A SHORT ACCOUNT OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL, NEWGATE STREET.

Given at a Meeting of the London and Middlesex Archæological Society, at Christ's Hospital, on Friday, the 20th April, 1900.

BY

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Vicar of Christ Church.

IT is quite fair to inform you at the outset that, taking it in the mass, the building which you have come to see this afternoon, cannot pretend to any great antiquity, except certain very small parts of it. To enormously long historical associations it can make claim, and very proud it is to do so. You look out, for instance, on the garden of the Treasurer, which is on your right as you sit, and you see what is absolutely virgin soil—ground which was closed in somewhere about the year 1225, as part of what a surveyor would call the "amenities" of the original messuage. This must necessarily be the beginning of any description of Christ's Hospital; it does not begin, however Irish it may seem, with its own foundation some three centuries and a half ago. The actual site, which belonged to the Franciscans, I have roughly tried to place upon the blackboard, and I will shortly say a few words upon it. Let me, however, even at the expense of saying what a great many know already, explain how it was that the Franciscans came to be here at all. It was in the year 1224 that some

nine brethren arrived at Dover, four of whom pushed on as soon as they could to London. They seem to have lodged for a short time at Blackfriars, that is to say with their Dominican Brothers, and after that they obtained by hire the house of a certain Sheriff Travers—a name which sounds modern enough—upon Cornhill. That house, apparently of no very great pretensions, rapidly became too strait for them. They required to have, so remarkably did their work appeal to the citizens, an altogether new site, and it is known to anybody who has studied the Franciscans at all that they had a strong objection on conscientious grounds not merely to good sanitation but to surroundings which could not pretend to be absolutely and unjustifiably unhealthy. It was their bounden duty and service, as they considered, to follow their noses in this sense, and therefore at the end of a very short time, having found that they wanted further accommodation, they accepted an offer made to them by a citizen called Ewen of the site which is represented on the blackboard. It was one which would naturally appeal to the desire of the Franciscans to have a dwelling which was generally unwholesome to live in. Upon the east it is bounded by the street in which I now have the pleasure to live, which was then called Foul or Stynkynge Lane. (Laughter.) In the course of years it came to be called Chick Lane, and many of you now in this room can doubtless remember when its name was perhaps a scarcely more fragrant one, viz., Butcher Hall Lane. In these last times it has taken to itself, with better sanitation, a respectable [and, since these words were spoken, a still more auspicious] title, and King Edward Street is healthy

as well as loyal. The north side of the site was bounded by the City Wall, which, as you know, was only just this side of the Town Ditch, whose odours need not be particularised, if you remember that, open and not ashamed, this main sewer of the City thus ran past the Franciscans' ground. On the south there were the Flesh Shambles, an arrangement of slaughter-houses, which, as there was then no London County Council, were not so salubrious as they might have been. Therefore you are dealing with a triangular site, which satisfied the desire of the Franciscans to mortify themselves by living in an unhealthy neighbourhood. Of course, it is only fair to say that, if the neighbourhood was unhealthy, they knew there must be work of a higher kind for them to do. They were great social workers, in fact the great "slummers" of those days, and St. Ewen's gift—for he became a saint afterwards—has been variously looked upon according to the temperament of the individual. Bishop Creighton, with whom I walked through the school a short while since, told me that he could quite understand Ewen's liberality, for the land must have been quite unsaleable under any circumstances [alas, that his early death should add pathos to the recollection of it]. As a matter of fact Ewen shortly afterwards retired into our monastery, and ended his days there, so possibly there is some ground for that contention. Still depending, as they always did, upon the liberality of the citizens, which was very generously accorded to them at all times, the Franciscans went forward with a little building. You are aware that it was against all the traditions of the Order to have any very strong buildings. The

first chapel, for instance, that they erected on their Shrewsbury settlement was of stone, but a most peremptory order came from the headquarters in Italy that the stone building should be taken down and replaced by one of mud. That was the Franciscans' rule in such matters, and for a time they stuck to it. But it is quite obvious that a great movement like this was bound to lead to the erection of large and commodious buildings. Therefore, upon this site, which is bounded by the three unsavoury boundaries which I have mentioned, you get first of all the absolute requisite of a monastery, the Great Cloister. The south side of that Great Cloister, which I shall have the pleasure of showing you later on, is the one part of the old monastery that survives to-day. Over the east side of it was the Great Dortor (or dormitory), which was practically ruined by the Great Fire. Upon the North Cloister in the year 1429 no less a person than Dick Whittington constructed for the Friars a large Library. That also meant a great falling off in the Franciscans from original righteousness. For St. Francis, when asked by the brothers to give them some books, replied that they did not want any books except a breviary, and he was the breviary (*Ego breviarium*); yet they became, in due time, a learned and scientific Order, and Dick Whittington presented to them a very fine library, which practically all survived, as far as the building went, until about the year 1800. He gave them also some £400 worth of books. You will find the building very clearly described in Stow. On the west side of the Cloister there was the Refectory, which was the site of the place where the Blues themselves fed for a great

