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A Hospital Farm in London

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# A HOSPITAL FARM IN LONDON.



"MORTLAKE."

*The Hospital farm horse. His mother worked there before him, and "Mortlake" was bred on the premises.*

*1911-1916*



RHN / FU / 2 / 3 / 24

A HOSPITAL FARM  
IN LONDON.



Half the misery of human life  
might be extinguished by mutual  
offices of compassion, benevolence  
and humanity.

*Addison.*

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## INTRODUCTION.



THE most remarkable thing, very frequently, about those crystallised statements which we call "truisms" is their absolute untruth. There are notable exceptions, it must be admitted; that the average Londoner knows little or nothing about the charms and treasures of his great city, for instance, is the tritest—and the truest—of truisms.

How many, it may be wondered, have even heard of, far less visited, one very charming nook in London, this miniature "Hospital Farm" that is set like a green jewel in London's smoke-grimed side within seven miles of Charing Cross?

Yet it is extraordinarily well worth a visit, even if it is accomplished only through the pages of this booklet. All that rare charm which clings about the life of a farm that is lived out and planned under the vast sky spaces, and in the ennobling silences of a remote country-side, seems intensified here in this patch of land round which the huddled houses of a great town crouch in envious ambush. Inside these gates it is hard to believe that close by is beating, strongly and swiftly, the pulse of the monster city.



Sometimes we read how, on those scarred plains of Northern France over which the scourge of war has run like fire through the stubble, our soldiers chance on just such a little farm as this, set about by its orchards and green fields and trim espaliered garden, that has escaped, as by enchantment, from the general ruin.

It may be that only womenfolk, or the very old among the men, are left to care for it, but its placid life flows on. In the fields the little line of tethered kine feed unconcernedly, and the busy bustle of the yard, as the men march by, over the half-opened gate of a stable looks the questioning, patient face of a horse. Peace and homely beauty seem to brood over the place like a cloud, and yet . . . Beyond those sheltering trees, within earshot of the murmur of this pleasant, homely life, is war. Pain and suffering . . . a life struggle in which human souls are being called upon to exhibit to the fullest all those spiritual qualities that alone make for true victory: self-mastery, self-sacrifice, patience, heroic endurance.

Is the parallel very obvious? We hope so.

Close, very close, to this London Farm where as one enters all the troubled world seems left behind, is another battlefield, the hidden battlefield of a great Hospital, where men and women are waging a struggle with pain and suffering, none the less heroic and magnificent, that it is unseen and unchronicled. These battles waged with much cheerful courage achieve no decoration, stir no great masses to thrilled applause. For these combatants there can be no final victory; the ills against

which they struggle are Incurable, and in their warfare their great strength lies in the strength of others, their courage in the courage of those who are willing to help them to bear their burdens with a loving willingness, that willingness which springs from "the dominating sense of a common duty."

Do not allow that strength or that courage to flag through lack of thought or willing help. There have never been so many demands upon your thought or your generosity as at the present time, it is true, but the claim of this great Hospital is one which can never be forgotten. Reflect for a moment upon its work and you will realise this.

The Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath, shelters, feeds, and tends two hundred and thirty Patients. There are besides seven hundred and twenty incurable invalids who receive a life pension from its limited funds, and to enable it to perform this work nearly £30,000 has to be raised yearly from voluntary sources, since the annual expenditure is £35,000, of which only £6,000 or £7,000 is assured.

The Board of Management will be indeed grateful if every reader of "A Hospital Farm in London" will send a cheque to help forward the great work of this National Charity.

City Offices:—

4, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,  
LONDON, E.C.



EXTRACT FROM THE CONSTITUTION.

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"The design of this Charity is not to interfere with the action of any existing institution, nor to relieve those cases for which provision is found elsewhere; nor does it profess to relieve temporary affliction; but so far as funds will permit, its aim is to provide relief for that which is continuous and permanent, and for which no public provision exists. It does not, therefore, deal with idiots, persons of unsound mind, with those who have been afflicted from birth, or who have received parochial relief."

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The Hospital is not quite a mile from East Putney Railway Station (District Railway), where cabs are obtainable. Putney Station (L. & S. W. Railway), is rather more than a mile distant. Motor omnibuses (Services Nos. 70 and 85) run from Putney Bridge Station (District Railway) to the top of Putney Hill, which is within three minutes' walk of the Hospital.



