

## **John Hunter, at Earl's Court, Kensington, 1764-1793.**

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6 JOHN HUNTER,

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AT

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Earl's Court, Kensington.

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1764—1793.

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KENSINGTON

WAKEHAM AND SON, PRINTERS, BEDFORD TERRACE, CHURCH STREET.

1881.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

JOHN DORAN, LL.D.,

Who wrote of "Kensington Worthies," and whose  
valued friendship was part of my inheritance:—

AND ALSO OF

FRANK BUCKLAND,

My old friend and fellow student:—This Reprint of their  
Notes, with others, are dedicated to the Members of

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS

Who visited Historical Houses at Kensington,  
8th August, 1881.

J. J. M.

# JOHN HUNTER AT EARL'S COURT,

## KENSINGTON.

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The Sagacious Founder of Scientific Surgery, in 1764, purchased two acres of land and built a house in the hamlet of Earl's Court, Kensington. This, from time to time, he enlarged, as the following extracts from the parish books show :—

- In 1775.—“ John Hunter, £15. Earl's Court.”
- „ 1776.—“ John Hunter, Esq., £15.”
- „ 1777.—“ John Hunter, Esq. (and garden), £80.”  
“ Ditto for part of Coleherne, £30.”
- „ 1778.—“ John Hunter, Esq., house and garden, £69.”  
“ Ditto for part of Coleherne, £30.”

Here is a note as follows :

- “ Mr. Hunter thinks he is overcharged.”
- In 1779.—“ John Hunter, Esq., house and garden, £69.”  
“ Ditto part of Coleherne, £30.”

Here, for nearly 30 years, he retired from the fatigues of practice, to continue those researches which, with the experience of Staff Surgeon and Surgeon of St. George's Hospital, led to principles long since proved to be the beacon and guide in the treatment of disease. An old inhabitant of Earl's Court states : “ He lived at Earl's Court House, and I have heard my father say that the pond in the garden was ornamented with skulls. He kept a jackal, which added much to the fear the people entertained of ‘ The cunning man,’ a name given him from the number of books he had about him. He took much notice of my father, who was a youth in Hunter's day, at Earl's Court. For years and years in North Row was one of the bones of a huge whale which he had brought down to dissect—it lay in the gutter on the north side.”

In Middleton's “ Middlesex, 1798,” page 341, “ Mr. Baird observes in his report of this county the variety of birds and beasts to be met with at Earl's Court (the villa of the celebrated and much lamented Mr. John Hunter) is matter of great entertainment. In the same grounds you are surprised to find so many living animals in one herd from the most opposite parts of the habitable globe.”

The house, grounds, gardens, dens, and conservatories remain but little changed. The following extracts from various works will give an interest in them ; but *the pond*, a few years since filled up, is shown by the depression in the drawing of the east front of John Hunter's house and grounds by Mr. Arthur Roberts, of Kensington Square. A special interest attaches to this pond, for while Jenner was pursuing his observations on the cuckoo, Hunter was busy trying to make pearls, by introducing extraneous substances into oysters for them to form on. The subjoined letter to the greatest patron of science in Europe, Sir Joseph Banks, alludes to this inquiry :—

" 1787.

"DEAR SIR JOSEPH,—I have these two days been draining the pond, or rather fishing for pearls, the success of which you will see by the specimens. Those I had made the experiments on were dead, but there is one recent. I have a few alive that I mean to put under experiment; but I shall open the shell and put in the extraneous body. If any other method suggests itself to you, be so good as to inform me, I would not have you make Lady Banks a present of them; I hope to get better, at least as large as my thumb. I lately got a *tall man*, but at the time could make no particular observations. I hope next summer to be able to show you him.

"I am, dear Sir Joseph,

"Your much obliged,

"JOHN HUNTER."

This "*tall man*" was doubtless O'Brien, the famous Irish giant, whose skeleton, eight feet high (and for which John Hunter is said to have paid £500), is in the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. "In the dead of night the body was removed in a Hackney coach, and having been carried through several streets, was transferred to Hunter's own carriage, and conveyed immediately to Earl's Court. Fearing lest a discovery should take place, Hunter did not choose to risk the delay which the ordinary mode of preparing a skeleton would require; accordingly the body was cut to pieces, and the flesh separated by boiling; hence has arisen the brown colour of the bones, which in all other respects form a magnificent skeleton."

There is a very old copper cauldron still fixed in a small room about 23 paces down a subterranean passage, entered by a sunk way five feet deep. Close to this are dens of various sizes, but the largest of all is at the east end of the grounds, near the great gate columns. This *den* is formed by earth raised to a considerable height, surmounted by castellated brick work, from which there must have been an extensive view in the old days, and on which possibly a mounted gun protected the premises and the valuable collection. The triple compartments face the house; they are strongly bricked, and guarded by gates only at the present time.

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#### EXTRACT FROM FAULKNER'S HISTORY OF KENSINGTON, 1820.

Of the Manor of Earl's Court, in the Parish of Kensington, in the County of Middlesex.

"In this retreat he had collected many kinds of animals and birds, and it was to him a favourite amusement in his walks to attend to their actions and their habits, and to make them familiar with him. The fiercer animals were those to which he was most partial, and he had several of the bull kind from several parts of the world. Among these was a beautiful small bull he had received from the Queen, with which he used to wrestle and play, and entertain himself with its exertions in its own defence. In one of these contests the bull overpowered him and got him down, and had not one of the servants accidentally come by, and frightened the animal away, this frolic would probably have cost him his life. The refinement of taste, and pursuit of that knowledge which contributes most to raise our admiration and gratitude to a First Cause, could not be more strongly attended to than in this delightful retreat.

