

*August-September,
1941.*

Vol. 2. No. 6.

The Abinger Chronicle

Contents:

<i>Autumn, 1941</i>	- - - - -	<i>S.S.</i>
<i>Simple Pleasures (continued)</i>		<i>R. C. Trevelyan</i>
<i>Gossamer</i>	- - - - -	<i>S.S.</i>
<i>Children of The House</i>	- -	<i>Olive Heseltine</i>
<i>Poem</i>	- - - - -	<i>Nicholas Moore</i>
<i>Milton</i>	- - - - -	<i>Ludwig Marx</i>
<i>The Prophet Answered</i>		<i>Marjorie Scott-Johnston</i>
<i>Home-coming</i>	- -	<i>Carla Lanyon Lanyon</i>

Price Sixpence.

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

ABINGER COMMON

DORKING, SURREY

The annual subscription is 6/- post free. 3/- for six months, post free. These should be sent to the Editor.

(Cheques, if used, should be made out to Sylvia Sprigge. No stamps, please).

NOTE—Vol. I., Nos. 1—12, and Vol. II., No. 1, are now out of print.

The Abinger Chronicle

Vol. 2. No. 6.

August-September, 1941

AUTUMN, 1941

I have just watched a full and golden moon
come out into a cloudless piece of night,
and like all men who watch a moon, I dreamt
of other places, known and yet to know
whereon, this night, my autumn moon could shine.

Just now it will illumine battlefields
Where men tonight, and every night and day
fight, fall and fight again and fall
to stem a nightmare onslaught on their homes,
to face a dawn with yet another stand.

There's glory there, and men who fight with faith
destroying everything before the foe's advance.
But O with Moon and Dawn so red with war,
a lyre's very strings with grief are torn,
and plucking them, how can a song be born?

S.S.

Simple Pleasures (continued)

PHYSICAL PLEASURES

Stretching, taking deep breaths, yawning, sneezing,
scratching.

Running barefoot on smooth grass or sand, or walking
barefoot on high fells after rain, through plashy grass and
mossy bog.

Rolling naked on the snow before plunging into the
sea. The delicious warmth, so it then seems, of the sea-
waves.

Simple Pleasures

To bathe in the sea by moonlight, especially when a fresh wind is blowing inshore, driving the waves rapidly before it, while a late-risen, low-hanging moon is lighting up their long round backs, leaving the troughs in shadow, so that nothing of the water is visible except its impetuous silent swiftness, long lines of brightness and darkness sweeping noiselessly past one.

Chewing grasses; unsheathing and eating grains of wheat or oats; sucking honey from clover flowers.

Running down the steep rough side of a hill. One must look, not at one's feet, but a yard or so in front of them, and must know with instinctive certainty where to place one's feet. Also descending a steep gravel slope, or a scree of small stones, at full speed with long strides, throwing one's weight on the heels.

Walking as far as one can without losing one's balance along one of the rails of a railway line.

All the operations of shaving with an old-fashioned Tubalcain* razor are pleasurable: first stropping (preferably with a wooden strop); then lathering with a fragrant soap; last shaving with a blade warmed by dipping it in hot water; the firm rhythmical sweep of the razor, the methodical disappearance of the soap, and the final washing of the face with cold water. I do not know whether shaving with a safety razor be a pleasure or a martyrdom, as I have never tried it.

After a hot bath, to let the water run out, and then turn on the cold tap and sponge oneself all over with cold water.

To sit in a small rowing or sailing boat, and hold one's hand over the side in the cool water.

PLEASURES OF INDOLENCE

To lie on one's back in grass or heather looking up into the blue sky.

* Tubalcain, the son of Lamech and Zillah, was "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Genesis, v. 20.

Simple Pleasures

*Those who at the height of noon
Loll back on scented heather late in June
And sound beyond blue, blue and blue beyond.*

T. STURGE MOORE, *Danae*.

To lie on a sofa looking at the varied decorations of one's bookshelves. But this may easily become a complex emotion of pleasure or regret; the pleasure and pride of a collector and possessor, or regret at having read so few of the books, or the thought that so many are not worth the trouble of reading.

To sink down, tired, into an armchair, or into one's bed.

