

charters, the same being granted to the Maior, commonly and citizens of London; nor could it wait upon the commission without the directions of the court of aldermen.

"The commissioners, on receiving this reply directed the Lord Mayor to send the original charters to the Council Chamber, to be compared, and kept, by them; and this direction was communicated to the court of aldermen on March 17th, 1682. The court ordered the charter, which it understood was lodged at Christ's Hospital to be brought to it and the town clerk was directed to inform himself if such visitation had been formerly made, and how the three hospitals of Christ's, Bridewell and St. Thomas's being all of one foundation came to be divided.

"It seems that the commissioners had to write once more demanding the charter of the hospitals from the Lord Mayor, and were informed on March 20th that the Court of Aldermen could not deliver the same without the consent of the commons in common council assembled.

"Eventually the original grant or charter of the three Royal Hospitals, which was, and still is, kept at Christ's Hospital, was delivered to the commission, but St. Thomas's heard nothing more of it for a year and nine months."

Subsequently it appeared that "the policy of the Commissioners and new Governors was to cast off the yoke of the City in a very arbitrary and unauthorized way, a policy which was later to lead to a great deal of trouble."

Another instance of the tenacity with which the City insisted upon its rights in connection with the hospital occurred when the Lord Mayor reported to the Court of Aldermen that on the death of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, the president of St. Thomas's Hospital, the treasurer "had caused a Court of Governors to be summoned, and had elected a president without acquainting his lordship, and that he thought the same derogatory to the honour and dignity of the chair as well as of the court." After directing the town clerk "to search what power and authority the lord mayor and the court have over the hospitals," and summoning the treasurer of the hospital to attend the court "with such precedents as he could find in the books of the hospital relating to such elections" the Court of Aldermen resolved "that upon the death or resignation of any president of the said hospital, the right of summoning and holding the court in which the new president is to be chosen is in the lord mayor for the time being, and that no other person whatsoever hath a right to hold such a court unless by a power delegated either by this court or the lord mayor for the time being." They ordered a copy to be sent to the treasurer, and we find that on four subsequent occasions the lord mayor presided at the election of a president of St. Thomas's Hospital.

Eventually in December 1779, owing to difficulties between the Royal Hospitals and the court of common council, who claimed to be the governors of these Hospitals, a petition was prepared by the Hospitals and sent to the Lord High Chancellor concerning these.

In February 1782 the treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital told the governors that "the petition to the Lord Chancellor had been presented and considered, and that, since no order had been made thereon, it was now desirable to apply to Parliament." This was done and in conjunction with the presidents and treasurers of the other Royal Hospitals, a petition was prepared "for leave to bring in a Bill for establishing the present acting governors as legal and responsible governors of the hospitals to which they were attached; for up to this time they had been nothing more than sub-governors whose appointment had not been strictly legal."

This was done and the Bill presented. Eventually the common council appointed a committee to meet the presidents and treasurers of the Royal Hospitals and draft an agreement finally and amicably to adjust the several matters in question.

On July 31st 1782 the treasurer informed the court of

Governors of St. Thomas's Hospital that the approved agreement with the City had been engrossed and signed, and a Bill in Parliament had received the Royal assent. "Thus ended the long misunderstanding between the City and the Royal Hospitals, caused not by any fault on the part of either, but because the advisers of Edward VI, when drafting the Charter to the City giving it control of the hospitals, could not foresee and thus provide for the changes which time would bring about." We realise in reading this book how the close connection between St. Thomas's Hospital (when in St. Thomas's Street) and Guy's Hospital came about.

In 1721 the governors of St. Thomas's let to "our worthy governor and benefactor Thomas Guy Esq., intending to found and erect an hospital for incurables within the Close of this hospital . . . several parcels of ground" Guy's idea seems to have been to provide for incurable patients, when obliged by the rules of St. Thomas's Hospital, of which he was a generous governor, to leave that hospital. This he expressly provided for in his will, but provided notwithstanding that it should be lawful for his executors and trustees "to cause any number of the said beds or wards to be filled and made use of, in like manner, and with like patients, as the beds in the hospital of St Thomas are ordinarily used."

A gruesome complaint made to the governors in 1632 concerned the graves in the new churchyard. "It seems," it is related, "that the dead patients in the new churchyard are buried so near the surface that putrefaction is seen above ground; and it is ordered, therefore, that no corpse shall be buried less than two feet deep. This, apparently the governors think quite deep enough." As it was not until 1697 that the order was given for the dead to be buried in coffins, only shrouds having been provided up to that time, the condition of the churchyard does not bear thinking of.

It is amazing to read how whenever a vacancy occurred for a surgeon or physician and even for the reversion of such a post how Kings and other potentates wrote to the governors commending their own nominees. Charles I, Charles II, James II, Oliver Cromwell, Thomas Cromwell, Fairfax, all strongly urged protégés, ending their letters somewhat in the strain of one from Charles I. "And we do not doubt of your readiness to give us satisfaction herein as well in regard of this our recommendation. . . which we shall retain in our Princely remembrance for your benefit as occasion shall be presented." We are not told of any such occasion arising!

Various items of interest concerning the nursing staff crop up from time to time.

In 1634 a standing committee was appointed to deal with all matters which do or shall concern the matron and hospitaller. "It seems that trouble was inevitable, for not only had each of them to watch over the interests of those of his or her own sex in the hospital, but each had to overlap into the other's domain. The hospitaller while administering spiritual consolation no doubt received many complaints about the nurses and whether he reported these to the matron, or dealt with them on his own account, that lady was sure to think that he was interfering with things outside his province."

Another trouble arose in 1655. Sisters King, Noah, and Tobias turned Quakers, and they were informed that if they did not alter their opinions and conform before September 1st they would be discharged. At the next court it was reported that several sisters had been discharged, so it is assumed that the Quakeresses had refused to change their religious opinions.

The book is full of interest, and we heartily commend it to our readers. We look forward to the publication of the third volume which, covering as it must, the foundation of the Nightingale Training School, must be of special interest to students of nursing history. MARGARET BREAY.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)