JOHN THATCHER.



Farmers are the founders  
of civilisation.

*Daniel Webster.*



JOHN'S COTTAGE, STABLE AND COACH-HOUSE.

## A HOSPITAL FARM IN LONDON.

WHAT a peculiar title! Perhaps it is, but what do you say when we tell you that the farm we have in mind is only seven miles from Charing Cross railway-station; that there are houses, row upon row, every yard of the distance from the Mansion House and stretching the whole way there and beyond; that motor 'buses rush by for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four within a single mile; that trains on the District system rattle to and fro within a couple of hundred yards? Is not such a spot a part of London? If not, where is London?

There are only twenty-five acres, and before we explore them let us introduce you to John Thatcher, who has worked on this patch of land for forty-nine years. John has, of course, seen many changes in





A SUN-DIAL IN THE GROUNDS.  
A BIT OF OLD Kew BRIDGE.

his half-century's service; he remembers the day when prize-fights used to take place regularly on Putney Heath, and the adjoining Wimbledon Common. He recollects one event very clearly: A London "lad" was brought down by a crowd of supporters and backers for the purpose of meeting a big Putney youth, who happened to be in those early days an under-gardener on this very small farm, which is owned by the Royal Hospital for Incurables. The Putney youth was a born fighter, but he had not met a recognised London pugilist before, and when about to enter the ring he whispered to the lad from London: "let's go softly and share the purse!" This remark was overheard by some of the Londoner's friends, who were very indignant and immediately ordered their protégé to enter the ring and give the Putney youth the thrashing he undoubtedly deserved. John Thatcher recalls the fact that the Londoner got the whole thrashing and nothing but the thrashing, and that the purse went to our under-gardener. One may quite reasonably assume that the Board of Management of the Royal Hospital of those distant



THE VINERY.



days knew nothing of the naughty conduct of their pugnacious employé.

John Thatcher has now a staff of five or six men, and is quite certain that there is not one among them who would entertain an offer of a purse, however big, for an illegal fight. John takes a pride in his work, and is still young enough to toil on the land the usual hours and to do many little tasks that lie outside a head man's ordinary duties. His cottage is small, but adequate for the needs of himself and wife and son.

Two dogs are a part of the farm staff. "Bob" is



ANOTHER VIEW OF JOHN'S COTTAGE.

told off to keep guard against poultry thieves. During the last eight years we have had two visits from persons who have never been traced and who have succeeded in bagging (that is actually the word, for a sack is used) some of our poultry. The location of Bob's kennel is not a fixed arrangement; one night you may find it many yards away from the point where it stood the night before. Bob seems to know why his quarters are moved about, and it will be an unhappy experience for the individual he tackles in the exercise of his police work. Bob, whose father was a mastiff and



"BOB" AT REST.

whose mother may have been a sheep-dog, is sure to secure a piece of the material in which the person is clothed, even if he does not remove a "pound of flesh." We have about two hundred head of poultry, among which white wyandottes are prominent. Many of the birds have been given to us by a generous friend, who is well-known in the poultry world.

"Jim" is a fox-terrier. He is not badly marked, but he is rather too long in the leg for show purposes, and when a puppy he received a nip on the lip from a crafty rat. The bite

was not severe, but it has given Jim a facial twitch, which conveys the impression of a chronic and unsuccessful endeavour to smile—an expression, in



"JIM" AND A VICTIM.





"MORTLAKE" IN A HIGH WIND.

short, that one often meets with in crowded railway carriages when one enters knowing full well that one is not welcome. Jack's early rat-bite by no means discouraged him, and although he is now five years old, he is as keen as ever on the scent and smarter than ever in bowling over the rodents. His kennel is much nearer to John Thatcher's cottage than is Bob's, and, as he barks when Bob barks, John is well warned when necessary.

"Mortlake," the Hospital farm horse, has a good day's work to do. He is used for sundry carting jobs and for drawing a heavy mowing-machine across and across and again across the lawns. He would rather be between the shafts of the cart than on grass-cutting work, because he hates wearing the big leathern shoes which are put upon his feet before he is allowed on the lawns. He was one of three baby horses born upon this London farm; he will be ten years old next birthday. He is a leisurely animal; it is one of his unlucky days when he is sent with the farm cart to the London offices of the Royal Hospital for a ton or so of papers, or a heavy piece of furniture. He prefers the Putney Heath atmosphere and traffic to those of St. Paul's Churchyard. He is a big speckled grey horse, and, while not really bad-tempered, he is decidedly haughty.

