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The Abinger Chronicle

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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

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OCTOBER

The hills are quiet and quiet are the ways
Where golden fern is touched by Autumn's grace.
The heather bells are bowed ; their music strays
Sighing over the lonely moorland space.
In misty skies the Buzzards mew and chase
And tender comes the song from Woodlark's throat,
As though such melody should all embrace
And the year close upon a wistful note.

Oh, now so near and now again remote
That lovely spirit breathes ! in bird that sings,
In gossamer seeds of thistledown that float
Into the sunset on their silver wings,
In cupped acorn I hold, or, by the wood,
In stubble pale where once the proud wheat stood.

V. S. WAINWRIGHT.

REMEMBERED MEALS

In these days I am rather glad that I have never had a large appetite for food. Nor am I fortunate only in this. The emotion of pity is a pleasant one ; and I have the pleasure of pitying great eaters—I who used to envy them so much. . . . Delightful to go to bed at night in ardent anticipation of an enormous English

Remembered Meals

for trout, for poulet en casserole, for omelette au jambon, for Camembert or Brie, was in great measure due to the briskly flowing, the indefatigable little trout-stream at my side.

But away with scientific analysis! It is an outrage on memory. Let me but mention an Arquean meal that I recall with special clearness. There were four of us. The host was a friend of mine well-known in London as a devotee of music and patron of musicians, well-loved for his kindness of heart and immense sense of fun. One of the guests was a life-long friend of his, a not greatly-gifted painter but very good fellow and accomplished man of the world. Another was a beautiful young lady, full of intelligence and high spirits. The sun shone fiercely on the orchard, but was tempered by a lively western breeze. The leaves of the tree above us were ever astir. Shifting dots of sunshine dappled the tablecloth and sparkled on the good red wine in the thick rustic glasses. We ate and ate, we laughed and laughed, long and long. The dogs, the cats, the hens looked up at us and marvelled at our gaiety. And the stream babbled with us. And all the world was young—seventeen years old perhaps, not more.

MAX BEERBOHM.

AFTER THE WAR

After the war they say, they say
All life will be as new.
The solemn words of mighty men
Will raise a throne of peace and then
Give with the same abundant pen
To every man his due.

After the War

It may be so, it may be so
 There's virtue in a plan.
 But there is nothing new to say
 No panacea new today,
 Only an old and narrow way
 And the weary feet of man.

The laws, the sempiternal laws
 That hold the world in fee
 Are truth, the debt that none should owe
 And justice, cool to friend and foe
 And love, to heal our loveless woe
 And the heart's nobility.

And these are old, as hate is old
 But older by a day.
 And none that lives can now devise
 A nobler peace when horror dies
 Or richer duty than to rise
 And hearken, and obey.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

CAN WE NO MORE

Can we no more,
 Not anymore be blind?
 Must we now look,
 Must we root about to find?
 Must we grub to recover
 The truth which is lost,
 Not dance in the summer
 And skate in the frost?
 Ours were nights of pleasure
 Under the moon :
 An end has come to leisure,
 But not to soon.

DENTON WELCH.

GEOGRAPHY IN EUROPE

Against the map of Europe
 A steel-beaked dart
 Was flung.
 In the lazy haze of Spain
 Like a sudden spurt of flame
 It hung
 Until the score
 Guernica, Madrid,
 Was chalked in red.
 The flinger's hand paused,
 Took aim,
 And Warsaw came
 Into target fame.
 The hand replucked, hovered, thrust,
 And the proud name
 Rotterdam
 Was written in crimson dust.
 A twist of the turning wrist
 And Lidice,
 Red as the rest,
 Was marked
 On the territories of the heart.

IDA PROCTER.

A DUEL IN GREEN PARK

It was evening, late evening in July, and daylight
 still when I met him. A tall figure, over six-foot and
 carrying his left arm in a sling and over it a well-cut
 xviiith century cloak with silver clasps. He was young,
 barely 24, and obviously foreign, and somewhat lost on
 the empty pavements of Pall Mall,

A Duel in Green Park

We almost collided at the corner of Waterloo Place. Of course I apologized and he also, but his apology was in Italian. Being friendly disposed towards those freedom-seeking Europeans who have managed to reach these shores I asked him if he came from Italy.

"Italy?" he murmured, "what is Italy? I come from Piedmont." I was suspicious now and asked him boldly who he was.

"I am Count Vittorio Alfieri of Asti, poet, tragedian and lover of liberty.* I must get back to the Haymarket or they will be wondering what has happened."

"What *has* happened?" I asked. We sat down on one of the teak seats in the porch of the Athenæum and he told me the whole story.

Alfieri, you must know, was a Piedmontese writer and poet of the late 1700's who wrote a lucid and vivacious Italian prose such as had not been known since Machiavelli, and in an age that had produced mainly librettos for the Italian opera. His writing was so clear that if you have an inclination now to read his autobiography you will find it exciting and repelling by turn, with a certain vivid stamp of truth.

Why Alfieri was to be found the other night in Pall Mall on the very evening, 171 years after he had fought his famous duel in Green Park, is no easier to explain than why his autobiography should have come my way in a fine quarto edition published by Ciardetti in Florence in MDCCCXXII. These things happen.

One is drawn to these outstanding individualists of the great Revolution days. Some were swept into Rousseau's social vision, others later withdrew again, others were doubtful or antagonistic from the first: among these, Alfieri. He lived much in France before

*Spectral License. Alfieri was 27 when he wrote his first tragedy.

