HOW A GREAT MUSEUM GREW.

By A. K. Page.

Illustrated from Photographs by C. Pilkington.

STATUE OF JOHN HUNTER.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS FROM LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

OF all the great green squares in the centre of London —and, thanks be to Providence! there are a few —none is so difficult of access as the largest of all—Lincoln's Inn Fields. Lying on the rising north bank of the Thames, hid 'twixt the Strand below and High Holborn above, it is seldom that a stranger finds his way through its narrow turnstiles or crooked streets that wind through the savoury, vanishing slums of Clare Market. It is a quiet square as a rule, a few "cabbies" dozing in its corners waiting for a passing solicitor or a client; but on a summer evening, when the band plays amongst its trees, the days of the "pied piper of Hamelin" seem to return. Crowds of street urchins, women with children in arms, forsake the slums round the Seven Dials and Drury Lane, and troop in, laughing and merry, past the chapel where Lord George Gordon held riot, and the Old Curiosity Shop, to listen to the music.

The surgeon, young and old, knows his way to Lincoln's Inn Fields. On the south side lies his Mecca, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, with its great museum behind, containing the Hunterian collection. It is a huge, plain, monotone, porticoed building, towering above the solicitors' offices which shoulder it on each side, and carrying in its square top a two-storeyed block by way of an afterthought. It looks solid and unostentatious. No one would suspect that there a creation has its home such as the world never saw before, unequalled and unrivalled in the capitals and countries of the wide world, fit to be the just boast of a great nation. It contains the sermon of how man moves, lives, and has his being, written in Nature's own characters. Here is there nothing parochial, nothing even national; it rises right into the universal, dealing with all mankind, everywhere and at all times. It cannot, like theories, be proved false, nor, like writings, become old and stale; its truth is for all time and for everybody.

It is not too much to say that the great public is ignorant of its unique position among the world's museums; they hardly even know of its existence. And yet its doors are always open, and to everyone. The average medical man is scarcely aware of its merits; only the foremost of them have grasped the magnificence of its design, and hence even the professional element is small amongst its visitors. On Fridays and Saturdays, when admission is reserved for women, a few

uniformed nurses from the larger hospitals may be seen prying amongst the serried ranks of preparations in its galleries; on other days a country visitor who has learned of its existence by some lucky chance strolls round, bewildered and lost in the infinite wealth of its conception and details. The Londoner, proverbially indifferent to the great things beside him, never comes. But the student knows it, the student who seeks to widen the bounds of knowledge of man in health, man in disease, man as he was, and man as he may be, knows and loves it as a mine of wealth. If it is brain he would study, where else can he find, ready to his hand, such a series, from every kind of animal, as he finds here? He can trace at a glance, step by step, Nature working from her simplest beginnings to the rich complicated organ of man—the organ that has produced the whole world of civilisation. If it is the skull or the skeleton that is the subject of his investigation, here he may find, filling case after case, room after room, all the races of the earth, side by side, not in ones and twos, but in scores and scores, showing the multitudinous forms assumed by the skulls and skeletons of mankind. The day comes, and it comes quickly, when some races will find their sole representatives here. It is already the mausoleum of the Tasmanian.

The moment you come within the spacious entrance hall of the College you have a sense of ease, wealth, and solidity. There is nothing gaudy or garish; the thick carpets on the stairs, the portraits of its great men in the entrance hall, its solid fittings, its rows of busts, all convey the feeling of affluence and prosperity; the Royal College which has nursed the museum to such perfection seems still to have somewhat of the air of its former existence as a city corporation. The bust of Huxley is here; he was a member of the College, and did much of his work in the museum; Sir Richard Owen, guardian of the museum for twenty years, his elder rival, is there, too, as a young, strong man, and as an

THE HUMAN ROOM.

old man with lined, gaunt face and watery eyes. I wonder why they perpetuate our great men to coming generations as old men ; it was Huxley himself who said every scientist should be pole-axed at sixty. There is not a scientist in Europe to-day—with, perhaps, a couple of exceptions—over sixty, who is doing work worthy of his past reputation ; it is the man of forty, and not of seventy, that should be perpetuated.