“*The House* within bore marks of having been enlarged according as the owner had risen in rank and wealth. The panels were enriched with drawings representing Cupid and Psyche, finished in water colours with true classic chastity, by a near relation of Mrs. Hunter, a gentleman who had studied in the Italian school. Each compartment was bordered with a circular ornament, which concealed the nails by which it was attached to the wall, that the whole might be readily removed when the house was deserted for the winter season.

“The distance from town was such as to secure a professional man from interruptions of less importance, and within call of more urgent occurrences. From the year 1772 till his death he made it his custom to sleep there during the autumn months, coming to town only during the hours of business in the forenoon, and returning to dinner. Attached to the house was *the conservatory*, with every facility for watching the labours of the bee; experiments were carried on to show the analogy between animal and vegetable life and growth. In the pleasure grounds the ox and buffalo exhibited a variety of crossings, whilst the kennel and styes furnished papers well deserving to be found among the transactions with which they are enrolled.”

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## EXTRACTS FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN HUNTER, F.R.S.

BY DREWRY OTTLEY, Esq., 1835.

“As many of the inquiries he was desirous of instituting could not be carried on conveniently, if at all, in the centre of a crowded city, he purchased a piece of ground called Earl’s Court, about two miles from London, and built a small house, where he used to spend much of his time, and where he pursued most of those researches which form the subjects of his papers in the *Philosophical Transactions*, or are detailed in his work on the *Animal Economy*.

“Here it was his delight to spend an hour or two amongst the strange inmates congregated from all parts of the globe, engaged in observing their habits and instincts, and amusing himself in making them exert their various methods of self-defence against his playful attacks. As might be expected, he got himself into perilous situations in his character of assailant. On one such occasion he was thrown down by a little bull, which the Queen had given him, and with which he had been wrestling; and had not one of his servants accidentally seen his danger, and driven off the victor, he would not have escaped without severe injury. In another of his adventures, still more serious consequences might have ensued. Two leopards, which he kept chained in an out-house, broke from their confinement, and got into the yard with the dogs; a fierce encounter immediately commenced, the noise of which alarmed the neighbourhood, and quickly brought out Hunter to inquire into its cause. He found one of the leopards engaged with the dogs, whilst the other was making his escape over the wall; and instantly, though quite unarmed, he ran up and laid hold of both the animals, which fortunately submitted to be led back to their den and secured. When the danger was over, however, he became so agitated at the recollection of it that he fainted. Hunter had for some years past maintained his two establishments in London and at Earl’s Court.

“His house at Earl’s Court had been gradually improved and enlarged since his marriage (in July, 1771, with the sister of Sir Everard Home), and some of the rooms had been tastily fitted up under Mrs. Hunter’s direction; the drawing room in particular was ornamented with moveable panels

elegantly painted in water colours, and representing the story of Cupid and Psyche. Here he used to spend a good part of his time during the autumnal months, returning to London in the morning, after breakfast, and retiring to dine and sleep with his family at Earl's Court.

"*The grounds* were, as usual, stocked with various denizens of earth and air, collected from all quarters of the world, and the *garden* was well furnished with wall fruit, but this was considered the sole property of his bees, several hives of which were contained in the conservatory, where he used to pursue his observations whilst at home, and leave some of his family to mount guard during his absence. His fondness for bees was very great, from whence he derived a common but expressive metaphor which he was in the habit of employing, that 'his head was like a bee hive.'"

"I am inclined to believe that I should not at all exaggerate what we owe to John Hunter if I were to assert that, with the exception of Sir Isaac Newton, there has been no individual in these latter times who has done so much as he has done towards altering and elevating the character of the peculiar sciences to which he devoted his attention; and be it observed that these were not sciences of limited extent. They embraced whatever belongs to the physical phenomena of life; the natural and healthy structures of animals from the lowest to the highest, and the aberrations and changes which constitute disease."

*From "Hunterian Oration," 1837,  
by Sir Benjamin Brodie, Bart.*

"The greatest man in the combined character of Physiologist and Surgeon that the whole annals of medicine can furnish."

*From the Works of  
Sir William Lawrence, Bart.*

"Earl's Court he directed to be sold, and the proceeds, after payment of his debts, to be divided equally between his widow and two children."

1728. Born at Calderwood, N.B.

1747. Arrives in London.

1749. At Chelsea Hospital.

1751. At St. Bartholomew's.

1754. Entered St. George's Hospital.

1756. House Surgeon there.

1759. Staff Surgeon.

1763. Returned to England.

1764. Purchased Earl's Court House, Kensington.

1767. Elected F.R.S.

1768. Surgeon to St. George's Hospital.

1771. Marries Miss Home.

1775. First lectures on Surgery.

1776. Surgeon-Extraordinary to the King.

1786. Deputy Surgeon-General to the Army.

1788. Portrait taken by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

1793. Died in the room adjoining the Board Room of St. George's Hospital, on October 16th.

1859. John Hunter's remains discovered by Frank Buckland under the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and removed (by the Royal College of Surgeons of England) to their final resting place, on the North side of the Nave in Westminster Abbey, 28th March, 1859.

