

it. Even during his Oxford days, when the Warden of Wadham was asked, "of all the young men you know, who, in your opinion, will go farthest?" he answered without a moment's hesitation, "J. A. Simon."

It was in a "manse," where so many eminent lawyers and politicians have been cradled, that John Allsebrook Simon first opened his eyes one February day in 1873. Son of the Rev. Edwin Simon, Congregational Minister, he comes of a stock which has sent many of its sons to fill Nonconformist pulpits with distinction. At Fettes College, where he was sent, "a pale-faced slip of a boy, with a serious face and a shy manner," young Simon quickly showed the stuff he was made of. "He pushed into prominence at once," says one who knew him in those early days, "rapidly became head boy; and, apart from other success, became an informal political leader as well. It is one of the legends of the life of that remarkable school that this instinctive orator and politician used to gather meetings of his boy-comrades and harangue them on political questions."

Although Simon had no influence to support him, and counted no solicitor among his friends, he had no long period of waiting for briefs, such as is so often the fate of even the cleverest of young lawyers. Fortune still continued her smiles; briefs began to flow in quite an uncanny way to his chambers in the Temple; and, throwing himself with ardour into his work, he soon had his feet planted firmly on the ladder to leadership.

Before a couple of years had passed he was one of the busiest juniors in town and on the Western Circuit, with an income and a reputation which men who had worn their stuff gowns for a score of years might well envy; and with amazing rapidity he built up an enormous practice in railway work, in large commercial cases, and in other directions of which little is known to the outside world.

To those who knew him and had watched his wonderful career, his elevation to the Solicitor-Generalship at the early age of thirty-seven, and when he had been only four years in the House, came as no surprise, however unexpected it may have been to the outside world; and it was not long before he gave convincing proof that no choice could have been more admirable. His opportunity came when, during the absence of Mr. Lloyd George, the conduct of the Budget Bill devolved on the young lawyer; and how magnificently he acquitted himself cannot better be told than in the words of one who was present. "The intricacies of the Bill were a puzzle to the keenest of lay minds and even to many well-trained legal minds. The language of all Acts of Parliament is obscure, complex and redundant. What are apparently complexities, contradictions, provisos within provisos, parentheses within parentheses, make the ordinary mind reel. And here was a very tranquil, pleasant-spoken young man, speaking the simple language of ordinary life, suddenly making the whole abysmal darkness into gleaming light, and proving that what you thought insoluble gibberish in merely the legal expression of the plain, simple facts of everyday life."

Sir John Simon's reputation at Westminster was made on that memorable evening; and from that day there has been no member to whom the House has listened with greater respect and attention.

## GRASS-HOPPER LOVERS

Jean Henri Fabre, the Naturalist, Tells of  
Insect's Amours

JEAN HENRI FABRE, the great naturalist, is also a charming writer and a bit of a humorist. Instead of being dull, dry and technical, his article in the English Review on "The White-Faced Decticus" (a form of grass-hopper that lives chiefly on locusts) is full of dry wit as well as shrewd observation. His description of the love-making of the decticus, and the mating is full of quaint touches. He commences by referring to the insect's strange song, and says: Is he celebrating his wedding? Is his song an epithalamium? I will make no such statement, for his success is poor if he is really making an appeal to his fair neighbours. Not one of his group of hearers gives a sign of attention. Not a female stirs, not one moves from her comfortable place in the sun. Sometimes the solo becomes a concerted piece sung by two or three in chorus. The multiple invitation succeeds no better. True, their impassive ivory faces give no indication of their real feelings. If the suitors' ditty indeed exercises any sort of seduction, no outward sign betrays the fact.

It is a very different matter when, towards the end of August, I witness the commencement of the

wedding. The couple find themselves standing face to face quite casually, without any lyrical prelude whatever. Motionless, as though turned to stone, their foreheads almost touching, they exchange



"Nobody loves me!"

—Sykes, Philadelphia Ledger.

caresses with their long antennae, fine as hairs. The male seems somewhat preoccupied. He washes his tarsi; with the tips of his mandibles he tickles the soles of his feet. From time to time he gives a stroke of the bow: tick; no more. Yet one would think that this was the very moment at which to make the most of his strong points. Why not declare his flame in a fond couplet, instead of standing there, scratching his feet? Not a bit of it. He remains silent in front of the coveted bride, herself impassive.

The interview, a mere exchange of greetings between friends of different sexes, does not last long. What do they say to each other, forehead to forehead? Not much, apparently, for soon they separate with nothing further; and each goes his way where he pleases.

