

June, 1941.

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# The Abinger Chronicle

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## *The Abinger Chronicle*

appears frequently, as funds allow, monthly, if possible. While many of the contributors are local to the Abinger district, or frequent visitors to it, many come from far afield.

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THE EDITOR

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# *The Abinger Chronicle*

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## THE PILOT

No more he ventures in the heavens above  
For that brief glory which was his to give;  
And giving, gave it with so great a love  
That, earth-forgotten, free, he still can live.

Now in his heart prevails a majesty  
Unchanging, ceaseless as the sun and stars.  
And mind and grace are one unknowingly  
That quietly heals and soothes those mortal scars.

When, from earth's wounds, a dazzling faith is wrought  
Some part of it is his inviolate,  
Bright-eyed desire, keen hope and youth's fine thought  
Will in that loyalty be consecrate.

AIRCRAFTMAN E. M. SKIPPER

## THE C MINOR OF THAT LIFE

Does Three Blind Mice sound different when it is played in different keys? I ask for first aid on this problem. Of course if it is played high up it will sound different from when it is played low down; the mice will squeak more shrilly. But that is not my problem. And, of course, if it is played first in one key and then in another, it will sound different the second time, owing to the relation between the keys; the mice will seem increasingly insolent, or increasingly pathetic. But that again is not my problem. What I am muddling after is this: Is there any *absolute* difference between keys—a difference that is inherent, not relative? Have they

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special qualities, and, if they have, can the qualities be named, and is there any key which is particularly suitable for Three Blind Mice?

I have battered my head against this for years—a head untrained musically, and unacquainted with any instrument beyond the piano. Perhaps, like many amateurs' problems, it is no problem, but one of those solemn mystifications which are erected by ignorance, and which would disappear under proper instruction. I continue to wonder whether keys have colours, or something analogous to colour (as the scales in Indian music have), whether they tint the tunes which are played in them, and which key would be most suitable for the Mice. C major? And D major for Pop goes the Weasel? Or is it the other way round? Or does it not matter either way?

The problem, if it is one, is connected with one's sense of pitch. If we can't tell what note is being sounded, if we don't know what key the Mice are being played in, why then it can't matter to us in which key they are played. What the ear cannot hear, the heart cannot grieve. And I generally can't tell. My sense of pitch—though it does exist—is shaky and feeble and easily foiled by a few chromatics. I think I can tell when a tune is in C major, and I do frankly consider this key the most suitable for the Mice—it is straightforward, nurserified, unassuming. Mice in A flat would greatly overstate their claims, for A flat is a delicate, suave gracious intimate refined key. And Mice in E would be presented far too brilliantly. I mention these three keys (C, A flat, and E) because I most readily detect them, and am therefore the more ready to ascribe them characteristics. Besides them, I sometimes spot F, which has the lyric quality of A flat, only less marked, and C sharp (D flat), which has the brilliancy of E, only more marked. Outside these five, it is usually guess-work for me.

The above are all major. More easily detected than any, and more interesting than any, because it moved so often through the mind and under the fingers of Beethoven, is the key of C minor. Perhaps because it evokes him, but



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perhaps because of something inherent in it, which attracted him, it appeals very readily to our sense of pitch, and if the Mice deserted their proper mode and put on its immensities, they would soon be run down. Beethoven, like myself, had feelings for certain keys, and he makes some quaint remarks about them. For instance, he calls B minor a 'black' key: rather odd—it never struck me as 'Black'; brown is the utmost I would go to. Again he calls A flat 'barbaresco, not amoroso,' and here the old boy is obviously wrong. He ought to have listened to me. I have already defined the character of A flat, and anyhow if he did think it 'barbaresco,' why did he choose it for the slow movement of the Pathetic Sonata? C sharp he calls 'maestoso.' Here he is quite right, and Wagner agrees with us, and has chosen this sparkling yet noble key for the closes both of Rheingold and of Götterdämmerung; the Gods go up to Walhalla and fall from it in C sharp. And Wagner chooses its fellow-brilliant, E, for the close of Tristan, where the lovers leave this unreality of light for the darkness, and Verdi, his inspired follower, chooses E for the end of Otello.

