

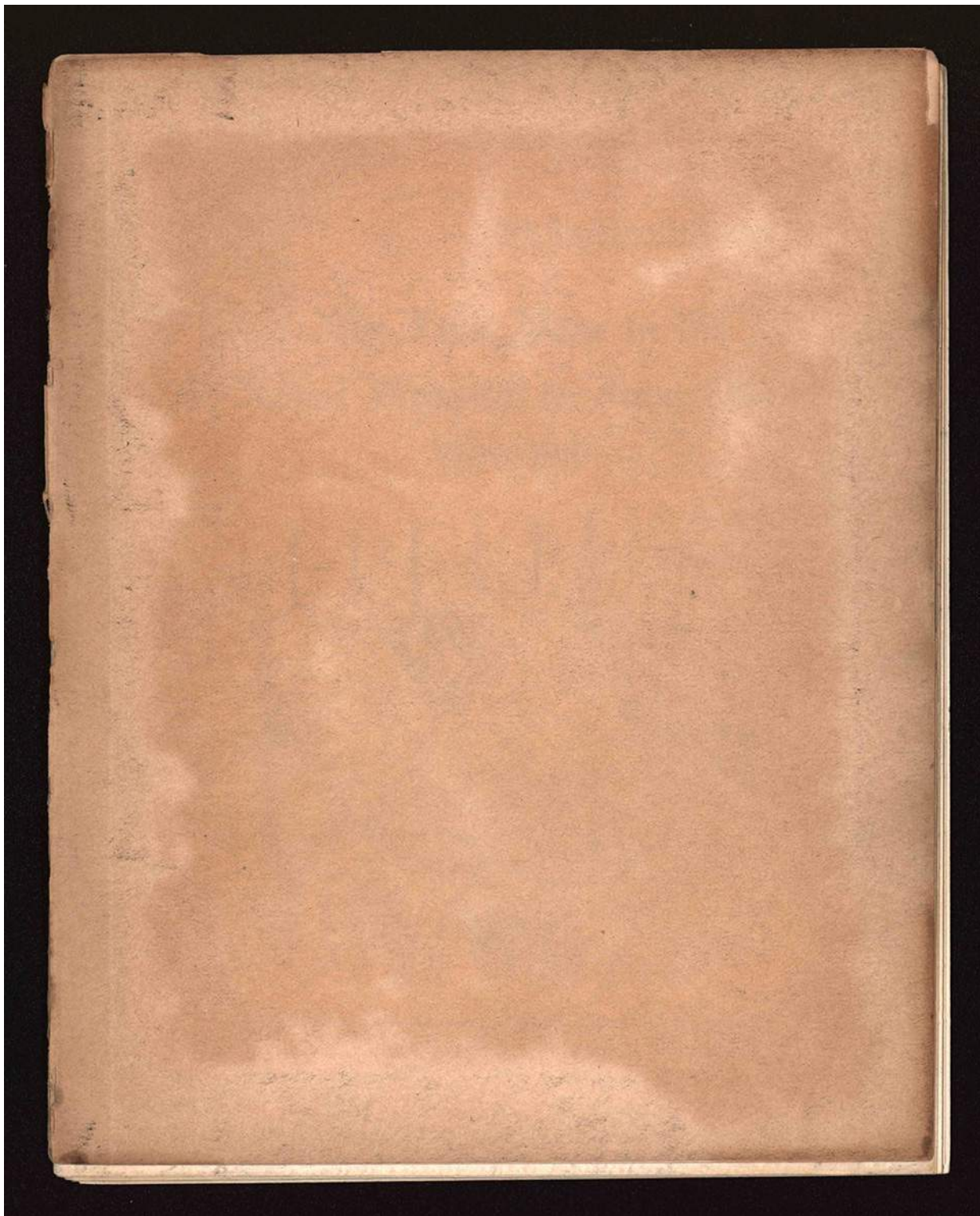


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My First Year in the Royal Hospital for Incurables,
Putney Heath

