

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

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DUST.

This sick dust, spiralling with the wind,
is harsh as grief's taste in our mouths
and has eclipsed the small sun.
The remnant earth turns evil,
the steel-shocked land has turned against the plough
and runs with wind all day; and all night
sighs in our sleep against the windowpane.

Wind was kinder once, carrying cloud
like a waterbag on his shoulder; sun was kinder,
hardening the good wheat brown as a strong man.
Earth was kinder, suffering fire and plough,
breeding the unaccustomed harvest.
Leaning in our doorway together
watching the birdcloud shadows,
the fleetwing windshadows travel our clean wheat
we thought ourselves rich already.
We counted the beautiful money
and gave it in our hearts to the child asleep,
who must never break his body
against the plow and the stubborn rock and tree.

But the wind rises; but the earth rises,
running like an evil river; but the sun grows small,
and when we turn to each other, our eyes are dust
and our words dust.....

Judith Wright.

THE SILVERTON HOTEL

by Allen A. Strom.

Australia is scarcely a land of tall mountains and jungle forests. Right at our back door the rolling plains run out towards the Darling. Very soon the tall gums give way to stunted mallee, or deep green of cypress pine, the scraggy, bushy "currant bush" or mulga looking like a birch broom in a fit.

It was dark, very dark when the Silver City Comet coughed into Broken Hill's disreputable railway station. When morning came, after a brief rest snatched in the famous Sturt Park, a new world was before us. This is a truly remarkable city for such absolute isolation.

Imagine our complete sense of loss when we came to erect our tent - not a tent pole for miles, not a tree, not an inch of wood for fire - if only Marie Byles were here. Yet this city of the West holds many secrets that we do not share - the colour of the setting sun and the early morning the soil so richly, so attractively, so sanguinely red, offset by the green that is greener than the "ceaseless mile of the wheat"; imagine the purple and the sapphire blues, the whole box and dice of colours specially supplied by the spectroscope. No! there is nothing in coastal or mountain scenery to equal that galaxy of colour to be seen in the Barrier Ranges, morning after morning and evening after evening during the warm, Spring days.

Do you realise the height of the Barrier Ranges? Broken Hill itself is 1,000 feet above sea level. Along the coast that would mean gurgling creeks, perhaps rain forests at a cliff edge but I guess it was long before the days when the amoeba crawled amongst the "primordial slimes" that the land of the Silver City was the scene of gushing streams. Poor worn-off stumps of mountains are these - the decayed roots of a giant's massive teeth. Occasionally, as at Silverton and Quondong, we happen upon the remnants of a mighty stream, now but a broadened, lazy bed of shifting sand. Ancient, weary and twisted old gums hang about the banks like the loafers outside the village pub on Saturdays - waiting for a drink, remembering the old days, thinking of Sturt and the mighty pioneers who passed their way.

If one goes far enough West from "the Hill", one literally drops off the edge of the range onto the Mundi Mundi Plains. Imagine our feeling of amazement when, following a road through rolling hills clothed scantily in hungry mulga and "pom-pom" everlasting, we were suddenly confronted with a flat which stretched South, West and North to the horizon. Not just your ordinary undulating, commonplace kind of thing but a regular billiard table - flat, oh! so damnedly flat with rising clouds of dust, with mirages and any number of mirages without the asking.

In Silverton there is only one centre of activity, the General Store and Post Office, boasting as its headquarters a worn-out wood shed and a semi-collapsible weatherboard shack. Yet this is a town which once had a town clerk and a mayor but that was before Mr. Rash cracked the crown of Broken Hill less than eighteen miles away.

A narrow-gauge tramway runs through Silverton from Broken Hill to Cockburn on the South Australian Border - The Silverton Tramway.

To sit in one of the dog-box carriages whilst the locomotive sped up the incline of 200 in one at 10 miles per hour was worth the excessive charge for these same rails had carried fabulous wealth from the bowels of the earth to the teeming millions - the most extraordinary deposit of silver-lead-zinc in the world saw the light through the enterprise of the Silverton Tramway Company, incorporated in South Australia in nineteen hundred and something.

We made the best of our stay in bordertown - what a desolate place! By zig-zagging down the fence line (the fence had long since disappeared) we are now able to say that we have been in and out of South Australia eighteen times.

