum est").

In 1587-8 the horses and goods were removed and the building divided into three floors of students' rooms, as it continued to be until 1863. The words quoted by Baker (184) from the *Liber thesaurarii* are, "Hospitium novum intra præcinctum collegii, ubi olim erat hospitale D. Johannis, &c."

This concludes all that I have to state concerning these interesting and ancient buildings, of which every trace must unfortunately soon be removed. In one point of view we may well rejoice that the Infirmary is gone, for as students' rooms it was a disgrace to the College.

PLATES.

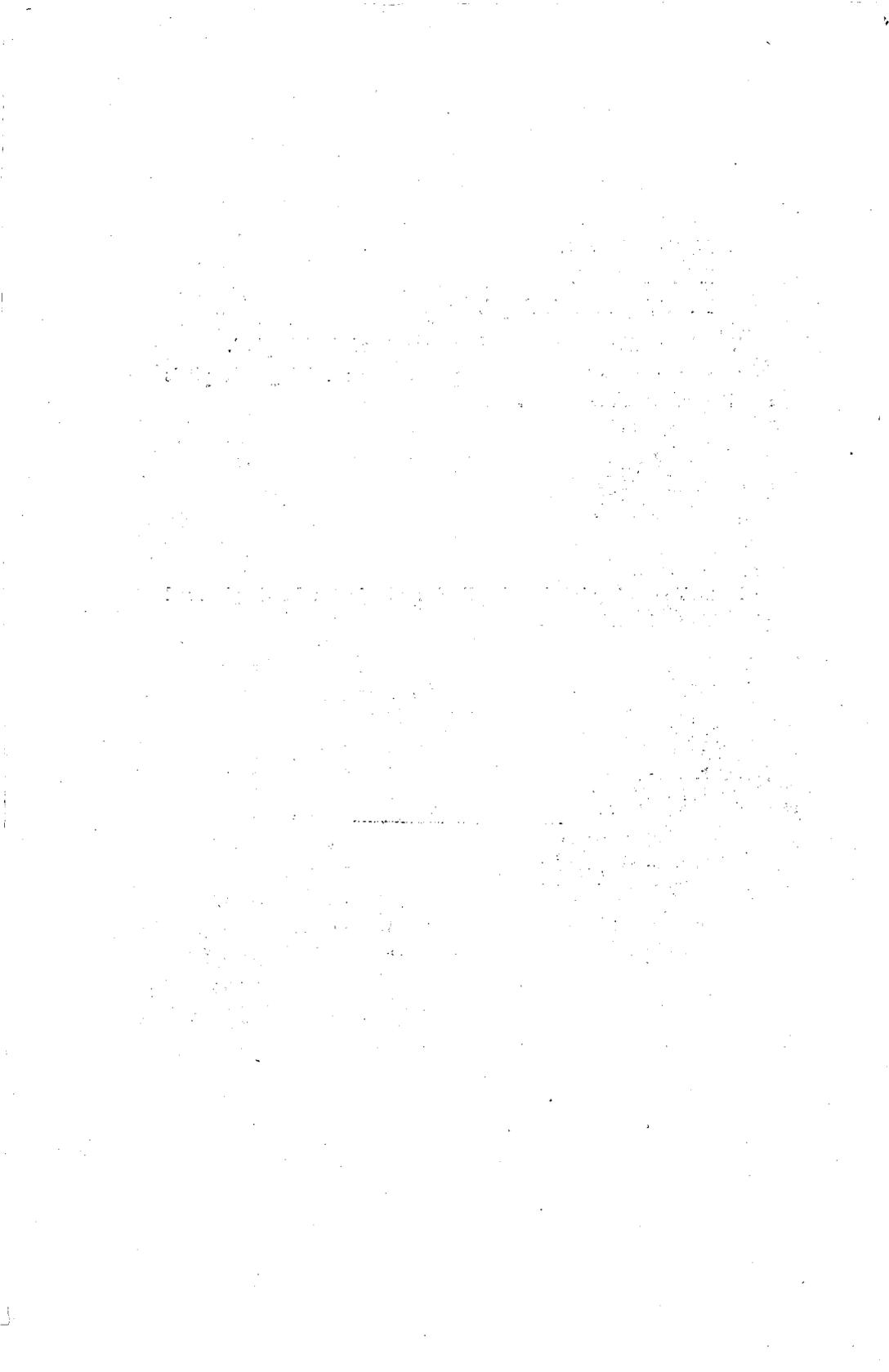
1. A view of the inner side of the south wall of part of the Infirmary, together with a small part of the outside of the north wall of the existing chapel of the College.
2. The piscina as it existed before its removal to the new Chapel.
3. Ground-plan :
 - A. Chapel of College and formerly of Hospital.
 - B. Infirmary of Hospital.
 - C. Hall of College.
 - D. Combination-room under the Master's dining-room.
 - E. Part of Master's Lodge.

