

# Love For The Land

(Continued from previous page)

know every villager and where the village churchyard is rich with the dust of their ancestors, there is still a large section of the comfortable middle classes in England whose love of the country and of country life is derived less consciously from the same sources. For them, descendants perhaps of country squires and "gentlemen farmers," the country does not mean, as it does out here, hard work, shearing, dipping, milking, digging, ploughing. That is done by the labourer. It does not mean wool and butterfat and apples so much as a general belief that the land and life on the land provide, not indeed riches, but a pleasant sufficiency. Country life in their case means escape not so much from work as from worry, from smoke and dirt and noise. It means an abundance of flowers and birds and beasts; a return to a primitive way of life that is aesthetically more satisfying than life on the average New Zealand farm, because it is based on a long-established tradition.

THE love of the country in England runs deeply in artistic and literary circles. It is not only the Thomas Hardys and the Walter Sickerts who seek to live out the evening of their days in the quiet of village life. It is the Beverley Nicholls, the Sackville Wests, the Meynells, and hosts of others whose ideal of bliss is rural. Whether this would still be so if country weekends meant travelling on New Zealand roads and by New Zealand railways may be questioned, but not very seriously. The cottage that appeals to English students and Bohemians is often as inaccessible as any New Zealand home-stead. Ideally, it is in some village where the honk of motor-cars is all but unknown, where the cottages lack sanitation and ordinary conveniences, where

beams are apt to bump the head at every turn, and where ancient ovens or open fires make cooking an art as well as a labour. This is the background which Bloomsbury and Chelsea love to convert to aesthetic uses.

[T] is, however, as difficult to judge as to generalise. Some readers will remember a story by Chekov about a man who spent his life dreaming of gooseberries. In childhood he had lived on a farm, and that farm with its gooseberry bushes remained in his system through 40 years of official life. In the end, it became an obsession. He would study sale notices, write for information about properties on the market, inspect them and then his bank account, and finally sink into depression because he was not yet able to buy a farm of his own. But at last, after the most miserable economies, he achieved ownership, and his first thought was that he would now be able to eat gooseberries grown on his own soil.

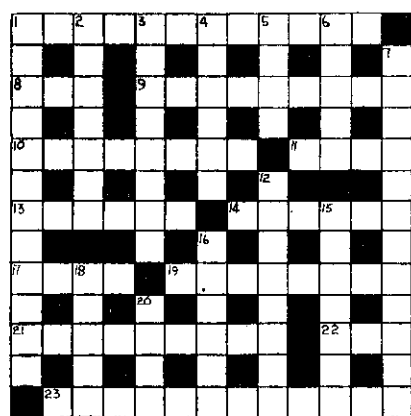
It would be interesting to know how many New Zealanders have read that story, and how many of those who have read it did so with the feeling that they were reading about themselves. It is certain that many people in New Zealand who will never buy farms read advertisements of farms for sale. They may not be sighing for gooseberries, but they are harking back to something else for which farm-life stands—the smell of a woolshed or of a stable, wind running through tussocks or grass, fowls round a grain-stack, sea-gulls following a plough, gorse in full bloom, pine-needles or thistle-down or fern dust. Just as Falstaff as he died babbled of green fields, most of us as we grow old discover that the mud which stuck to our boots in childhood remains for the rest of our lives.

—A.O.S.

(See also page 11)

## THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

(No. 156: Constructed by R.W.C.)



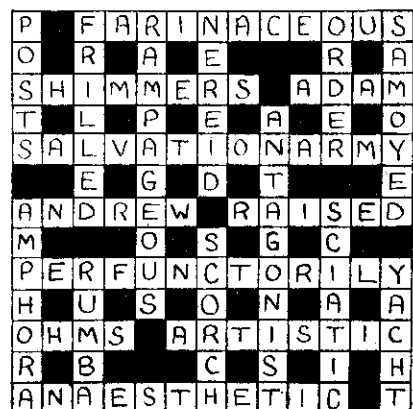
### Clues Across

1. Having had one over the eight?
8. There's nothing in a B.A.
9. A real, firm warning (4, 5).
10. She heard this.
11. Wire into a Maori 17 across.
13. Bad ear out of the country.
14. Here you find the boss in the stream.
17. Superman.
19. Was I told to sow mine? (4, 4).
21. This looks like the King of Beasts in revolt.
22. Range of knowledge.
23. Death calling to tell you what to do when the power fails. (5, 1, 6).

### Clues Down

1. A bad sherry, eh? (anag.).
2. Her tale (anag.).
3. Flattery (4, 4).
4. A miner changes his environment here.
5. Cricket ground in 1 across.
6. A seer will obliterate.
7. Me nice person! (anag.).
12. You might find this in an A.I. garden.
15. Kath and Ned got together and expressed gratitude.
16. Chief part of flint, sand, etc.
18. Jewish doctor of the law.
20. Utter nonsense.

(Answer to No. 155)



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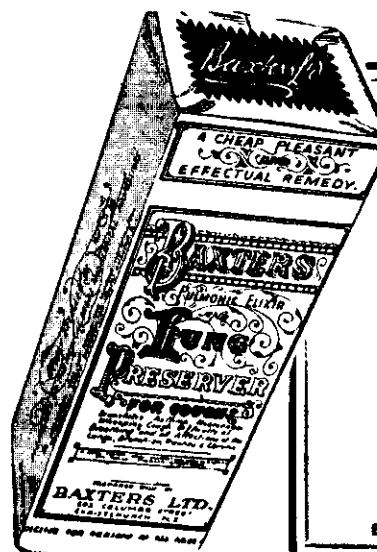
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