

Halton House

February 21 1911.

My dear Bob,

You have given me rather a large order in suggesting recollections of HASLAR. I suppose I have many inside me somewhere but they take a lot of stirring up, and I do not know the sort of recollections you want.

One of my earliest is the remembrance of our Mother sitting in a dressing gown, (white with blue ribbons) in the library in an easy chair and of how white her skin was. She often read to us, and sang Scotch songs, to which we invariably danced. We used to sit on great round hassocks covered with carpet stuff.

Then I remember the two servants named Lock, the elder waited at table and kept us in order. One was named Ellen. I remember her suddenly going hysterical at prayers and yelling like a wild Indian.

One day there was a very bad thunderstorm. I went into the glass porch to see it, and one of the naval carpenters came running to get under cover. I opened the door and there was a great flash and clap and he was knocked down almost on top of me. I thought it a very great joke but was reproved for laughing. The man was not hurt but some of the tools were fused together in his basket, a chisel and some nails. It must have been really a very narrow escape. His name was I think Wilson.

I remember the nursey and its landing and how we used to post things in a crack behind the mantelpiece. I also remember being dressed for parties in a blue and white silky frock, with Prince of Wales buttons, which didnt please me. When dressed and my hair

brushed up to a point by Christian, (the nurse, who came from a little farm at Alverstoke,) I was dumped down on a chair and dared to move, while the others were being got ready. Dinner was at 3 P.M. when there was a party - with the blue plates I now have for dessert.

Then I remember our Mother lying dead, covered with quantities of violets. Indeed I always afterwards associated her with Violets. And I remember the funeral. I was clothed in a long fusty smelling cloak.

The garden was a remarkably fruitful one. Grapes grow and occasionally ripened on the long high south wall towards the Hospital, and there was always a splendid crop (as I now judge) of apples and plums, chiefly planted by our Grandfather, John Booth. Everything seemed to grow there without much trouble. The garden had flowers along its paths, and had a door which was opened by a key like this: lifting up a latch. On the west side was a high wall dividing us from the Asylum, covered with plum and cherry trees.



I remember Jonny Lind stopping (I think only one night) with us. I can give no date but think it was early in her career. We were all tuned up and came down in the evening. I recall that I was terribly disappointed. I was told a "Swedish Nightingale" was coming and I expected a bird. She went to the piano and sang. We at once danced and were reproved. She laughed and begged us to dance singing " Le Tiglicci ".- I always remember the tune - and kept singing to us laughing all the time. I believe she was going to the Isle of Wight.

We used often to go to Alverstoke to Church. Samuel Wilberforce was the Rector. He had a surpliced choir of boys, unusual at that time. I remember I wished I was one of them, and I recall the Te Deum they sang. Then Trench was Curate. Afterwards the Dalpoles came to

the Rectory. I didnt like them as I did the Wilberforces.

The first Capt. Superintendent I can recall was Capt. Carter, a disagreeable man. Then Sir Edward Parry came whom everybody liked, and very sociable times everybody had including all of us children.

Lieut. Parker was the Lieutenant in an office near the gate. He was an exceedingly clever draughtsman and was always drawing and painting one or other of us. A rather weasened old Lieut. but very fond of children. I think you have a painting of our house by him.

The Liddells lived next door to us. Johnny and Bobby being the children. Dr. Liddell was a great tuft hunter to the great amusement of our Father.

Mrs. Ball at one time lived in a room in the hospital but was moved and went to live at Forton where our Father put Archy Richardson to live. I blew Archie R's thumb nearly off near Haslar Bridge in trying an experiment with gunpowder, 1d. worth and a popgun. He didnt like to fire it so I got him to hold it while I fired. I was told I had better go into the Artillery and learn to control Gunpowder - and I did.

The Lunatics fitted me out with a snelt net and I used to catch heaps off Haslar Pear with crushed crab as bait. I first had to catch the crabs with a lump of meat.

I spent much of my time in old Mr. Barrons and subsequently Charles Barrons room close to the Museum stuffing birds and making skeletons of fish. Also watching Mitchell lithographing fish for the Fathers books. Also hunting cats, there were scores of them, down the Gaffer round the Hospital, but I think that Lieut. Parkers work and that of Mitchell made me want to draw.

Dr. Anderson lived in the house the other side of the Hospital. We all liked him. He left Willingham his gold watch. Next him lived

the Surgeon, Henderson.

I remember Huxley well as a young man Doctor but Bailey and Clarke better. The latter was generally called in by the Father when any of us were ill. Generally he clapped on a lot of leeches. I reminded him of this afterwards. He said "How our systems have changed"

The Baker Church had record dreary services. We sat in a high pew. Dr. Dunne preached for $\frac{3}{4}$ hour at a time and our Father slumbered peacefully. So did some of us, but I recall Josephine steadily listening. There was an old grinding organ that played perhaps a dozen tunes. We sang Brady and Tate, and the choir was composed of squalling washerwomen, pious on Sundays but more or less blasphemous during the week. We were always required to know what the text was. Eventually Dunne was superannuated, much to the relief of everybody.

There if you want any more reminiscences you must give me the headings. I have just run along as things cropped up in my mind. Of course I remember the charades and all that. It is getting late so I will end.

Your affectionate Brother

(Sd.) JOHN B. RICHARDSON.

Major General John Booth Richardson
(1838-1923) was the oldest
of the seven children of Sir John Richardson
and Mary (née Booth) Richardson
(1807-1845)

Wrong - eldest of
surviving children. TV