But of C minor, the key he has made his own, Beethoven says nothing, so far as I know. He has invested in it deeply. If we lost everything he wrote except what is in this key, we should still have the essential Beethoven, the Beethoven tragic, the Beethoven so excited at the approach of something enormous that he can only just interpret and subdue it. It would be a pity to lose a Beethoven unbuttoned, a Beethoven yodelling, but this musician excited by immensities is unique in the annals of any art. No one has ever been so thrilled by things so huge, for the vast masses of doom crush the rest of us before we can hope to measure them. Fate knocks at our door; but before the final tap can sound, the flimsy door flies into pieces, and we never learn the sublime rhythm of destruction.

The catalogue of the C minor items is a familiar one. Heading it is the Fifth Symphony. Then there is the great violin sonata—greater than the Kreutzer, many critics

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think. There is the third piano concerto. There is the Pathetic sonata, with its opening groan, and the last piano sonata (op. 111) with its opening dive into the abyss. There is the movement from the third Rassoumoffsky quartet, there are the thirty-two variations. And there is probably a good deal more, some of it hidden away in works of other key-signatures. It would be absurd to press for similarities in items so different in intention and in date, but one has in all of them the conviction that Beethoven has found himself, that he is where he most wanted to be, that he is engaged in the pursuit of something outside sound—something which has fused the sinister and the triumphant.

There is a proof of this—at least it seems to me to be a proof—‘indication’ is the wiser word, no doubt—in the earliest of all the piano sonatas (Op. 2, No. 1). The key is F minor, and we go Mozarting ahead until we reach the last movement. This is a scrattling prestissimo, spitting triplets all over the place, and banging out not very amusing chords. After twenty bars, the triplets run down into the earth and re-emerge in the C minor key. Now the excitement begins. Beethoven, for the first time in his life, opens out. He plays with the new key for twelve bars, establishing it more firmly and heating himself up more at each note—and then out of it there soars a new tune, a tune in octaves, not loud, not elaborate, but tearing down the curtains and letting in the unknown light. As it sings itself out, the triplets get something to do which is worth doing, and when it ends and the banging chords re-enter, they talk sense. This knack of turning dullish stuff into great stuff is characteristic of Beethoven, and incidentally one of the reasons why one ought never to skip the repeats when playing him—for only at the repeat does one hear what the dullish stuff means. But it thrills me that he should have exercised the knack first in the key of C minor, and that from that attitude he should have prospected the wildest and most wonderful land of his empire.

Thus far have our Mice led us. Holding up their tails, let us count them. Firstly, there may be nothing in key.



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Secondly, there can be nothing in key unless we have the sense of pitch. Thirdly, Beethoven thought, rightly or wrongly, that there was something in a key, and either chose C minor when he was in a particular mood, or was put into a particular mood after choosing it. Mozart's fondness for D major may also be noted, but in this respect, and indeed in others, Mozart did not go so far.

E. M. FORSTER

Note.

*Woodhouse Hill is near the village of Abinger, a village set in the heart of some 4000 acres of land now preserved for all time against building development. To save this land there have been many struggles: the story of one of the earliest of these is told below.*

## THE FIGHT FOR WOODHOUSE HILL

Many years ago I was turning over old estate documents relating to manors and common rights. They had value historically for the light shed on days when a common played an eager and active part in the working life of the villager, but the events recorded had, apart from this, only an ephemeral interest. Among them, however, I came on papers which, when collected, made it possible to piece together the story of a fight which had consequences reaching down to the present time. Had the fight ended differently, Woodhouse Hill and wide stretches of land adjoining would no longer have been a part of the Hurtwood Common.