number of years. Still further to the west is the site —with no trace of the building—of the Little Cloister and Infirmary. Between that and the site of the old Giltspur Street Compter stood the Bakehouse and the Brew-house. All these buildings passed in 1552 into the possession and use of Christ's Hospital; and at the east of the site, where we now are, there were other erections, from one of which the Governors ejected my predecessor, the first vicar of Christ Church, in order to make a "compting house." They bought his bedsteads and all his belongings, and got rid of him, and sometimes I think sadly that it will soon fall to my lot to see the exodus of the Hospital's bedsteads, and perhaps to return to the site on which my first predecessor had his lodging.

I must now say something about the Church itself. You will see that a large part of our ground-plan is taken up by the minster of the Franciscans. The first chapel that stood upon the site was begun almost immediately after they came here in 1225; but about the year 1306, when their reputation with all classes of people was established on a very large scale, no less a person than Margaret, the wife of Edward I, came forward and offered to erect them a very stately building. She started to build the Choir; the whole Church took over thirty years to build. It was consecrated before it was finished in the year 1325. It was finally finished about 1337. It must have been a magnificent building, 311 feet long, rather more than three times the length of the present church, and exactly its width, viz., 89 feet. It had fifteen windows on each side. The present church stands merely on the site of the choir

of the old church. This Grey Friars Church became the fashionable burying place of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and just as the wealthy Florentine of old paid largely to be buried in San Miniato, so it was believed that things would be made comfortable and easy for you in another world if you could afford to be shrouded in the habit of the Franciscans, and buried in the choir of their church here. The result was that crowds of "persons of quality" lie buried there. There are thus beneath the present Christ Church the remains of at least three Queens of England and one Queen of Scotland: Margaret, daughter of Philip of France, the second wife of Edward I; Isabella, wife of Edward II; Phillippa, Queen of Edward III; and Joan, Queen of Scots; the wife of David Bruce, and so on. Stow has preserved a full list. According to their rank they all had their splendid tombs, and thus, at the beginning of the sixteenth century this must have been one of the most magnificent churches that the country contained. *The Grey Friars Chronicle* relates that Cardinal Wolsey began to "enter hys visitacioun" in 1525, and though he did not actually superintend the turning out of our Friars, yet he began the movement, and they were finally suppressed in the year 1538; they were turned out bag and baggage, and the chief purpose which the Church served during the next eight or nine years was to store the wine which had been captured in certain French ships. But it also served a better object, sheltering, for a time, the printing press of Richard Grafton, who was the first really active Treasurer of Christ's Hospital. He also had at that time another press working in a part of

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. THE COURT ROOM.

the "Hall Play" ground, which, till a century or so ago, was always called "Grey Friars."

We are assembled in a room which is full of pictures, and as these pictures have a definite historical interest, it may be well for us to follow them round, and see how the various persons, however unsociable their faces look, are intimately connected with the great days of this ancient institution. Here, in the first instance, is King Henry VIII, the despoiler of our monastery of the Grey Friars. In arriving at that result he went through one of his characteristic plans. There was a Church here close by, between this and St. Martin's le Grand, named after St. Ewen, the donor of this site ; and there was another Church called St. Nicholas in the Shambles. "Obviously," said Henry, "there are too many churches about here"—one has heard it said since then—"what could be better than to destroy several of these churches, and leave the Abbey Church of the Grey Friars as the Parish Church ?" That came to pass, and in a way, that is the beginning of the use of this ground for Christ's Hospital. Subsequently Henry's Letters Patent gave into the hands of the Lord Mayor and Commonalty of the City of London, to form a house for the use of the poor, a parcel of ground consisting both of our site and of the site of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. What he made out of it I am not prepared to say, though I do not think it was very much. The only pity is that the City's correspondence tends to show that Henry, having discovered the necessity of founding a house for the poor, endeavoured to *sell* to the City the site which he had grabbed from the friars. Happily, Henry had to express his regret that

