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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.

MSS. (which are voluntary) are welcomed by

THE EDITOR

CHERRY COTTAGE

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July, 1941

OUT WITH THE FIELD CLUB

Born in eighteen sixty-seven
in a country rectory
hidden in the hills of Devon—
clear my childhood's memory!

Still I see it, brick and freestone
in the Early English styles,
ball-flower on the front-door keystone,
roof of variegated tiles.

In his belted Norfolk jacket
of ecclesiastic grey,
luncheon in its neat-tied packet,
Dad would set off for the day.

Touring round the ancient churches,
gaunt and upright on his bike;
fiercely Gothic his researches,
all else viewed with stern dislike.

Then, at tea, what tales of crocket,
cusp and spandril heard we then!
Note-book whipped from inner pocket,
mouldings sketched with rapid pen.

Sometimes on our bikes together,
eager schoolgirl, parish priest,
confident, nor doubting whether
we'd enjoy our Gothic feast;

hunting out the Perp.piscinas,
low-side windows, stained glass (Dutch),
vowing that we'd never seen as
fine a font as such-and-such.

Out with the Field Club

Now I live like some poor spectre,
 relic of a far-gone day—
 still the Rectory stands, the Rector
 long has lain beneath the clay.

But the're days, when, past all doubting,
 I relive those lost so long—
 at the annual summer outing
 of the Field Club, sixty strong!

There, among the fonts and brasses,
 easter sepulchres and screens,
 nice folk of the leisured classes
 dream once more of childhood scenes.

STUART PIGGOTT

OUR MAID . . .

Our maid, Jane Allen,
 Fly-by-night,
 Left the dishes
 Shining white,
 Took her stockings
 From the horse,
 Darned the heels
 With stitches coarse;
 Drank a cup
 Of Indian tea,
 Then dropped a letter
 In a tree;
 And this is what
 The letter said:
 "When you get this,
 I'll be dead."

DENTON WELCH

PEACE OF HEART

Here in the quiet heart it lies
 A gentle drop
 Oozing its honeyed oil
 Into the springs and coils of being.
 In brute thunder
 In chaos
 In raucous panic
 It is a still silence
 A hushed joy
 Wooed by the desiring heart.
 To the refugee
 To the exile
 To the evacuee
 It is a dwelling-place
 Of warmth out of the snow
 A hedge from the blizzard.
 For the unloved
 For the broken-hearted
 For the failing nerve
 It is a winter flower
 Stronger than hatred
 Blossoming in dire winds.

IDA PROCTER

WRITTEN IN A HITLER PRISON IN VIENNA, 1938

Und wenn Du nachts dem Rauschen Deines Blutes
 Nachlauschest in die grosse Dunkelheit
 Und wachliegst im Verfluten ohne Schwere,
 Dann bist Du Anbeginn und Ewigkeit,
 Bist leidbereit und neuen Wege mutes
 Und nur noch Fracht auf Gottes Zukunftsfähre.

PAUL NEUMANN

SIMPLE PLEASURES

By Simple Pleasures I mean those for whose enjoyment the exercise of the intellect or the imagination is not necessary. Thus I would not include among them pleasures that are mainly artistic and contemplative, such as watching a ballet or a sunset, or listening to music. Also, in order to limit my list, which must be arbitrary and cover but a small part even of my own experience, I shall exclude the more complex social and erotic pleasures, those also of games, of sport, and of the palate. Many that might seem to be childish are really not so, and are enjoyable at any time of life. But purely childish pleasures, such as taking rides on a long stick, or pretending to be a railway train, generally require a more imaginative make-believe than an adult is capable of: so these I have excluded.

Most of our simple pleasures consist of immediate and unsophisticated sensuous reactions to common daily objects and processes that make up the world as we know it. They are congenital and sometimes unconscious parts of our mental and emotional life, governing our tastes and desires, and colouring our more conscious and elaborate states of mind. They are the raw material out of which happiness is composed, and the soil into which poetry strikes its roots.

Some classification will be necessary, that my list may not degenerate into a random catalogue. But many pleasures would seem to belong to more than one class, either because they come to us through more than one of our senses at the same time, or else because the emotions they arouse may vary on different occasions.

1. PLEASURES OF SIGHT.

To watch drops coursing down the window-panes of railway carriages or down the sides of a bath, making a favourite in the race now of one drop, now of another.

To see the wind racing in waves of light and shadow across the tall grasses of a hayfield, or through a silver-green field of oats,

Simple Pleasures

An elephant walking.

To watch young rabbits at the edge of a cover, chasing and jumping over one another. To hear the doe, when she is aware of you, thump on the ground a warning to her young with lifted hind-legs.

Walking through a wood in May to come upon a brood of fox-cubs sauntering among the bluebells and campions near their earth. If you are on their lee side and move stealthily, you may sometimes come within a few yards of them and watch them unperceived for quite a long time.

To see a fox anywhere and anywhen.