You will never understand the museum, its meaning, or its greatness, unless you know how it came into being. It was born in the brain of a reddish-haired little Scot, John Hunter, who came to London nearly a century and a half ago, a roystering, idle, ignorant, sharp-tempered lad of twenty, from Long Calderwood, in Lanarkshire, to learn anatomy with his prospering, clever, snobbish brother William. Without doubt an ill-conditioned, proud, pugnacious little man from beginning to end. He had one great idea. He saw that of writing books there was no end, and medical knowledge circled round in every generation, ending where it began. If ever real advance was to be made in the knowledge of what man really is and how he lives, work must be done in such a way that one generation might start where the last left off ; and to this end Nature must be caught and fixed in her every mood, and her methods of working shown in the act. If the functions of the lung were to be understood, it was of little use to seek them in the complicated organ of man ; the rudiment and simplest condition of them had to be sought for in the lowliest of animal forms, and the complications and additions which Nature in her experimental moods had added in the higher animals had to be traced out.

SIR RICHARD OWEN.

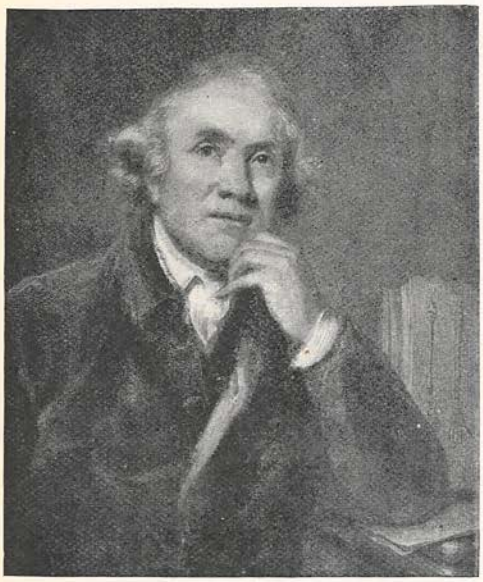
OWEN IN OLD AGE.

HUXLEY.

Every shape of living matter was to Hunter an experiment of Nature, to be tried, tested, and examined, that he might understand the manifestations of life in man. To know a disease, specimens exhibiting its every stage and variety had to be collected and put up for permanent exhibition. You may yet see in the galleries specimens he prepared, fresh, beautiful, and instructive as on the night they left his hand. There you may still examine the cock's spur growing luxuriantly in the comb to which he transplanted it. There you may see the specimens he made to prove the structure of the membranes

of the unborn babe, and the many other "human documents" that still stand unique in scientific value. Specimens are there, thousand upon thousand, each one throwing some light on the economy of man.

It required money to carry out the project. Altogether he spent £70,000 in his own lifetime, every penny of which he made in practice during the day, and every penny of which he spent to buy material to examine during the night. "Hang that guinea!" he used to say, as he rose unwillingly from his dissecting table to see a patient. He even used his own body for experiment and inoculated himself with the virus of one of the most loathsome and fell diseases that



JOHN HUNTER.
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

afflict the flesh of man—to find out too late that he was mistaken. "My life," he said of himself in later days, "is in the hands of any rascal who chooses to annoy or tease me." In 1793, at the age of sixty-five, he dropped down dead at St. George's Hospital after a heated discussion in which he had taken part, leaving a widow in a house in Leicester Square—demolished the other day—with a coach and horses, a retinue of forty servants and workmen, an invaluable collection on which he had spent £70,000 and his best brains, and not a penny else. It took six years, and, thanks to Sir Joseph Banks, the effort was successful, to convince the Government that here was something that ought to belong to the nation. "What," said Pitt, "buy preparations? Why, I haven't money enough to buy gunpowder." Ultimately £15,000 was given, the collection was handed over to the custody of the Royal College of Surgeons, and £15,000 more was given wherewith to house it. A right good custodian the College has been; it has spent almost half a million in amplifying and completing Hunter's design. It has had rare luck in the choice of its curators; every one of them has known what to do, and has done it. The museum has no rival, and in the custody of the College never can have one.

Its curators have been great men. The first was William Clift, a young man in Hunter's service, who guarded and arranged the collection during the troublous times that followed Hunter's death and its complete removal to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Richard Owen, a young medical man struggling into practice in the vicinity of Lincoln's Inn Fields in the early thirties, with a decided bent for anatomy, assisted him in the museum, became his son-in-law and successor, and finally the greatest anatomist of his time. The late director of the South Kensington Natural History Museum, Sir William Flower, succeeded him, and he in turn found a successor in the present curator, Dr. Charles Stewart, a man of rare ability, an ideal director, who writes his discoveries, not on paper to be published, but in preparations to be placed on the shelves of the museum, so that Nature may be consulted at first hand.