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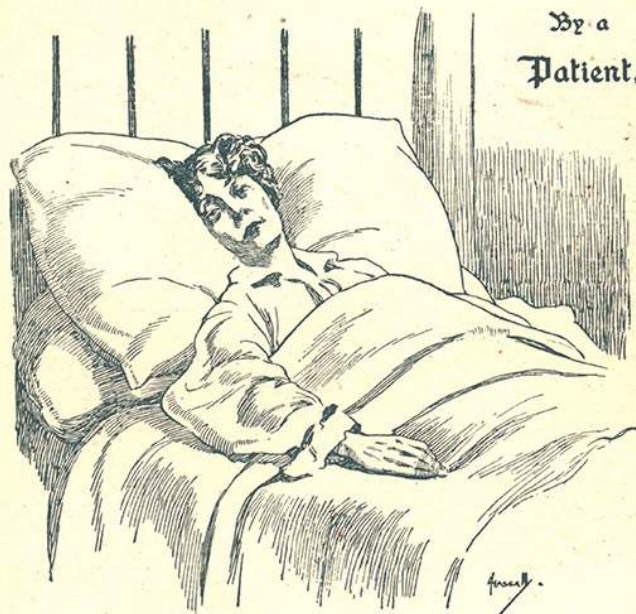
Christmas, 1907.

With the Season's Greetings.

**My First Year in the
Royal Hospital for Incurables**

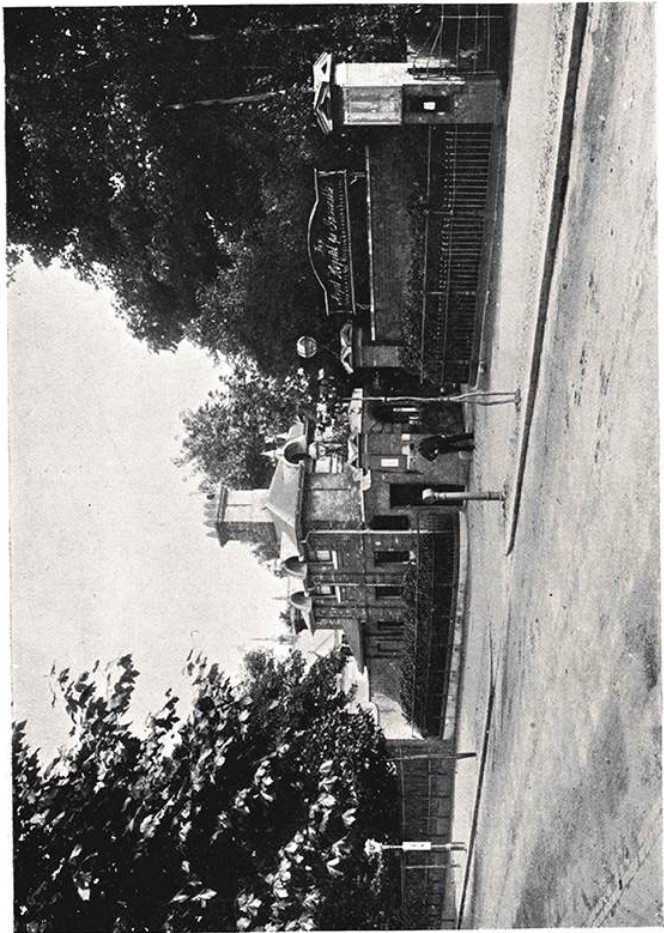
Putney Heath

By a
Patient.



RHN/FU/2/3/14

My First Year
in the
Royal Hospital for Incurables,
Putney Heath.



The Lodge and entrance to the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney.

THE lessons I learn from the folks I meet
 Are sometimes sad and sometimes sweet,
 And if I could take them all to heart,
 How bravely and well I should play my part;
 But I'm treasuring up for the hour of need
 The lessons I learn from the Invalid.

One there is on a couch of pain
 From which she never will rise again.
 "Sister," said I, "how long, how long
 Since you walked in the meadows so young and strong?"
 And a whisper reached my listening ears,
 "Here have I lain these fifty years."

Fifty years! 'tis a lifetime run,
 From light of morning to set of sun,
 From set of sun until morn again,
 And all the years have been full of pain.
 "What is the lesson you've learned this while?"
 "Brother," said she, "I've learn'd to smile."

One there is with the whiten'd hair,
 And the patient face so strong and fair,
 As I sat and told of the world outside,
 Where she used to run and walk and ride,
 She said—"You have charmed away the pain,
 And it's good to hear of the world again."