the Corporation were very "pinch-pence" in the matter. They were in no hurry to pay a price for a site which was mere "stolen goods." Anyhow, the site was conveyed on December 27th, 1547, for a house for the poor. To this extent, therefore, Henry VIII was our founder. Some four or five years passed, and it would appear that absolutely nothing was done with our particular part of the site. St. Bartholomew's Hospital started, and did its work for the poor, and in the meanwhile the City was teeming with children who could no longer find refuge in the conventual houses where they had hitherto been taught. They had to be provided for somehow, and what Edward VI did was of course not to become a liberal benefactor of Christ's Hospital, though he allowed it to receive land in mortmain of the annual value of 4,000 marks, but merely to arrange that such part of the land given by Henry to provide a "house of the poor" as was not then being used should be handed over for a "house" to be called Christ's Hospital, into which the children of the City should be taken ; and I say children, because this place was never intended to be merely a boys' school, but one in which both sexes were to be treated alike, and indeed for a very long time both sexes had their meals in the same hall at the same time. Whether, under the circumstances, there was any peace in the hall, must be left to your imagination, but such was undoubtedly the custom.

The work of preparing this site for the purposes of a school began in the summer of 1552. You will find in our first Ledger, which is on view, that the accounts begin with "Rewards to the carpenters,

bricklayers," and so on. It was only in the month of November that anything was brought in in the way of "supplies," and then the very first item of the commissariat is £3 6*s.* 8*d.* worth of "beare." (Laughter.) I have said that Edward VI gave very little indeed for the endowment of this Institution, and I want now to call your attention in this connection to the portrait of Sir Richard Dobbs. It is worth your while to read as you go out, if you can, the inscription below that portrait:—

"Christes Hospitall erected was a passinge dede of pitie,
What tyme S^r^ Richard Dobb was Maior of thys most fam^s^ citie."

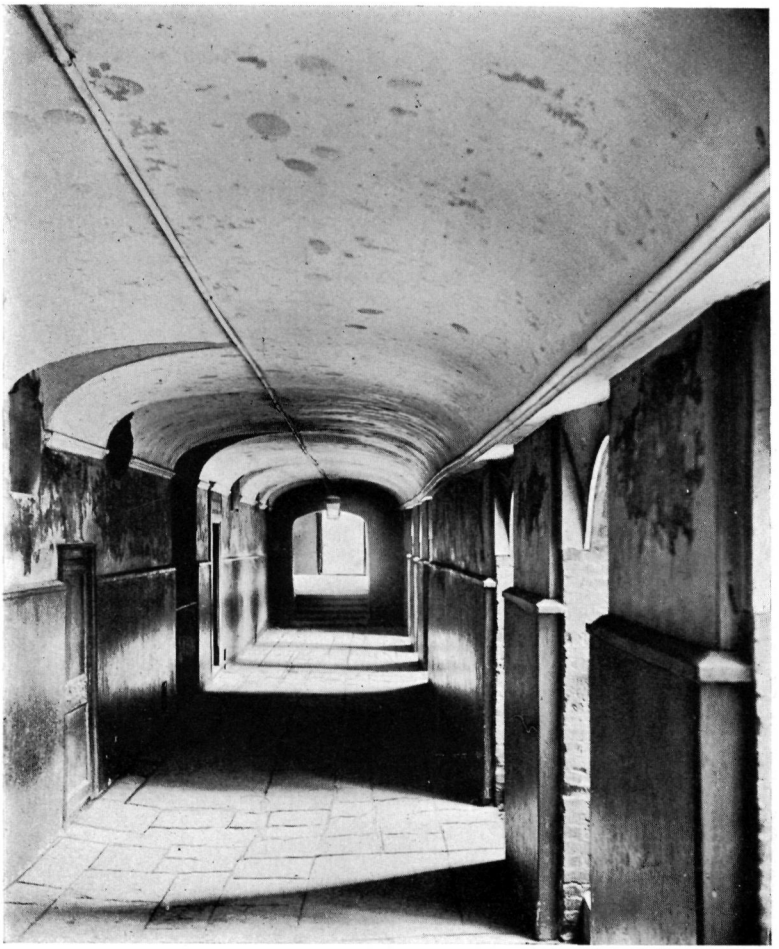
Dobbs was the head and front of the movement which got together the money necessary for starting Christ's Hospital. It is very important that upon that point we should be perfectly clear. The work of this Institution has been carried on until the year 1891, by the benevolence, first of the citizens of London only, and more recently by the benevolence of those who were not citizens; and, in my opinion, if the same liberality had been consistently maintained by the Civic authorities as such, there would not have been any question of depriving the Corporation of that hold which it rightly had upon the Institution for a great many years. Dobbs and his friends gathered themselves together, and collected a very large sum of money. I have often thought that modern charities, with their business-like schemes for "raising the wind," are completely in the shade as compared with our first benefactors. They made a decree that, on a particular Sunday, collections should be made in every City church—(I should like to see my Alderman "decreeing" anything of the sort)—

and they issued collecting boxes which people were to put on the tables of their houses ; and, as they could not trust the City clergy any more than some people will trust them now, they wrote a sermon, "a fine, witty and learned oration," (that, at least, was their own verdict on it) and sent it round that the clergymen might preach it, and "move the people to charity." (Laughter.) I do not think Dobbs and his colleagues had to build any rooms or any structures at all. All they had to do was to put the existing accommodation into order.