1877. Memorial Window placed in N. transept of Parish Church of Kensington, by public subscription.

[From *The Athenæum*, Dec. 4, 1869.]

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## KENSINGTON WORTHIES.

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Kensington Parish boasts of many past celebrities, and the parishioners have now an opportunity of showing due respect to their memory. Among the illustrious men who lived and wrought there are authors, philosophers, and artists, who should not be forgotten. The foundations of the new church are laid, and we are glad to hear of a movement, the object of which is to perpetuate the memory of at least one Kensington worthy, by erecting a memorial window in his honour, in the church. We allude to John Hunter, who not only purchased land and built a house in the parish, but there prosecuted the researches which have immortalized his name. The College of Surgeons and the medical profession generally will, we trust, aid in this object of doing honour to Hunter.

But there is even a greater Kensington name than Hunter's; need we say it is Isaac Newton? the most illustrious, certainly, of the men who have claims on the fond recollections of his successors in the parish. We would suggest to the Society of Arts, and to any of the learned Societies having especial sympathy with Newton and his almost God-like work, that Kensington New Church, *with* a memorial window to John Hunter, and without one to Isaac Newton, would be imperfect. With their co-operation, the honourable end will be easily reached.

Then, among authors, we recognise the name of Addison, one of the greatest of our moral writers, and one of whom Kensington is especially proud. If there be no others, we hope at least to see these glorious three enshrined, as it were, in the sacred edifice. To look up at them and remember them and their works may be no weak incentive to the spectator to at least try and do likewise, by doing his utmost to turn to account the gifts he holds of God, and will be holden to answer for. The Literary Fund might spare an *obolus* for him who imagined Sir Roger de Coverly.

We leave musical and other celebrities for future testimonials of gratitude; but we must *insist* on the right of Newton, of Hunter, and of Addison to be honoured in the way we have mentioned.

With hearty co-operation, the end might be accomplished by a half-crown subscription; and if extraneous aid come not, we hope that the parish of Kensington will have spirit and liberality enough to suffice for the work, and to pay the above-mentioned tribute of respect and homage of their affection to their own heroes.



# JOHN HUNTER'S RESIDENCE

AT EARL'S COURT, KENSINGTON.

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JOHN HUNTER, the greatest anatomist, physiologist, and surgeon that England ever produced, died October 16, 1793, aged 64. His memory has not yet passed away from amongst us, and I trust it never will pass away, so much does suffering humanity owe to his great discoveries. John Hunter had a country residence at Earl's Court, Kensington. The old parish church has lately been pulled down, and it has been proposed to place memorial windows in memory of historical personages connected with Kensington parish in the church now being built by Gilbert Scott, R.A. A list has been published of the illustrious individuals who lived at or near Kensington, and whose future memory will be thus recorded for generations to come. Among these illustrious names I find Sir Isaac Newton, Charles James Fox, Lord Macaulay, Archbishop Whately, William Wilberforce, Sir David Wilkie, Sir Augustus Calcott, R.A., Dean Swift, William Penn, Robert Nelson ("Fasts and Festivals"), W. M. Thackeray, Dr. Crotch (Dr. of Music), and many others. The Royal names of Queen Victoria (born in Kensington Palace), King William III. and Mary, Queen Anne, George I., George II., the Duchess of Kent, and Queen Caroline must also be included, as they all lived in Kensington.

