

Editorial

I FIRST DROVE A FERGUSON TRACTOR at the age of eight. It "was not a great lumbering old-fashioned thing", as HW discovered when he acquired his (*The Story of a Norfolk Farm*, p.213), or I should not have been able to drive it. You started it with the gear-lever and it steered itself along the deeply rutted tracks round the chicken pens on my cousin's Essex farm. A few years later I graduated to the Fordson Major. There was no self-start on that and I wasn't allowed to swing the handle for fear of a broken wrist. They were wonderful, those boyhood visits; getting up early in the morning to tow the tractor with its load of mash and cast-iron tank slopping water; breathing the dust and chaff from the great belt-driven threshing machine; watching the piglets frantically feeding. Many years later I drew a wage as a tractor driver, and I sang as I took my trailer-load of grain from the combine to the drying-shed, and recited Hamlet's Soliloquy as I harrowed a field, up, down, hour after hour. I never drove very straight, but I enjoyed myself. I was also put to baling, and it was then that I learned what hard work really was and shamed into realising that this wasn't a job just anyone could do. (It was a wizened 70 year old labourer who demonstrated the technique of pitching a bale from the ground to the fourth layer on a trailer stack.)

HW knew what hard work was, all right. In this issue Ben Serjeant reminds us of Henry's hard work as a farmer, and links his ideas on farming with his writings; and Ronald Duncan reminds us of his hard work as a writer. It is HW's concentration of purpose which impresses us; as George Painter reminds us,

The peculiar quality of Henry Williamson is the piercing directness of his vision, the absolute identity of his own feeling and its communication to the reader, the clothing of a naked and terrible pain or joy in a noble and innocent prose, as keen as sunlight and as transparent as spring-water.

We are fortunate to be able to reprint the whole of George Painter's review of *Love and the Loveless* which appeared originally in *The Aylesford Review*; and in having Fr Brocard Sewell's fascinating account of the history of that journal. And we begin where it all began, at No. 11 Hillside Road, described so evocatively by John Glanfield.

This is a journal of contrasts, as any journal of the Henry Williamson Society is almost bound to be. And as our membership is bound to be: we seek the man and his vision in the South London suburbs, in the Devon countryside, in the derelict Norfolk farm, but our visions may not all be the same. We view him, as it were, from different vantage points. But, as we tramped round the farm at Stiffkey last year, "Isn't it interesting that all the members of the HW Society are all such thoroughly nice people?" said someone. "Doesn't that say something about Henry?"

Just so.

W.H.