

ONE-SIDED HUNTING

by "SUNDOWNER"

TWO pups which saved their lives by getting born an hour after their three brothers and two sisters had been buried are making new assaults on my weakness. They are now nearly a month old, and their method for three or four days has been to sit up when I approach the kennel and cock their heads sideways to look

MAY 17 at me. But today they went further. They sat up, stretched, yawned, staggered round the kennel with their tails up, then looked at me for a moment and barked. I felt my resistance melting away and began pulling myself together to go. But suddenly one threw himself clumsily on the other and started chewing his ear. This, I knew, meant "Let us be cunning. Let us be bold. Let us catch the old boy by his heartstrings and hang on till something gives. Another turn or two and we'll have him." So they bit, and rolled, and growled, and yelped till there was nothing left inside me but water.

Fortunately, something else then happened. Andy bellowed, and then bellowed again, and I knew that each wheezy call was a guffaw from the depths of his useless bulk at farmer-sentimentalists. Joe and Joey took up the call, crowing together from the trees, one sharp and shrill, the other raucous and rumbling, but each in his own way deriding me. The sheep were silent, but I knew that if they chose to speak they could tell a ridiculous tale too of a flock increasing fastest on the useless fringe—one pet the first year, three the next, five the next, and all given a lease (of life) in perpetuity. I remembered the old ram, who was done the year before last, more done last year, and so far gone this year in fat, toothless odorless uselessness that I am almost beginning to blush when I see him.

How far could I let it go? Was I farming or fooling; making the animals pay for themselves and a little more; or establishing an animal refuge? Before I could find an answer the pups rolled over and were sound asleep, one with his hind leg in the air. I hurried indoors to advertise them for sale, but instead of writing the advertisement made this note.

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THE enthusiasts—if they are more than one—who want the Department of Internal Affairs to liberate grizzly bears in the Te Anau-Dusky Sound country have this at least in their favour that they are ashamed of one-sided hunting. They want danger for the man holding the rifle as well as to the animal receiving the bullet. To be fair they should, of course,

MAY 20 agree that their guns should be single-barrel, muzzle-loading flintlocks and their bullets marbles or pebbles picked up in a creek. But I want to be fair, too. I know that if there were bears in the bush and the only weapons permitted were tomahawks and sheath-knives men would hunt them and now and again kill them; and they would still call it sport. High-power repeating rifles take the risk out of hunting, but



NORTH AMERICAN GRIZZLY
Danger for the man with the rifle

safety does not invariably kill courage. All it does is to make the cautious bold and help cowards to conceal their fear.

But I came today on another reason for releasing big and dangerous animals in wild and impenetrable country. It was a suggestion by a writer on Ceylon that elephants should be introduced into New Guinea to open up and road the jungle. There were no jungles, he said, in Ceylon in which the ridges had not been surveyed and roaded before human engineers saw them; and he thought that, if a few wild elephants were turned loose in one of the mountain ranges in New Guinea, explorers, instead of cutting their way painfully yard by yard, would soon be able to walk at normal speed; all fords and passes

would be revealed to them; and in arid territory "what waterholes there were would be centres from which roads would radiate as from Piccadilly Circus."

I don't know how long elephants would survive in our south-west, whether they would be tougher than moose or not so tough, and what their rate of multiplication would be. But they can, and sometimes do, live in strange places, and if they resisted the cold and wetness for, say, five or six thousand years, natural selection might give us a breed of pony elephants, comparable with the miniature moas we now know could be living there. Roads may then be unnecessary on the earth, since everybody will have wings, but what a scientific triumph it would be for New Zealand if it started an experiment in 1953 that in 10,953 had put Darwin back on his pedestal.

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IT worries me a little that we have already had 14 inches of rain in a district whose quota is only 20 inches. I can't make up my mind whether to rejoice that two wet days in three are now behind us or brood over the drought the law of averages warns us to expect in spring and early summer.

I used to welcome wet days when I was a boy, because then we had nothing to do; unless there were bags to be mended, harness to be oiled, potatoes to be picked over, or (on Sundays) psalms to be memorised. But wet days now mean hours lost from the open air, dogs looking reproachfully at me from not too comfortable kennels, and Elsie hitting me with a bedraggled tail as I milk her under dripping trees. They mean gum-boots or wet feet, a soggy garden, and muddy gateways and paths. At this time of year especially they mean everything that my loafing shepherd's soul dislikes, and it does not cheer

me as it did once to sit reading and dozing before a crackling fire.

Nor can I lose myself so easily vicariously. When I was young, and indolent, and under external disciplines, tied to bread-earning tasks, and wondering how soon they would end, I could lose myself occasionally in places like De Quincey's mountain cottage, "with candles at four o'clock, warm hearth-rugs, tea, a fair teamaker, shutters closed, curtains falling in ample draperies on the floor, and the wind and rain raging audibly without." But I can't escape by that route now. I can enjoy the fire, the tea, the company of the fair tea-maker, and the contrast between the warmth and peace within and the raging unrest outside. But I no longer sigh for such pleasures in advance or want a long extension of them when they come. I sigh for sunshine by day and still soft air by night; for stars, and crickets, and droning beetles (even though I know them now as enemies); and for the fragrance the night has when the sap is still in the trees and the grass.

It is a revealing confession to make, but when it rains I find myself closer to Boswell than to De Quincey, marooned with Dr. Johnson at Corrichatichin in Skye. While Johnson went to bed early (or at least to his bedroom) and composed an Ode in Latin to Mrs. Thrale, Boswell spent his time making querulous notes like these in his diary:

Nothing is more painful to the mind than a state of suspense, especially when it depends upon the weather, concerning which there can be so little calculation. . . . After dinner I read some of Dr. Macpherson's dissertations on the Ancient Caledonians. I was disgusted by the unsatisfactory conjectures as to antiquity, before the days of record. . . . I was happy when tea came. . . . I take it, is the state of those who live in the country. Meals are wished for from the cravings of vacuity of mind, as well as from the desire of eating. . . . I was hurt to find even such a temporary feebleness, and that I was so far from being that robust wise man who is sufficient for his own happiness.

To be continued)

(Solution to No. 647)

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Clues Across

- Refused to obey, if backwards indeed.
- Trust is misplaced in this support.
- It's soon time for feelings.
- "On with the —; let joy be unconfined" (Byron).
- Troop miles into the chief city of a state.
- and 6 down (4 words each). One way of saying one may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. See also "Iolanthe," Act 2.
- Means of transport for a witch.
- "... she followed my poor father's body, Like Niobe, all —;" ("Hamlet," Act 1, Scene 2).

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- Part of an advance story.
- Balance.
- Sidles, in a way.

Clues Down

- "... we are such stuff As — are made on." ("The Tempest," Act 4, Scene 1).
- Fling about a singular grain.
- The name of the priest who thought Hannah praying in the temple was drunken (see 1 Samuel, chapter 1).
- He was supposed to hold up the universe.
- His dog was called Toby.
- See 13 across.
- "And if I send them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way; for — of them came from far" (St. Mark, chapter 8).
- "—, when sweet violets sicken, Live within the sense they quicken" (Shelley).
- Listened in some confusion.
- Forty-five inches.

No. 648 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