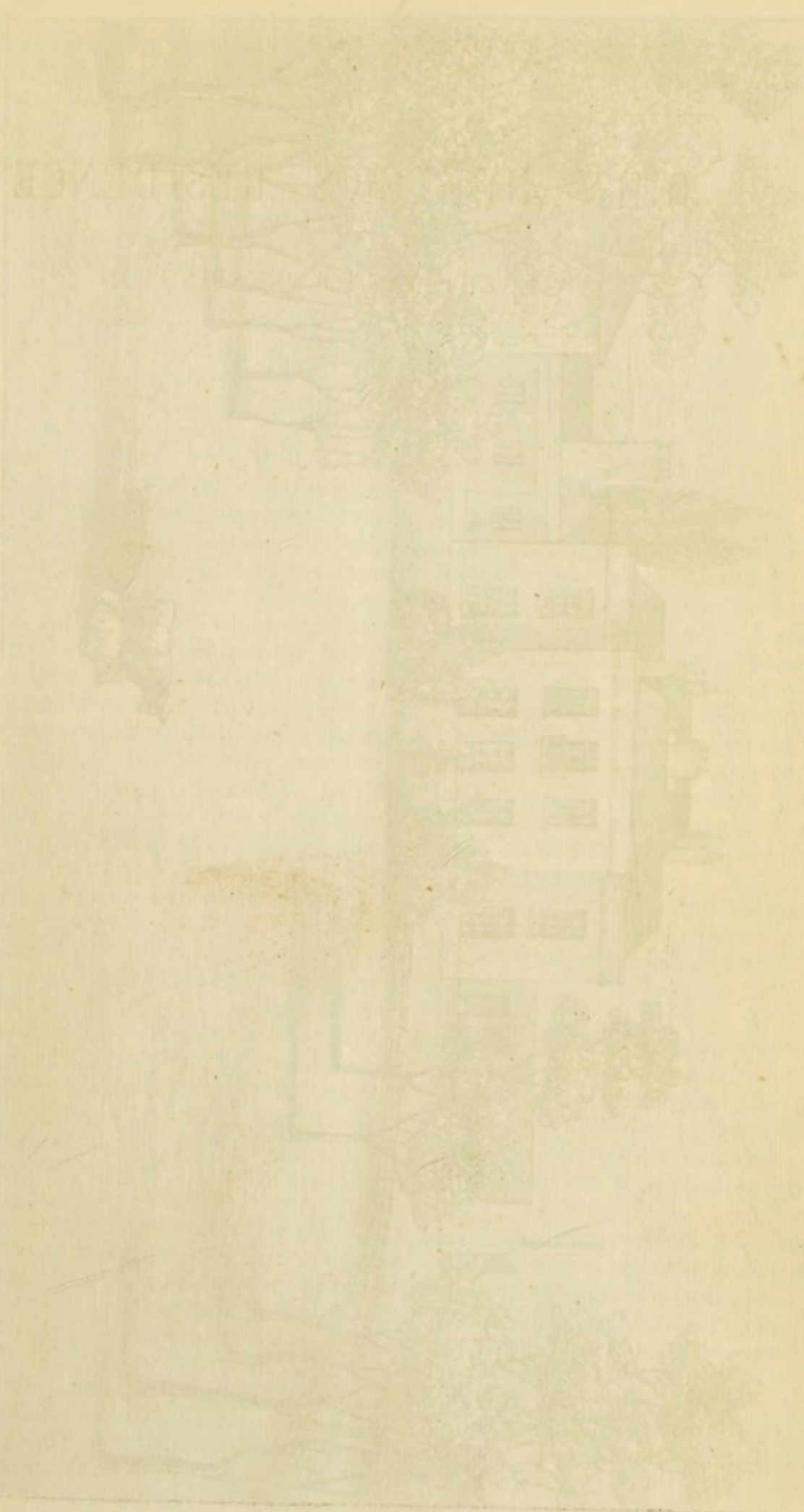
In the list of illustrious persons whose names will thus be handed down to posterity is that of John Hunter, who for many years lived at Earl's Court, Kensington. My friend, John Meriman, whose family has been so long established at Kensington, has been kind enough to invite me to examine this house and the grounds connected with it. In Foot's "Life of Hunter," 1794, we read: "To unbend the mind from the tedium which during the summer months comes over every man of care stationary in this metropolis, to refresh the animal functions, half poisoned and debased by anatomical miasma, and to be as little as possible out of the way of the sudden calls of a surgeon, John Hunter chose a cottage at Earl's Court, about a mile in the midst of fields beyond Brompton. There he sometimes retreated for fresh air and took his hobby horse along with him. Nobody of common curiosity could have passed this original cottage\* without being obliged to inquire to whom it belonged. By observing the back of the house a lawn was found stocked with fowls and animals of the strangest selection in nature, as if it had been another repository belonging to Brooks; and in the front there were to be seen four figures in lead or stone representing lions, two in a form *passant* placed upon the parapet, and on the ground two more *couchant*, guarding the double flight of steps leading to the vestibule. On the sides of the area were seen two pyramidal collections of shells, each of them seeming to conceal a subterraneous entrance to Golgotha. Over the front door was presented the mouth of a crocodile gaping tremendously wide. It was also at

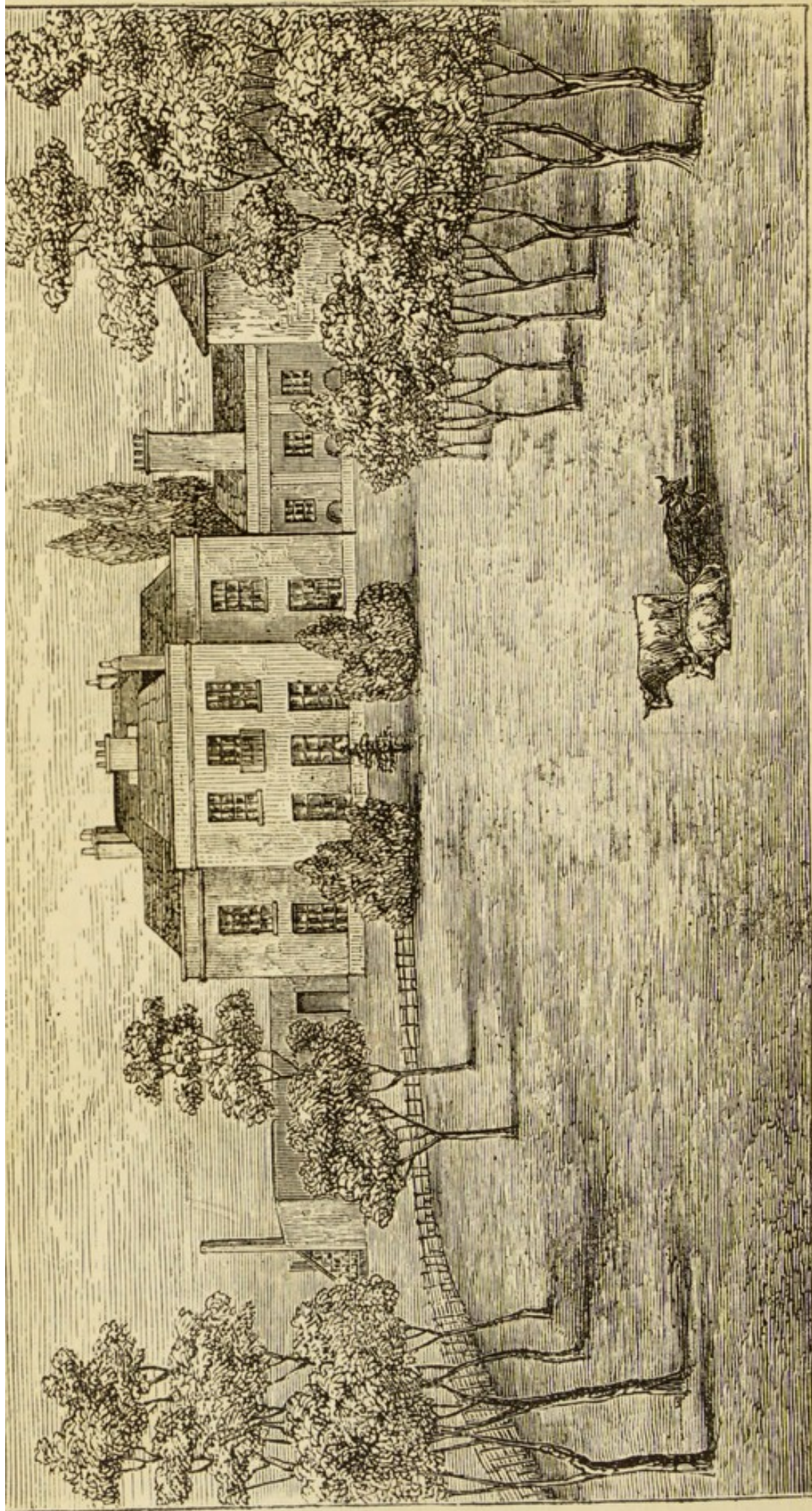
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\* This is the very building now standing.

