

LIFE BUSY IN THE PONDS

A Clever Snail that Foils Its Foe

OUR FRIEND THE CENTIPEDE

By our Country Correspondent

While waiting for the spring to break, we may still explore the life of pond and stream. Here there is no sleep or cessation of activity, and a collection of fresh water molluscs for the home aquarium is always interesting and easy to make.

A mollusc very common in some parts is the ram's horn coil shell, a member of the Planorbis family, whose English name well describes its appearance. It is the largest of its kind, being about an inch in diameter, and the shell is a yellowish or reddish brown, though specimens have been found which are perfectly white.

Hiding Behind a Screen

Young specimens have a mossy film of outer skin over the shell, but the older ones are glossy. If the creature is irritated it often discharges a quantity of red fluid; and the idea is, no doubt, the same as when the cuttle-fish pours out its inky fluid in the sea to conceal its position, and give it an opportunity of escaping. It is a kind of smoke screen.

Another interesting specimen to look for is the common pond snail, which also is among the largest members of its family. It will be found in stagnant pools, and on sunny days, at this time of the year, may be seen floating with inverted shell at the surface of the water. A muscular movement of the foot can be discerned as the creature creeps along on the surface film of the water.

Pond Snail's Curious Habit

The pond snail is, however, very sluggish in its habits, and you will generally find its shell encrusted with a deposit of vegetable and mineral matter. Like the coil shell, if annoyed it discharges a coloured fluid, in this case violet, to disconcert its enemy. It is common in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but has never been taken in Wales.

A good many foolish people kill centipedes whenever they come across them, which is pretty often if they turn over stones or pieces of wood that have been lying in dark and damp places. It is stupid to kill these creatures, for, though they may look fearsome, they are quite harmless to human beings, and do a great deal of good in the garden by living upon snails, slugs, and the grubs of insects that spoil our plants.

Centipede with Thirty Feet

Its name is misleading, for the centipede has not a hundred feet, but only fifteen pairs. When born it has only seven pairs, and acquires the other eight pairs later. While it is harmless to human beings, its venom may well make creatures nearer its own size alarmed, for if you have ever seen it bite a fly you will notice that death is instantaneous.

Down by the seashore there is always something interesting to be picked up, even in January. After storms the beach is strewn with specimens, among which the five-fingered starfish is very common. The upper surface is covered with more or less spiny plates and bosses arranged in a pattern, but the underside is soft and has numerous sucker feet by which the starfish is able to propel itself.

Flowers are beginning to speak of spring, for furze and mezeron are in blossom, and the pale perfoliate honey-suckle is putting out its leaves. C. R.

A COMB THAT CUTS HAIR

The safety razor so far has had no interest for children, but a new comb, fitted with a pair of safety blades somewhat similar, has been invented by Mr. C. L. Neil, with which parents can, it is said, cut their children's hair—or their own, indeed! The cutting blades are adjusted, and the hair combed, when it becomes automatically cut!

HAROLD BEGBIE'S SONG FOR BOYS

The Gladdest Land Beneath the Sun

THE gladdest land beneath the sun is the land that gave us birth: England, flower of the flock that crowds the lap of her mother, Earth!

England, the land of smiling hills, gay cliffs, and laughing moors; England, the land of the cheerful home and the playful out-of-doors.

She's good when the sun is on her fields and all's sweet blue beyond,

Fine when the skates of Winter ring their chimes from dyke to pond,

Dear when the bright green breath of Spring shines out from her April leaves,

And grand when the Autumn waggon comes for the load of her golden sheaves.

*RADIANT home of Freedom, splendid in the past,
Glorious in the future if your sons hold fast,
Happy, laughing England, valiant, gentle, true,
Let me die in bitter shame if I prove false to you.*

IT'S fine to know our little land was ever the first to lead

On Freedom's road in every cause that has served the whole world's need;

Fine that her name is known and loved for justice, mercy, truth, Wherever her flag has gone with her games in the strong right hand of youth;

It's fine to think that the greatest man of all mankind but one Was born in the fields where Avon flows and England called him son:

And it's fine to know that with all her love of the frolic glee of life

She has kept to the path where Duty walks in the winds and rains of strife.

*GALLANT home of Freedom, noble in the past,
Nobler in the future if your sons hold fast,
Sturdy, kindly England, valiant, gentle, true,
Let me die in bitter shame if I prove false to you.*

I'M proud of the name with which I go through earth to the life to be,

A son of the land that first taught man his sacred right to be free, But prouder far that my Motherland is first of all lands in fame.

For justice wide as her mighty power and for love of a fair-played game;

And when I look at the English flag aloft on some old grey tower, I laugh with a joy like the flash of the sun thro' a golden April shower.

I laugh and I cry and my body thrills: I am one of England's sons!