One there is, on a couch she lies,
 With a glad strong look in her merry eyes,
 And all of the city's bravest sort
 Are there on the days when she holds her court.
 But her daily walk is only there—
 From the chair to the couch,
 From the couch to the chair.

At times, when I tire of the ceaseless quest,
 And, worn and weary, I seek for rest,
 When I'd stay my soul or I'd check my pride,
 I steal away to some still bedside,
 And I learn the lesson once again,
 Of a soul at rest in a body of pain.

Where does it come from, the peace they know?
 The peace that the world can not bestow?
 The only peace for life's long day
 That the world can never take away,
 And I hear His voice from the Eastern sea
 Who says, "My peace I give to thee."

HARRISON HILL.

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CHARLES CUTTING, *Secretary.*

Introduction.

THE Board of Management of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath, send out this little booklet to subscribers and friends throughout the land in the earnest hope that it will be read with interest, and that the reading of it will serve to prove, if proof is needed, that the aim of this National Charity is beyond praise. Over two hundred men and women who are sufferers from *incurable* diseases are provided with a home for life within the walls of the institution itself, and pensions of £20 a year are granted to seven hundred men and women, similarly afflicted, who remain in their own modest homes, and who, without the help which this pension provides, would have to seek food and shelter and other necessaries in quarters from which the memory of their previous and happier circumstances naturally makes them shrink.

"My First Year in the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath," is the written account of one who, though a great sufferer, looks out on life with glad and patient eyes, and one who tells in simple words of her gratitude. Those who enjoy sound health; those who have been blessed with this world's goods; those who have sympathy for the sick and oppressed; those who have lost dear friends;

those who believe in doing good, and those who grieve for their less fortunate fellow-creatures, will surely respond to this Christmas Appeal in a practical way.

There is not too much that is sad in the following pages; rather will the reader be cheered and strengthened by reason of the fact that the writer of the Appeal has faith, even when in much physical pain, to believe that means will be found to carry on the work of this great Hospital and Home.

Invested funds only bring in £5,000 a year, and £30,000 more have to be secured every twelve months in order to meet the expenditure. Every item of expenditure is most carefully considered by the Board of Management. Each year annual subscribers and generous donors are removed by death and other causes, and it is, therefore, imperative that the help and interest of new ones be enlisted.

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Secretary.

*Offices: 4, St. Paul's Churchyard,
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My First Year in the Hospital.



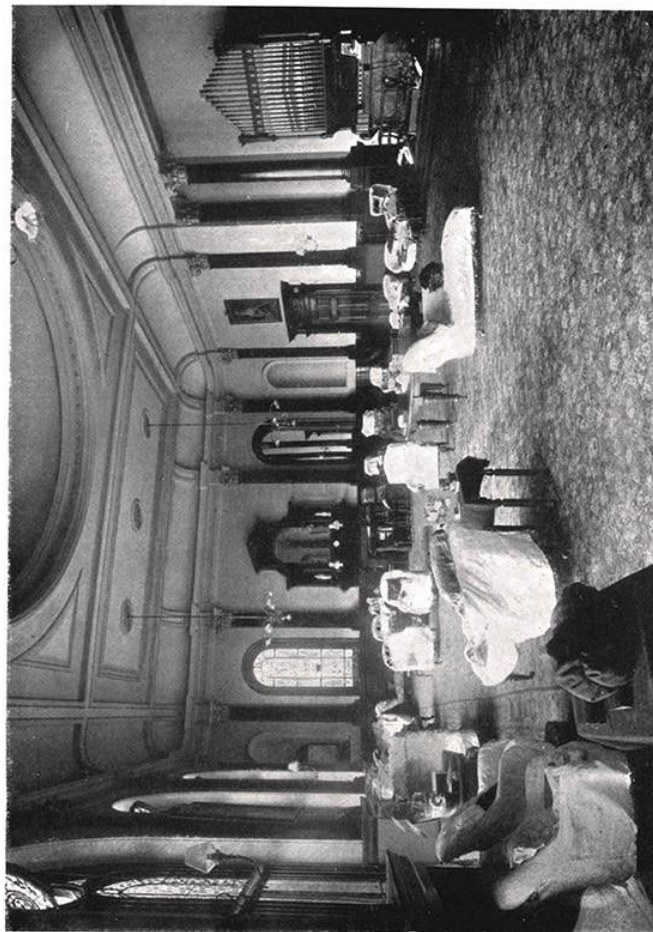
IT was on a winter's afternoon that I arrived at the Entrance Hall of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath. I felt very glad to think that all the trouble and the anxiety of elections were over at last, and the goal attained. I must admit I felt most thankful to the gleams of wintry sunshine that day; for the size of the Hospital, the thoughts of the great number of its suffering inmates, and the general strangeness of one's future surroundings naturally produced many a qualm in a new in-patient.

