

## SIMPLE STORIES

### FATHERLESS

THERE was a boy: sensitive, curious, intelligent, and fatherless since the age of two. He didn't mind that much. He was at a boarding prep. school, where, being keen at games, he held his own and was happy. People were good to him, and he was only a little embarrassed when they spoke well of his father, and told the boy that he would have to try to live up to the high example set him by the deceased.

He had been curious from an early age. When he was barely eight, he had asked his mother where babies came from, and since she was a sensible woman, she had told him gently, but without embroidery. He had nodded and gone about his business satisfied. It was just another small point that had needed clearing up. Lately he had become interested in biology (true refuge for the curious), and the sex life of mammals was to him just part of an absorbing subject.

The family doctor, overhauling him before he left prep. school, thought it a duty to give him a little lecture on the facts of life; starting with the flowers, and the bees, and Nature's plan. The boy thanked him politely.

A clergyman came to dinner in the holidays, took him for a walk in the garden and talked of the insects, and the pollen, and the wonderful ways of Nature. The boy thanked him, but that night his dreams were of troubled bees, and clouds of choking yellow pollen.

Finally, a nice uncle took him out to lunch; an uncle who usually said "Here's five bob. Don't make yourself sick." But this time he began to talk of growing up. The boy sprang up, white and shouting "No! No! Not any more bloody bees!" And ran from the restaurant.

Later, the nice uncle said to his wife, "It just shows that the boy needs a father to guide him."

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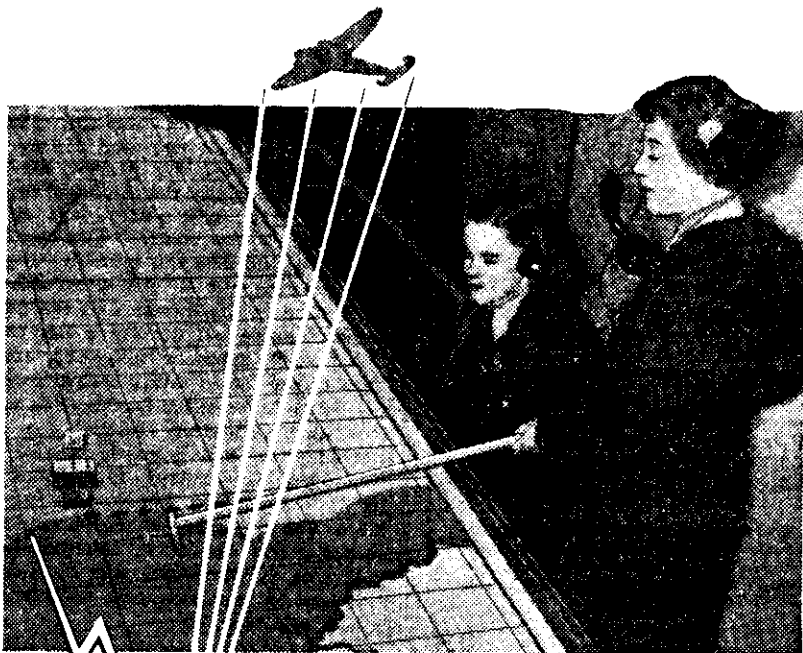
seems to-day no need why people should endure the semi-exile of living out their lives in thinly-settled rural areas.

The factory, as regards methods, is as much present in the country to-day as in the town. And factory methods tend to large-scale processes as much in the fields as in the workshops. U.S.A. was not the first, Russia will not be the last country to be collectivised—to farm areas rather than sections.

When furrows thus run mile-long lengths, when the machinist and the machine have finished taking over what is still largely a handicraft, what is to prevent exodus and alternation, that of people at present too much tied to the countryside, to the cities, that also of people becoming too citified to the country? That such sojourns far from busy haunts are essentials of human culture, our wisest poet Wordsworth knew. And Dickens, the poet of crowded streets, proved the opposite equally true.

Perhaps God made both country and town and His Eternal Adversary made it his malevolent task to keep them apart.

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22