THE HISTORY OF ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES UNTIL A.D. 1600.*

The History of St. Thomas's Hospital " (Vol. I) by Dr. C. F. Parsons, D.Sc., F.S.A., gives us for the first time many interesting facts from a careful study of old documents, notably the Chartulary of St. Thomas's Hospital among the Manuscripts by Stow, the Elizabethan historian, in the British Museum; the minutes of the Governors' Court from the days of Queen Mary to the present time, letters from Kings and Queens and great Statesmen, old accounts and charges to officials preserved in the strong room of the hospital, and other papers.

It is dedicated, by special permission, to His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, in memory of the fifty years during which he has been President of St. Thomas's Hospital.

The book is welcome. How many members of the public, how many, even, of the medical and nursing professions could say when this great institution was founded, where it was situated and to whom it was dedicated?

Originally a part of the Priory of St. Mary Overie, or St. Mary the Virgin of Southwark, it is sometimes said that the beginning of St. Thomas's Hospital dates from the separation of the two. Even then, however, the infirmary of this religious house was used for the relief of the sick and suffering, which its position outside the great southern entry to the City of London called upon it to undertake, and which proved too small for the work thrown upon it, so that it is said that it was added to by Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, during his lifetime, and from the time of Becket's canonization in 1173 this part of the Priory was known as St. Thomas's Spital.

The story of the Legend of Mary Overy must be studied by those who seek for the kernel of truth hidden in most legends.

At first in the great diocese of Winchester, it was in 1106, forty years after the Conquest, that William Gifford in the seventh year of Henry I built Winchester House on Bankside. He was the first Bishop of Winchester who felt the need of living near London, since London was now the centre of the Kingdom. He does not, says the author, appear to have been greatly impressed by his neighbours, the collegiate priests, for Stow tells us that he replaced them by Canons Regular or Black Canons of the Order of St. Augustine of Hippo, with a prior at their head.

The Order of Augustine Canons was one which was specially adapted to minister to the sick because its life was so much lighter in spiritual duties than was that of the monks, and the opening clause of the Rule of St. Augustine, their founder, runs: "Before all things, dearest brethren, let God be loved, then your neighbour." Its brethren, says Dr. Parsons, seem indeed to have overshadowed the grey or ministering friars whom St. Francis of Assisi founded in 1209; and there can be little doubt that as soon as they were established at Southwark, their infirmary became a hospital for the sick and infirm who passed along the great highway to London.

Owing to its position close to the Bridge, where all the great southern roads converged upon London, the medical and surgical practice of the Priory of St. Mary in Southwark must have been very great, even in Stephen's time, and there can, says the author, be no doubt that our predecessors saw a good deal more of disease like typhus, plague and leprosy than we do in London to-day.

Medicine after the Conquest.

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