I was ushered into the Library for a few minutes, a magnificent room, quite in keeping with the Hall and its lovely Adams decorations. Here I saw books which I afterwards learnt were the gifts of friends of the Hospital for the use of the patients. What a cheery look the handsome apartment had, with the firelight playing across the various bindings, and seeming to say "Cheer up! you cannot be altogether lonely and shut away out of the world when you can meet with old friends like us, and make the acquaintance of new ones." How I mentally

inmates. What a variety of sad physical ailments, each one calling for its own special treatment, and what a quantity of medicine this requires! It must need a great outlay for drugs alone. Surely money must be well spent in helping to alleviate suffering, such as one sees here.

Later on I made my *début* amongst the general company (by this I mean the patients who can leave their beds and rooms) and was allotted my place amongst them. Never shall I forget this. I was afraid to lift my eyes; surrounded by sufferers, and yet, amongst it all, such brave hearts and cheerful faces, and so few allusions to torturing complaints. I was much impressed by the wheel-chairs. It seemed nothing but "wheels" at first. Chair cases are wheeled into the large Assembly Room about 11 a.m., in time for Morning Prayer.

All the regularity of clockwork is needed to keep the wheels of this great establishment going. One is very interested as one gets to know more about this large Home, and witnesses the kindness and care displayed by the attendants towards the patients committed to their charge. How carefully the attendants cover the shawls over those who cannot move arms or hands sufficiently to do what is necessary for themselves ere taking them along the corridors to the lift, meanwhile making inquiries as to how Mrs. So-and-So is to-day?



The Assembly Room.

Everyone is much struck with the beauty of the two sitting-rooms occupied by the female patients, the large Assembly Room and the Andrew Day Room. The former, where the Divine services are held, also entertainments and concerts, &c., has some fine oak mantelpieces. These form a fine background for a number of beautiful statuettes which were presented by another kind friend of the Hospital. It is a great source of delight to many of the patients that those helpers of their less fortunate fellow-creatures should not only have thought of their bodies, but that they should also have supplied beauty for the eye and mind. It is a great rest to look upon and think of lovely objects. The oil-painting, too, which adorns the walls of the Andrew Day Room is very beautiful, and, of course, everyone is interested in the tapestry pictures, which we are so proud of.

We patients find the winter a most trying time. With so many it means being indoors for *months*, and to those who have to keep their beds, more monotony than usual. Winter increases most physical complaints, and, after all, can a harder verdict than the one of "Incurable" be imagined? What a dreadful time most of us have spent when the utterance of that word cut away the ground of hope from under our faltering feet! If it had not been for this haven, what would have been the fate of

these hundreds of helpless ones whom God has permitted the hand of suffering to touch?

I cannot speak fully of many of the cases to be seen here. Think what it would mean to you to lie in bed week after week, year after year, surrounded by invalids, walking or otherwise! Pain and suffering, sometimes more, sometimes less, but always suffering.