УЛЕУБГА СОУБЛ КЕНСИНСТОН  
ЛОНИ НЛИТЕК.Э НОМЕ

УЛЕУБГА





A. Roberts. 1870

JOHN HUNTER'S HOME  
AT EARLS COURT KENSINGTON

1764 — 1793.

Earl's Court that he pastured those buffaloes which he so lately as in 1792 put into harness and trotted through the streets of London. Savage beasts said to have been snared on the lofty and barbarous mountains of Thibet, or on the dreary wilds of Boutan, and imported there for autumnal exhibition on carnival days at Smithfield, held in honour of St. Bartholomew, were sure to be first shown to John Hunter, their keeper, thus enhancing the estimation of his rare Asiatic curiosities. We are also told that giants and dwarfs were certainly retained by him for dissection whenever the fates should determine it—whenever the sister's shears of destiny should cut the threads on which their lives suspended.'

Mr. Merriman assured me that, according to all local tradition, the house and grounds are very little if at all altered since the days John Hunter lived there. It was, therefore, a real treat to me to be allowed to go over them with Mr. Merriman and his partner, Mr. Arthur Roberts, and we owe many thanks to the present occupier of the house, Dr. Gardiner Hill, for his kindness in the matter.

John Hunter built this house himself. It was originally a plain brick building, in the form of a square; but as his practice increased he added to it on both sides. It is just the sort of house the great anatomist would have built. There is not the slightest attempt at effect or useless ornamentation. His favourite room was evidently the large room on the ground floor, looking out on the park. In this room there is plenty of space for his papers, books, instruments, microscopes, and all the paraphernalia of a working physiologist. Mrs. Hunter's rooms were evidently up-stairs, and the panels of the doors are ornamented with drawings painted in water-colours. No doubt John Hunter had as great a horror of feminine interference in his studio as have many philosophers of the present day. All round the house is a covered cloister dug about six feet into the earth. I expect John Hunter had two reasons for making this cloister, which is very like a prolongation of areas to the London houses. Firstly, this cloister would keep the house dry, and secondly, it would form a grand place for keeping live stock. I have no doubt, therefore, that in this cloister he kept many of his smaller animals used for experiments, such as dormice, hedgehogs,\* bats, vipers, snakes, and snails, for his researches on torpidity; and hatches full of rabbits, whose unfortunate fate would be to have their ears frozen to prove points connected with blood circulation.

It would also be a good place to hang up skeletons, or dry preparations, or to macerate bones. Nobody more than myself knows the value of an area—I am sorry to say my own area in Albany-street is terribly small—to a London house, especially when one has a great many dissections on hand; and I have no hesitation in saying that John Hunter made a great many of his preparations now in the Museum in the College of Surgeons in this cloister-like area.

The entrance into these cloisters leads through a subterraneous passage, very dark, and like an enlarged fox's earth. This passage, again, I warrant, was one of Master John's contrivances, for through his burrow he could wheel a tidy-sized cart or truck, and drag into his den anything, from a giant's body up to a good sized whale; and I have no doubt that the *Balanoptera*

\*John Hunter was very fond of experimenting with hedgehogs. He thus writes to Dr. Jenner:—"I received yours with the hedgehog, but I want more: I want you to get a hedgehog in the beginning of winter and weigh him; put him into your garden, and let him have some leaves, hay, or straw to cover himself, which he will do; then weigh him in the spring and see what he has lost. Secondly, I want you to kill one in the beginning of winter to see how fat he is, and another in the spring to see what he has lost of his fat." Again—"If you could send me a colony of hedgehogs, I shall be glad, as I have expended all I had but two; one an eagle ate, and a ferret caught the other." Subsequently—"Can you send me more hedgehogs this spring? All those you sent me died, so that I am *hedgehogless*." Jenner was the great discoverer of vaccination, A.D. 1780.

