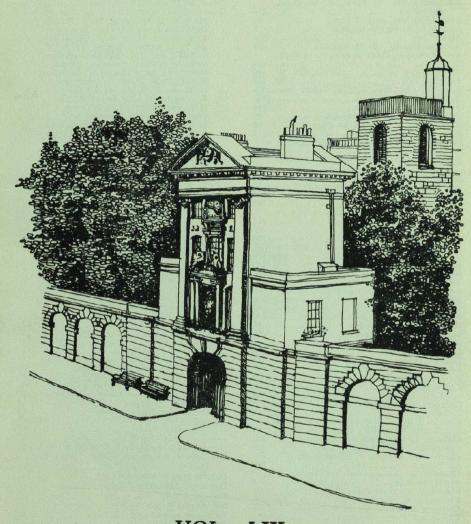


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EDITORS

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GOLDFISH

"These (the fishes) were made out of the most entirely ignorant and senseless beings, whom the transformers did not think any longer worthy of pure respiration . . . and instead of allowing them to respire the subtle and pure element of air, they . . . gave them a deep and muddy medium of breathing."

PLATO.

The fountain in the Square is justly famous. Numerous verses have been written about it, it has regularly appeared in photographs and sketches, and frequently is used as the central motif in Christmas cards, when other inspiration is lacking. However, how much thought is given to its patient inhabitants, the goldfish of St. Bartholomew's Hospital? They serve, in their way, to add as much to the character of the Hospital as does the fountain, and they have a long and honourable history.

The colony at present consists of one large and five medium-sized goldfish. They are lively, of good appearance, and seem to be of the common variety, Carassius auratus. They are accompanied in the fountain by some smaller water creatures of an indeterminate nature.

Little need be said about the five smaller goldfish-they were introduced about three years ago to restock the dwindling population of the fountain, and have flourished ever since. However, some tribute must be paid to the large goldfish, who epitomises the venerable Hospital in which he dwells. He was originally purchased, along with several others, from Selfridges some 26 years ago by a doctor in the Speech Therapy Department. These appear to be the first goldfish to have been placed in the fountain. Although the others have since fallen by the wayside, the veteran remains in the best of health. Within his lifetime he has survived many trials which might well kill a lesser animal.

Several times the fountain has been frozen solid, but it must be appreciated that gold-

fish "thrive equally well in tropical and temperate climates." After an air-raid during the last war, numerous incendiary bombs were recovered from the fountain, but they did not seem to have disturbed the goldfish. A more severe test was to come two years ago, when a blue dye was placed in the fountain on the eve of View Day. The goldfish were removed in the morning with a startling cyanosed appearance, but with no signs of discomfort. The fountain was cleaned and the fish returned, but unfortunately one succumbed to the effects of the detergent. The introduction of hordes of tadpoles in an attempt to disturb the peace of the rightful tenants of the fountain was probably the supreme indignity.

The only official duty which the Hospital performs for the goldfish is the cleaning out of the fountain. This is regularly effected by the porters. Feeding is left to the generosity of teaching staff and students. It does not appear that any keen physiologist has yet trained the fish in Pavlovian fashion to appear for food on the ringing of a bell. A member of the teaching staff regularly inspects the goldfish for fungus, and, if this appears, the fish are removed by the porters and thoroughly scrubbed. One must praise the sensible and unassuming way in which these animals are tended.

It is often said that it is the "little things" which matter, and which are most readily noticed; and one cannot help thinking that these goldfish have their own small part in the widely heterogeneous nature of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.