"Jack," the donkey, who goes out daily, weather permitting, with an invalid chair trailing behind him and an attendant walking by his side, is a worldly creature; he will not consent to be polite to you unless you tender, at least, one lump of sugar. He is not made to gallop so often as his seaside brothers and sisters, and, perhaps for that reason, he is a dignified and difficult fellow. Sometimes when in the meadow with "Mortlake," he will unbend and indulge in playful antics, but such exhibitions are rare, and usually take place in the very early morning long before spectators,





ONE OF THE PLANT "WARDS."

who can read and write, are about. "Mortlake" and "Jack" are good friends, though the former seems to have a secret sense of his superior size, and the latter has some consciousness of his lighter and more gentlemanly job. Both may be coaxed to the side of the railings that encircle the meadow by a tempting morsel of food.

Adjacent to the meadow is a railed-off orchard where there are over 1,200 young fruit trees. The majority of these trees are now bearing fruit in season, which is used for the 230 patients in the



ORCHARD AND HAYSTACK.

Hospital and for the members of the staff, who number 120.

Years ago cows were kept on this Hospital Farm in London, but for good and sufficient reasons milk is now supplied by a contractor, and the long narrow cow-shed has been partly re-built and converted into an apple-store.

We have not much glass, but there is a vinery from which we usually get about 150 lbs. of grapes a year. The patients think highly of a little bunch of grapes grown upon the Hospital premises. Then we have a small plant "ward" where evergreens and so on from





ONE OF THE POULTRY RUNS.

the Hospital are taken when they are in an unhealthy or drooping condition. John Thatcher also grows a few cucumbers at the farther end of this greenhouse, and now and then he puts a brood of delicate and newly-born chickens on the floor in there for warmth.

At the time of writing we have about sixty pigs, including a pedigree hog. By keeping pigs we are able to dispose advantageously of the waste food from the tables. Invalids are known to have fickle appetites, and there is daily and unavoidably a large