- F. Students' rooms.
- G. First court.
- H. Second court.
- I. New chapel.
- K. Bishop Fisher's chapel.

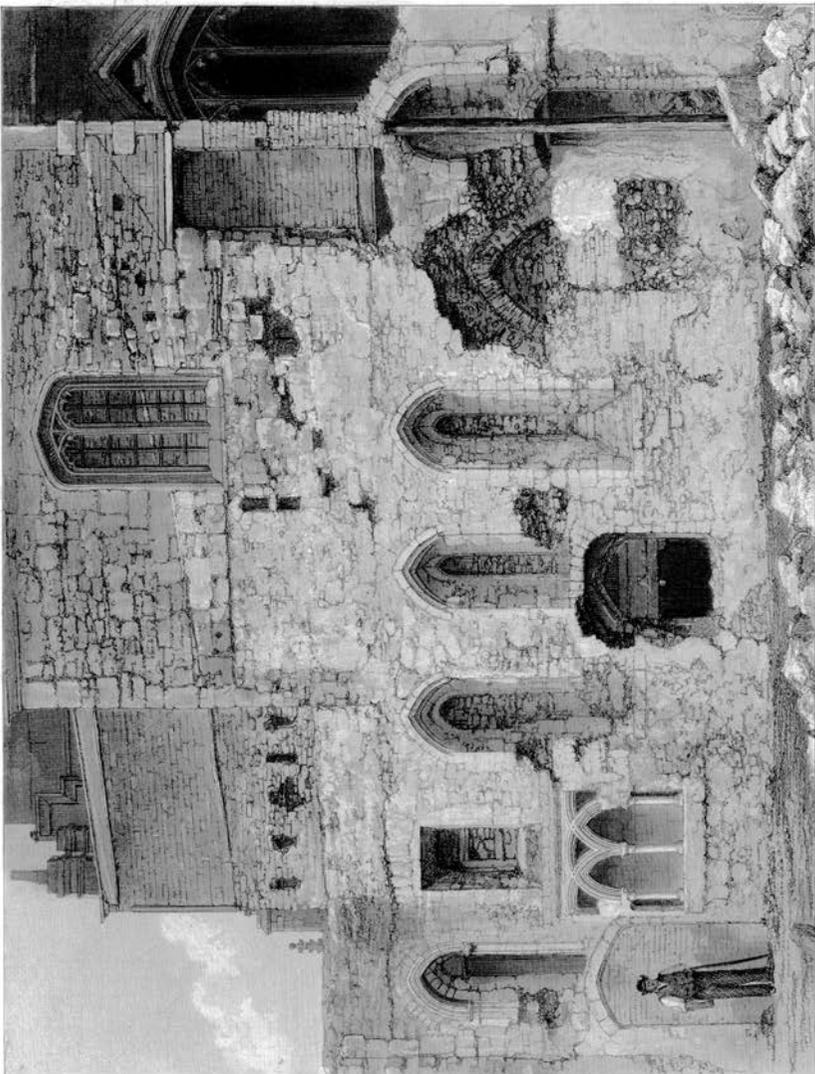
The diagonal shading shows the remnants of the Hospital.

The cut at page 355 shows the plan of the mouldings of capitals and the arches of the piscina.