Woodhouse Hill rises from the Abinger Hammer-Holmbury road at the North-east corner of the Hurtwood. It is in the Manor of Gumshall Towerhill, itself part of the ancient royal Manor of Gumsele, which dates back to Saxon times, and included the parishes of Shere, Ewhurst, Cranley, and Albury. In the year 1784, the date of the fight, the common was open heather land with large tracts of grass, and there were few trees. It is interesting to note that about the same time small plantations of Scotch fir—known as Fir Pounds—were made in different parts of the Common. The Scotch firs seeded themselves and spread rapidly till the Common, up to the days when fellings for war needs began, became almost continuous high

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forest. Somewhere in his writings Charles Darwin mentions this change as an example of how the character of a whole district may be transformed by the introduction of a few plants suited to the environment.

The fight opened in the year 1784 with a claim made by Edmond Shallett Lomax, the then owner of the Netley Estates, which included Sutton Place Farm and other lands adjoining the North side of the Hurtwood. From the papers I possess he would seem to have claimed that (1) there was a Manor of Sutton of which he was the Lord; (2) attached to the Manor was a portion of the Hurtwood Common; (3) he owned all the land in the manor; and in consequence the common concerned had ceased to be common and became part of his private estate.\*

The claim appears to have startled the district. It was at once resisted by George Bray (the Lord of the Manor of Gumshall Towerhill), actively supported by the commoners of Felday and Pitland Street, most of whose lands were held of the Manor. The case against the claim was prepared by William Bray, one of the joint authors of the well-known "History of Surrey." There was a general gathering of the clans and the searching of the dim memories of ancient people. It was necessary to show that the commoners had in fact been in the habit of exercising their rights of common on Woodhouse Hill and the Warren Lands. It was also necessary to show that no rights of common had been exercised by the owners of Sutton Place Farm as, admittedly, there were no rights of common in the Manor of Gumshall Towerhill attached to that farm. It would be tedious to quote from the many witnesses; one example must suffice:

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\* The "law" included in (3) is correct. A Lord of the Manor is the owner of the common subject to the rights of the commoners. These rights prevent enclosure. If, however, the Lord acquires all property to which rights of common are attached, there are no longer any rights of common which the Lord does not possess. The common, therefore, ceases to be common. The "law" remained unchanged until a few years ago. Even now a claim has been made that under the old law Effingham Common has ceased to be a common. The claim is being resisted by the Guildford R.D.C., who is being advised by the Commons Preservation Society.



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“ Thomas Chapman, aged 71, said that when about  
 “ 20 years old he came to live with Joseph Green, who  
 “ rented Sutton Place Farm and the farm that John Turner  
 “ now uses, staid there a year, then married and worked  
 “ as a servant with him 6 or 7 years, with Green 6 or 7  
 “ years when Green broke, and Capt. Heath\* had both  
 “ farms on his hands for some time, during which he was  
 “ employed by Capt. Heath as a bailiff, says that Capt.  
 “ Heath bought some little black Welch beasts and turned  
 “ them out in the Common; they were turned out in the  
 “ morning by Mansfield and fetched in at night, but says  
 “ he is sure Mansfield did not tend them on the Common  
 “ but came back and did other business. Says that he  
 “ never knew any other cattle turned on the Common either  
 “ by Green or Capt. Heath. Never heard Capt. Heath  
 “ speak of any liberty or manor he had on the Common.  
 “ Whilst he was bailiff there a little bay horse was about  
 “ the common as a stray, and one day he found him at  
 “ Woodhatch Gate, and opening the gate he came in at  
 “ the gate; he told this to Capt. Heath, who said, the horse  
 “ don't belong to me, have him down to Mr. Bray's pound.  
 “ Says the horse was taken down to Mr. Bray's accord-  
 “ ingly.”