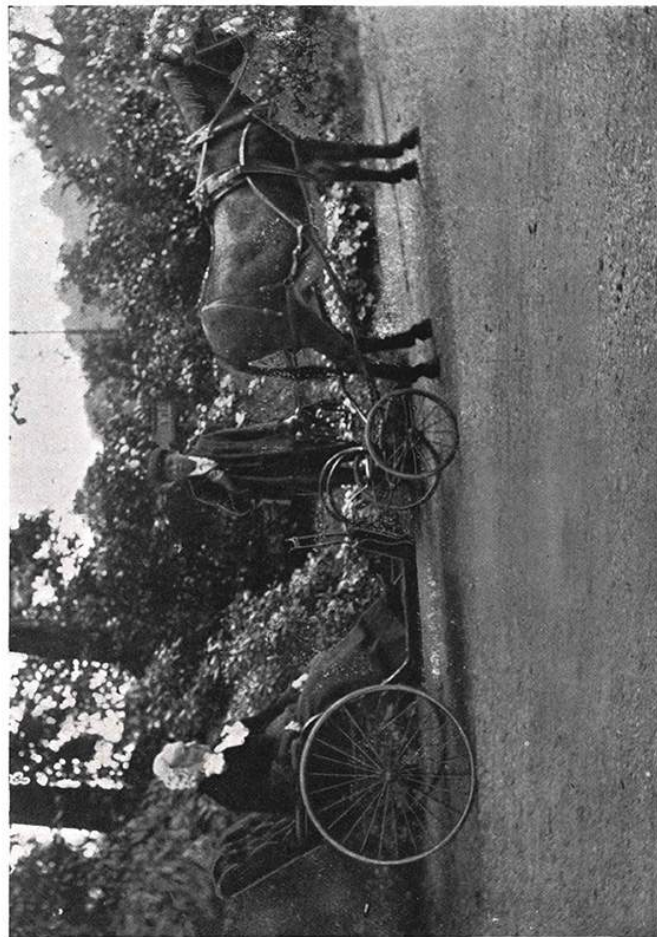
As I gradually slipped into my place at the Hospital, I came to hear the life stories of many of those around me. How tragic many of the histories are! The hopes and ambitions of many lives have been dashed to the ground in a few months—aye, hours. Yet how little would visitors guess this to see the cheerfulness with which they are greeted by the patients. The brightest sunshine casts the deepest shadows. One sees the suffering of the body, but who can tell the conflict of mind and spirit that some endure. They may be out of the busy world in one respect, yet, probably, their hearts and affections are there.

Many thanks to the kind and cheery visitors who come to see us. Very welcome are the little items of news from the outside world. How anxiously we await the advent of a visitor carrying a music-case. Half-an-hour's music on a dull winter's afternoon puts colour into things. Unfortunately, the last year or two, our visitors have fallen off in this respect.

The musical half-hour has become too rare. May I plead, on behalf of "we patients," that those who have the gift of music will not forget the great service they might render for the Master's sake to His suffering ones on the hill? One must not forget to mention how keenly we appreciate the generous friends who get up concerts and entertainments on our behalf. I felt, personally, that they certainly helped me through my first winter. Mind and body are so closely allied that this tonic is the one we like best.

Now I will relate how I made the acquaintance of our donkey "Jack," whose duty it is to draw a bath-chair belonging to the Hospital. The latter, patients are privileged to use by paying a small sum to the Steward, which goes to the upkeep of "Jack" and the charioteer, commonly called the "donkey boy." What a boon these chairs are (for there are others, minus the donkey), all gifts from the good friends of the Hospital. I never have gone out in one of these chairs without asking for a blessing on the heads of those who so thoughtfully gave them. It is so delightful to go outside into the world, and this, without our chairs, would be an impossibility to many.

"Jack" is a donkey of character, with a strong mind. We have had several differences of opinion as to the route we should take. I must admit I have



A Patient and W.—, and "Jack," the Hospital donkey.

our Organist) sang carols. Light refreshments were provided for the patients, who afterwards retired to rest.

After Christmas comes the time when one begins to feel the pull of winter in full force. How one dreads the next three months! It is a most expensive time for the Hospital. Large fires must be kept up—corridors must be heated. It is only warmth and tender care that keep life in many a suffering patient. Will you just give a thought to the enormous sum required for the heating of this vast establishment? As you sit around your own firesides at home, rejoicing, I hope, in the blessings of health and comfort, determine that, as far as it lies in your power, you will help to provide warmth for those more sorely afflicted than yourself.

The days passed on until Easter drew near. This time will always remain a very happy memory to me. I have never spent a happier Easter-tide than my first one at the Royal Hospital for Incurables.

On Easter Sunday the Assembly Room, reading desk, &c., were decorated with white and yellow flowers. Those patients who are great flower-lovers feel very grateful to the Matron for the pains and trouble she takes in arranging them. They certainly are most appropriate at Easter. The joy of Easter was as a sweet fragrance throughout the Hospital that day, and there was not a ruffle to spoil the peace of it.