On a station platform or at a level-crossing to stand within a couple of yards of a train passing at full speed.

To watch from a carriage window the engine smoke drifting, eddying, vanishing over the fields.

To see the waves breaking on a sandy or a shingly shore—the green luminous transparent crystal of its arching back, as each new wave curls over and falls—the difference between the strength and the reach of the successive waves—where the sand is level, the smooth shallow wash, embossed with foam, running in with a hiss, but soon slowing, pausing, turning, then flooding back to meet the oncoming wave. If the beach be shingly, the grand multitudinous noise, like a vast sigh, as the spent wave drags a myriad pebbles back with it a few inches.

As when heav'd anew

*Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hear,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.*

KEATS, *Endymion*, II, 347.

Drifting thistle-down or silvery willow-herb seeds.

To watch the flight of pigeons, rooks, sea-gulls, or dragonflies.

A gull dropping down on to the water with upright wings, then folding them on its back as it settles.

To watch groups and lines of sparks running this way and that in the soot covering the back of a fire-place.

Simple Pleasures

To look down over the bows of a ship in calm weather,
and see the prow cutting and cleaving the water.

*The marvellous behaviour of her hair,
Bending with finer swerve from off her brow
Than water which relents before a prow.*

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE, *Mary and the Bramble.*

To walk early in May through an oak-wood, where
the birch and hazel undergrowth is sparse enough to allow
vast carpets of bluebells to stretch away continuously in
all directions.

A star gliding down the sky; a single, double, or triple
rainbow; the moon rising or setting beyond a high rocky
mountain-ridge.

To stand watching the woodmen sawing through the
heart of a tall oak tree. They pause to knock their wedges
deeper into the widening cleft; then saw a little, but soon
pause again, and stand peering up and consulting. They
slip the saw out of the crack, and hammer in a new wedge.
At each stroke the whole tree shudders through all its
branches and twigs. Now it is moving. Gently at first it
falls, slowly and silently; then with a loud crackling roar
smites the earth and lies still.

To watch snow falling; and next day, after a frost,
to see the wind send the loose snow scudding over the
hard crusted surface of the field, or lift and whirl it away
in clouds and eddies.

2. PLEASURES OF SOUND.

The hoot of an owl; the cry of a curlew, a golden
plover, or a peewit; the cawing of rooks and jackdaws;
the distant croak of a lonely raven; the cooing of doves;
the shout of a cuckoo.

When listening to a nightjar churring, as he squats
along the dead branch of a pine-tree, to hear him slightly
alter the pitch of his churr without bringing it to an end.
Then to see him wing silently away into the dusk, yet
now and then uttering a strange high-pitched cry, or
clapping his wings together loudly above his back.

A donkey's bray from a distance.

Simple Pleasures

Listening to the sound of a hay-cutter, or of a scythe, or to the hum of a threshing-machine.

The sound of unseen horses' hooves; the tap of cricket bat and ball on a summer's day; the rhythmical purring sound of milk spurting down into a pail.

The sound of skates, and the noise of a stone thrown along ice.

To go through a house tapping various hard substances with one's knuckles or finger-tips, and distinguishing the subtler differences of resonance given out by solid or hollow wood in furniture, panels and doors, by stone or plaster walls, by bronzes and boxes and water-pipes, etcetera.

The confused bleating, and the smell, of a large flock of sheep on the move.

To hear from inside a house the faint sound of rain beginning to fall outside.

When in a wood the summer sun comes out again after having been hidden for a time, to hear a myriad flies suddenly begin buzzing and humming again in the tree-tops.

When lying awake at night to hear the faint sound of trucks being shunted a long way off.

To lie on the beach listening to the indolent waves breaking slowly—"Each ere it breaketh pausing long as it can."

To sit beside a small brook and listen to the varied sound that comes from its tiny cascades, near and far, as it falls from pool to pool. One may often distinguish a number of quite different sounds, each with its own monotonous pitch and quality, loudness and softness, yet all delicately orchestrated together into one many-toned harmony.

Walking along a country lane, when the wind is too weak to stir the foliage of the trees, to be surprised by a steady murmuring sound overhead, and, looking up, to see that it comes from a great aspen poplar, whose myriads of light-hung leaves are fluttering and rustling against each other incessantly, be the breeze never so light.

On a summer's day to become suddenly aware of the fierce hum of a swarm of bees.

3. *PLEASURES OF TOUCH.*

The feel, to the touch of one's fingers, of leaves, grasses, cloth, paper, metals, jade, china, wood, etcetera.

The feel of the first drops of rain on one's bare head, face and hands.

Cutting the pages of a book with a long ivory paper-knife. This is a pleasure even though we know the book to be unreadable. A wooden or metal knife is a poor substitute. Postcards, envelopes or hairpins are ignoble and treacherous tools.

To feel and hear acorns or husks of beech-nuts crunched beneath one's foot, or the crackle of thin white ice covering a puddle.