So the fight continued. Finally a procedure, not un-  
 common at that time, for settling inexpensively disputes  
 of this kind, was approved. The evidence of the witnesses  
 was taken down in writing in the presence of both parties,  
 and each party added such documentary evidence as they  
 possessed. These were all submitted to an arbitrator, who  
 was asked to decide the question at issue merely on the  
 written evidence, each side agreeing to accept the decision.  
 The conclusion of the award of the arbitrator, as a sort of  
 charter of the common of Woodhouse Hill, merits quota-  
 tion :

“ I am of opinion and do determine that the evidence  
 “ produced to me for and on behalf of the said Edmond  
 “ Shallett Lomax of Sutton's being at present a manor is too  
 “ slight to warrant any declaration of its being such or

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\* The then owner of Sutton Place Farm.

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“ to support a claim to any manorial rights. From the  
 “ deeds produced to me it seems to have been a manor in  
 “ ancient times, but it cannot be deemed to be a manor  
 “ at present. Also I am of opinion and do determine that  
 “ the part of the common in dispute is within the Manor  
 “ of Gumshall Towerhill.”

So the fight came to an end. As to the present fruits of the struggle, the common rights remain intact, but year by year their exercise is decreasing. A few children are sent to cut firing, and cut it in a way that might well cause the old commoners to turn in their graves. An occasional goat is tethered on the grass, a practice which in the 18th century would have excited immediate opposition, seeing that a goat is not a commonable beast; and that is all. But fights usually have consequences other than those anticipated; and so it is here. As fruits of this ancient struggle Woodhouse Hill and the Warren Lands remain common land for the free enjoyment of the general public.

I have never been able to find among the living any records of the fight such as are often in similar cases passed on from father to son. But I sometimes wonder whether the deep love of the common, cherished by many of the older inhabitants, may not owe its strength to some subconscious memory that, in days gone by, the efforts of their ancestors saved large stretches from enclosure.

REGINALD A. BRAY

## WHERE I WANDER

Where I wander  
 By the sea--  
 Where birds float--  
 And where pools  
 Are black and sleek,  
 Where, in the upturned sand  
 So many feet have been;  
 Amongst those brittle rocks and slime,  
 I feel the passing of all time.

DENTON WELCH



## WHEN IT WILTS

Edward Thompson, tells of a custom by which, somewhere in India, distances are measured. A branch is broken from a wayside bush; when it wilts, it is reckoned that a *krosh* (about two miles) has been covered.

I could cap this with a nice habit I found in Turkestan where the time it takes to drink a pot of green tea (with a fair accompaniment of merchants' gossip) is used to measure a certain number of miles.

The milestone is a very Roman and modern invention, by comparison with the Indian twig and the tea in Samarkand, but measure we will, every now and then, until the journey's done.

If one writes at all, in these days, one sees that the twig has wilted and another will have to be plucked, and somehow it has become a very risky business, this stopping for a moment by the wayside, risky because the war seems to wilt the twigs at a shockingly fast pace, so that it would often be wiser to sit under the old familiar great trees and stop plucking at the bushes altogether.

However, at the awful risk of running into a very maze of trees, bushes, twigs and green tea and silence, I venture on.

There are, at the least, two moods after the bombs have fallen, and many more just before they have fallen and while they fall. Before and While is mainly a question of courage, of which one prays for more, mostly in vain, being by nature not armoured for this kind of thing.

Immediately after the bombs have fallen we must all sleep and recover as swiftly as may be. Sometimes four hours will restore some strength, sometimes the Shelter Habit gains a hold on the rather badly shaken, driving them underground for a whole unnecessary week to talk there till midnight and sleep unhealthily till five, then to walk wearily home unheeding of the London dawn. This habit only leaves them two nights at home in which to regain strength for the next night of horror.

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Either way it is still the mood of recovery—a truly civilian affair with no discipline about it as yet, no field hygiene as the sergeant would say; full of questioning as to the reason why, brimful of the little and big personal losses, cleaners' bills, broken window boards, small or great bodily injuries, and then the welcome and rather rare wit, maybe the dairyman or the policeman who caps the never-ending details with some quite preposterous bomb-story. a leg-pull of the first magnitude, bless him.