You will be able to see a list of the first staff of the Hospital, and it will show you how completely this was a *hospital* to start with, quite as much as a school. The aggregate salaries of the doctors matron and nurses were about double the total sum paid for education. The first thing to do was to get the children clean, and so thoroughly was that work performed that the chronicler tells us how hundreds of the children having been taken from the dunghill, and brought into clean surroundings, simply "died downright." Education, therefore, was rather a secondary consideration, but it began at once. And this brings me to the picture of Dame Mary Ramsey—a somewhat sour-looking lady with a menacing finger. She endowed our Writing School, and her husband was Sir Thomas Ramsey, Lord Mayor in 1577. In that year some attempt had been made to start a Writing School ; but when Lady Ramsey died, her benefaction placed it on a permanent basis, and, up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was quite common to see mention in our books of "The Master of the Lady Ramsey's Writing School." She also left

funds for the purpose of sending the boys of this Hospital to the University. She endowed with a large sum of money my own College at Cambridge, and she was buried in the old church of Christ Church, Newgate Street. She left me, as Vicar, 10*s.* a year for looking after her tomb, which the "City Parochial" authorities refuse absolutely to pay me. To her, personally, by a curious coincidence, I am under very considerable obligations. I learned writing at Christ's Hospital, as the result of her original foundation. I was an exhibitioner of this Hospital at the University, as the result of her foundation of Exhibitions here. I was scholar, nominally on her foundation, at Peterhouse. I am now the legal guardian of her monument in Christ Church. She has followed me all through my life, and an engraving of this picture points its finger at me in my study. (Laughter). It is impossible to tell where that Writing School was, for the exact position of the early schools is a matter of complete mystery. It is not till after the Fire that we begin to see where the teaching went on. We see what terrible straits the Fire put the place to. We find regulations that the boys in the Writing School are to refrain from making what is called a "tumultuary removal up and down" over the heads of the boys of the Grammar School underneath, and again that the boys in the Reading School are to refrain from making a "tumultuary removal" over the heads of the boys in the Writing School. There was, somewhere or other, a three-storied building, each storey of which was used for the purposes of a school.

In Queen Elizabeth's time there was a right-of-way straight through Christ Church under the lantern-tower; and as you came along Christ Church passage just now you enjoyed the liberty they took. The Fire is naturally described in the books of the Hospital with very great definiteness. I have not time to allude to all of it, but what happened was roughly this: The Fire was travelling from the south-east, and it naturally attacked first the great Church itself, which suffered very considerably from the burning of the lead and from the effects of the Fire generally. But it was large enough to protect our Cloisters which stood to the north of it. Consequently these Cloisters and Whittington's Library survived in part up to the early years of last century. The historian of Christ's Hospital—Mr. Trollope—wrote that in 1832 there was still part of the wall of the Whittington Library left. You have yourselves seen, as you came in, the South Cloister, which we call the "Giffs." I have no doubt in the world that that word "Giffs" is simply a corruption of Grey Friars, though it is popularly explained with reference to a Beadle of past years. "The Grey Friars" is the name given in the books, as already mentioned, to a part of the Hall Playground, and the Cloister, being used as a natural passage towards "the Grey Friars," got to be known as "The Giffs" (G-F's). The parts not protected by the Church were entirely destroyed, including the Treasurer's house, which had only been built twenty years. Let us see how Christ Church was treated as a reward for protecting the ancient buildings of the Hospital. Sir Christopher Wren was then in full command of these matters, and he decided that