Desideratoque acquiescimus lecto. CATULLUS.

To lie back, looking up into the branches of a huge beech-tree, or of a dark yew, studded with scarlet berries.

Lying in bed on a summer morning, to hear big flies or bumble-bees bump from outside against the window-panes from time to time.

FEARFUL PLEASURES

Seeing a snake. Even to come upon a harmless grass-snake sleeping in the sun, to touch its tail with one's finger, and watch it start moving, at first sluggishly, then swifter and swifter, till "with indented glides" it disappears in the grass—even this is to me a somewhat fearful pleasure; though less fearful than nearly treading on a long black snake in the grass of a Ceylon garden. I seem to remember every place where I have ever seen a snake, which is evidence, if not of the pleasure, at least of its fearfulness.

After swimming too far out from the shore, and turning to swim back in fear of currents, to seem at first to be making no progress, but at last to perceive from the position of the rocks that one is a little nearer to the land, and will reach it safely in time.

To stand close up to a cage in a Zoo, in which a lion is roaring his loudest and fiercest. Donald Tovey once told me how his five-year-old brother was seen standing stock-still facing a roaring lion, and was heard muttering to himself: "Lions are very kind to little boys."

Simple Pleasures

In the old days of horse-vehicles, to cross a crowded street without waiting for the policeman to hold up the traffic. One should always walk, and only take to running when imminent danger threatens. If two try to cross together, the risk is more than doubled.

Solitary rock-climbing, where I have sometimes found myself in positions in which there seemed to be no way of going up or down without great risk of falling. While the danger lasted, the fear was stronger than the pleasure; but when it was over, the pleasure was intense.

A thunderstorm is a very wonderful pleasure. When I was young I was afraid of the lightning, but not so much as to spoil my delight in the thunder. I have now for many years delighted in the lightning too. No sound moves me so much as thunder, whether crashing overhead or muttering convulsively from afar. No sight is grander than an approaching storm—the lurid light—the torn cloud-masses, rapidly mixing and severing—the veil of rain sweeping nearer, streaked with lightning flashes. I have heard that Beethoven was once discovered on a hill-top conducting a real thunderstorm. Lucretius however writes :

*Whose limbs cower not in terror, when beneath
The appalling stroke of thunder the parched earth
Shudders, and mutterings run through the vast sky?*

Such terror seems to have been common even among Roman matrons, for Cato, the rigid old Censor, let it be known that he never embraced his wife except during a big thunderstorm; so that, as he said, he was a happy man whenever Zeus was thundering. One would like to know whether he observed a similar rule with regard to the slave-girl with whom at one time he cohabited.

TOWN PLEASURES

Some of these town pleasures are now obsolete, for London at least has changed much since I was a young man, and is still changing rapidly. Hansoms, horse-buses, crossing-sweepers and Italian organ-grinders are extinct, and yellow fogs are not what they were.

Simple Pleasures

When crossing the Charing Cross foot-bridge, to look down on the flow of the river and on the Thames barges, and, if it is low tide, on the lovely smooth shining surface of the mud. Then to look up across the old Waterloo Bridge at St. Paul's and the City churches.

A ride in a hansom cab. This was a fearful pleasure, because, if the horse should fall, one would be thrown forward on to the apron of the cab, and might be seriously hurt.

To sit on the top of a horse-bus, just behind the driver, and watch his skilful driving, and the broad bare backs of his horses.

To give a penny to an old crossing-sweeper, or throw a sixpence out of the window to an Italian organ-grinder, who sings as he grinds, with a monkey on his barrel-organ.

It used to be a great delight to me as a boy to press hard with the end of my stick against a row of iron railings as one walked, and so produce a marvellous *glissando* on a single note.

To stop and watch a Punch and Judy show in a bye-street.

To hear the bell and the street-cry of the muffin and crumpet man approaching and receding.

To grope through a good thick yellow fog listening to the weird sound of unseen feet and horses' hooves.

To get up at dawn and walk across London to Covent Garden, when the streets are empty save for an occasional policeman or coster's donkey-cart. At Covent Garden to watch the old women shelling peas, and expert market-men carrying a tower of a dozen or more round baskets balanced on their heads.

