

# WHY DON'T WE MEASURE THE MOONSHINE?



Written for  
"The Listener"  
by  
**ROBERT H. NEIL**

Left: Our artist's suggestion for an apparatus to remedy the deficiency

*How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears.*

YES, we should have missed a lot if we'd missed the moon. Whereas if someone wiped out the sun, the only thing that would happen would be that we should have another poor summer.

Yet there is no chart of the magic moonlight that transforms familiar landscapes into fairylands of romance, and that transfigures weak humanity into something only a little lower than the angels.

We can learn from the almanac of the comings and goings of the moon, of her ceaseless waxings and wanings. But there are no statistics available as to the duration of the moon's visibility.

We measure up so many things that don't matter, and we neglect to chart the moonshine that does.

After all, what benefit is it to know how much sunshine we had in September or what was the weight, in tons per acre, of the October showers, if we may not learn the depth or intensity of the moonlight of November?

Omar would have been a much different Khayyam without his moon.

*You rising moon that looks for us again,  
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane  
Before we treat her as we treat the sun  
And register her Pleasure and her Pain?*

OUR meteorological departments are now almost as comprehensive as they are exact. Not a single degree of frost, not an odd trace of fog, not a solitary whiff of gale, but is accurately recorded by wonderfully contrived instruments and recorded for all time on fearsome-looking charts.

You know the charts, all full of funny little squares and red and black lines running zig-zag from top to bottom and right across, and up and down. And blank spaces beneath the heading "sunshine," and rivers of black ink under the word "rain."

Any local Clerk of the Weather will tell you, if you ask him nicely, and at the right time—the right time is not just when he's reckoning up how much frost we should have had if we'd had any at all—he'll tell you:

Whether or not the sun was shining at mid-day on any day in the year that you care to mention.

When it rained, and how much and why, in any week since you were born.

What was the force of the wind, and its direction, on any particular evening.

What was the warmest day and the coldest night during the past fifty years.

AND so on. But ask him how much moonshine we had last month and he's stumped. He can't tell you. Nobody can.

But why can't they? That's what I want to know. Why should the rays of the moon pass unreflected and unrecorded?

The moon plays a very large part in our lives. It's a much nearer neighbour than the sun and a deal more friendly.

It never raises blisters on the back of our neck. It never blazes so pitilessly from a blue sky as to drive strong men to soft drinks.

No, it is the theme of poets, the inspiration of artists, the companion of lovers. For every song that has been sung about the sun there is a whole volume of ballads about the magic moon.

Blot out the moon by a perpetual eclipse and where would your ballad-mongers be? No more moon hath raised

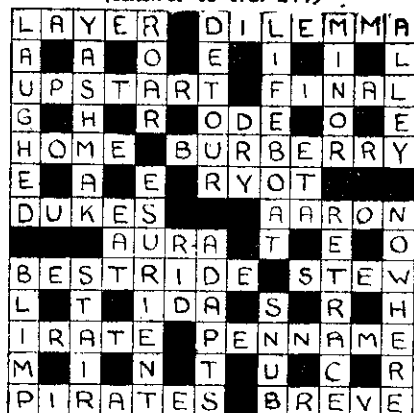
her lamp above. No more in the pale moonlight. No more Oriental moon is shining. No more meet me, darkies, when de moon am big. No more anything.

But for the moon we should have missed the beauty of that glorious first act of "La Boheme," with the songs of Rudolph and Mimi and "Lovely Maid in the Moonlight."

But for  
*That orb'd maiden, with white face laden,  
Whom mortals call the moon,  
We should have lost forever Lorenzo's invitation to Jessica.*

## THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

(Answer to No. 244)



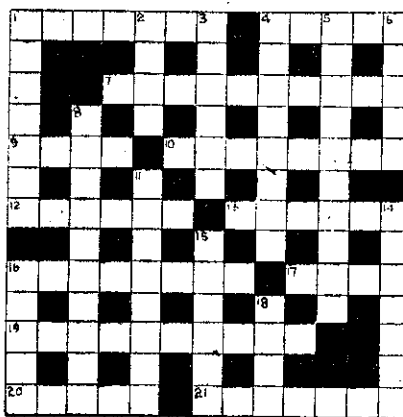
### Clues Across

- Atmosphere disturbed in an underground hollow is something not appreciated by the common herd.
- One's equivalent of a dog's day?
- Recent mail (anag.).
- Lied in a lazy manner.
- I eat corn (anag.).
- Eaten away.
- Brown pigment from soot.
- The postscript is reversed before the finish.
- Assert.
- Mob rule.
- "Exit Sir —" (Title of a play by Ngato Marsh and Dr. Jellett).
- "And was Jerusalem builded here, among these dark, — mills." (Blake).

### Clues Down

- Grain over frozen water found along the top of some buildings.
- Help (It sounds rather like a wager).
- A coster forms a bodyguard.
- A Disney 10 across.
- The first step.
- The colour of the eye of the Little Yellow God.
- Get her a lot, on the whole.
- Lead jumbled in the dock presents an impasse.
- About art, Eric is uncertain.
- Traps.
- Form of words less mighty than the pen.
- Cost (anag.).

(No. 245; Constructed by R.W.C.)



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