N.B. The Society is indebted to Professor Babington for the plans and plates illustrating this paper.



CAMBRIDGE ANTIQ. COMM. V. 2.

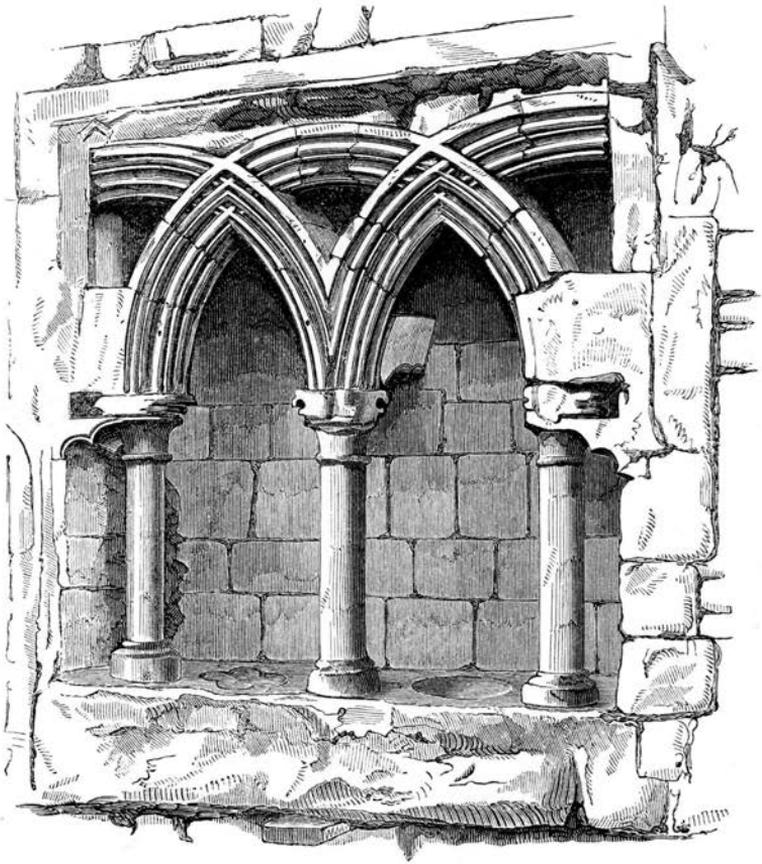


W. H. R. Photograph.

