

December, 1941.

Vol. 2. No. 8.

The Abinger Chronicle

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Price Ninepence.

The Abinger Chronicle

appears eight times a year. 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

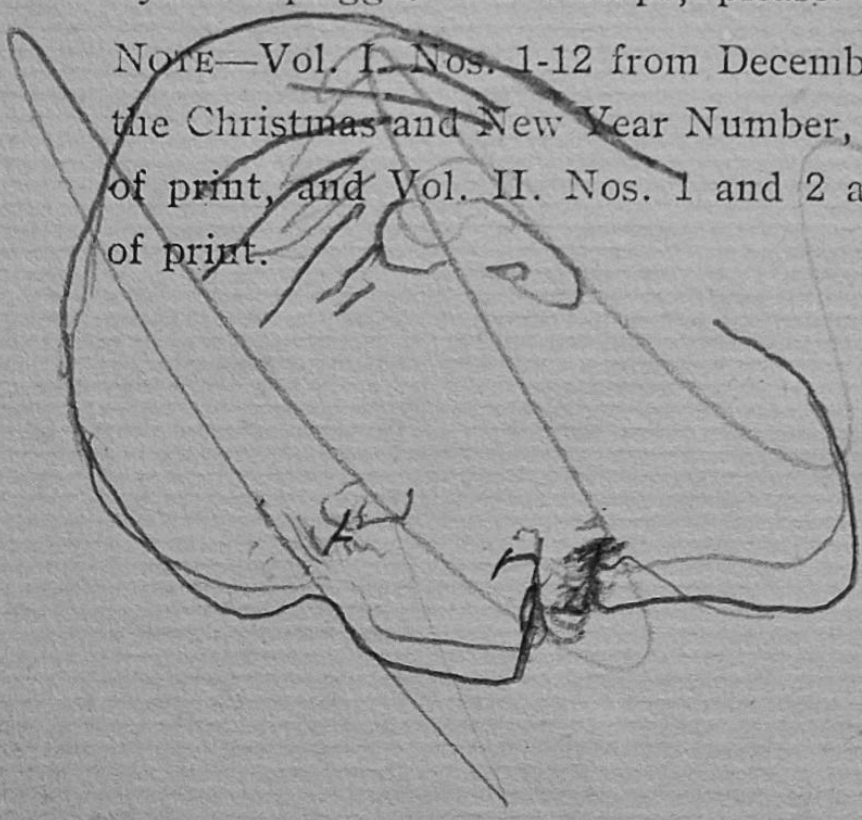
CHERRY COTTAGE

ABINGER COMMON

DORKING, SURREY

The annual subscription is 6/- post free; 3/- for six months post free. This 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 from December, 1939, to the Christmas and New Year Number, 1941, is out of print, and Vol. II. Nos. 1 and 2 are now out of print.



The Abinger Chronicle

Vol. 2. No. 8.

December, 1941

MOONLIGHT

Look ! as though frosted the meadows are, white with moon-
light !

Only to live ! only to love one hour as this in its progress
A vision fallen upon the desertless spirit.

Only so richly to live ! Have years so bless !
As though for no other being had beauty ever or change

Redeemed the world, been ever so sweetly translated
Into an hundred tongues of light and strange

Accents of sound and colour, early freighted
Out of a moonbright evening; Oh,

Not for us in striving, wearing, tearing,

But lifting eyes suddenly out of darkness and seeing

Beauty that never was in earth or heaven before, blow

Flow and scatter, frost-fill the glittering air, faring

Into the heart that loves as never, never loved other being !

E. D. IDLE

NOTES FROM A WAR DIARY

London.

War has meant leaving the country, leaving daylight
for artificial light over a desk, leaving the mistiness of
Abinger fields and woods and the sunlight in Abinger lanes
for grey, hard, dirty pavements; leaving the broad open
hearth of home for the box-like life of a London flat.

Above all, war has meant leaving the few, familiar
and friendly people for the many, the unfamiliar, the am-
bitious and queer people.

Notes from a War Diary

War work exhausts you before you begin to use your body. The responsibility and the continual adaptation to reorganisation is a fret. Life itself takes up the challenge, all that is alive in one, against the despair and cruelty in the ten occupied countries of Europe.