To pick up and pocket a sixpence or shilling from the pavement of a street.

When walking through the crowded streets, to look for a second or so straight into the eyes of someone as he approaches and passes by us. We then have the illusion that by the expression of the eyes—the eyes alone, without the help of the other features—the whole character and temperament of the passer-by is revealed to us—happiness

Simple Pleasures

or misery, kindliness or moroseness, humour and intelligence or stupidity.

*The magic streets allure me, faces strange
Who pass and pass, and haunting human eyes,
Eyes that I love, and never see again.*

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH, *Sonnets*.

PLEASURES OF DESTRUCTION, OF FIRE,
AND OF WATER

Lighting a fire, and watching the flames spread from match to paper, from paper to wood, from wood to coal; feeding the fire with coal or wood, and reviving it when nearly dead, with or without bellows.

Tearing up and burning superannuated letters and papers.

It is to me a great pleasure (though perhaps at the same time a great grief) to watch anything, from a forest or a house or a haystack, to a small cardboard box, consumed by flames: and the flames themselves are infinitely various in beauty.

Slashing down nettles or thistles with a walking-stick; cutting out with a knife dandelions and plantains with as much of their roots as possible.

Killing clothes-moths and mosquitoes.

To watch the incoming tide creep up, surround, and undermine a child's sand-castle, until gradually it has all slidden down into the wash.

My father used to teach us, when we were children, how to dam up a small stream, till we had formed quite a big pool for paddling in. At last we broke the dam and watched with delight the water sweep down in a magnificent rushing flood. This, though a childish pleasure, my father seemed to enjoy as much as we did.

Where there are pools of standing rain-water in muddy lanes and cart-tracks, it is a great pleasure to open channels through the mud with stick, hands, or boots, so as to invite the water to flow away to some pool or stream on a lower level. Homer shows by one of his similes in the *Iliad* that he too, before he grew blind, must have loved the pleasures of playing with water.

Simple Pleasures

"And just as when a man, who guides a rill, leads its stream from a dark spring among his plants and garden plots, a mattock in his hands, and flings away obstructions from the channel; and as it flows onward, all the pebbles are swept along, and swiftly it glides murmuring down the steep slope, and outstrips him who is guiding it; even so" etc.

PLEASURES OF WATCHING INSECTS

To come upon a huge ant-hill in a pine-wood. To watch the activities of ants, large or small.

To see a spider weaving her web.

*A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.*

WALT WHITMAN

The sight of hundreds of spiders-webs, all their threads sagging with the weight of the morning dew, each web a marvel of bright silver, gleaming against the dark bushes.

To watch closely how a centipede walks.

Teasing a wood-louse till it curls itself into a ball, then watching how within less than a minute it warily unrolls itself and scurries away.

To watch a hover-fly poising motionless, then darting to another spot to poise again, then alighting with outstretched feet on some object. To listen to its two faint notes, when poised in the air, and when resting—so different, yet both such beautiful "gossamers of sound."

To watch a humming-bird hawk-moth drinking honey from a flower on hovering wing, with long tongue uncurled and outstretched.

R. C. TREVELYAN

(Conclusion)



GOSSAMER

Look at the dew the mist has made
 this autumn morn !
 The bare trees sparkle and in their shade
 a beauty's born;

for there are webs of silken threads
 over the heather,
 and the dew hangs in a thousand beads
 on the gossamer.

Gossamer the rain has brought down
 as it floated high,
 Now it lies like a silver crown,
 almost a sigh !

Look at the empty webs in dew,
 a loosely woven lace;
 they deck the trees and the bracken too
 with curious grace.

All the webs are empty to-day
 and dull the spiders;
 for no fly in his senses would come this way
 into the sparkling larders.

S.S.

CHILDREN OF THE HOUSE

The House of Commons has had its official obituaries, but I would like to add the usual personal notice. For the Palace of Westminster was, to me, less a National Palladium than a schoolroom playground; and its labyrinthine lobbies and imperial precincts were, to me, not so much "The House" as Home.