In every museum of this sort there is much that appeals to the morbidly curious, and nothing appealed to John Hunter more than Nature in her monstrous moods. He had the true instinct of the investigator—any manifestation he could not understand riveted his attention and ingenuity till the explanation came. In one case of the museum illustrating the variations of human stature, stand side by side the skeletons of Giant O'Brian, who measured about eight feet, and of the little dwarf Caroline Crachami, who stood little more than a foot and a half on her stocking soles. It is not uninteresting to notice that giants or dwarfs are such, mostly on account of the size of their thighs and legs; their jaws and skulls are those of normal people. What one wishes to gather, on looking at such specimens, is—what sort of people were they, and how did they come here? The giant's slipper lies beside him, big enough for a baby's cradle. If you would know what sort of man he was

you must turn to the *Annual Register Chronicle* of June, 1783, where the following extract occurs: — "In Cockspur Street, Charing Cross, aged 22, died Mr. Charles O'Brian, the famous Irish giant, whose death is said to have been precipitated by excessive drinking, to which he was always addicted, but more particularly since his late loss of almost all his property, which he had invested in a single bank-note of £700. Our philosophical reader may not be displeased to learn, on the credit of an ingenious correspondent, who had this opportunity, that in 1780 he measured 8 ft.; in 1782, 8 ft. 2 in.; and in 1783, 8 ft. 4 in." The giant learned that Hunter's eye was on him, and to frustrate the anatomist's design left stringent instructions that his body was to be watched by relays of men till it could be carried far out to sea, the coffin weighted and sunk. He was not well dead when Hunter's agent plied the watchers with drink. At first they agreed to a dereliction of duty for £50; but getting that so easily, demanded £50 more, and only ceased to extort when Hunter refused to budge a penny beyond £400. The body had to be hid and secretly prepared, but so proud was Hunter of this acquisition that, when Reynolds painted that splendid portrait of him, which is reproduced here, the giant's leg was shown dangling in the corner of the background of the picture.

In another corner of the museum are to be seen the clothes of a man struck dead by lightning. The cotton clothes which the farm labourer wore when struck are rent in shreds, with singed parts here and there; the leather boots are shivered, the dial of the old-fashioned verge watch damaged. At a glance you realise the effects of a bolt from the blue.

IN THE SKELETON ROOM.

In another gallery, illustrating miraculous recoveries from injuries usually fatal, is a nude picture of a "John Taylor, a Prussian by birth," showing a scar in the front, and another on the back of his trunk, with a great iron pivot lying beside it. The picture and the pivot tell the whole story, but if the details are required they may be found in the catalogue. There you learn that "John" was on board the good brig *Jane*, of Scarborough, John Good, master, on Saturday, February 26th, 1831, busily trying to pass "the pivot of the try-sail mast into the main boom, when the tackle gave way" and the pivot passed through him. Some weeks in the London Hospital made him fit to go again on board the good brig *Jane*, of Scarborough.

COMPARATIVE SIZES OF SKELETONS.

Giant O'Brian, Giant Freeman, and Dwarf Caroline Crachami.

In another part stands the shaft of a "single-horse chaise," and near by it the dissected thorax of a man, showing a cicatrix in the right side and another on the left side of his chest. On turning to the catalogue it is found that the shaft had passed through the chest, and yet the wound was not fatal, but healed up, leaving the patient many subsequent years of life. Near by you see several scalps torn off by machinery, and read in the catalogue that their former owners survived the loss. One of the most interesting rooms in the whole building, of which an illustration is given here, is one containing the complete skeletons of the great South American extinct animals, the mylodon, the glyptodon, and megatherium, acquired and fitted up when Sir Richard Owen was curator. With these stands a very fine and complete example of the magnificent extinct Irish elk, recovered from the marsh under an Irish bog many years ago. A skeleton of the giant of birds, the dinornis, of New Zealand, now extinct, occupies a corner of this room.

Very few of even those familiar with the museum know of a little side gallery containing the surgical appliances of times which may be almost called prehistoric. There may be seen the instruments of the Roman surgeon in use in the year 300 B.C. Examples of the finished workmanship of the Roman artificial limb manufacturer are also represented. There also are to be seen the arms and legs used by the unfortunate Mrs. Robertson, of Dundee. Through a disastrous disease she lost all four limbs, but, thanks to Heather Bigg, she found substitutes which allowed her to crochet and walk about and earn her livelihood.

No one who visits this museum and grasps its splendid conception and its magnificent execution can leave it without a feeling of national pride. In no country could such a creation arise and mature but in England, the home of individual enterprise. Private effort, private donation, private brain work have made it. It is no State creation and could not be. It is the most complete attempt ever made to work out in the concrete a one great idea, which cannot be done by Civil Service nor by routine, but only by the voluntary and combined efforts of far-sighted men. State aid and State direction can do much, but those who cry for the Continental methods in England should remember that State aid and direction has not yet produced such a museum in either Germany or France.