The last few days we spent on the Darling River at Menindee. It's a sleepy town, Menindee! When Burke told Wills to book up the team at the local drinking house, it was little different from what it is today indeed the grandson of the original owner now owns that hotel in Menindee True, when the railway came through on its way to "the Hill" the town tended to shift from around the original punt crossing of the river to the new railway-cum-road bridge; but the old shacks are still there, chewed by the white ants and gnawed by the slowly passing years. If some one does not wake up soon, the sand dunes will finish off the job and smother the whole town in its final shroud.

The few days under the Murray River Gums beside the swollen river ended too soon. These camps are ever so different from the usual walkers' sojourn overnight - methinks they are the camps that Lawson knew so well and I guarantee there has been many a drover and many a sun-downer under these selfsame red gums.

So often in our rush for the spectacular we make for the highlights of our land yet we miss the real essence of the country because it lacks the embellishment of glamour. In the desire to know this country fully comes the true Australian patriotism.



One could not help thinking of "Strike a light ! the light's on strike" (Euripides) at the Xmas Party as, owing to the irregular regulations, there had to be enjoyed by candlelight.

One would think therefore (wouldn't one now?) that there would be positively nothing to report but there one would be quite wrong. For, if little information is forthcoming from any other quarter, I have, fortunately, THE LITTLE BIRDS, who, while floating aloft and pretending to be asleep, always have one eye open for news and one for telling me all about it.

Of course as soon as I arrived the big silver one gave me a wink and told me all about the Coffey family - a daughter. I can't tell you the name as I don't know it and the Birds have knocked off for the night, the Stork is the only one who will do any overtime ever.

That knowing little bird (third from right) laughed and said, "You know, you've got 'em bluffed. When the magazine staff arrived at Era recently, Norma Phillips expressed horror that the latter were to camp near her." Result Perfectly good behaviour whenever the staff was looking.

THE JOYS OF CYCLING.

by "R.Blue".

Pops was young and enthusiastic - "Cycling is so much better than walking good roads and lovely coasting downhill we could easily do Peat's Ferry and Wiseman's Ferry and come home through Galston Gorge to Hornsby" Doubtful, but unprotesting, I was lead astray so *

One December Saturday afternoon last year we met at Hornsby with full packs and our bikes. We set out in a shower of rain but had scarcely gone three miles before we were sweltering in the sun, which continued to smile on us up and down all those hills before the Hawkesbury. It did not take long for us to spread out - Sally, of course, was in the lead, Betty and Peg not far behind. But our energy availed us nothing. On a rise outside Cowan a car shot past with two bikes on the running board and Flo and Pops waving gleefully from the back seat. We said things no ladies should and tried to console ourselves with the thought that the run down to Peat's Ferry is better than any car ride and it was - almost. Five miles down hill!

Well, that was nice and the trip across on the ferry was very pleasant, but what a hill on the other side! Did Pops say cycling was better than walking? Cycling is walking - mostly.

We soon decided to camp at the first sign of water but water was scarce and Sally and Peg went about half a mile down a creek bed before finding a trickle over a rock that formed a tiny pool.

Betty had trouble putting the tent up. The ground was either sand or stones and pegs refused to go in. However we soon had everything settled - except, of course, the sandflies who dined with and on us. And so to bed, but alas, the night was hot - too hot inside a sleeping-bag to be a suicide out of it, for by now the mosquitoes had smelt us out. We spent the night crawling in and out until Flo got up at 4 a.m. The rest of the day lay with closed eyes trying to deceive ourselves that we slept. But we could sleep with Flo tramping cheerfully around and talking - to the mossies, I suppose. There was nothing to do but have breakfast and "get on the road before the heat of the day".

It was hot already at six when we set off but the road was good and we had some lovely hills to coast down. All went well till we left the main road for a cross country dirt road. Peg ran into a patch of gravel and came off. Hurt? No, she is used to scratches.

The day progressed and so did the heat. There were no views as we were surrounded by smoke and haze. A strong wind sprang up bringing ash and dead leaves with it. We decided to turn back.

A bath in a fine running creek refreshed us considerably and we set off for the Hawkesbury again. The long flat stretch before the ferry was open to the full force of the wind and at one stage Betty and her bike were lifted right off the road by a sudden gust.