A Duel in Green Park

and during the Revolution. He saw the most violent happenings in Paris including the storming of Bastille and he became a violent francophobe, a sort of Italian Lord Vansittart about France. But he was again and again a passionate lover of liberty, countering every attempt of the tyrannical little kingdom of Piedmont to compel him home or to control his writings. Of censorship he would have none. He preferred publishing in Kehl or with Didot rather than submit to it, and one of his most exciting tracts was "Of Princes and Letters," on the kind of patronage and liberty that are desirable in a well-governed state.

And later on, fifty years after his death, his dream of a United Italy was achieved, and the writings and the speeches that led the way to it were all modelled upon Alfieri's vigorous and brilliant prose.

But here he is in London in 1771; 23 years old and as attractive and intelligent as young Latins can be; walking back to the Haymarket Opera House, where all the town was flocking to hear the new Italian Operas of Rossini and Donizetti.

He had left the Opera House barely three-quarters of an hour ago in the company of an English Guards' Officer, the husband of a lady with whom Alfieri was headlong in love. The matter was to be settled between the acts, so they went into Green Park at sunset.

The duel was long and arduous, though Alfieri says "he didn't kill me because he didn't want to and I didn't kill him because I didn't know how to." Nevertheless Alfieri's sword was "like a saw" afterwards, from the slashes it had received, and given.

Never was a duel more unavoidable. Alfieri was quite guilty and so was the lady, but she was rather more than that, for she had just had a Chatterley-like affair with her groom who had become the chief spy in the present affair.

A Duel in Green Park

A rather grim story that did end in a divorce, but not, as Alfieri had hoped, in re-marriage with him. "Her confession [about the groom] froze me to stone," he said, and he vowed friendship but never marriage. Alfieri never married though he lived very happily, he says, for the last forty-five years of his life with the German-born Duchess of Albany. A few years after the duel, he paid a third visit to England, this time to purchase no less than 14 thoroughbreds (for he was a great rider). These he shipped safely to Calais and and then rode with them and a couple of grooms right across France and the Alps to Pistoia, not losing one of his steeds en route.

Then came the French Revolution and the First Consulate and the Empire. Alfieri watched Napoleon's advance into Italy with disgust and horror. He was in Florence during the French occupation and refused many invitations to dine and fraternize with the French Generals. Not all Italians were inclined to be so hostile to the Napoleonic invaders accompanied as they were, by enormous propaganda about their liberating mission.

Alfieri saw through that new order and now nearly a century and half later it is good to read what he wrote then about England in the Seven Years' War :*

"And so we have seen barely nine million Englishmen in this American War facing more than twenty million Frenchmen, ten or more million Spaniards, five or six million American and Dutch—a political marvel which has no reasonable explanation unless we own that a free man is worth at least six slaves."

How he hates violence :

"Once Cæsar had crossed the Rubicon it is true that there was no alternative left between civil

*This and subsequent quotations were written on the eve of the XIXth Century, between 1798-1800, and are from *Del Principe and delle Lettere*, Sonzogno, Milan, pp. 225-233.

A Duel in Green Park

rebellion and servile obedience : but let us never forget that *young* Cæsar as well as Marus, Silla and their men—all these ruinous pests—might have been successfully countered with all the strength of Sane Opinion, if she had been grandly conserved, renewed and continually corroborated by the high teaching of reason and truth and made to penetrate to the humblest citizen of Rome by the many excellent writers of the day.”

But his first and last love is Italy, the *penisoletta* which once conquered all the known world and then lost it when she “became vitiated with the vices, the riches and the very rulers of the conquered,” Italy which, “then illumined Europe with literature and science, rediscovered from the Greeks, and civilized Europe with the divine arts which she created and did not imitate.” Of Italians, this Piedmontese says : “among them, in every age, there have been found, more numerous than elsewhere, those seething spirits who, driven by natural impulse, seek glory in the highest enterprise.” But of the Italy of 1799 under foreign domination he says : “she is at the apex of servitude and nullity, but by reason of the enormous crimes committed there, I am convinced that there, more than in any other region of Europe, there are warm and fierce spirits who only lack the proper sphere and the proper means to accomplish high deeds.”

And then he calls out :

“Among us slave-people who lack our tribunes, who shall teach us to know our rights, to take hold of them, to defend them, if the writer does not do so? Brave and truthful writers are honoured, natural and sublime tribunes of unfree peoples . . . these true writer-tribunes are a blessing not only to one nation but to all peoples.”

A Duel in Green Park

The Cæsar of Alfieri's time had crossed his Rubicon as the Cæsar of our time has crossed his ; and the prospect of civil rebellion and revolt was as grim and certain then as it is now, but still Alfieri called out for his "writer-tribunes." He had little use for the public show of liberty. Such was "frequently to be found among slave peoples." The "private, political, civil and domestic liberty of the citizen and the writer is the measure of good government."

What would Alfieri have written now amid the many hankerings in his own country and elsewhere, hankerings after a sort of idealized collectivity? I meant to ask him that evening in Waterloo Place, but his shadowy figure had melted away towards Haymarket.

Very young men who fight duels in Green Park are not given to lengthy discussion, and he was not to be retained, but I fancy he would have said the same things all over again despite the new weapons which make our contemporary tyrants and invaders seem so much more impregnable than their predecessors. For Collective Man, he would surely have had a string of wincing epithets.

S.S.

THE ANATOMISTS

We bonily explore
 What isn't anymore.
 We try to understand
 The magic fairy wand.

We get into a book
 "Apollo's summer look"
 And music on a stave
 Or hushing of a wave.

The Anatomists

Each moment steals the last
Till we've nothing but the past ;
Then with all our joys in bottles,
Death comes and slyly throttles.

DENTON WELCH.



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