

and jerseys. Outside the sky is bright blue with the snowy hills cutting sharply against it. The fields are tawny-green, with cocksfoot and buttercups and clover in the grass; and blue borragge, dog-daisies, and a pink rose bush are growing over by the dam. Under the willows in the mushroom paddock rabbits are playing, and thrushes hopping across the shadows. The heavily-leaved boughs float gently in the drying air. I suddenly want to sing.

At the tent my husband has rigged up the canvas floor as a break between the wind from the snows and the fire. We cook bacon and eggs and coffee, remarking how revolting indoors, and how delicious out-of-doors is the smell of frying. Himself wants to convert one of the food boxes into a meat safe and busies himself with butter-muslin and tacks as soon as we have eaten. I am left to the job I love—making the camp ship-shape. But first I remove the warmest slacks and jerseys and get into shorts. I take the bedding over to the bridge and hang it out to air, I stand at the steps of the hut and wash the breakfast dishes in hot soapy water. I cook prunes and figs for tomorrow's breakfast, and black currants for tonight's dinner, rousing the smouldering fire into a flame with an enamel plate beaten fiercely up and down so that a draught is forced upwards under the logs. I pour the fruit up and dissolve a packet of jelly in a mixture of their juices. Now I can go down to the creek and wash the billies.

This, of all camp joys, is one of the best. I stand bare-footed in the creek washing the fruit-stains inside and the soot

outside with a root of grass covered in soft mud. Though a black billy is a camper's pride, a sooty billy is a good camper's horror, and there is nothing that so easily and pleasantly removes soot as soft mud, I take longer than is necessary, paddling about on the round stones, looking for mint among the grasses and waiting for a minnow to swim over my feet. The sun pours down but the wind is still cool. Soon, however, the snow will be gone, and then—

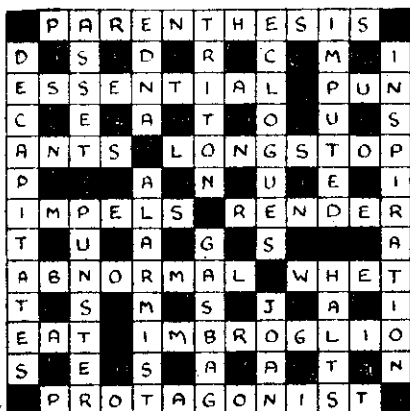
Then? Just camping: looking at the sky and the hills as if they were being discovered for the first time; wandering through the hot grass and the spicy shade under the trees; going to bed in the dusk and watching the stars come out; writing, resting, doing just as one likes while "peace comes dropping slow."

And the husband? No. Activity for him—washing, fishing, climbing, anything to be on the move. He will sometimes need assistance, so one must be ready with complaints of what one has left behind—no coat hangers, no towel rack, no clothes-pegs, no ladle. Then he will set to and fashion these necessities from bits and pieces he has collected around him, modestly requiring nothing in return but a little wifely praise.

When the children return they will view our rested faces and sunburnt arms with surprise. That we in our elderly camping have enjoyed ourselves as much as they in their youthful climbing will not seem possible to them. But we shall say nothing for we ourselves were young once—though no child will ever really believe it of a parent.

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

(Solution No. 480)



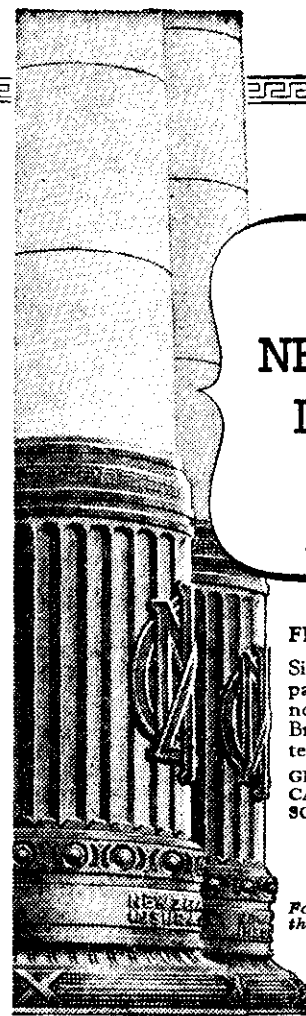
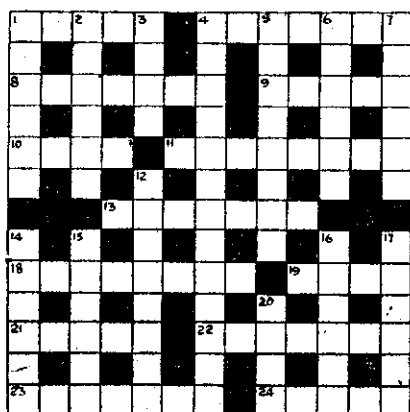
Clues Down

- "To scatter — o'er a smiling land" (Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church-yard").
- Wander in confusion.
- Part of 3YC's Sunday Programme.
- Not a chorister (anag.) . but it is to do with music.
- He beat the 19 across despite the latter's superior speed.
- Chooses.
- Corrects.
- "The —" is the title of a much-reproduced painting by L. Campbell Taylor.
- "Nods, and Becks, and wreathed —" (Milton's "L'Allegro").
- On bail (anag.).
- "and it — not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (Epistle of James, 5, 17).
- Depend upon (two words).
- "The soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had elsewhere its setting, And cometh from —" (From the same source as 22 across).

*Clues Across

- "Still in thy right hand carry gentle — To silence envious tongues" ("Henry VIII," Act III, Scene 2).
- Our gate is put out of order . . . it's a wanton offence.
- Regularly found among a race.
- He and Ron discover a river flowing through the Lake of Geneva.
- "Woodman, spare that —! Touch not a single bough!" (George Pope Morris.)
- Port, indeed!
- Part of a bacon tester.
- Late tram (anag.).
- See 5 down.
- Scottish land-owner.
- "Heaven lies about us in our —!" (Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality").
- Probably part of the apparel of a 21 across.
- Behead this French sculptor and you have the Norse God of War.

No. 481 (Constructed by R.W.C.)



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