I think all patients are agreed on the great privileges we enjoy in our Divine services. Church of England, Nonconformists, and Roman Catholics, all are able to enjoy certain services which recommend themselves to their particular point of view. I cannot speak too highly of the unsectarian freedom and liberty we have. It certainly carries out the good Founder's wishes. Among such a large household one can imagine the number of different opinions there are ; but harmony reigns within this Royal Hospital. Services are held during the week, also a Bible Class during six months of the year for those who care to attend ; very much appreciated these Services are, too.

After Easter the days begin to allow of sitting out of doors on the verandahs. What a comfort the verandahs are ! Invalids could not sit out in the grounds without the shelter they afford. They lie on the south side of the Hospital, and chairs can be wheeled straight out from the main corridors. What a merry party of patients are gathered there sometimes ! If they *are* invalids they can hold their own with anyone at repartee ! You hear some very smart and amusing questions and answers.

The verandahs get very full as the days lengthen and the sun gains more power. Such a lovely view is obtained from them. The orchard, meadows, and the wooded slopes in the distance lend an added



One of the Dining Rooms.

beauty to the scene. There is a history attached to the two orchards. The first one was given to the Hospital by the late Mr. Henry Huth, a former Treasurer, and one of the most generous friends the Hospital has ever known. The memory of his kindness and generosity is much treasured in the Hospital. One of the wards is named after him; he endowed it. He gave the pictures that adorn its walls, and the first table-cloths that draped its tables. I also find he was the first one to present the Hospital with invalid wheel-chairs, these costing 30 guineas each. One feels sad when they think of the great loss sustained by the Hospital on the removal of such a friend as Mr. Huth. I do hope that, when occasion arises, and we lose other dear helpers, kind hearts may feel stirred to come forward and fill such gaps.

Another friend gave the second orchard, which bears his name, "The Fowler Orchard." It contains about four hundred young fruit-trees. At one time this was a meadow. I believe ten cows were kept there to supply us with milk, but the scheme did not answer. It was found to be cheaper to buy the milk. Then Mr. Fowler suggested that it should be turned into an orchard, and he would provide the trees. He also gave all the rose-trees and a number of pretty trees which adorn the lawn in the front of the Hospital. I must not forget the mulberry trees

which he also had planted—one either side of the Home, so that each side could have its own fruit, though that day, I am afraid, is a long way off, as mulberry trees take a long time to mature.

I remember an amusing incident seen from a verandah one afternoon in connection with our horse, "Mortlake." He is used for the work on the farm. In appearance I should consider he belonged more to the useful than to the ornamental type. He is a dark dapple-grey. In character I can only go by hearsay, and I do not think it quite fair to judge, as opinions are divided. I was told that he was given to biting; but one day the gardener told me "Mortlake" was the gentlest creature; it all depended how, and by whom, he was handled. One feels drawn to the dear old thing after that. He seems so human. He was bred on the farm, too, his mother, "Kitty," having been in the service of the Institution. On this point he scores one off "Jack," the donkey, who is inclined to give himself airs on account of his firm belief in *his* superior position and brains.

Horses are turned out to grass in our meadow in the Spring. One afternoon another horse was brought. Those already there lined up to meet him, but he seemed to hesitate and tremble when "Mortlake" (who happened to be there) came up to the gate to meet him and greet him. He then entered and joined the company. Really, it seemed, as we remarked on

the verandah, as if our old "Mortlake" was acting the part of the steward and guide to a new patient.

While mentioning our four-footed friends, I must not forget the Doctor's dogs. They are two Irish terriers, and answer to the name of "Rags" and "Tatters." They generally accompany the Doctor on his rounds, and are as much at home in some of the wards as he is. How delighted I was to see those dogs when I first became an inmate! They were so friendly. They introduced themselves at once, and they are not above accepting small trifles in the way of a bit of sugar or a sweet biscuit. This latter attitude of mind depends on how many folk they have seen before; but they make an effort to be polite and oblige, so as to avoid hurting one's feelings. Naturally, the patients have their favourites. Personally, I give the preference to "Rags." He seems to have the more brains of the two, and he likes the ladies! I have heard that "Tatters" has the better pedigree. But, as their master says, each one has his good points. Long may the dear old things live to accompany him! It would be so strange not to hear the accustomed formula, "Here comes the Doctor with his dogs."

