

1945

THE USAAF HAVE GONE

The wood was cleared meticulously, except for the concrete roadway. The troops departed, and silence reigned again.

But a change had come over it. Our loved familiar sanctuary had been violated, desecrated, trampled by alien feet. The life had gone out of it, the spirit of the place departed.

Within a few years even the lifeless shell that had been Nurse Wood was demolished, razed to the ground, except for a small belt of wild cherries and maple near the house and ploughed in.

All the pulsing life, the butterflies and birds, oak trees and orchids, the magic and mystery in which our young lives had been steeped were erased from the face of the earth.

I wandered disconsolately along the well-known paths that empty summer. The ground was caked dry and the grass in the clearings like straw. It seemed as if there was in the air an echo which could be felt rather than heard an echo of the diminished seventh, a descending cadence anticipating the last, long and final tonic chord.

The war had cost us dear, so much had been taken since it began. First Booter, father's treasured mount. The wood was irreparably spoiled; and I could still hear the anguished cries of the bereaved badger calling her mate in the icy moonlight.