It was only midday when we arrived at the ferry but it seemed days since we had risen. The haze was so bad we could scarcely see the opposite bank of the river and the sun was just an orange balloon in the sky.

We lunched in grand tourist style in some picnic grounds and tried to sleep under a tree but the tree had roots that stuck into us and the picnic grounds were inhabited by ants. We soon set out for

Brooklyn station and arrived there at 5.30 p.m. to find that the first train left at 5.40 p.m.!

Betty told Pops just what she thought of cycling and Flo blamed Peg for inviting her on the trip and said she would never speak to her again.

The train arrived at 5.40. There was no luggage van for the bike and people were practically standing on the bumper bars. Next train at 6.50 - ditto. The third train arrived at ten past seven and we squeezed ourselves and bikes on a outside platform.

Said Flo to Peg - "Wait till the weather's cooler and we'll go on a really nice trip."

Said Peg - "Does anyone want a bike cheap?"

CHEEP*CHEEP.

The bird with the big tail said "Do you know that Mouldy Harrison is back?" Then he added, glancing ruefully at his sombre feathers "And did you see the bow tie he was wearing, purchased in New York?" Yes, I did, and if he got it on the Lend-lease principle for cattle and turnips could we not get the latter back?

A garrulous little bird couldn't restrain itself from blurting out the news which it had heard from a sea bird from Era. "I can't be quite sure it is true," he said, "but these sea birds are straight." Well, it appears that some walkers cannot but do battle when they feel that a wrong has been done but three or four lusty life-savers can behave in reverse. That was Leon's bloomer and, next day, between the appendix scar which prevented him from doing battle royal and the cut lips announcing a skirmish, Leon was rather like mince-meat.

"For good old-fashioned convention, give me Era", said the wise bird near the door. "To see Joan Savage slaving back and forwards with the water while Harry reclined on the grass, fair made me nostalgic for the cave-man days. But we did reward our women with an occasional bone or two but Harry sooled a tick onto his "missus" so that she had to go home early."

A little wren volunteered the information that Alan Hardy is out of the Army and back at work. When I asked the wren what it was tittering about, it said, "I was thinking of a funny story I heard about your "Dorman" though it's a bit old. On one occasion, "Dorman" was holding a carriage of walkers spell-bound by his rendition of "Lord Randall". He was standing with his back to the closed door of the compartment and had just arrived at the lines (executed with great dramatic effect) "And what come ye here for, My bonnie young mon?" when the door opened behind him and a ticket-inspector said "Tickets, please".

I asked a coy but pretty bird why she was looking so disgusted. "Well, wouldn't you be?" she said. "Arthur Gilroy took a W.R.A.N. down to Era and just missed drowning her. Indeed, he was so sure everything was over, that he paced up and down the rocks waiting to collect the body when the waves threw it up. Alas it wasn't so my hones are nil. "

by "Socrates".

What is wrong with our Walking Club? Nothing as far as I can see but this article would be silly if such an assumption were made. So here are my suggestions for renewing that interest in walking which some people think is the purpose for which the club was formed. Any originality is humbly disclaimed as a step in the right direction was made years ago at Kanangra and the surf club at Era has also shown the way.

The suggestion is that a series of dancing floors be created over the countryside. No further incentive to both young and old members would be required if it were known, for example, that the dancing floor at Kanangra Walls was in good condition so that the party doing the Gangerangs could indulge in a spot of dancing upon arriving there the first night. Think how hard it would be to restrain the members as they raced over the High and Mighty, Rip, Roar and Rumble, if they knew that a dancing floor existed on top of Cloudmaker. (Though, actually, that would be a silly location - Dex Creek would be the logical site.)

For the scoffer who cynically asks "Where will you get the money for all this?" the answer is simple. Let the club erect, from the money subscribed to buy the Era land, a dancing floor at North North Era. By charging an entrance fee of a "deener" (this nomenclature is necessary to avoid paying amusement tax) to the weekly dance held there, sufficient funds would be quickly acquired. The bus proprietor would no doubt give a substantial sum to the Dancing Floor Movement to show his gratification for the fortune he acquires from transporting the thousands of walkers to Governor Game Lookout.