The daily journey through Trafalgar Square never ceases to be a marvel of pleasant buildings, columns, domes and spires, with the pigeons circling round and the lovely curve of Whitehall at the bottom of the Square.

War.

The young can be very unhappy about the war. I tend to be suspicious of anyone, old or young, who isn't unhappy about the war. Nevertheless one dare not dwell too long upon the news, from any theatre of the war, for fear of being overfilled with pity and anger and grief. Someone wrote :

"What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension, how like a god."

Of course you have to be of a loving disposition to write anything of the kind. Whoever wrote it knew what friendship was. Then, the other day, a pilot flying over our desert battlefield in Libya, described it as a sight like that of prehistoric animals crawling about. "In action how like an angel . . ." The only thing to do then is to weep, and so I did.

Ah what avails the sceptered race

Ah what the form divine

What every virtue, every grace . . .

What indeed.

No War Poetry.

Only Lord Vansittart.

The request for war poetry is a compliment, a request for the best company on a long journey. It is, however, being made by one kind of person for one kind of poetry, and Sir or Madam, if the poets are not accompanying you on this journey, maybe you, and not they, have taken the wrong turning.

Notes from a War Diary

I know a man who writes a poem, or part of a poem, a day. The poets are not silent at all. It is possible to fight and fight hard without pretending that fighting is a laudable, historic way of spending a life-time.

Those blind Germans are being disillusioned about the sham glory of war, not we. For us it is a dangerous, deadly, grim thing, a promise to keep about certain undisputed obligations.

I know a painter who is not painting because of the war and a poet who is not making poetry because of the war. Time is the trouble. It takes time. And so we all go to concerts.

Music.

I know very little about music. I now buy records and play them over and over again, where the instrument or the melody catches my fancy, learning to distinguish between an oboe, a horn and a flute, with the help of a friend. Bach's 5th Brandenburg, Mozart's Coronation Concerto, the Pastoral Symphony; these are delights.

Reading

Saint Simon and La Rochefoucauld just now, because these two teach you how to behave—a truly formidable problem when you have to meet a dozen strange and canny people every day, after years of country life.

La Rochefoucauld keeps on solving nice queries. For instance: Why do I find my attention riveted on some awful spectacle of some ghastly description or some horrid person, willy-nilly as it were?

Answer: *On aime tellement toutes les choses nouvelles et les choses extraordinaires, qu'on a même quelque plaisir par la vue des plus tristes et des plus terribles événements, à cause de leur nouveauté et de la malignité naturelle qui est en nous.* One was aware of the *malignité* always, but the awful fascination of novelty, no. That needed saying.

My edition of La Rochefoucauld, printed in Paris in 1777, is unnecessarily apologetic about his critical opinion of human nature, so much so that his remarks are softened down by other remarks of Amelot de la Houssaye, the French translator of Sarpi, or by the Abbé de la Roche,

Notes from a War Diary

or by a *Maxime Chrétienne* in a yet tenderer vein by a gentle lady called Madame de la Sablière. Must get an undiluted La Rochefoucauld.

Ambition.

This vice seems to waste a lot of time in war. Intrigues to outdo the other man or the other department are born, grow, flourish and wither over-night. Even the really able seem to be entangled. They, however, appear to be ambitious in rare and right moments.

Country life is graciously free of all this.

Kew Gardens.

First visit in December. Found there wonderful old trees, all named and known and cared for, and three plum trees in flower. These last took my breath away. And the lake, the strange asiatic ducks and geese and pea-hens! Not a soul about but for a few gardeners, and a horse and cart collecting autumn leaves, and two land girls stacking carrots in a pit.

The Thames very silver grey and fast flowing, and the whole place a paradise for trees and tree lovers. Found a walnut on the grass and what looked like a lime. Very exotic birds flying about and the great hothouses with their huge palms and date and coconut trees only needed a few monkeys and jackals to leap and shout in their jungle-like heat. Where the firs and pines are, beyond the lake, noticed a strong scent I have not smelt since I was in the Black Forest.

And so back to London.

S.S.

