

# Look Out for Those Radiations!

**H**UMAN kind cannot bear very much reality; especially if the real is also the picturesque. You should take the picturesque in sips, sketching the bossy mountain or the embowered lake from horseback like Dr. Syntax, and then passing on. It doesn't do to bog down in a stone cottage at Windermere, still less in a castle on the Jungfrau.

Keep clear also of Public Works Camps in the Mackenzie Country.

Before the hydro-electric scheme got properly under way there was a lot of preliminary work, mainly of a labouring sort, going on. The single men were accommodated in tiny huts, each equipped with one bunk, one table, one stove, one shelf, one chair and one window.

These huts were sprinkled along the edge of a vertiginous ravine which, after a week or so, became merely a god-awful gash. An icy torrent raved at the bottom of this canyon, spilling out of the great lake and scouring itself even deeper into the rock and glacial rubble of those parts.

The lake itself was imprisoned on all sides by stark mountains, forming such a scene of cheerless romance as to be a natural choice for tourists and postage-stamp designers. The winds howled hot from the north-west or cold from the south-west, but in any case they howled most of the time, rocking the unrooted huts gently towards the chasm.

Under these conditions it was natural that one's thoughts should turn to poetry, and there was indeed a well-stocked library set up behind the cook-house. Under "Wordsworth" on a fly-blown card were ranged the adventures

A New Zealand Landscape, with People,  
by "AUGUSTUS"

of a character named Jeeves in several volumes.

Unable to bear the insistent reality of those rocks, those tussocks and those vast star-shotted nights, unable, too, to bear the pressure of one's individual soul (for no hut was large enough to allow the solace of much society) one took to cultivating one's sensibilities.

There was one red-headed man who spent his time trying to catch the little robin-like birds which darted about the arid grass.

"I tried treacle mixed with the chewing gum last night," he would confide in his opening statement at breakfast. "Smeared it all over the grass."

"No good?"

"Nope." Silence would settle again.

Another man was convinced that the whole cliff on which our shacks were perched was undermined by the river and would collapse with the coming of spring.

"I been watching the surface of me tea each day. See how it's higher one side of the cup?" He sighed with a sad satisfaction. "Yep, she's sinking all right, the whole ruddy caboodle is sinking into the ditch."

Two men developed warts on the backs of their hands and a dull panic settled over the camp as the others waited for the contagion to spread, anxiously examining themselves in the showers.

ONE evening as I was lying on my bunk reading Ruby M. Ayres by candlelight my door opened and a middle-aged man named Fergus who was

experimenting with side-whiskers came in and sat at the table. He took from his pocket a tin of condensed milk punctured in two places, and capping his mouth over one of the holes sucked down a mouthful. Then he offered me the other hole.

"Sweetened?" I asked. He nodded unhappily. So I dragged off a gollop and replaced the tin on the table with his own hole towards him. We both rolled a herb and lit them from the candle. Presently Fergus jerked his head at my bunk and asked:

"Do you sleep all right on that bunk?"

"Not too bad."

"Dream?"

"On good nights I dream. Sometimes I eat a couple of pickled walnuts before blowing out the candle. That helps."

"Ah. Dreaming shortens your life. I notice you have your bunk running east-and-west. That's bad." I smoked and waited.

"All bunks along this ridge ought to run north-and-south. I been into all the other huts now to tell them. Yours is the last one, so I thought I'd do you tonight."

"You mean all the others have turned their bunks around?"



"The rod whipped and recoiled . . . it was getting the better of Fergus"

"Well, of course. You see, you're lying athwart the radiations." Stubbing out his cigarette he sprang to his feet and with a quick flick inside his waistcoat produced a green metal device like the rib from a lady's corset, which was bent over and bound at the middle with thread.

"Watch this," he commanded, and took the two ends of the rod in his hands, bending them apart and holding them from him in the pose of a water-diviner. The rod began to make dipping jerking movements. He came over to me and held the gadget in line with the longitudinal axis of the bunk. The rod plunged and bucked. It whipped and recoiled savagely. It was getting the better of Fergus. His face was contorted with the strain of holding on to it. Suddenly he dropped it to the blanket as though it were hot, and blew on his tortured fingers.

"There!" he said, replacing the rod in his bosom like a fond adder.

"B-b-but . . ." I was aghast. What had I been trifling with all those weeks? Athwart what diabolical radiations had I strewn my heedless limbs? Fergus shook his head, deprecating my alarm in the manner of a householder familiar with the uproarious vagaries of the plumbing.

"Simply bauxite," he smiled out of a wan countenance as though little else was to be expected of a locality so removed from the decencies of life.

We hurled ourselves into the moving. I tore the bunk from its place and shoved it against the adjoining wall expecting a static discharge to explode with released tension through the floorboards.

Seated once more we both felt the need of another pull at the condensed (continued on next page)

(Solution to No. 593)

F	R	A	C	T	I	O	U	S	A	A
A	A	R	N	A	D	I	R			
E	V	E	N	T	U	A	T	E	O	C
E	A	N	E	A	R	T	H			
A	N	G	L	I	N	G	Z	A	A	
N	R	E	E	T	N					
G	R	O	A	N	S	A	S	K	I	N
O	U	E	S			O				
S	N	A		C	O	L	O	N	E	L
T	U	D	O	R	H	P	X			
U	S	E	L	O	Q	U	E	N	C	E
R	E	E	D	S	O	R	E			
A	L	T	O	L	E	R	A	B	L	E

## Clues Across

- No terms with this creature.
- "And that one — which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless"  
(Milton, "On His Blindness").
- Here it looks as though the donkey is sick.
- This stone could be comparatively 5 down when beheaded.
- Fruity part of a 13 down 1 across.
- "And oftentimes, to win us to our  
The instruments of darkness tell us  
truths" (Spoken by Banquo in  
"Macbeth").
- Praise, son? It's a calumny.

## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- "— deferred maketh the heart sick." (Proverbs).
- Even if you get it right, it isn't right at all.
- Mixture of rats and mice for an Oriental weapon.
- Palace, or Walk?
- If it's A1 here, it's first class.
- If it is for a certain amount or over, it needs a 2d stamp.
- The proper way to march, or part of the foot.
- Marryat's Masterman?
- "Why do the heathen —, and the people imagine a vain thing?" (Psalms).

No. 594 (Constructed by R.W.C.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9				10		
12				11		
14		15			13	
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23						
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## Clues Down

- "Secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an —" (Dickens in "A Christmas Carol").
- Hippocampus.
- Slippery fish.
- One of seven, according to Disney.
- It presents an enormous bill.
- Masters out of order.
- Cynical.
- Shocking.
- The list is out of order.
- The Queen Mother wore this colour on the present Queen's wedding day.