

The Hospital World.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, ROCHESTER.

Little is known by the world at large of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester, yet its foundation is probably the oldest in this country, though it is considerably later than that of Santo Spirito in Rome, founded by King Ina in 717 A.D., the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, at Siena, which dates from the ninth century, and other notable hospitals still carrying on their good work. It was founded by Bishop Gundulf in 1078, nearly half a century before Rahere dedicated to the same saint the historic hospital in the marshes of Smithfield, so that when, as a nurse trained in the later institution, I recently visited St. Bartholomew's, Rochester, on the occasion of a concert of unusual excellence followed by a Christmas tree, the Chaplain, Mr. Bailey, remarked with a twinkle that the "elder brother was very pleased to welcome the younger, who had outgrown him in size."

The younger brother has, by the way, furnished the elder with the present Matron of the

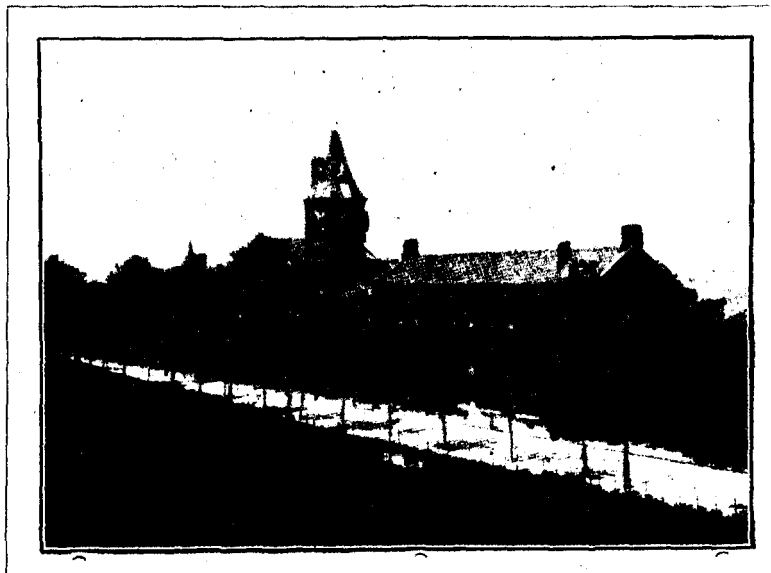
institution, Miss Pote Hunt, the Home Sister, Miss M. K. Steele, and one of the Ward Sisters, so that there is a strong bond of union between the two.

When Bishop Gundulf founded the hospital in 1078 he put it under the protection of the Prior of the Cathedral, whose modern successor, the Dean, is still its Patron and Governor.

Like so many old religious foundations, the Hospital, which was originally intended for lepers, is excellently placed, on the high road between Rochester and Chatham, and on a height overlooking the estuary of the Thames, with a view right away to Southend opposite, and including the dockyard in the foreground on the right, and the Cathedral and Castle on the left.

I learnt that originally the staff consisted of a Prior and four Brethren, but as early as the reign of Edward III., Sisters had been added to those who served it. When the Cathedral body was remodelled in 1541 the Prior received the title of Dean, and Henry VIII. confirmed the patronage of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to him "and his successors for ever." The present building dates from the year 1868, and was erected on the site originally given by Bishop Gundulf. The ceilings of some of its wards are supported by great oak beams which seem as if they must have been part of a still older building, but the glory of the hospital is its chapel, which dates from within twelve years of the Conquest, and the great architectural feature is the Apse or round half-domed Sanctuary, which has its own Arch, and is not a mere circular ending of the Chancel. In the

reign of Henry VIII. the Charity seems to have been deprived of many of its emoluments, but in Queen Elizabeth's reign a lease was granted to "George Hope Smith for fourscore and nynteene years in consideration that he should make the said Chappell (being old and ruynous and like to come



ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, ROCHESTER.
From Fort Pitt Hill.

to utter decay) to serve for an honest and seemly dwelling house." This desecration was the means of preserving the fabric until about 1730, when the tenants were bought out, and it was again equipped for its rightful purpose, but its restoration was not completed until 1874, when it was carried out by the late Sir G. Gilbert Scott.

At the present time the hospital, which is a general one, has 104 beds, and, as it serves a large area, including Rochester, Chatham, and the surrounding district, and there are many accidents in the dockyard, the surgical work is very excellent. There is an up-to-date operating theatre, and seldom a day passes that it is not in use. There is also a large chil-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)