The really hurt do not talk at all.

I met a man in Kingsway yesterday,  
a bricklayer maybe, young, dusty, fair,  
and he was weeping as he walked.

Step followed step reluctantly and slow  
as though the man were tired out and spent  
with all-night London wandering.

I think this man had lost his home last night  
and lost the very word from out his mind  
when the bomb had blasted it away.

I wanted to take him somewhere, some place  
where warmth and kindness might stem all those tears;  
but I myself was still too weary.

Then a week later there was a thunderstorm in London, a fierce little thunderstorm on the Sunday morning. Every time it thundered people smiled in the street. Complete strangers almost winked at each other. Very odd, but I believe you would have winked too.

That evening I found myself in a nearby Catholic Church at the end of Benediction. By design? Well, yes. One must pray sometimes and in a church. A little rabble of our Gibraltar children with their teacher were lighting candles to some Saint over in the north transept (Churches are good compasses in a city), and as the small flames increased and flickered I thought of Italy, where the churches are full of hundreds of tokens of grateful affection, even to absurd little wax arms and legs, thankofferings for



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some healed limb. As a confirmed Anglican and (severer still) a baptized Presbyterian I used to have my puritan prejudice about this sort of thing, but now, well, one isn't spoilt. Any token of love and respect becomes precious.

Then the children filed out past the Altar, and there the teacher waited to put them through their paces, seeing that each child curtsied as it passed.

I was watching this process of early training, impressed by the rather fierce tap of the teacher on the shoulder of two moorish-looking little boys who would have skimmed the ceremony, when a priest in a cassock came up to me and suggested that I looked sad, was there anything wrong? I was so taken aback as to be unable to answer except with a commonplace, so that he went away. Of course, he meant kindly, but there it is, we are not conversational by race.

Well, I left him four lines on a slip of paper in the church porch,

Look you, there's so much hate in all these ruins  
and so much love within the house of God,  
so hearts will come to grieve away their grief  
just here, kind stranger, where there's peace of God.

All this too is the mood of recovery. The other mood is the memory, strange, unforgettable, over-tempting to the quick imagination and oddly, persistently, offering a hope, if ruins can do such a thing.

Within this memory, the mind, the eye, the heart, have looked their fill of what were once great busy crowded thoroughfares in the City of London. Fire, not once, but many times, has burnt away every vulgar advertisement, every name, every trapping and decoration, leaving street upon street of clean pink and black masonry, giant shells, deserted, silent, long since bereft of all the more heart-breaking signs of recent human habitation. Did human beings ever live in the City? Only caretakers and cats slept there at night. By day, curious able quick minds decided curious things at lightning speed. Enough, the ruins are too silent to admit of comment. There is nothing

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romantic about them. God forbid that ivy and Piranesi should ever come their way. But they are clean, the way fire cleans.

I went back to my own small dwelling, near two immense craters that have swallowed a dozen great houses each, and the memory of the City faded into sorrows nearer home.

O heart of England torn and wounded now  
to live here is to live among the crags,  
among the charred great fingers, stone and brick,  
that point the sky from whence destruction fell.  
This was our street, our dairy once stood there.  
This corner burned most fiercely of them all,  
for here were spirits stored in cellars deep,  
and this poor page of music speaks of days  
when this charred instrument made melody.

For three days now the men have delved down deep  
among colossal mounds of brick and dust,  
slowly to rescue the beloved dead.

Can any say he knew this was the price  
of Liberty, of passion to be free?

It is so high that Love must hide her face  
leaving my street to sheer courageous life  
that stays and stakes its faith upon this fight;  
but O the heart of me asks for the grace  
not to forget, not to forget Love's face.

The twig is wilting and a new one must be plucked  
to light the next mile.

S.S.





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