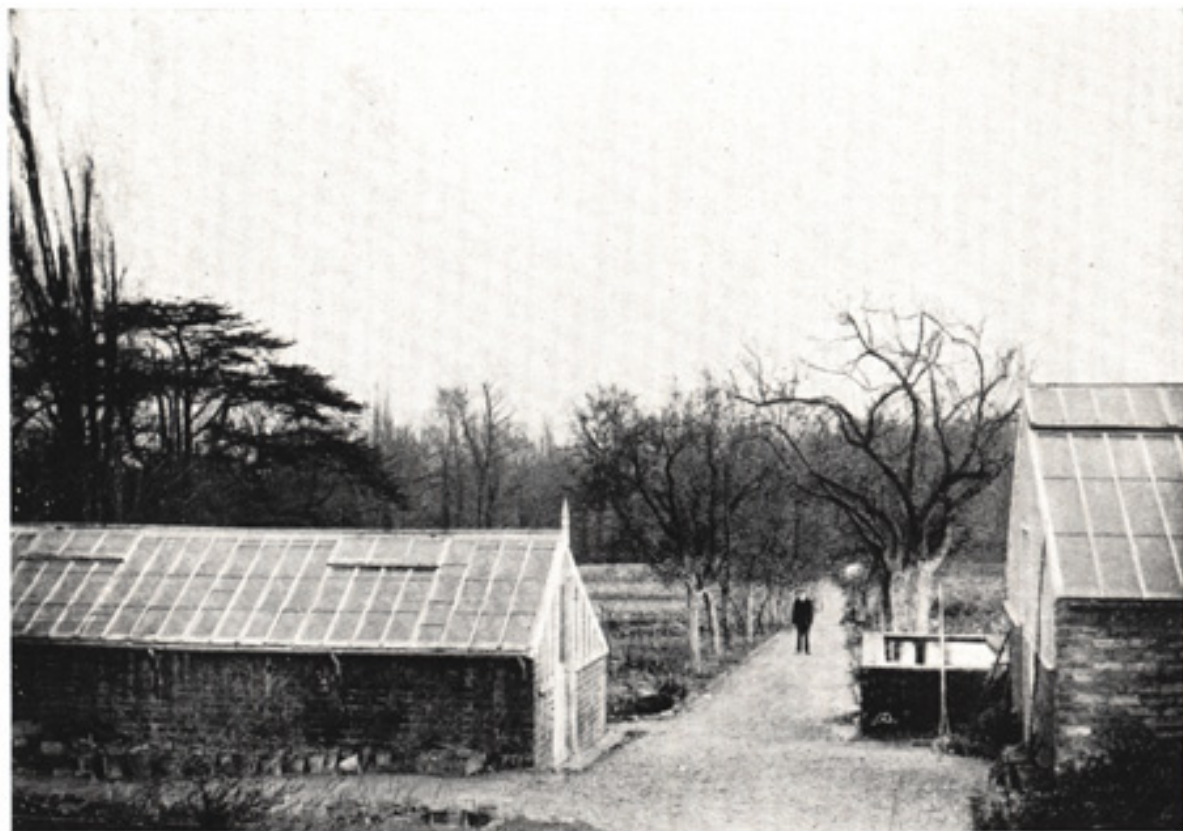


REAL "PUTNEY PIGS."

quantity of food from the sixty-two wards and the four big dining-rooms. Many of the patients are bed-ridden; that is why meals have to be served in so many places.

There is a flock of pigeons always on view; one can see white fan-tails and the common blue London pigeon feeding side by side. These two strains of pigeons interbreed with curious results. Now and then Thatcher kills a few pigeons in order to tempt the appetite of some poor suffering men or women





KITCHEN GARDEN.



TOP OF THE ORCHARD.

who have no inclination for more everyday and less delicate food. Pigeons are not the only birds on this London Farm; last year when the grass was being cut in the

orchard for hay, a nest containing eleven young pheasants was disturbed. John Thatcher did his best to rear the youngsters, whose parents vanished, but

he was unsuccessful. Car-

rion crows (baby chicken

killers) and owls

have been seen

about, and John

has had a shot

at the nest of

the former and

killed the

young.

The lawns

are beautifully

situated, and

during the sum-

mer months

they are the

scenes of garden

parties and other

entertainments.

The nurses play lawn-

tennis, and the male



THE SPOT WHERE THE PHEASANTS' NEST WAS DISTURBED.



MIDDLE PATH OF KITCHEN GARDEN.





ANOTHER POULTRY RUN.



CHICKENS, THREE DAYS OLD.



attendants are allowed a small space for a game of quoits. There is also a small bowling-green, which is not often used by the patients because of their physical inability to take part in such a game, but some of the officers are able to play now and then, and in that way pleasure is given to the patients, who are keen spectators of anything approaching a contest.

By the sale of pigs and hay and by very careful management, as well as by the "sale" to the Hospital of all vegetables, &c., at the current market price, our last yearly farm balance showed a profit of £84 1s. 4d.

Our market garden produces rhubarb, celery, potatoes, cabbages, beans, peas, leeks, onions, turnips, vegetable-marrows, parsnips, carrots, radishes, lettuces and even tomatoes and asparagus. The best modern system of rotation and intensive cropping is adopted, and in War Year three-quarters of an acre was added to the kitchen garden in order to produce more vegetable food. In addition to the fruit in the large orchards, we have also a few pear and plum trees, one fig-tree and one walnut-tree. There is an extensive culture of that great floral favourite, the sweet pea, all the best modern varieties being grown.

The Hospital itself is well worth a visit and is open for inspection throughout the year on week-days from two till six, and on Sundays from two till four p.m.



"JACK" IN HARNESS.



ENTRANCE LODGE AND APPROACH.



### Form of Bequest.

I bequeath to THE ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLES, PUTNEY HEATH, the sum of £           , free of duty, to be paid, together with the duty thereon, out of such part of my estate as can be lawfully bequeathed for charitable purposes, and to be applicable to the general purposes of such Institution, and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer or other proper officer for the time being of such Institution shall be a sufficient discharge for the same.

*N.B.—By virtue of the "Mortmain and Charitable Uses Act, 1891," land may now be devised to a Charity, but it is liable to be sold within one year from the death of the Testator.*

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