Children of The House

When in the spring of 1902 my father was offered the post once held by Chaucer, of Clerk of the House, the move from Marylebone to Westminster was greeted by all his family, with one exception, with enthusiasm. To my mother's practical mind the inconveniences of this Gothic residence far outweighed its charms. Its obsolete kitchen range consumed, so her predecessor informed her, a ton of coal a week; the great height of the rooms with their cavernous fire-places made heating impossible; the interminable stairs induced heart attacks among housemaids, and a building so vast necessitated a minimum staff of eight servants, excluding the odd man. Before she set foot in the place, my mother declared, drastic reforms must be carried out. The Board of Works, which had already presented us with a crimson Plantagenet dining-room suite, several massive oak bedsteads, tables and chairs, not to mention every possible requisite for the writing table—cream-laid stationery, blotters, quill pens, sticks of red and blue sealing wax, little leather blocks, and even, if my memory serves me right, sand—was now ordered to produce an up-to-date kitchen range, to instal central heating, gas stoves in every bedroom, to convert two vaulted chambers into bathrooms, and introduce that exciting novelty, an automatic electric lift. Her commands were obeyed, and we moved in.

It was an exciting experience in those early days to wake in a bedroom so near the sky to the chimes of Big Ben and the "rookety-coo" of pigeons bowing to the sculptured kings; or to be kept awake, sometimes till the small hours, by the stentorian shout of policemen calling "Divishun!" Then came the historic cry of "Who goes home!" with its sinister suggestion of armed M.P.'s banding together against the foot-pads of Piccadilly, until at length the last carriage and hansom had jingled away, a gate clanged to, the beacon light on the Clock Tower was extinguished, and we slept.

But it was at week-ends and when the House was up that the Palace of Westminster became our own. What fun it was on rainy days to run races along its stuffy

Children of The House

corridors; to explore the building to its topmost floor, peeping into every room; and once (how like a George Macdonald fairy tale), to open a door at the end of a passage and find an old woman sitting alone, with a scarlet geranium in her window-box, making gold lace. How romantic, too, to steal at night along the corridors, lit only by the night watchman's swinging lantern, and coming at last to Westminster Hall, to climb its corkscrew turret stairs and gaze down on the frozen gesticulations of long silenced orators. Or on a Sunday afternoon one could turn into the library and sample that collection of volumes that no gentleman's library should be without; which, beginning enthusiastically in the 18th century, had somehow come to a halt round about 1850. Then there was the Terrace at midnight. Outside were the cool river breezes, flickering lights and flaring trams crossing Westminster Bridge; and inside, cavernous recesses, haunted by the smelly spectres of ancient dinner parties.

On Friday nights when all the cats, from Ministerial lions to secretarial tabbies, were away, we mice sometimes gave youthful dinner parties and finished the evening dancing the Lancers in the Central Lobby. Then my father would let us into the House, where along its green benches we conducted mock debates and the tallest young man would try from the Front Bench whether his legs would reach the Table as easily as Mr. Balfour's. We sat in turns in the Speaker's Chair, and wondered afterwards if a lace handkerchief or a hairpin had been left behind to give us away. Those were the days of the Grille, behind which our cloistered sex, unable to see and scarcely able to hear, were permitted to breathe the aseptically sterilised and asphyxiatingly stuffy sacred air of the House of Commons. Immense pains had been taken over its ventilation so as to preserve elderly legislators from any risk of germs, or worse still, of "draughts." The air from the Thames was filtered through layers of cotton wool and drawn through flues into chambers under the House, from whence it rose, in its final fugginess, through gratings to aerate the legs and lungs of the legislators. Specially distinguished and

Children of The House

suitably diminutive guests of my small sister were entertained by her under the grating beneath the boots of the Front Bench; a hushed audience of their whispered consultations.

We residents might use, when we pleased, the Ladies' or the Speaker's Gallery; but we scorned to compete with the crowd of sightseers on full dress debates. However, I remember Joseph Chamberlain's acrid tones, emphasised by his pointing forefinger and pointed nose, and Mr. Balfour's dexterity when half-way through his speech, he received a note; after which, without pause or embarrassment, he reversed his arguments, making imperturbably a perfect circle. I recall, too, the musical voice of that gallant pro-Boer, Mr. Lloyd George, the melancholy distinction of "Black Michael" Hicks Beach, and the bald head of Walter Long, which turned scarlet when anyone said "Dogs!"