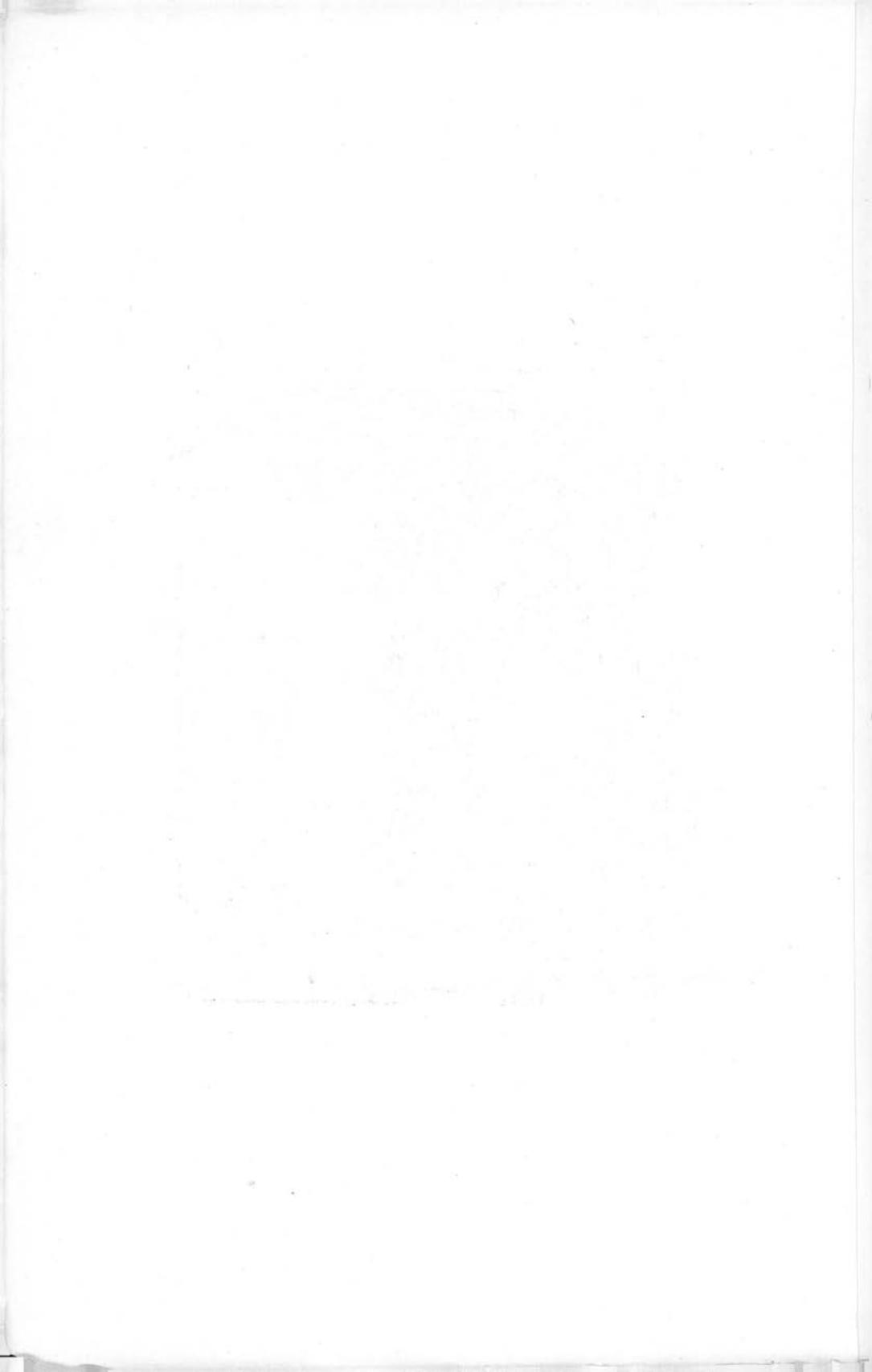
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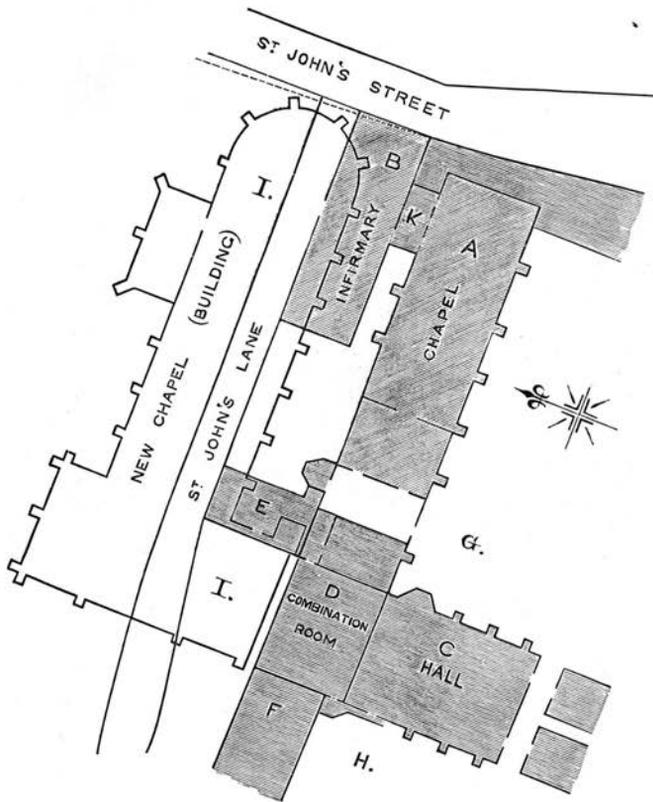
HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,
CAMBRIDGE.