About this time I had an opportunity of seeing the "Restell Wing," where the male patients have their quarters. I accompanied some friends who had come to see over the Hospital. If it is sad for



A Room in the "Restell Wing" of the Hospital.

women to be ill, how much more so for men? They cannot have quite the same amount of resources for passing the time that fall to the lot of a woman. We saw their sitting-room, reading-room and billiard-room. The last-named contains a good table. But I think the most interesting of all is the workshop. Here some patients were busily engaged making photograph-frames and lovely boxes ready for our annual Sale of Work. It must be so difficult for our men patients to find something to do, amongst them being so many who are terribly helpless. But "Necessity is the mother of invention." I can only say COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF, and I am sure you will endeavour in some way or other to lighten their burdens.

I must not forget to mention the Laundry. It is well worth a visit. Here is a hive of busy industry and an absolutely indispensable one. With so many bed-ridden and helpless patients, the amount of bed-linen needed is, of sheer necessity, very great. It is only by scrupulous cleanliness and constant change of linen that any degree of comfort is obtained, or sad indeed would be the plight of the helpless sufferers, who lie so patiently there, month in, month out. I think a few items of this vast outlay would interest you. Laundry bills are a consideration in many houses. I do hope when you hear a little of what ours means to the Hospital



A peep at the Hospital Laundry workers.

you will feel inclined still more to assist in this great work, and will understand how the great burden of ways and means presses upon our Board of Management. Nine women are constantly employed in our Laundry. With the assistance of machinery about 14,000 articles are washed weekly. It is a most interesting sight to see the different articles all arranged neatly in their several piles ready to be packed into the laundry baskets, which are delivered to each ward on Saturday evening.

These are some of the quantities used at the Laundry in a year: 1,350 bars of soap, 7 cwt. of starch, $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of blue, 2 cwt. of borax, and 60 cwt. of soda. I think these figures will speak for themselves, without further comment, more especially to housekeepers.

Now, I must tell you about our annual Bazaar or Sale of Work. All the winter the patients are busily at work of all kinds and descriptions. It is wonderful to see the ingenuity displayed by crippled hands in order to use knitting-needles, crochet-hooks, etc. The sight teaches a great and wonderful lesson in overcoming grave difficulties.

Visitors so often ask if the patients find the time long. The answer is almost invariably the same. "Oh, no! the days go much too quickly. The time does not seem long enough!" And as the date of the Bazaar draws near, the activity increases in the

endeavour to get the various articles ready in time. This Bazaar means a great deal to the patients, as the work is sold for their own benefit. These are the only means many of us have of supplying ourselves with little comforts and necessaries throughout the year.

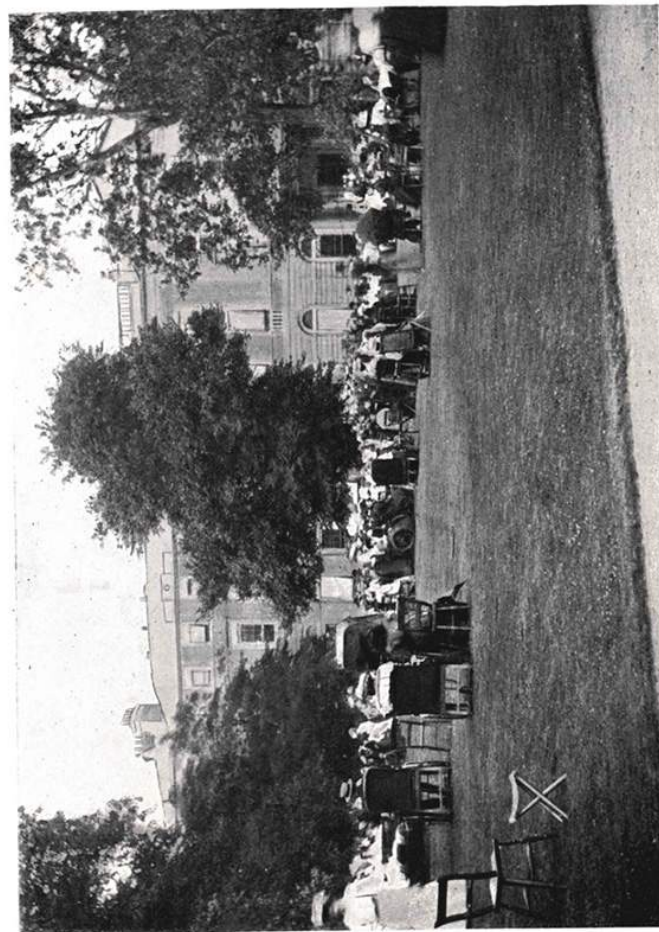
No effort or trouble is spared by the ladies who so kindly undertake all the arrangements and work in connection with this Bazaar. It is held in the Assembly Room during three days in the month of June, and terribly hard work it is. It was opened during my first year at the Royal Hospital for Incurables by a very gracious lady, the Duchess of Wellington. What excitement there is during these three days in the Hospital, and how busy everyone is! No member of the staff seems to mind the extra work entailed; they enter into it with the greatest possible good-will.