Of all the privileges enjoyed by the residents, undoubtedly the most appreciated was the permanent protection of the Police. Around us night and day as giant guardian angels was the *corps d'élite* of the British Constabulary, Division A. With what pride did we receive the salutes of these gallant officers; how our hearts swelled as for us they held the traffic in suspense! Small wonder that my youngest sister carried her head high when horses were reined to their haunches, and cyclists forced from their seats as, hoop over arm, she sauntered across to the Park. If, thanks to the guardianship of Division A, Speaker Court was made a nursery of Pomp and Circumstance, to the Servants' Hall it was a Paradise. During the twenty-one years that we were there the *embarras de choix* was such that only one maid left. This exception was Louisa, the second parlour-maid, engaged to a policeman. The nearer her wedding day approached, however, the more her pretty face became clouded. Some light on her predicament was revealed to me accidentally one afternoon. Happening to pass the pantry, I beheld Louisa perched on the knees of no less a personage than the head of Division A, Chief Inspector X. Averting my eyes, I hurried upstairs and began to practise Beethoven's Sonata in C Major.

Children of The House

Presently came the sound of creaking footsteps and heavy breathing, there was a cautious knock on the door, and the crimson face of Inspector X. presented itself, asking if he could speak to me. "You know, miss, Louisa is my God-child," he stammered, "and I have always looked on her, in a manner of speaking, as a daughter. . . But of course one word of this to Sir Courteney and I should be ruined!" Blushingly assuring him that I had seen and would say nothing, I resumed my Sonata to cover the Inspector's retreat. . . I have never been a luster after power, but in moments of ignominy it has comforted me to remember that I once held the honour of the British Constabulary in the hollow of my hand. As for Louisa, she was carried off to a cottage in Peckham, as a mere policeman's wife, after reigning over the "Hall" of a Palace and the hearts of the Force.

Our balcony overlooked Palace Yard, and here one summer evening we heard the Naval Brigade singing "Hearts of Oak" as they crossed Westminster Bridge from Waterloo, while London made its preparations for King Edward's Coronation. It was from this balcony that we girls inadvertently witnessed a Cabinet meeting. Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister, had just received the news that the King was to undergo a serious operation, and that evening, straying along the leads beyond our bounds, we looked in at the window of what we mistook for our drawing-room. To our surprise we beheld an official chamber filled with solemn elderly gentlemen. This was a special and super-secret meeting of the Cabinet in the Prime Minister's room for the postponement of the Coronation. Fortunately, Arthur Balfour, to whom my father confided the impropriety, viewed it with philosophic leniency.

The Coronation itself proved rather a tedious affair with its endless waits, due to the habitual unpunctuality of Queen Alexandra. As the glass coach passed a friend of ours heard the King saying irritably to his wife, "If you don't take care you won't be crowned at all!" Far more memorable than his Coronation was the funeral of King Edward, eight years later. - There, in Palace Yard,

Children of The House

just below our eyes, were assembled all the kings of the world. The most impressive of this regal host was the Imperial figure of the Kaiser, in silver helmet and cuirass, mounted on a magnificent white horse. King Edward lying in State revealed to us the excellence of John Burns' heart: for tirelessly throughout the day he came to Speakers Court to conduct our maids one by one, by his private entrance, to Westminster Hall.

Among his other duties my father was Custodian of the Standard Weights and Measures, and these placid objects, kept in their case, were often proudly displayed to visitors. More intriguing than these was the small glass door, like that of Alice in Wonderland, leading to a realm of magic. For it opened on to a passage that led straight to a private door into the House. This door was guarded by a veteran policeman, a devout Gladstonian, who often lamented the parting of political greatness. One of his predecessors, many years earlier, had given my father a curious link with the past. As a young man he had talked to this ancient doorkeeper, who remembered, when a boy, seeing a meeting of the House on the occasion of the execution of Louis XVI. All the members were dressed in black except Fox, who wore a red waistcoat.