Laughter and tears are a hymn, a prayer, and this is the way it runs:

*SACRED land of England, holy in the past,
Holier in the future if your sons hold fast,
Love of you shall keep me steady, gentle, true,
Let me die in bitter shame if I prove false to you.*

NATURAL FACTS OF THE DAY

The universe moves to order like a clock. Sunrise and sunset, moonrise and moonset, high tide at London Bridge, ever they come and ever they go, while nations rise and fall.

Here is Nature's time-table next week, given for London from January 18.

Time-table of Sun, Moon, and Sea

	Sunday	Thursday	Saturday
Sunrise	8.0 a.m.	7.55 a.m.	7.53 a.m.
Sunset	4.21 p.m.	4.28 p.m.	4.31 p.m.
Moonrise	5.43 a.m.	8.2 a.m.	8.48 a.m.
Moonset	2.9 p.m.	6.22 p.m.	8.43 p.m.
High Tide	12.23 p.m.	3.2 p.m.	4.11 p.m.

Next Week's Moon



NEXT WEEK IN THE GARDEN

Tie up endive for blanching successively, and protect from frost. Protect a portion of parsley from frost; make a new sowing in a sheltered situation.

Jerusalem artichokes may be taken up and housed, and a new plantation made in a spare corner.

If the weather is likely to be severe, take up broccoli that are nearly fit for use, and store in a cellar.

ICI ON PARLE FRANÇAIS



Le charpen- Le gâteau La carte-post-
tier tier tale

Le charpentier scie un morceau de bois.

Marie aura du gâteau pour sa fête.

J'ai reçu trois cartes-postales ce matin.

ELLE ÉTAIT SOURDE

Dans un ravissant cottage du village de X. demeurait une brave femme, la Mère Martin. Elle était très âgée, très sourde et presque aveugle.

Or, un beau matin, le village fut tiré de sa somnolence habituelle par un vacarme épouvantable provenant indubitablement du cottage de la bonne femme. On se précipita, croyant à un assassinat. Mais c'était tout bonnement la Mère Martin qui, les deux pieds posés sur la queue du chat, frappait à tour de bras sur sa marmite, la prenant pour un gros morceau de charbon qu'elle voulait briser.

WIRELESS

Can We Send the Waves to Mars?

WIRELESS POWER FOR MOTOR-CARS

By Our Marconi House Correspondent

The Government has now partially withdrawn the restrictions which prevented people from practising wireless as a hobby. British citizens may now obtain permission to put up aerials in their gardens, and receive wireless signals.

It is a most fascinating hobby, quite within the power of the ordinary bright schoolboy.

Dr. A. M. Low, lecturing on what he called the "horrors of the motor-car," demonstrated the control of a motor-car by wireless, and prophesied that one day we shall be carried by vehicles controlled by wireless worked from a central generating station.

London's Tangled Traffic

The remote control of mechanism by wireless does not, even at the present time, offer much difficulty; but the control of a vehicle such as a taxi in and out of the traffic of a London street is a problem which has very little in common with the parlour tricks of which we hear from time to time, in which toys are caused to perform evolutions on a table.

The question whether we can wireless to another planet comes up smiling as regularly as that of the existence of the sea-serpent, and most people seem to read into it far more than they should do; for they take it to mean, "Can we communicate with Mars?" That is a very different question.

A Puzzle for the Future

We may say that we shall never know whether an attempt to communicate with Mars has been successful until we receive an answer from Mars, and there is, of course, in any case, the vital query as to whether Mars is inhabited. And then, even supposing there are living beings there, and that they have highly developed brains, they may know nothing about our methods of wireless.

The other way of interpreting the question may be put in these words: "Can we send wireless waves as far as Mars?" Some time ago, out of curiosity, we worked out roughly the power of the machinery which would be required to do this, and came to the conclusion that the task of building such machines is not altogether impossible. Whether or not the waves would ever reach Mars, however, we cannot say.

SOMETHING NEW FOR AEROPLANES

Airmen Safer From Fire

One of the greatest dangers in flying is the risk of fire, owing to the highly inflammable nature of petrol, the fuel which is at present used for all aircraft engines, while the terrific noise made by the engines is itself very nerve-racking.

Both these great disadvantages have been overcome, it is said, by the invention of two Englishmen, Mr. William P. Durnall and Commander G. T. Bowles, R.N., who have designed a new engine which they declare to be silent, and which will burn heavy, crude oil.

Not only is the risk of fire thus eliminated and flying made more pleasant, but this class of fuel is very much cheaper than the highly-refined petrol.

THE FRUIT TREE BALLOON

An important invention is being used with success by Californian fruit-growers, whose fruit trees are large and have to be fumigated. A balloon has suspended from it a large tent, which it drops over the tree. The fumigating gas is introduced into the tent, and the whole tree is easily dealt with. The balloon and a crew of four men make it possible to fit thirty tents an hour over big Valencia orange trees.