To walk with one's feet brushing through dry chestnut or beech leaves.

To pick up a mole that has come to the surface, and feel it struggling in one's hands for a short time.

Stroking the soft nostrils of a horse.

Playing with the wax of a lighted candle; breaking off a stick of wax that has run down the side of the candle, and melting it drop by drop in the flame.

4. *PLEASURES OF SMELL.*

The scent of new-mown hay.

In the streets of a town to come suddenly upon the smell of an unseen brewery, or of coffee-beans roasting.

The smell of wood-smoke, or of a peat fire.

The odour of a new sponge, of resin, of gummy poplar leaves, of the rain-soaked earth after a drought.

The smell of a railway or traction engine, when one is a boy.

The smell of horses and stables, of cow-sheds, farm-yards, and manure heaps.

The scent of unsmoked tobacco, of cedar-wood cigar-boxes and spills, of boots and shoes, and of Harris tweed.

(To be concluded)

R. C. TREVELYAN

SUMMER

How soothing is the ringdoves coo;
 The finches chatter in the boughs
 Of this old elm that creaks with age,
 Whilst spots of sunlight fleck the cows.

Sweet benison of sun oh ! stay,
 Shine on these roses, do not pass,
 Join with the summer wind that bears
 Scent from the bean fields and the grass.

THEODORA ROSCOE

POEM

" Whence comes that loveliness which slips
 Down from yon starry sky ? "

" It is the mirror of ten thousand lips
 Which loved in years gone by . "

" And whence that outstretched tenderness
 Of mingled tears and laughter ? "

" That is a vision of our power to bless
 Those that shall come hereafter .

Yet all men's loves are hushed and dumb,
 The Gods with reverence bow;
 For all before and all to come
 Love not as we love now . "

R. G. BOSANQUET

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

We? We have failed; and yet so be the sense
 Of undiscovered spoils, of wealth unmined,
 Of hidden treasure that were yet to find.
 Lodge with us still, if still with reverence
 We stand at wonder's threshold ere that hence
 We pass to the unknown, let no unkind,
 No thought of bitterness becloud the mind
 To shroud the sweep of life's magnificence.

Rather bid speed to those in whose young eyes
 Is light of pent expectancy, and breathe
 A blessing on their course, that they in scorn
 Of safety's sheltered shifts, unfaltering rise
 To heights we dreamed of and in turn bequeath
 The undying quest to seekers yet unborn.

GEOFFREY BOSANQUET

RE-DEDICATION

Blindly we grope the warring path
 That leads to roads we all must take again,
 When blood-red harvest is the aftermath
 And peace itself is writhed in pain.

Is it enough to plan anew
 A far-off world where reason will prevail,
 And wisdom is, as fresh as morning dew,
 To liberate the heart that will not fail?

Ere dimmer burns the dying light
 Or feebler grows the erstwhile frenzied zeal
 Man turns to soul, bewildered by his plight,
 And there some starry gleam his faith will heal.

AIRCRAFTMAN E. M. SKIPPER

GOD THE MATHEMATICIAN

In the quiet evening
 By the still fire,
 The clock strikes eleven,
 And the sounds retire
 From the kind circle
 Of our known room,
 Through house and garden
 And the night-gloom;
 Waves electric
 Perceived but unknown,
 Like ripples of water
 Disturbed by a stone,
 The sounds in circles
 Pervade the air,
 Eleven eternally
 Chiming there.

O'er lake and leisure
 Through mountain and pain,
 The waves flow outwards
 And onwards again;
 Regardless of battle
 Or joy or birth,
 Heedless of laughter
 Or sorrow on earth;
 Till spreading at last
 Through planet and star
 Man's reason no longer
 Can name what they are;
 As river and water
 Flow down to the sea,
 Dissolved in essence
 And changed in degree,
 The chimes of eleven
 Melt into some form
 And with light, shape and colour
 Return to their norm.

God the Mathematician

But out of this ocean
 Of oneness, this lake,
 What caused the Spirit
 Of Living to take
 The number, the measure,
 The finite degree
 Of this sound undulation
 Unique, whole and free,
 So that down through abysses
 Of spacial-time,
 Poised and significant
 Fell this chime,
 In the kind circle
 By the still fire,
 Perfecting a moment
 Of finite desire?

ALAN DANE

EXILE

World whose well-being always I desire,
 Where do you stand when England fills my eyes?
 Barrenness, exile, iron waste of skies,
 Grey arctic loneliness, where all hopes tire.

And England, lovely, leafy every shire,
 Deep to the heart her cloud-crossed acre cries,
 Her poetry and music—with what ties
 She binds the flames that leap from her own fire!

Some left their homes when war laid waste their plot,
 And dwelt far off, but all their soul was tossed
 Upon the tree that bore it, left to rot
 In its own ancient beauty, while the ghost,
 The only fragment wholly self, begot
 Enormous sorrow in a strange land lost.

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