Friends coming to the Sale of Work are able to visit the wards, if they choose. I know of one ward which had between seventy and eighty visitors in one day. They were all most welcome. Imagine what a gala day it is to those who lead a monotonous life. It is so delightfully worldly and nice to hold receptions like this; it is well worth while being tired. As someone said to me: "You see it is only once a year, and you see people and friends then whom you meet at no other time." We only hope we may see

you there next year, and, please, bring your purse with you! I know we can guarantee you will find something to your taste among the thousands of articles for sale. We have a band playing on the lawn, and refreshments are provided at a small cost.

There was another red-letter day during that first year of which I must not forget to tell you. It was in relation to the same gracious Duchess whose name has been mentioned before in association with our Bazaar. One cold, dull, grey morning we were told that the Duchess of Wellington was coming, and would visit our ward. It was one of those days when, metaphorically speaking, we all had our faces turned to the wall. Really, to tell the truth, we did not feel quite smiling enough to receive visitors. You know such days will occur in the life of an invalid, and one does so much like to give visitors a warm welcome. However, her Grace arrived (accompanied by Mrs. Casher, the Secretary of our Ladies' Committee), and brought "heart sunshine" with her. How much we appreciated her kindly interest and sympathy. The roses she brought were treasured with great care by the patients, but far more fragrant is the memory she left behind. We speak of her as "our Duchess" now. Needless to say, we turned our faces to the wall no more that day.

I think the next events that made a ripple in our quiet stream of existence were the garden parties.



A Garden Party in the Hospital grounds.

These are looked forward to with much interest by those patients who are well enough and able to attend them. The garden parties are given by friends of the Hospital : some at their own gardens, and others in the lovely grounds belonging to this National Charity. What excitement there is, and what an interesting spectacle it is to watch the preparations for a garden party here. Everyone seems to enter into the spirit of the function with such zest. Here one sees the porters carrying the heavy garden-seats, the attendants bringing patients along in their wheel-chairs, and nurses assisting—all under the direction of the Steward. Then the Matron arrives with the host, or hostess, of the afternoon.

In July, we had a nice open-air concert and tea out of doors on the lawn. One gentleman gave us songs quite in the Chevalier style, and his services were appreciated by his audience. There may be many things which we patients cannot do, but I think, if it came to a laughing competition, we should certainly come out on top.

After the season's garden parties are over, many of the patients go away to see their friends, and the Hospital seems to settle down for a very quiet spell until the beginning of October, when the large family at the Royal Hospital for Incurables once more assembles. For the winter draws near, and though invalids may suffer less in summer, autumn, with its touch of

keenness in the air, reminds us of many things in the way of pain we would far sooner forget. And now we settle down to the winter routine, and there will be very little more outing for any of us until the spring days return once more.

Christmas approaches, and we begin to think of the festival at which we commemorate the Birth of our Saviour, Who came to bring "peace and goodwill to men." Our thoughts naturally turn to what we can bring to the Christ-Child? The keynote of Christmas is joy. The more we realise of the Love that was content to be stripped of His glory, to suffer for us, even the death on the Cross, the more we understand the intense joy of giving for His sake. Surely no gift could please Him more than caring for His sick and suffering ones gathered in this noble Hospital and Home. He, Himself, says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

"The Holy Supper is kept indeed,
In what we share with another's need :
Not what we give : but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare.
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me."

A PATIENT.



