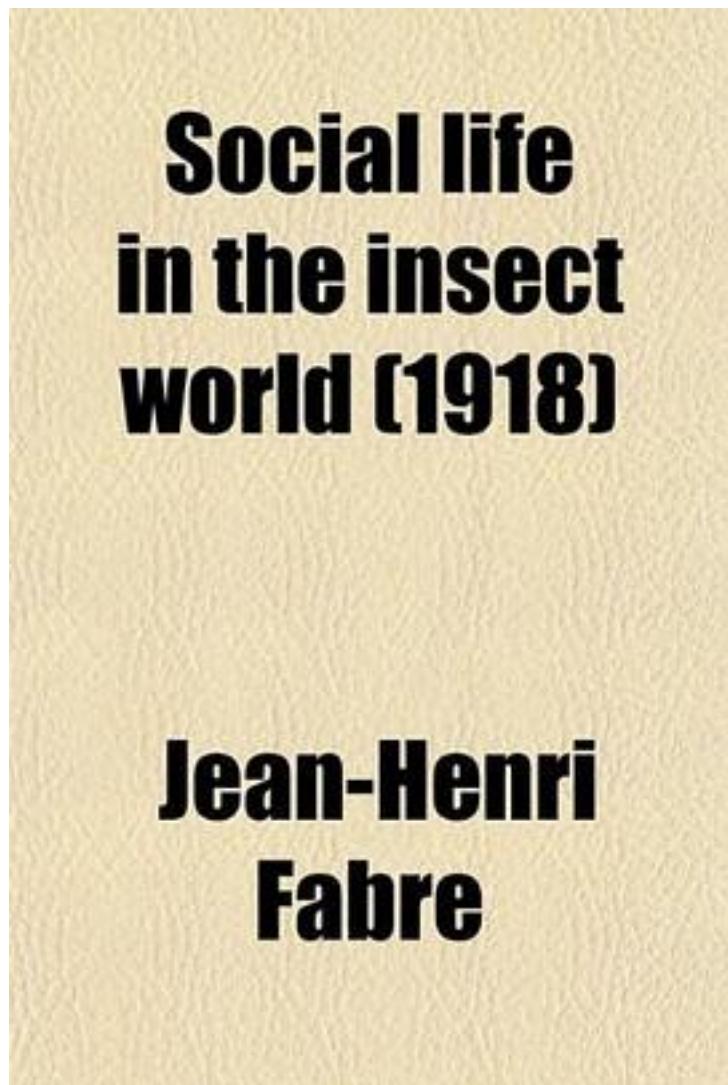


Social life in the insect world (1918)



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Purchase of this book includes free trial access to [www.million-books.com](http://www.million-books.com) where you can read more than a million books for free. This is an OCR edition with typos. Excerpt from book: CHAPTER III THE SONG OF THE CIGALE Where I live I can capture five species of Cigale, the two principal species being the common Cigale and the variety which lives on the flowering ash. Both of these are widely distributed and are the only species known to the country folk. The larger of the two is the common Cigale. Let me briefly describe the mechanism with which it produces its familiar note. On the under side of the body of the male, immediately behind the posterior limbs, are two wide semicircular plates which slightly overlap one another, the right hand lying over the left hand plate. These are the shutters, the lids, the dampers of the musical-box. Let us remove them. To the right and left lie two spacious cavities which are known in Provencal as the chapels (li capdlo). Together they form the church (la gleiso). Their forward limit is formed by a creamy yellow membrane, soft and thin; the hinder limit by a dry membrane coloured like a soap bubble and known in Provencal as the mirror (mirau). The church, the mirrors, and the dampers are commonly regarded as the organs which produce the cry of the Cigale. Of a singer out of breath one saysthat he has broken his mirrors (a li mirau creba). The same phrase is used of a poet without inspiration. Acoustics give the lie to the popular belief. You may break the mirrors, remove the covers with a snip of the scissors, and tear the yellow anterior membrane, but these mutilations do not silence the song of the Cigale; they merely change its quality and weaken it. The chapels are resonators; they do not produce the sound, but merely reinforce it by the vibration of their anterior and posterior membranes; while the sound is modified by the dampers as they are opened more or less widely. The actual source of the sound is ...

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