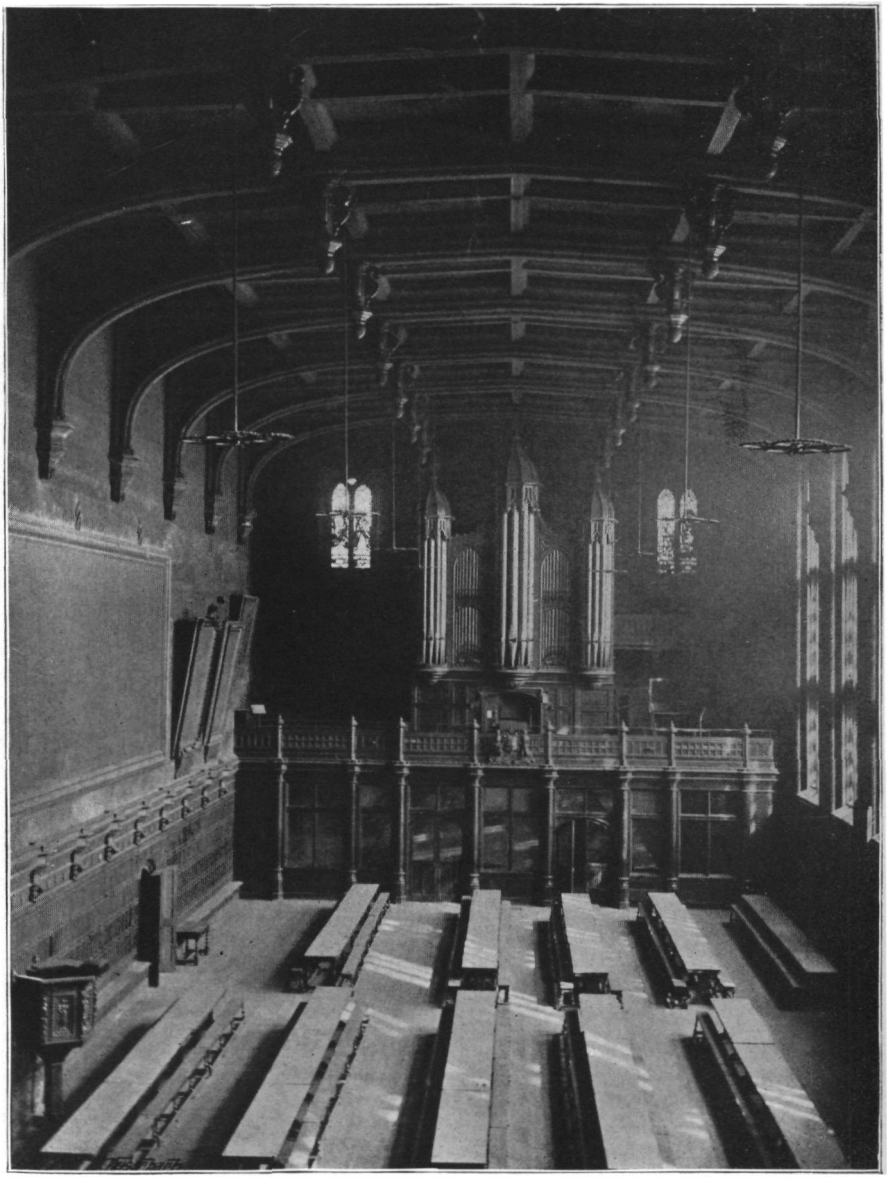
CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. "GIFFS" CLOISTER, INTERIOR.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. "GIFFS" CLOISTER, EXTERIOR.

only the choir of the Church should be re-built. I am of opinion that the destruction of Christ Church by fire was only partial, and I will read to you a few sentences out of our records which give an account of the Fire. "This Hospital of Christ was almost consumed, with the two great Churches adjoining, in September, 1666"—I conjecture that these two were the Choir and the Nave of Christ Church, the Nave being always called the West Church, and the two being separated by the public passage already mentioned—"with the two Churches adjoining, except the four Cloisters to which the fire hath done no hurt, and about three Wards—towards the Sick-Ward and severall roomes there, as also the Wardrobe of this Hospital over the South Cloister, the Fire hath done no hurt, and several other rooms there, as also the wardrobe of this Hospital over the South Cloister." That Cloister contained over it a ward (which must have had a party wall with the Church), "the glazed windows of the Church on that side being very little damnified." Now a Church which is burnt, and of which the windows are very little harmed is not, it seems to me, beyond the hope of restoration, and we know that for twenty years after the Fire divine service was performed in Christ Church, in a Tabernacle erected in the middle of the Choir. Sir Christopher Wren ultimately erected, on the site of the demolished Thirteenth Century Choir, a building which, for my part, I would gladly sacrifice for the sake of a bit of the Old Church. The West Church, he decided, should not be rebuilt, and he quietly made over the foundations of its north wall to Christ's Hospital, in order that this benevolent

looking old gentleman, Sir Robert Clayton, might erect over it the exquisite red-brick building that you saw on the left as you came down the passage. I am sorry to say that the Bishop of London fully consented to the robbery, as also did the Court of Aldermen; the value of the stolen ground to-day would restore to my parish something of the affluence it once enjoyed, but I am not sanguine of securing it. The records contain complaints that the Cloisters were very weak even before the Fire. It is extraordinary, in their state of weakness, how any part of them survived at all, but it did. For instance, a regulation was passed that the children in the wards were to cease washing the plates because the Cloisters underneath were exceedingly weak.