Unfortunately one heavy expense would have to be met and that is the hiring of some "chuckers-out" to forcibly remove the fractious element which would no doubt try to create trouble over raffles, treading on toes, etc. Of course some member of the club may have sufficient experience of this kind of trouble to acquit him for the job.

The advantages of the Dancing Floor Movement are so obvious that I do not intend to enumerate them further at this stage. However, if members who are in the room at the next General Meeting will stop talking about food lists, transport, photographs, future plans, etc. and listen to what is going on, they will probably hear the following motion passed *

That this club proceed forthwith with the erection of the following chains of dancing floors *

- (1) Burning Palms - Era - Marley.
- (2) Kanangra - Dex Creek - Konangaroo - Breakfast Creek.
- (3) Clear Hill - Cox's River - Kedumba Valley.

(I have omitted the Kosciusko area pending negotiations with the Ski Council on a two-use floor - for dancing in Summer and skating in the Winter.)

7.
NOTES FROM THE FEDERATION REPORT FOR THE MONTHS OF

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

Note the following dates and determine to be present *

1. Bouddi Working Bee in May on the weekend nearest to the full moon (see Maries Byles for actual dates) .
2. Federation Reunion in OCTOBER, first full moon weekend, provided it does not clash with the holiday weekend.

After working these dates out members should be able to calculate Easter 1979 on two fingers. Nevertheless, excuses that the moon did not behave as forecast by the astronomers will not be accepted.

Latest on Era. Included in the correspondence were letters to the Minister for Lands and to Mr. Sweeney M.L.A. stressing the urgency of the matter of resumption of the Byrnes Estate and pointing out that the lease of Gray's property on the Garie Road expires next June. Latest advice, received on the 4th. of December, is that the estimates have again been slashed and there is no money for the Era resumption. The Surveyor-General suggests that the bushwalkers should apply for resumption of Lot 7 for £250. At the special meeting on the 4th. December the Federation decided to apply for that resumption and also to apply to the owners for an option to purchase when the restrictions are lifted.

Associate members of the Federation. A few months ago publicity was given to the fact that individuals can become associate members of the Federation and 150 copies of an application form were issued. Only three forms, however, were returned. The Federation was pleased to admit them as Associate Members but was disappointed with the result of the drive for new members.

"The Bushwalker" Annual. After much argumentation, it has been decided that this year's annual will take the same form as previous year and should appear in October. Photos and articles etc. are still needed and these may be handed to Jean Golding or Ray Kirkby both of whom are on the committee.

Transport from Mittagong. A letter was received from the Shire Clerk, Mittagong, pointing out the walking possibilities of the district and offering to arrange transport at Xmas. This should be a useful lead for transport at any future date.

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Under date 9th. October 1945, the Convenor of the Topographical Section of the River Canoe Club of N.S.W. advises that a further map, No. has been prepared. This map covers the Richmond River (Central Arm) from The Risk to Coraki.

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The following article was written many years ago and is now reprinted in its entirety.

" THE PHARLAP OF THE BUSHWALKERS.

An Interview with Gordon Smith

by Judex.

"How old were you when you took up walking?" I asked by way of commencing the interview.

"About 12 months, I expect", was the laconic reply and Gordon started to edge away but the corner was rather congested and he did not succeed; so after the usual preliminary modesty (to which interviewers become accustomed) he gave in and sat down again.

Gordon was not born and bred to the bush; indeed had it not been for the S.B.W. he might never have found out the charm of bushwalking. His early walking activities were entirely in the racing direction. Someone from the N.S.W. Walking Club picked him out from a number of his school mates as something out of the ordinary and suggested he should join the Club. He did so in 1921 and in 1922 he proved the discernment of his nominator by winning the 20 miles championship. Since then he has won about 20 championships both Club and State. At present he holds the State 32 to 50 miles track-walking and the Australian record for 24 hours. He also held for some while the Australian 50 miles championship but a Victorian subsequently made better time on the same test.

During the last 12 years he has averaged 4500 miles a year, or about 88 miles a week - it makes one gasp - 88 miles in a long weekend perhaps but 88 miles every week!

Large mileages are Gordon's strongest point. He told me that in walks under 15 miles he is by no means a record-holder, a matter which may be a surprise to many who have been out with him and thought he flew over the ground, rough and smooth alike.