Next day, the same two meet again. This time, the song, though still very brief, is in a louder key than on the day before, while being still very far from the burst of sound to which the decticus will give utterance long before the pairing. For the rest, it is a repetition of what I saw yesterday:



"His Most Vulnerable Spot." (An American conceit.)

—McCutcheon, Chicago Tribune.

mutual caresses with the antennae, which limply pat the well-rounded sides.

The male does not seem greatly enraptured. He again nibbles his foot and seems to be reflecting. Alluring though the enterprise may be, it is perhaps not unattended with danger. Can there be a

nuptial tragedy impending? Can the business be exceptionally grave?

The writer then describes how the male lays a sort of egg which the female consumes.

At first, he continues, I looked upon the horrible banquet as no more than an individual aberration, an accident: the decticus' behaviour was so extraordinary; no other instance of it was known to me. But I have had to yield to the evidence of the facts. Four times in succession I surprised my captives dragging their wallet; and four times I saw them soon tear it, work at it solemnly with their mandibles for hours on end and finally gulp it down.

To return to the male. Limp and exhausted, as though shattered by his exploit, he remains where he is, all shrivelled and shrunk. He is so motionless that I believe him dead. Not a bit of it! The gallant fellow recovers his spirits, picks himself up, polishes himself and goes off. A quarter of an hour later, when he has taken a few mouthfuls, behold him stridulating once more. The tune is certainly lacking in spirit. It is far from being as brilliant or prolonged as it used to be before the wedding; but, after all, the poor old croak is doing his best.

Can he have any further amorous pretensions? It is hardly likely. Affairs of that kind, calling for ruinous expenditure, are not to be repeated: it would be too much for the works of the organism. Nevertheless, next day and every day after, when a diet of locusts has duly renewed his strength, the decticus scrapes his bow as noisily as ever. He might be the novice instead of a gluttoned veteran. His persistence surprises me.

The ditties become fainter from day to day, and occur less frequently. In a fortnight the insect is dumb. The dulcimer no longer sounds for lack of vigour in the player.

At last the decrepit decticus, who now scarcely touches food, seeks a peaceful retreat, sinks to the ground exhausted, stretches out his shanks in a last throes and dies. As it happens, the widow passes that way, sees the deceased and, breathing eternal remembrance, gnaws off one of his thighs.

## BREED—OR DIE!

Bold but Relentless Facts of Life—  
A Woman's Challenge

I WAS visiting the north of England in connection with an Industrial Congress, and I called upon a woman whose husband worked in a mine. Thus begins a vitally important article by the Countess of Warwick in the Hibbert Journal; and goes on: Her small house was scrupulously clean; she was young, vigorous, swift in thought and movement, and gave me the impression that nothing came into her life in the form of obstacle and surprise without finding her ready to deal with it effectively. She showed me with a certain pride the small collection of books on social subjects bought in second-hand shops by her and her husband. I remember seeing John Stuart Mill, Ruskin, William Morris, Rowntree, Henry George, and many another familiar name. "We have read them together," she told me; "we have educated one another since the time we first met at evening classes." I remarked that her married life seemed to lack one thing only, and that was a family, and I quoted the Eastern aphorism that a house without children is a garden without flowers. She smiled a little sadly, and then I noted how some faint lines about her mouth tightened and hardened, robbing her of a certain charm. "Lady Warwick," she said, "we earn between us by hard work from day to day between four and five pounds a week. It has taken many years to reach that figure, and there is no chance of passing beyond it. What we have endured on the road to this comparative comfort we alone know, and we don't talk about it. But we both believe that the game is not worth the candle. The conditions of life in England are not worth perpetuating, and neither of us would willingly bring children into the world to take their chance and run their horrible risks as we did." She stopped for a moment in order to be sure of her self-control, and then she told me that in her view, though all her heart cried out for little children, sterility was the only protest that could be made against the cruel conditions of modern life under capitalism. "I know that my husband and I are desirables from the employer's standpoint. We earn far more than we receive, we are temperate, hard-working, punctual, reliable. But when we have settled our rent and rates, clubs and insurances, dressed ourselves, paid tram-fares and bought a few books, there is nothing left but a slender margin that a few months' illness would sweep away. For a week or ten days in the year we may learn that England is not all as hideous as this corner of it, but we shall die without a glimpse of the world beyond and of its treasures that our books tell us about. If we stop