Now we come to the men who gradually caused this Hospital to rise from the dead as it were. Erasmus Smith, Esq., a gentleman with a considerable amount of property in Ireland and an educational benefactor to Dublin, is one of the chief of them. What troubled him in connection with the Fire was that the Counting House received its proper attention immediately, while the children were treated as a secondary consideration. I found a letter the other day from old Erasmus, where he speaks of "the great intendment of this happy foundation" being hopelessly neglected, and urges that the children ought to be brought back there at once with a view to "theire Discipline and Education in piety." He made himself responsible for rebuilding a large number of buildings, gave money, and provided the necessary material. The President at that time was Sir John Frederick, ex-Lord Mayor, who had been in the School, and who occupied the position of President



CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. INTERIOR OF GREAT HALL.

longer than anyone except the Duke of Cambridge, who has doubled Sir John Frederick's record and still takes as keen an interest in the Hospital as any man living. Sir John Frederick is remarkable for having built a hall on the site of the Franciscan Refectory, which was the scene of a great many interesting ceremonies, especially the Public Suppers. These suppers used to be held on Sunday nights (instead of Thursdays, as now) and, as far as I can gather, they were welcomed as a form of amusement at a time when entertainments were not numerous. Our books record frequent regulations for keeping "the rabble," who came up into the Hall on Sunday nights, from getting into the Hall at all. The Beadles were told to prevent them from coming in, and to let in "only persons of quality," who were expected to show a practical monetary interest in what they saw. The Beadles then were not too respectable; they were mostly publicans in a small way, and a good attendance at "Public Suppers" meant very good business for the Beadle.

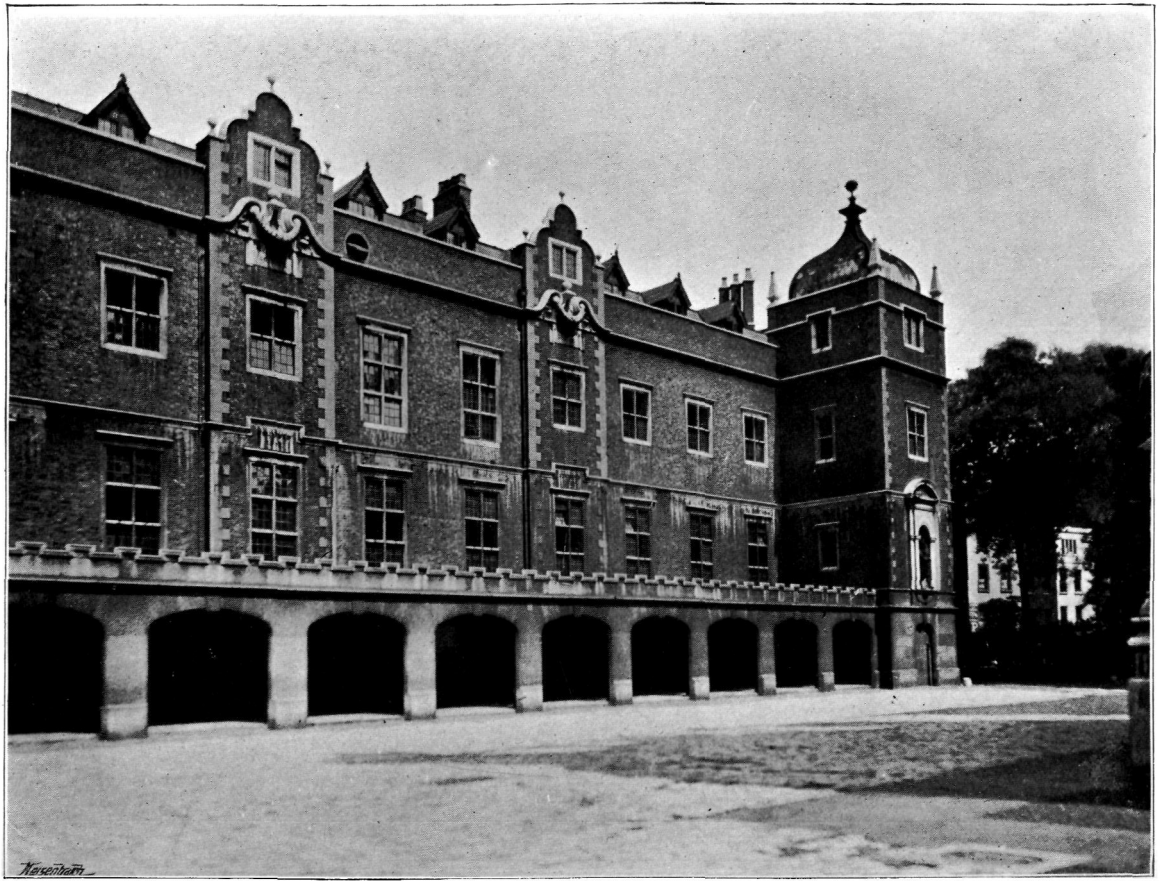
Sir John Frederick was also in other ways a very great benefactor and friend of the boys, and they were allowed to express their thanks to him in language which must have been embarrassing. A youthful orator in 1664 thus comforted the good President:— "When you dy, you shall swim to your grave in the Tears of Orphans and on your Tombe shall they ingrave this Motto:—

