

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and
Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1940.

LIVING IN THE COUNTRY

FOR some people the country is either a dormitory, or a playground or both. Migrating for brief periods from towns and cities, they expect to find rural areas equipped with town water, town sewage, town light and town transport. Finding these things unavailable they take refuge in laughing at the quaint systems by which water is still drawn out of the earth in one bucket and the sewage deposited in another. They laugh at the locals and have a lot of fun from Friday nights to Monday mornings. Their attitude to the country has been well reflected in a decade of country books whose authors, in fancy pants, have shown the rest of the world how frightfully amusing, quaint and intriguing (the words are all theirs, not mine) country life could be.

Facts and figures

In these ten years I cannot recall a book designed to show the potential country public, which is always great and is now daily becoming greater, how country life might really be lived; at what cost or what profit; whether it was healthier or happier; how the law applied to it; what the cost and methods of light, sanitation and water-supply might be; if it were possible to make a living, or supplement a living, by keeping livestock, bees or growing mushrooms; what the cost of building, restoring and maintaining a house or cottage should be, and so on. Now at last a book of this kind, based on the proposition, among others, that "the country life to-day is an ideal life for better reasons than the worship of an antique but obsolete rural England," has been written.

Living in the Country (Black, 7s. 6d.) is the book, and its authors, Frederick D. Smith and Barbara Wilcox, are a farmer and his wife. Their book comes at an opportune moment: the moment of airy generalities about the future of the land and the countryside, the moment when, the patient dying, the physicians hastily realize they will be out of pocket if he does and frantically begin to apply the desperate remedies. It comes at a moment when the problem of a population drifting from countryside to town has come, through the impact of total war, the diametrically opposite problem, the problem of a vast social revolution, of people drifting, unwillingly, gladly, socially unprepared, morally shattered, financially uncertain, into rural life, from which many will never go back.

Both sides of the picture

All the problems of that life, from sanitation to servants, from house-keeping to bee-keeping, from the nuisance of fleas to the nuisance of neighbours, from the growing of cabbage and lettuce in the back-garden to the raising on a commercial scale of market garden produce, from the legality of picking mushrooms to the job of buying a horse, are all, together with scores of others, not excluding those of social significance, expertly and above all honestly discussed and answered in this book. The authors have no illusions about the beauty or the hardship of country life; they know that fresh air is no substitute for good food; they know that happiness, even in lyrical surroundings, is more naturally the result of high economic standards than of the buoyant temperament. They know all about the death rate of towns being twenty-seven per cent. higher, even in peace-time, than that of rural areas, yet they do not forget to mention a certain appalling tuberculosis report for rural areas as the other side of the picture.

Theirs indeed is a picture painted on both sides of the canvas. It depicts fairly the joys and drawbacks of country life. Few people will need, or appreciate, at one time, all the facts given in its pages. It should be bought, put on the shelf and used, like a dictionary, for help, guidance and elucidation on all matters of country life. In its honest, practical yet visionary way it is so good that few of us will, by using it, fail to enlarge our vocabulary of living.

H. E. BATES.

WHO seeks for truth should be of no country.
—VOLTAIRE: *Reply to an Academician.*