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The Countryman

A Quarterly Non-Party Review
and Miscellany of Rural Life and Work
for the English-speaking World

*Edited and Published by J. W. Robertson Scott
at Idbury, near Kingham, in Oxfordshire*

O more than happy countryman if only he knew his good fortune - *Virgil*.
Salute Urbanus, our fellow worker - *Paul*. The profit of the earth is for all - *Eccles*.
There is nothing better than farming, nothing more fruitful, nothing more
delightful, nothing more worthy of a free man - *Cicero*. The best citizens spring
from the cultivators - *Cato*. Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee - *Job*.
I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding - *1 Corinthians*

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The Rural School — What Fourteen Authors, an Actress, and two Playwrights, who Live in the Country, Think about it

IT occurred to us that it might be of service if, giving the educationists, the farmers and the politicians the go-by for once, we had the views of some observant and disinterested residents in the country on the rural educational system. We decided to try a few well-known rural authors who live in the country, also Edith Evans, the distinguished actress who farms, and Bernard Shaw, who besides his town flat at Whitehall Court has a place in Hertfordshire. 'What, in your view', we wrote, 'stands in most need of improvement, having regard to present and post-War conditions?' Here are the replies.

H. E. BATES (Kent)

No one rural problem can be isolated from the rest. My two small daughters attend the ordinary village school - journey, two miles by taxi; teacher, intelligent, efficient, tireless; results, extremely good educationally, higher immediately than those of the previous high school, health good, in spite of air-raids and cold midday meals. Yet I note several interest-

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ing things: the general physical standard of their small village friends is poor; their small brother of three is taller, for example, than boys of six, whose teeth are nothing but blackened stumps; many are cases of incipient rickets. Their defects, I notice, begin to be less marked and finally disappear, in many cases, as soon as the child is transferred to a centralized school when at least one well-cooked meal per day is provided. I cannot help feeling therefore that it is perhaps futile to hope that rural education can be progressive so long as the rural standard of home life remains so low. The real heroine is the village schoolmistress. But ask *her* for her greatest problem and she will reply, not the child or the government or the system but what happens or doesn't happen at home.

ADRIAN BELL (Suffolk)

I KNOW of much useful work being done by individual masters of country schools on the lines of teaching the young to think with their hands as well as their heads. Or rather, encouraging them to do so, for the instinct of it is bred in them. Certain school gardens, woodwork classes conducted by the master after hours, the encouragement of local dialect in the sense of disentangling it from 'urban slang' (in another instance), show this. But these instances need to become a broad stream before they affect the trend of education as a whole. No, until the country has decided what part agriculture — that is to say, the whole rural culture — is to play in the social structure of the future, rural education is bound to be unsatisfactory, because it does not know what it is educating *for*. It comes to this, until the farm-worker is assured of equal status with the town worker, education will be town-biased, as the building of so many of the area schools in the towns indicates. (The equipment, certainly, is excellent, but one of the teachings of education should be to make 'something out of nothing'. B-P., with the Boy Scouts, had this idea.) To say that the farm-worker has that status now that his wages equal the town worker's, is right in theory. In practice, farmers try to substitute still more machines for the expensive human, who becomes a sort of lonely machine-foreman. It won't do, of course. Many more will have to