> 'Here lies the Orphans' Father most discreet,
> Rare fruit made ripe for Heaven, for earth too sweet.'"

Thomas Barnes, the subject of the next portrait, is not connected with the re-building but with two things

of interest,—the plate, which will be described to you directly, and the foundation of the service and dinner in this Hospital on the 17th of November, in connection with the Accession of Queen Elizabeth. The dinner is no longer held, but we perpetuate (without endowment) the custom of the Sermon on the Virgin Queen and the Reformation. It was preached last November (1899) by the (late) Bishop of London, and in 1900 by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Sir John Moore, to whom I now pass, built us our present Writing School. The plans were nominally the work of Sir Christopher Wren, but an entry in the books shows that the Governors made a present of ten guineas to "Mr. Hawkesmore, Sir Christr. Wren's gentleman," who had taken a "great pains and industry in making the draughts," and was likely to be at considerable trouble "in the time of building it"—that is the Writing School. Hawkesmoor designed St. Mary Woolnoth, but there were not known to be any other buildings of his in the City. He was commissioned, as you will remember, by the Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, to erect their "Fellows' Buildings," but the Provost dismissed him as being "too luxuriant and exorbitant." Outside that Writing School there is a statue of Sir John Moore [since removed to Horsham], who gave the entire cost of the building, rather over £4,000. The Governors, having decided to erect a statue of the donor, gave a commission to "Mr. Gibbons, a carver." So it is that our records speak of the famous Grinling Gibbons. Alas! When that statue in marble of Sir John Moore was delivered, the Governors refused to pay for it, "the same being in no way liked off," and "the face in no



CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND THE MATHEMATICAL SCHOOL.

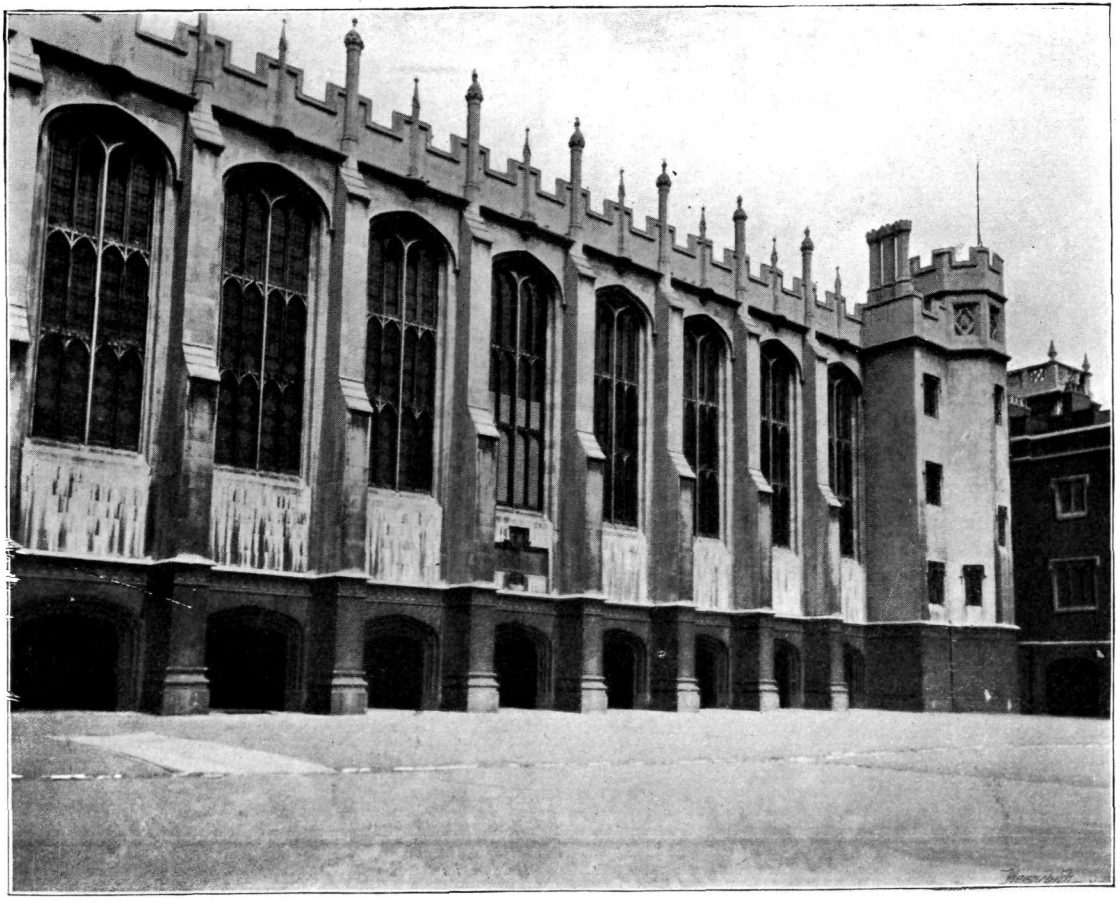
way resembling Sir John Moore." A balance of £60 (£30 having been already paid in advance) was due to Gibbons, and he suggested if the good Alderman would give him another sitting he would make it right. Three Governors were told off to watch the process. After considerable delay, however, the famous "carver" got his money.