*Rostrata*, 17ft. in length, described in his works on whales, was once carted down this passage into the area, to be cut up and figured and described. The entrance to where the stables originally stood was not far from this burrow, and John could have easily whipped anything into the stable yard down his fox's earth, and into the area, without Mrs. Hunter knowing anything about it; and I'll be bound to say she used occasionally to "lead him a life," and kick up a row if any preparation with an extra effluvium about it was left on the dissecting-table\* when the great surgeon was obliged to go out on his professional duties.

At one end of his burrow there is a mysterious-looking door, which leads into a small room, now used as a general receptacle for rubbish. Up in the corner were a lot of bones. I eagerly examined them, but they were only kitchen bones. In another corner of this room there is a largish-sized copper boiler standing out of the wall. Two doors fit on the top of this boiler, which closes it up quite tight. Ah! if this old boiler could only tell what it had boiled! *One* giant, we know, was boiled up in it; for in 1787 John Hunter wrote as follows to Sir Joseph Banks:—"I have lately got a *tall man*. I hope to be able to show him to you next summer." This tall man was no doubt O'Brien, the Irish giant, whose skeleton is now in the Hunterian Museum at the College of Surgeons, alongside the skeleton and coffin-plate of "Jonathan Wild," the great thieftaker of Jack Sheppard's time. O'Brien (or Byrne) was said to be over 8ft. high. In the *Annual Reporter Chronicle*, June, 1783, we read:—"The giant expressed an earnest desire that his ponderous remains might be sun\* out at sea; but if such were his wish, it was never fulfilled, as Mr. Hunter obtained his body before interment of any kind had taken place." Elsewhere we read:—

"In the dead of night the body was removed in a Hackney coach, and having been carried through several streets, was transferred to Hunter's own carriage, and conveyed immediately to Earl's Court. Fearing lest a discovery should take place, Hunter did not choose to risk the delay which the ordinary mode of preparing a skeleton would require; accordingly the body was cut to pieces, and the flesh separated by boiling; hence has arisen the brown colour of the bones, which in all other respects form a magnificent skeleton."

John Hunter is said to have given £500 for the body of O'Brien. I doubt if he did anything of the kind, for I well recollect old Mr. Clift (who was John Hunter's assistant) telling me when a boy a very different story. In Bristol Museum, if I recollect right, there is, or was, a stocking of O'Brien, hanging against the wall. If I recollect right the inscription says, "This is the stocking of O'Brien, the Irish giant, who *lies buried in the cathedral churchyard*." At all events there can be no doubt that O'Brien was wheeled down John Hunter's fox's earth, cut up in the area, and boiled down in John's universal preparation maker. I looked, therefore, upon this boiler with [a certain degree of awe and reverence, and as I got upon the stool to examine it, I repeated to Merriman a verse out of the old Winchester song of the workhouse boy:—

At length the soup-copper repairs did need;  
The copper-smith came, and there he see'd  
A dollop of bones lay grizzling there  
In the leg of the breeches the poor boy used to wear.

I opened the cover of the boiler and anxiously felt about in the dark for anything I might find, as I thought it was just possible that some relics of the great John's culinary operations may still be left. I could not, however, discover anything except a very old rusty key covered up with dust at the bottom of the copper. Whether this was O'Brien's key I don't know, at all

\* This dissecting-table is now in the museum of St. George's Hospital. The sofa on which Hunter died is, I understand, also at St. George's.

events it is an interesting relic. John Hunter took care that neither Mrs. Hunter or anybody else should go prying about this copper. The big doors are so arranged that no smell shall escape except up the chimney, and that there shall be more room than at first sight seems, for steaming as well as boiling.

As I searched about in the copper I fancied the great John behind me, with his high cheek bones, bright intelligent eyes, expressive eyebrows, and white hair curled behind, and his hands in his pockets, smiling his satirical smile at me and saying, "So, Master Frank, there you are again; you found me in the vaults of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and got me buried in Westminster Abbey twelve years ago, and now I find you actually in my house investigating my private skeleton-making copper. Never mind, my son, keep up my memory, and perhaps I will give you a wrinkle that may be of use to you about salmon\* from my notes, *a cartload* of which (as Sir William Fergusson rightly said in his last oration in my honour at the college) Sir Everard Home burnt, and which are now lost to your generation."

Close to the boiler are the old (now tumble-down) pig-styes, and it was doubtless in these very pig-styes that John Hunter kept the little pigs which he fed with madder, so as to cause their bones to become red. (See preparations in the College of Surgeons.) This was doubtless also the place referred to when he wrote—"I gave pigs a preference to any other animal, as being easily managed, and breeding perfectly well under the confinement necessary for experiments. I selected a sow and cut a slit in her ear to distinguish her from the others." Hence his valuable paper on the functions of the ovaria.