His now great love of bushwalking through the rough as well as along tracks is all the more interesting because racing walks are always along roads or at best good tracks. Long distance races, in which Gordon holds the record, are always along roads because it is only possible by this means to get the mileage calculated. The shorter walks are sometimes along tracks but none of them are remotely like bushwalking.

"Therefore how did you come to join the S.B.W.?" Gordon thought a good while but could not exactly remember. He was a foundation member of the Club and even before it was formed he recalls one purely pleasure walk of 500 miles which took him from Sydney through Nowra, Mossvale, Thirlmere, Burragorang, Jenolan, Bell Richmond and Parramatta in 16 days, so apparently the germ of bushwalking came into existence unawares.

"And which do you prefer now, racing or bushwalking?"

"Both are pleasurable... Racing is hard work and has a certain fascination but it can't go on for ever. Each year I decide to knock it off and then someone comes along and I go in for it for one year more. At best I can hardly do it for another 10 years. But bushwalking will go on for ever, I hope. It is the combination of walking and scenery that gives charm to bushwalking, not so much the wildflowers which do not appeal to me much, but the wider landscape. Then, of course, there is good companionship, swimming - and eating ;"

Scenery being one of the main attractions of bushwalking it may seem strange to some that Gordon has taken only two important walks afield, one to Barrington Tops and one to Tumut and Kosciusko. The explanation is that what he has seen of other parts only makes him love the southern Blue Mountains more. However, this year he is off to New Zealand and a taste of mountaineering, and it will be interesting to hear whether this type of scenery attracts him as much as his beloved Cox and Kowman.

This year is the first year bushwalkers have taken part in race-walking and, as we all know, they topped the lists coming second, third and fourth after Gordon in each event. I was very interested, therefore, to hear Gordon's comments on the possibility of racing walkers being drawn from the bushwalking movement. It was this :

" In a long race nine-tenths of the N.S.W. Walking Club fail because they lack the necessary stamina. This is where the bushwalkers score. They have carried heavy packs up steep hills and the whole of the bush-walking activities builds up that requisite stamina. Those who went in for the walking races this year had none of the racing technique or style, and yet they succeeded. If they would acquire these things, then, the younger especially should be very successful. I hope they will take it up;

The N.S.W. Walking Club, of which Gordon is such a distinguished member, numbers about 60. But members are not all very active. It is interesting to learn that some years ago they had it in mind to establish a club like the S.B.W. but the latter established itself while they were cogitating over the idea. Gordon thought this a pity since the latter method would have put the N.S.W. Walking Club on a sounder basis financially and better able to send teams to other States and such like. However, perhaps it was a wise fate which kept the bushwalking separate from the racing, and its separation does not prevent the N.S.W. Walking Club from drawing recruits from our ranks."

The following letter was received by the Secretary from JOHN HARTZ, a club member now resident in Hobart. In response to a request for publication John was a little doubtful saying, "I may have been a little more critical of Tasmania than was justified in an article to be read publicly." I, on the other hand, think that this is a good appraisal of Tasmania and trust that, in publishing it, I do not cause him to be ostracised. (Ed.)

Your letter with notes about SBW progress was very welcome, especially from the point of view of a poor-benighted SBW "non-active" half-frozen to death in Tasmania. These cold days, with snow on all hands, heavy frosts and frozen puddles on the roads all day, and (usually) an absence of sunshine, makes me long for a good hot humid sticky day in the bush round Ku-ring-gai Chase way. I never realised how one can miss hot sunshine so much as I have done since I came to Hobart 3½ years ago.

There are occasional hot days in Summer, perhaps two or three altogether, a direct heat which burns everyone like lobsters. I don't escape, even though I never got sunburnt in the NSW bush. But most days in Summer you tell the season mainly by seeing whether there are leaves on the English trees or not; it snows any old time. The Summer before last I and the two boys spent three days in Windermere hut in Lake St. Clair-Mt. Cradle Reserve while the blizzard raged without. Even with a roaring fire inside the hut, one could see one's breath in the air. It was just hard to imagine people surfing and sunbathing on Sydney beaches. Snow has fallen on Mt. Wellington every month of the year since we've been here.