I must now briefly ask you to notice the beautiful pictures of Mr. Colwall and Mr. Stone. These gentlemen are connected with the foundation of the Royal Mathematical School. King Charles II, whose picture hangs close by, was called, by courtesy, "the Royal Founder" of this Mathematical School, Mr. Colwall being merely the gentleman who provided the money to endow it. The latter gave to the Hospital a sum of £7,000, which was invested in the Excise. That sort of security being one which was "quite safe" for the Government, it was impossible to get the money out; so Charles II "founded" the Mathematical School by allowing the £7,000 to be released from the Excise—into which he had not put it—at the rate of £1,000 a year. He certainly gave them afterwards £370 a year for apprenticing the boys in the ships of the Royal Navy.

I only desire now to call your attention to an odd custom that once prevailed here, and is connected with Mr. Thomas Stretchley, whose portrait is also here. If any of us had been Governors of Christ's Hospital in September, 1692, when he died, we should have received a notice which ran as follows:—"Sir, Your Worship as a Governour of this Hospital is desired to be present at the Great Hall (date and hour being given) from thence to accompany the Corps of

Thomas Stretchley, Gentleman, to the Tabernacle in Christ Church to hear a sermon. Pray, Sir, be pleased to appear, his Executors having declared that he is a Bountiful Benefactor to the poor children of this Hospital."—As a matter of fact he gave to the Hospital some £5,000. This invitation represents a custom by which the children of this Hospital—whom you will therefore pity—were allowed for a very long period to be let out as mutes. When a munificent benefactor died—especially a Treasurer—he was allowed to have all the children to attend his funeral, and his corpse had the pleasant sensation of being accompanied to its resting place by some hundreds of children, who got very little in the shape of refreshment, and who would remember him for evil as long as they lived. There is a book in the Counting House which records every funeral so attended by the children from the year 1622 to the year 1754, though the custom is older still. I have been at the pains of going through the book, and I find that there were at least 1,500 such funerals between those dates, and the net profit to the Hospital from the system was somewhere about £75,000. Sometimes ladies desired to have our girls to attend their obsequies; I find, for instance, an entry that 40 girls attended the funeral of a lady, and in the margin there is a mention of 40*s*. In fact any member of the British public could hire the children to "mourn" at so much a head, or could secure their attendance by leaving a legacy to the Hospital.

With the portrait of Mr. Poynder at the end of the room, we come to the Treasurer who was in office at the time that the latest buildings were erected.



CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. THE HALL AND THE "HALL-PLAY."

The foundation stone of the present Hall was laid in 1825, and the other buildings followed in due course. When I tell you that the contract for one of these buildings is announced in the books to have been accepted from "the respectable firm of Cubitt and Sons," in 1834, you will begin to feel that you have got back to modern times.

NOTE:—Mr. Pearce feels that an apology is due to Members of the Society who did not take part in the visit, for the form in which his talk is here given; the only alternative was to re-write the whole. But the use of the portraits, as so many texts, may be defended in view of the fact that, when the buildings are demolished the pictures will remain as a *nexus* between Christ's Hospital present and Christ's Hospital future.—*February*, 1901.