In the farmyard by the pig-stye, no doubt, were kept the cocks and hens whose spurs John Hunter cut off and planted into their combs; likewise the ducks used for the table, and also for experiment, for he writes:—"I took two ducks, and fed one with barley, the other with sprats, for about a month, and killed both at the same time. When they were dressed, the one fed wholly with sprats was hardly eatable, it tasted so strongly of fish."

Above the stable was the pigeon house, in which lived the pigeons, from the observation of which he was enabled to write as follows:—"During incubation, the coats of the crop in the pigeon are gradually enlarged and thickened, like what happens to the udders of females in mammalia in the time of uterine gestation. If we allow either of the parents to feed the brood, the crop of the young pigeons, when examined, will be discovered to contain the same kind of curdled substance as that of the old ones, which passes from thence into the stomach, where it is to be digested."

This, then, is the philosophical explanation of the vulgar story of "pigeon's milk." The poor cocks and hens, the turkey cocks and the geese in the farmyard, the eagles, owls, and hawks in the hay-loft, and the ostrich in the cow-house, were all likewise subjected to experiment to prove that the air-cells in birds' bones and feathers communicated with the lungs, for he writes:—"I next cut the wing through the *os humeri* in another fowl, and, tying up the *trachæa*, as in the cock, found that the air passed to and

\* The great John thus wrote to Dr. Jenner:—"I received your salmon, and just examined enough to want another." "If you can get me some salmon spawn, I should like to have it, and out of different places, as it will be of different ages." "I want to examine the spawn of fish in the progress of the formation of the young one." This was written some seventy years ago. How I should like to show the great physiologist over my Museum of Economic Fish Culture at the International Exhibition! How pleased he would be with my hatching-troughs, my yearling salmon, and my three-year-old lake trout; also, I trust, with my "pyloric appendage" theory, and my casts of dissections in plaster-of-paris, especially when painted by my good friend Rolfe—the dear John was not up to this plan. In my humble way I mean to follow the steps of my great master, and am trying to make such a fish museum as will be appreciated some of these days.

from the lungs by the canals in this bone.\* The same experiment was made with the *os femoris* of a young hawk, and was attended with a similar result." In the stable-yard were chained up wolves, jackals, and dogs,† whence he obtained those curious hybrids, "one of which, being three-parts dog, I gave to my friend Mr. Jenner, of Berkeley," likewise boxes for the accommodation of the opossums, "which I have often endeavoured to breed in England. I have brought a great many, and my friends have assisted me by bringing them or sending them alive, but I could never get them to breed, so that I am left to conjecture as to many parts of their economy." Here also was in his kennel the dingo, of which John says, "he is capable of barking, although not so readily as a European dog; he is very ill-natured and vicious, and snarls, howls, and moans like dogs in common" In the stables he doubtless kept the donkeys, and the mules, and the celebrated free marten. "which I had from Benjamin May Esq., of Denham, near Uxbridge, who knew my anxiety to ascertain this point" In the stables also were possibly stalled the zebra and the mare by which he carried out the experiments on the reproduction of forms, marks, and colours in animals, by crossing a quagga with a mare, which mare continued, after a lapse of five years, to reproduce in three successive births *hippo-tigrine* markings. ‡

After Merriman and myself had examined the house, we went into the field in front of John Hunter's sitting-room. In the middle of the field there is a hollow. This was formerly a pond, in which John Hunter tried experiments to force Scotch river mussels to form pearls after the manner of the Chinese experiment. In 1787 he writes as follows to Sir Joseph Banks:—

"1787.

"DEAR SIR JOSEPH,—I have these two days been draining the pond, or rather fishing for pearls, the success of which you will see by the specimens. Those I had made the experiments on were dead, but there is one recent. I have a few alive that I mean to put under experiment; but I shall open the shell and put in the extraneous body. If any other method suggests itself to you, be so good as to inform me. I would not have you make Lady Banks a present of them; I hope to get better, at least as large as my thumb.

JOHN HUNTER."

Here, too, he kept his fish, frogs, leeches, and eels‡ for experimental purposes. These fish contributed much to his paper on "Animals Producing Heat." Thus we read;—

"I froze the tail of a tench, which became as hard as a board. When thawed, that part was whiter than common, and when it moved the whole tail moved as one piece, and the termination of the frozen part appeared like

\* Hence the story that John Hunter made a cock breathe through his wing bones.

† John Hunter accidentally broke his *tendo Achillis*, so he set to work experimenting with dogs; he divided the *tendo Achillis* in several dogs by subcutaneous incision, and killed the dogs at different periods to see the progress of the union.

‡ Pictures of these animals are in the College of Surgeons. I have some idea that the experiments were made by Lord Morton. I shall be glad of correct information.

§ John Hunter writes the following Irishism:—"Frogs live an amazing while after they are dead." As regards eels, he says:—"I received yours with the eel. I shall send you back the eel again with the liver, stomach, and gut removed, and nothing left but a fringe, which passes down the sides of the backbone, which I took, and still take to be the spawn. But I never saw any difference in it at any time of the year; and this one you have sent is similar to all I have yet seen. I think your stopping the eels a good plan, but I should suspect they would be more slippery than hedgehogs." Again—"Have you begun the eels? No porpoises—no salmon spawn; you see I am very greedy. What the devil becomes of your eels in the winter?—J. H."

the joint on which it moved. On the same day I froze the tails of two goldfishes till they became as solid as a piece of wood. They were put into cold water to thaw, and appeared for some days to be very well; but that part of the tails which had been frozen had not the natural colour, and the fins of the tails became ragged."

