

*June-July, 1943.*

*Vol. 4. No. 3.*

# *The Abinger Chronicle*

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*Price One Shilling.*

## *The Abinger Chronicle*

appears six times a year. While many of the contributors are local to the Abinger district, or frequent visitors to it, others come from far afield.

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Cheques, if used, should be made out to  
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NOTE.—Vol. I. and II. and some numbers of  
Vol. III. are now out of print.

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## FAITH

God! Art thou there? Then hearken,  
For sure the Devil's here:  
Thy day his bombers darken,  
Thy night his gunners sear.

Is that Thy Voice—the Siren,  
Heaving its wail of woe,  
Or ere Thy rain of iron  
Burst on Thy babes below?

With hurried hands we fumble  
For warmth and love and wit,  
Then stagger forth and stumble  
Alive into the pit.

The shivered stars are trembling,  
The moon's volcanoes bare:  
Then silence: then a rumbling—  
Sabaoth! Art Thou there?

The arc-lamps stab. Guns rattle.  
The flaming onions leap;  
While strides the God of Battle  
Thudding from deep to deep.

Whate'er Thy Name be, uttered:  
Whate'er Thy Gospel, taught:  
Thy will be done, we muttered,  
Jesus or Juggernaut!

Rangoon, January, 1942.

G. H. LUCE.

## THE FORMICARIUM

The light-footed trespasser among the pine woods of Leith Hill may sometimes, in the stillness of a summer day, catch the sound of a small persistent sibilation. This delicate hissing, finer than the lisp of leaves or water, proceeds from a heap of pine needles beside the path; a heap which is seen to be no casual dump, but an elaborate construction vibrating with energy and purpose. Its ceaseless quiver is caused by the scurrying to and fro of millions of tiny creatures, whose inaudible footsteps make collectively the diminutive roar of a great city. Here, scattered about the pine woods, are living monuments more ancient than the Pyramids. Before the earliest hunters roved the Eocene plains, before diplodocus or dinosaur, down who knows what untracked centuries, the industrious ant raised her rust-red cities twice as old as time. Civilizations more stable than ancient China, more enlightened than modern Scandinavia, were perfected in the Mesozoic ages by these pioneers of planning. Small wonder that philosophers from Solomon to Maeterlinck abound in their praise. Problems of engineering, hydraulics, sanitation, ventilation, dairy-farming, food-storage, fruit-preserving, infant welfare, and nursery schools, over which our Ministries are still fumbling, are, in the Formicarium, all efficiently solved. How ingenious, yet how simple compared with our own, are many of its methods! The living suspension bridge over which vast armies can pass without the forging of a single machine releases millions of industrial workers for the front; and the animated honey-pot, which combines the functions of receiving, containing and distributing, must arouse envy in every provincial Jam Centre. Ants' nests, made of sand or soil, cardboard, silk or tissue paper, in holes in the ground or on the tops of trees,

*The Wallington Ponds*

of poetry, if I grew tired of carrying my game-bag heavy with rabbits, and sometimes with the formidable weight of a hare.

The two Irish setters had been given a Spartan training by our old game-keeper, Tom Thornton. They were originally called Pat and Mick; but Thornton, being a fanatical anti-Irish Tory, had rechristened Pat by the neutral name of Pot, which in his Northumbrian dialect he pronounced Put. Mick was a hard-working, well-behaved dog; but Put, though he had the better nose, was often refractory, and would point larks and other "trash," run in on the grouse, and refuse to obey Thornton's whistle. On such occasions, much as he loved his dogs, he would show himself a ruthless disciplinarian; and I could hardly endure to watch the beatings poor Put had to suffer. In cases of extreme naughtiness, Thornton would bite the dogs' ears, which, though it probably did not hurt them much, they seemed to mind worse than a beating.

On days when the scent was good and the dogs at their best, it was an endless pleasure to watch them crossing and recrossing at full speed thirty yards or so in front of us, and then suddenly halting and crouching with tense body and straight tail, glancing back at us eagerly from time to time as we hurried up, and then, at a whisper from Thornton, creeping stealthily forward step by step towards the birds. No wonder the passionate old man was proud of his pupils. It was a pleasure too, when after an hour or two of hard work we came upon some small tarn or marshy place, to see the tired thirsty dogs plunge in and wallow deliciously, lapping up the peaty water, until Thornton drove them out lest they should drink more than was good for them. Sometimes he would take us past some well that he alone knew of, and there give his dogs, and us too, a short drink of pure spring water.

Sir Walter Trevelyan had been too humanitarian or too botanical to approve of shooting and fishing;

*The Wallington Ponds*

but he liked to see cold grouse and trout on the side-table at breakfast; so he allowed Thornton to shoot and fish the Wallington estate for thirty years alone by himself. He used to go out with his horse on to the moors, sometimes when they were covered with snow, and shoot many a grouse and black-cock from behind his well-trained stalking horse. He took with him an old-fashioned muzzle-loading "dook-gun," that had a single very long and wide barrel, into which he rammed a wire-cartridge, that prevented the shot from spreading too soon. With this gun he was able to kill birds at a hundred yards or more, and so keep Sir Walter's table well supplied with game, and with trout too, for he was also a most expert fly-fisher.

Owing to the frequent patches of treacherous bog, and to the shallow drains, often overgrown and concealed by heather and grass, the moors were very dangerous to riders, so that they were seldom or never hunted over; and it was necessary for the game-keepers to protect the young birds by putting down the foxes so far as they were able. One day, I remember, when we were beating a large cover for black-game and hares, I was sent forward to stand just outside the border of the wood. After a while I caught a glimpse of something greyish or brownish, that might be, yet somehow did not seem to be a hare, moving in the long grass inside the cover. I fired at it, but could not see what happened. Presently, hurrying on before the others, Thornton and his dogs appeared. He came straight up to me, and covering his mouth with his hand said in a hoarse dramatic whisper, "Have you shot the fox?" I pointed to the place at which I had fired, and there to his unconcealed delight he found an old mangy fox, which he promptly buried. As for me, I am afraid that I felt no remorse or shame whatever for having thus committed the crime of vulpicide.

R. C. TREVELYAN

*(Concluded)*

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