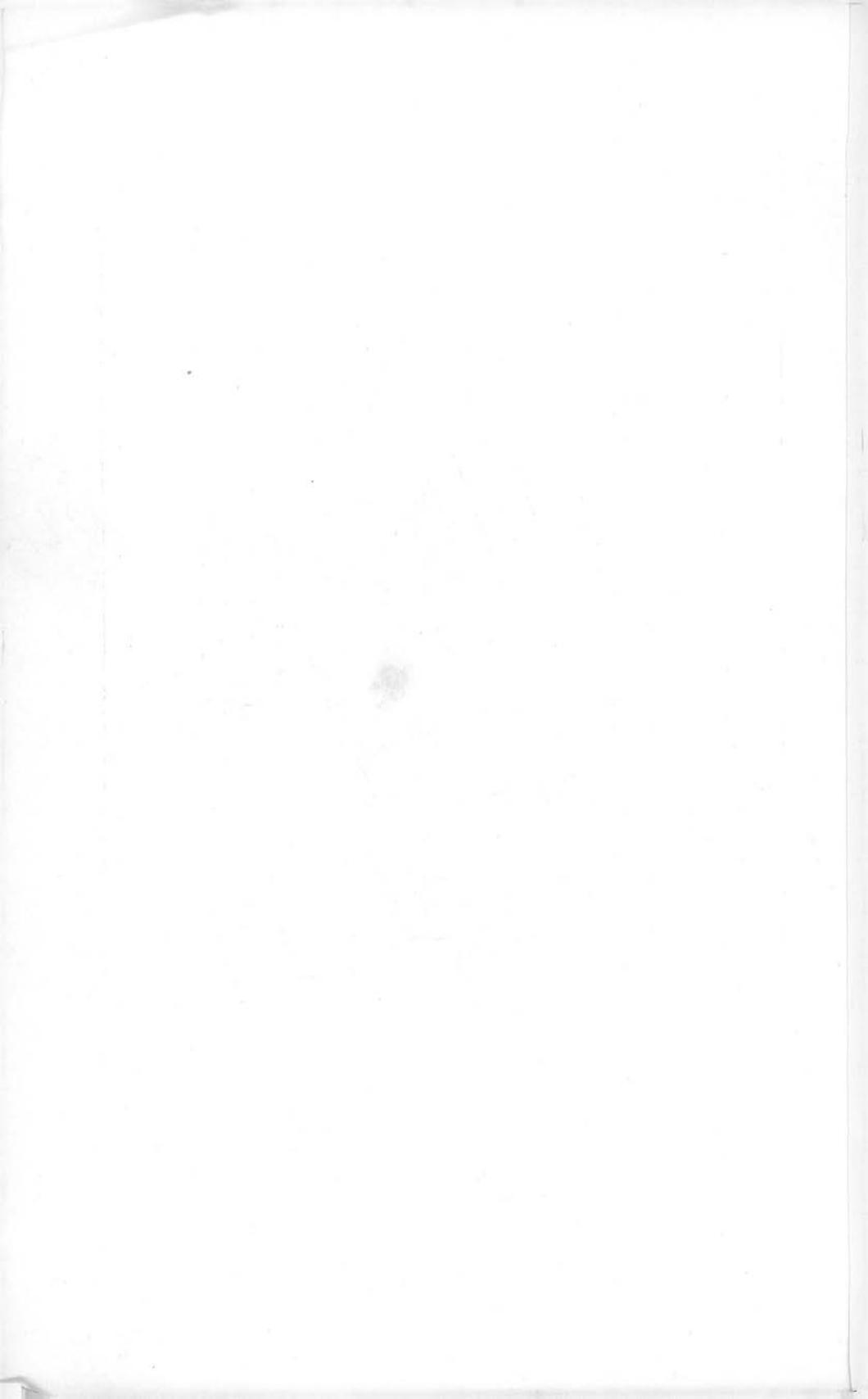


PISCINA. ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL.





PART OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.



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