In the pathway near the house I observed a tree bearing very peculiar incision marks upon the bark. I think these markings upon the tree were also some of John Hunter's handiwork, inflicted on it when he was carrying out experiments on vegetable life *à propos* to the heat of vegetables, or more likely as to the relative powers of union in the bark of a tree as compared with that of the human skin. The markings were mostly above my head, but this might be accounted for by the fact that, when John Hunter cut the poor tree about, the markings would be about the level of his head; but the growth of the tree since then would of course carry the markings up many feet higher. This, again, might have been the very tree whose temperature was taken. "I put my long thermometer into the feather of a peacock's tail and introduced it into a hole in the tree. I began my experiments at 6 in the morning. The atmosphere was  $57\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ , the thermometer in the tree  $55^{\circ}$ ." In one portion of the ground is a very old mulberry tree. John Hunter says: "I made experiments on several trees of different kinds, as pines, yews, poplars, walnuts." He does not, however, mention this old mulberry tree; but I'll be bound the poor old tree did not escape having holes bored into him by gimlets to take his temperature or freeze his sap in the spring months. Oh! that the mulberry tree could tell us of the suffering of his fellow trees in the grounds years ago at the hands of John Hunter! The trees he experimented on were then little saplings, now they are great big full-grown trees. I should like to examine them all closely.

Close to the mulberry tree at one corner of the field is an artificial mound of earth very much the shape of an ancient burial tumulus such as we see on the Downs. The west side of this mound has a passage in it leading to three cellar-like vaults. This is even now called the "Lion's Den," and there can be no doubt that John Hunter used to keep his lions and leopards in this place.

His sitting-room windows face this den, so that he could readily watch the animals from his easy-chair. This is doubtless the den from which his leopards escaped, the incident of which is thus recorded:—Two leopards broke from their confinement, and got into the yard with the dogs: a fierce encounter immediately commenced, the noise of which alarmed the neighbourhood, and quickly brought out Hunter to inquire into its cause. He found one of the leopards engaged with the dogs, whilst the other was making his escape over the wall; and instantly, though quite unarmed, he ran up and laid hold of both the animals, which fortunately submitted to be led back to their den and secured. When the danger was over, however, he became so agitated at the recollection of it that he fainted.

I closely examined these dens, but could find nothing but a very old decrepid wheelbarrow, which might have been John Hunter's from the look of it. In the largest den, however, I found a post and iron chain, such as is used for tying up cattle. The block of wood at the end of this chain is very old and worm-eaten, the chain also was very much worn. I think there can hardly be a doubt that this was the post to which John Hunter used to tie up the little bull which the Queen gave him, and which little bull nearly killed the great John; for the story goes that one day when wrestling with the bull the beast knocked him down, and would have gored him severely had not one of the servants driven the animal off with a stick.



On the top of the "Lion's Den" there is a little rampart made of bricks and tiles, after the fashion of the top of a castellated tower. The legend is that John Hunter kept a gun here, which he used to fire off occasionally, a sort of private fortress, in fact; gun or no gun, there is an excellent look-out from the top of the "Lion's Den." In John Hunter's time Earl's Court was quite in the country, and from the "Lion's Den" he would have had a good view of Westminster Abbey, little thinking he would ever be buried there. Near this place is a gateway, but neither I nor Merriman could make out whether this was a "dummy" gateway or intended for use; but depend upon it, John Hunter put it there for some purpose. His town house was situated about the middle of the eastern side of Leicester Square, and extended through into Castle Street, and here he established his museum. He used to drive a pair of bay-stone horses to and fro from Leicester Square to Earl's Court. Foot writes:—"On being told of his death at St. George's Hospital, on the 16th October, 1793, on the same day I recollect having seen his bay-stone horses returning through Piccadilly home without their master, and this circumstance introduced to my reflection the sympathy which Virgil has attributed to the war-horse of young Pallas in his funeral procession:—

"Post Bellator Equus positus insignibus Æthon  
It lachrymans."

As I stood on the "Lion's Den," I imagined this same carriage, with the high-stepping bay stallions, their coachman in tears, turning in for the last time to the very gateway after Mr. Foot had seen them in Piccadilly on the 16th October, 78 years ago, and I pictured to myself the consternation and grief spread like wildfire through the establishment by the sad news of the master's sudden death. From that day the glories at Earl's Court then set. There can never be another John Hunter.

I have thus endeavoured to describe Earl's Court, the residence of our great and illustrious founder. During my visit there I almost imagined that I was in the presence of the great man himself, so little is the place changed. I wish, therefore, to call the attention of my brother medical men, and the scientific world in general, to the above facts. Mr. Merriman has kindly informed me that he will send to anybody who asks for it a picture of John Hunter's house and the "Lion's Den" as they now stand, from drawings made by Mr. Arthur Roberts.

Earl's Court may disappear, but the memory of John Hunter will still be kept up in Kensington by the memorial window which it is proposed to erect in the new church. The larger the subscriptions, the more beautiful will be the memorial.

I cannot, I think, conclude this slight sketch of the great John Hunter better than by quoting the words of Sirach as recorded in the Book of Ecclesiasticus:—

"Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us.

"Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people wise and eloquent in their instructions.

"All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times.

"Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.

"The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will shew forth their praise."

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