

(continued from previous page)

I think only the poets, he murmured to himself, and a woman waiting beside him looked up startled.

IN the tram he thought again about cages. We are none of us free, he mused. This tram conductor, this man in the ragged coat in front of me, this woman with the parcels, even the school-girl with the bag, none of us free. We are all caged—you can see it in our faces. We can't sing the Lord's song because we are all in a strange land. We are in a strange land because we have not found our own souls. If we entered through our own souls into the land of the spirit, then we could sing.

It seemed again that he looked into Lisette's inwardly tranquil eyes, green, deep, secretive, yet calm and clear as twin lakes.

She should not have gone away, he decided. Yet what could he have done? The very essence of their relationship would have been bruised had he restrained her, had he protested or pleaded, had he fought for her. No—they had always entered and left each other as they pleased. Their communion with each other had been sacred because, although they raised no barriers against each other, yet they never forced an entry.

She had to go, he thought. Perhaps it was our destiny not to be together in this life. Some obscure purpose may be fulfilled because of our separation, because we were not permitted to go hand in hand nor grow together, as tree and soil grow together.

THAT night when everyone in the house was asleep except himself, he rose quietly and went out on to the porch. He did not think about what he was going to do. It was not a thinking act, it was something that was done through him, a gesture symbolic of the intent of some power or intuition he did not fully comprehend.

He lifted the cover from the canary's cage where it hung on the porch. The bird was asleep on its perch. He opened the wire door and left it ajar. In the morning the bird would awaken, and finding the open door, would go forth.

He went back to bed and slept.

AS he and his wife had breakfast, his daughter suddenly came in from the porch.

Mummy, I went to put back the cover off the bird's cage, and the door's open, and he's gone.

What? said his wife unbelievably, and she went out on the porch to see for herself.

Now who could have done that? Whoever would do a thing like that? And who could have stolen him? Dick—the canary's been stolen—Come and see.

Richard looked up quietly from his breakfast and spoke through the open door. He wasn't stolen. I let him out.

His wife came in, wide-eyed, amazed. You let him out! What do you mean? How could you have let him out? What-ever for?

I just opened the door. I did it in the night. He would have gone when he woke at dawn.

She looked at him as if he were mad. Why on earth did you do that? she asked incredulously.

It should not be kept caged, he answered.

But Dick, it is cruel to let it go. The other birds will kill it.

That is what I mean, he said. It is better that it should die by its own kind, than live in captivity among us.

Really, Dick, I don't understand you. To do such a cruel thing, apparently for no reason. I don't understand you.

I know, he said, and then stood silently, gazing out into the sunny garden, and his heart was utterly at peace.

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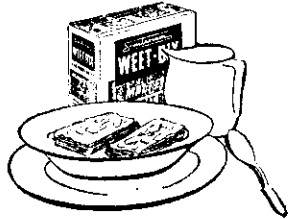
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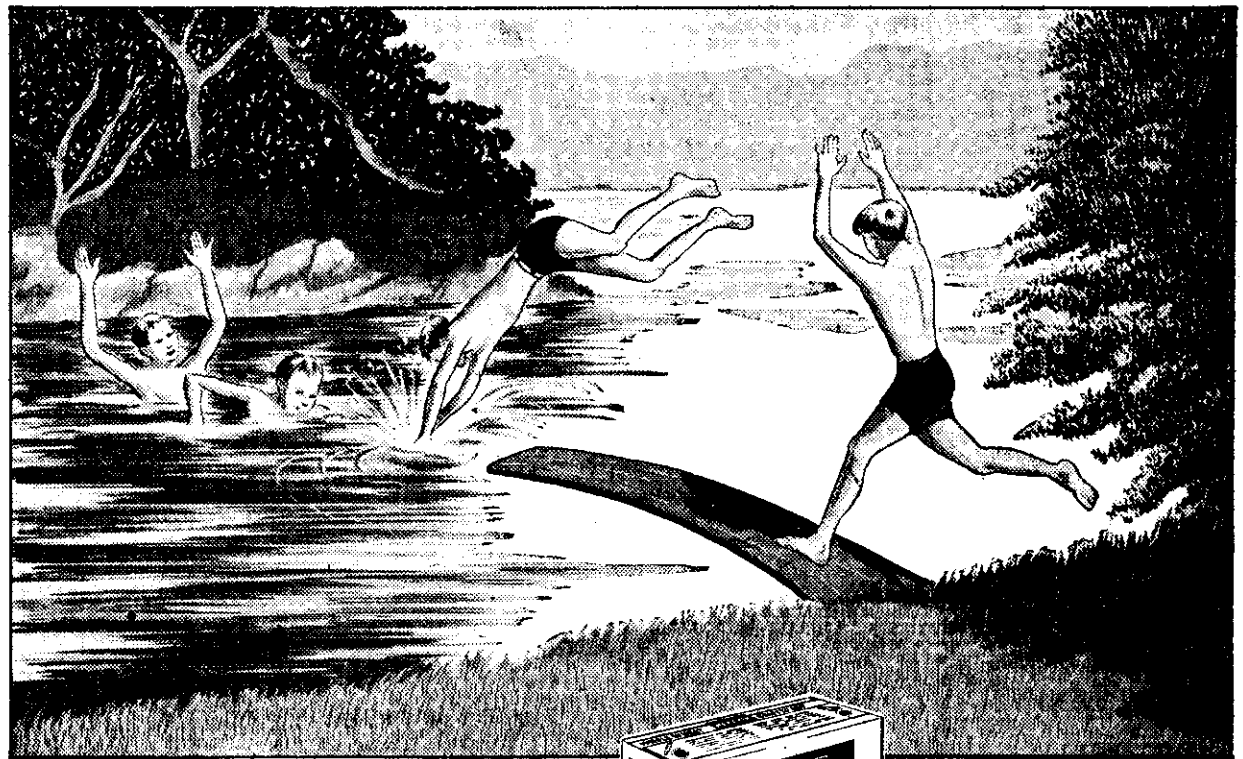
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