My father, who was what Conservative back benchers of those days described as a "shocking Radical," once suggested with a twinkle to the Speaker that a rubber stamp might be substituted for the inscription in Norman French, which it was his business (illegibly) to pen whenever a Bill was sent up to the Lords. The Speaker, with a smile, had replied that such a change would hardly be "sufficiently Plantagenet." But although at heart as jealous as any of its members of the privileges and survivals of the House, my father succeeded in sweeping away a number of its abuses. He used to say that his best reform would be to abolish himself, and he did transfer to the Civil Service Commission his power of appointing the House of Commons Clerks. The office, however, persists; though its official residence—cumbersome, expensive, picturesque—has found other functions.

Children of The House

St. Margaret's, Westminster, was our Parish Church, and it was there that we girls were married. As the bride sat at her dressing table she could watch from her window a crowd gathering outside the Church and realise with amusement that all these people were waiting to see her pass. No more brides will drive to St. Margaret's from this particular house. Our dining and drawing-rooms have been turned into Ministers private rooms; the schoolroom, which used to ring with laughter, now only rattles with typewriters; while the books, which used to range from *Little Folks* to Anatole France, now run from A to Z or 1860 to 1940.

It was the schoolroom and the bedrooms above it (all fortunately empty) that were shattered by bombs this spring. Even if the rest of the edifice is spared and these rooms, together with the House of Commons, are restored to order, it is unlikely that this solemn edifice will ever again admit of ways of life as light-hearted and leisured as those enjoyed by the daughters of the Clerk of the House in the security of the Edwardian age.

OLIVE HESELTINE

POEM

To thee, darling, the year attend,
The slight corn bend its yellow head
And bunting sing across the field.

And may the solemn weevil turn
Its intricate shadow on the leaf
To assure us in our belief

That when the winter comes again
And half-starved lovers need their grain,
Thy will be done and O amen.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

MILTON

Du, Milton, schufst dein Paradies
 aus einer Seele, gross und heiss,
 und als das Licht dich schon verliess,
 da sangst du blind noch Gottes Preis :

“Gesegnet, wer im Dunkel weilt,
 gesegnet, wer im Joche geht,
 wer über Länder, Meere eilt—
 doch der dient auch, der wartend steht.”

LUDWIG MARX.

THE PROPHET ANSWERED,
 “COURAGE IS PATIENCE”

The question is always new, but here the answer's set.
 Through what wide sorrow, with what torch
 came you upon that truth, O Mahomet,
 through what dry desert of experience approached
 the pillar of solitude where now love waits
 while death, with mindless skill, directs
 the incidence and anonymity of fate?

The bird flies home tonight, but who protects
 the airman gliding on much frailer wings,
 the sailor on the wreck-demented seas,
 the warden hearing all familiar things
 while war whines high above the trees?

Who, without faith, could bear to contemplate
 love's crucifixion; who, without belief,
 could hold this patience, be compassionate,
 find in occasional action a too rare relief?

The Prophet answered . . .

The woman dims her candle in the dark,
 and waits and prays, thinks of the unborn child,
 while guns beat scarlet thunder in the park;
 and she, with fate unreconciled,
 soul-weary, learns another song,
 a valiant song behind the sword—
 "Courage is Patience." But the heart cries, "Lord,
 how long?"

MARJORIE SCOTT JOHNSTON

HOME-COMING

I shall close the door of the George and Dragon
 In the very heart of the elm country,
 Greet mine host, order my flagon,
 Shut out the winter rain behind me.

Little flames will burn in the brasses,
 Reflected from the leaping fire;
 Brass medallions for wise great horses
 That draw the plough and grace the shire.

The wheel-backed chairs and the clock at midnight,
 (Always at midnight or always at noon,
 Never wound), will seem to me right,
 Homely, uncomfortable, gently in tune.

All men come to an inn at evening,
 Out of the rain to the fire-warmed room.
 I shall watch the firelight on beam-crossed ceiling,
 Pewter and prints, and *know* I am home.

CARLA LANYON LANYON

Canada, 1941

Estimates Free

Personal Supervision

A. A. TANNER & SON

for PRINTING

of every description

80 SOUTH ST., DORKING

Telephone 2131

DIE STAMPING. COPPER PLATE PRINTING

() DORKING & DISTRICT MUSEUM 02. AB



Tanner & Son, Printers, Dorking.