LORD DEATH

Death is the lord here now.
 We hustle, crowd and crouch at his behest.
 How Death laughs,
 Hissing his scorn in the North wind and the East.
 "Set your snares high in the sky," he cries—
 Then "Burrow deep, deep in the muddy ooze.
 Build pyramids of toil for my blasting,

Lord Death

Spin, weave for my unravelling."
 Spiders and ants, we labour to obey.
 We grind his instruments and heal the maimed
 That they may serve him.
 Goodwill of men and harvest of the land
 Serve but to feed Lord Death.
 "Blot out your life, your work, your love,"
 He cries and laughs at our shame and darkness.
 He shatters our night with his sirens.
 But I have laughed for a day with my own joy,
 Seeing the snow on the mountains softly boldly ablaze,
 Pure form, pure light.
 Thanks for the incorruptible,
 Beyond the reach of slaves, highborn.

Pullwoods, November, 1940.

ETHEL GINSBERG

THE FIRST HAND

(For John Donne)

The first hand, like a wind of five bent fingers,
 Holds in the straw its glory. O, the story
 Has been twice told before, and Christmas comes,
 And wounds drip from the cross, as spit the guns,
 But still the miracle is: Lord, and is more.

NICHOLAS MOORE

LINES FOR MUSIC

Yesterday, whose tears are gone
 From the earth you gaze upon,
 For survival seeks your heart.
 Oh bid the weeping shade depart!

Sad to-morrow, seeking birth
 Sooner than on carefree earth,
 Knocks upon your mind to-day.
 Oh bid the sorrowing shade away!

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

APOLOGIA PUNICA

Motto : Words, words, words !

A—Muse, sing of the Man who grasps and grapples :
 Who does not care that it was Eve who spun :
 The Man who knows that Eve made Adam's apples
 And Adam's pun !

Those Shakespeare loved were all in puns harmonious,—
 Pathetic, tragic, frivolous or stern;—
 Macbeth, Sir John, Mercutio and Polonius :—
 But you won't hear a pun from Guildenstern.

Is there a Land that does not care for bon ton ?
 Where Rhyme is Reason, and where Reason rhymes ?
 Where flows the Punch for everyone to punt on,
 Where dramas are Spuntaneous Puntamimes ?

From there I'll build pun-toons and get Ostend,
 And cause with puncer-movements Hitler's end.

Judy-cious Punch ! Thy judgement shall be heard !
 Poke with a joke—and conquer ! 'pun—my word !

J.H.

BY THE ABINGER WELL

Do you remember, nearly two years ago, a few lines in the *Chronicle* about the new iron drinking trough by St. James' Well near the Sequoia on our Common, a piece of good foundry work with a design of small holly leaves running round the brim?

Now, it is no use pretending. The trough wasn't a trough at all. It was the *Chronicle* itself, and the notable group of birds and quadrupeds gathered there in friendly conversation were none other than a few of the regular contributors to the *Abinger Chronicle*. Who was which, is a secret known only to those who were present.

Two years have gone by and the *Chronicle* lives on, without an editorial, and without the reviewing of books and views and times and tides in the affairs of men. To write, rather than to write about, would be its motto, if it could coin the phrase more neatly. This seemed the surest way of giving delight to the reader, and assurance to the writers, of whom many are young, and others somewhat reluctant.

There is a time for invention, a time for memory, a time for wit and much time for sorrow. Whenever the pen can make a lucid record of those times, and the result reaches the village post office at Abinger, the *Chronicle's* heart beats faster, as it were. Indeed it has been known to set off, under some such circumstances, at full speed, on a bicycle, with the week's post securely held in one hand, a handlebar in the other, the inevitable troops scattering, as it rushes by on its way to some wiser Abingerian who will confirm or poo-poo the week's good news.

Is it wise to give away these editorial secrets? Will not knowledge of this kind simply undermine confidence?

Gentle reader—we must hope that it (the knowledge) will not so do. And so into our third year with the warmest thanks to all our contributors, and a request for More.

THE EDITOR

The Abinger Chronicle

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NOTE

The Abinger Chronicle will cost 9d. in 1942, and it will only be possible to publish eight numbers.

This has indeed proved to be its cost of production this year, and that is why only eight numbers were published.

The subscription remains at 6/- per annum. New subscribers will be most welcome, and it is hoped that many readers of the *Chronicle* will use the occasion to give a year's subscription as a New Year's present to a friend.

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