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The Countryman Book

Readers of the first number of 'The Countryman', who still like to spare a yard or two of shelving for the thirty-odd volumes published under R.S.'s editorship, will be as glad as those who were introduced to it later to have 'The Countryman Book' (Odhams, 10s 6d), in which he has brought together some of the best contributions — in prose, verse and illustration — during his twenty years of editing. Here is what some readers have been kind enough to write for us about the book.

Field Marshal Smuts

I WELCOME 'The Countryman Book' — this anthology from twenty years of 'The Countryman', by Robertson Scott himself. It will be welcomed also by the numerous readers of that great journal, and by many more who had not the opportunity to enjoy its good stuff in journal form. Those twenty years cover an epoch of change perhaps without parallel in history — years during which human energies have been engaged and human nerves racked as perhaps never before. They called for some easing, some respite. How good 'The Countryman' has been in this respect throughout those years, and still continues to be! Now, in this book of selections, we shall have the best of the old collected to join with the new 'Countryman' in this function of release and refreshment for the tired mind and nerves.

Call it escape, if you like. But so are poetry and music, and perhaps even religion. Such escape is necessary for the spirit — escape and retreat into natural things and happenings, into the simplicities and intimacies, which have nourished our race from the beginnings. Much of the upset and unrest of our time is due to our preoccupation with public events and problems, continually forced on our attention by every form of publicity. The world is thus too much with us.

I like to browse in 'The Countryman', among things and events familiar or strange. Sense, commonsense, nonsense — it is all there, and we feel once more back in the life which simple people live in a natural world, away from the noises of the machine and the streets. And so I say: thanks for this anthology from Robertson Scott's 'Countryman', and all good wishes for the future of 'The Countryman'.

H. E. Bates, country writer and novelist

PLEASANT to think that I was a youth of twenty-one, about to publish my first novel, when 'The Countryman' was projected more than twenty years ago, and that Robertson Scott, its founder and editor, was a daring young man of sixty on an entirely new kind of flying trapeze! Since then a deeper and wider kind of consciousness has developed, in all classes, about life in the country. A huge literature on it has poured forth. More and more people, trapped by

wars and the fear of wars, have found themselves with a sharper hunger for England's green and pleasant land. I was going to say that Robertson Scott and 'The Countryman', in their unique way, had been not a little responsible for this. But that would, of course, be putting it the wrong way round. Good editors are like prophets: they begin by crying in the wilderness and then, thinking up their own kind of manna, end by satisfying the latent appetite of those who do not know why they hunger. In 1927 Robertson Scott must have been aware, like the good editor he was, of a vast and growing appetite in our own wilderness for a better country way of life, and the manna he offered was 'The Countryman'.

Now, out of these twenty years, he has gathered together and produced an anthology which has all the appearance of a prize marrow-fat pea. Prime ministers, labourers, dukes, playwrights, earls, novelists, American politicians, farmers, bird-watchers, professors, bishops, sanitary inspectors, magnates, chimney sweeps, kings — the democratic and now traditional 'Countryman' cast of contributors is here in all its astonishing variation. But behind it all is the hand of the man who twenty-one years ago also had wild dreams, said boo to the experts and confounded them, to our everlasting advantage, with the first magazine to be made the exact size for a pocket. How appropriate, in all ways, that it should be as green as England!

Field Marshal Earl Wavell

HERE'S twenty years' essence, in full schweppervescence,
Distilled in 'The Countryman Book';
Here are pictures and verses, the blessings and curses
Of field, farm and woodland and brook.
Prime Ministers, poets and tramps; rat-catchers, parsons
and scamps
Write of cottages, castles and camps.

The ethics of 'bundling', the methods of trundling
A wheelbarrow, trolley or pram,
Dogs, badgers and sheep, a girl chimney-sweep,
The way to make strawberry jam;
Dunmow and its flitches, the trial of witches,
The somnambulation of wigeon,
You'll find them all here, with discourses on beer
And maternal lactation in pigeon.

Of wisdom and lore there are samples galore,
There are anecdotes pithy and pert,
There are sayings and saws from in- and outdoors
Of Jarge, Sam and Sandy and Bert.