Incidentally surfing is unknown in Tasmania. Every beach is described as "dangorous" and, in any case, they are always remote and the surf never so good as in New South Wales. Also the water is bitterly cold always. A few people bathe in enclosed waters - a few days in Hobart (at Sandy Bay) there is even a crowd on the beach and water's edge - but if you go surfing you go alone.

The Tasmanian bush is extraordinarily rough and rugged, very mountainous and conditions and climate hard. Recently I saw a monument on the Hartz Mountain (after struggle along a track up to my knees - almost - in mud most of the previous day) to two men who died of exposure there in November. On Mt. Wellington there is a monument to a doctor who died of exposure in January. Underfoot it is usually wet and camping as we know it in N.S.W. is almost unknown here. Huts are erected in most places walkers get to and, no matter how determinedly you pack your tent with the intention of using it, one always finishes up in the hut along with the rest - and mightily glad to be there as a rule. But I still can't get out of the habit of carrying the extra weight of a tent.

On the eastern (dry) side of Tasmania, scenery and conditions are similar to western N.S.W. or, say, half-way between Bathurst country and Riverina with a few small areas of Sydney type of bush thrown in (as round Coles Bay). Water is obtainable only by calling at a farm house; the weather, however, is just as cold.

Hobart has its own special type of Southerly called "the sea breeze". If the day shows the slightest inclination to warmth the sea breeze comes along and freezes the marrow out of you.

Of course there are many compensations in Tasmania; the scenery is vast and grand. I think that if it were only warmer I should be

holiday place to a place of permanent residence, for people used to the weather. But Tasmanians who have lived in Sydney have quite other views: it is too hot, too sticky, they long for the sight of a "real" mountain, they long for weather of what they call the "invigorating" kind, they don't like walking in bush without water (forgetting that half the country around Hobart is waterless and you have to call at farms for it and even the farmer begrudges it, he is so short). They don't like the dry Sydney ridges, without "scenery", etc.

I was glad you sent me a walks programme so that at least I had the thrill of seeing the names of places; many of the names of leaders, however, are new to me. I also see that on Oct. 19th, you are to have a lecture "Vegetarianism is not a fad". Considering the number of times we poor vegetarians get "slung off at" even in "The Bushwalker" it's nice to think the other side is to be presented (or is it just a "have"?).

Tasmanian walkers do not wear shorts, partly, I think, because of the climate, partly because of the roughness of the bush and partly because it simply "isn't done". Nor have I ever seen in Tasmania a group of little tents so typical of our walking weekends round Sydney - in fact the only walkers' tent I have ever seen in Tasmania is my own. Nor do the walkers seem to use the same range of equipment as we do, generally there are a few "Paddy-made" items (or similar) and the rest makes do.

The Hobart Walking Club is partly a ski-ing club; in Winter all walks are off as long as there is snow on the mountain. I persevered with trying to ski until I had to walk 9 miles with full pack and heavy skis from National Park on a severely sprained ankle. After that I thought I'd better stick to walking and forget the ski-ing. But I admit that ski-ing would be great fun once you got the hang of it.

Incidentally walkers who are thinking of doing the 70 mile trip through Lake St. Clair- Cradle Mountain Reserve some time should do as early as conditions permit for a motor road is planned through the northern end and a riding track at the southern. At present, going from hut to hut, walkers have the place entirely to themselves, but once a road goes through it won't be so pleasant with cars and buses whizzing by. It is a five day trip if no huts are missed and it can be extended for as long as food holds out. There is a charming by-track now opened up to Pine Valley with further walks round the hut there, including the Labyrinth (a labyrinth of lakes and tarns with pines and snowy mountains round about). The snow apparently holds out all through Summer; they can get completely clothed with snow during bad Summer weather. - Incidental January is not a good time for the trip as, last Summer, even with war restrictions on travel, the huts were very much overcrowded. Even with only a few people in a hut, cooking on the one fire becomes a problem, at least it is to walkers used to open-air fires as in N.S.W. and I don't think of the crush when 20 or more get into a hut with room for 12 or 12. A non-holiday month, therefore, would mean more comfort as far as "hutting" is concerned. Of course in Winter no-one goes through; I think no-one has ever even ski-ed through - I don't know why.

I expect this is all you'll want to read about Tasmania.
..... Kind regards from Dora and myself. "

Ruminating on the ignorance of the prospective who has be told that he will not want to walk in all those sweaters, set my mind running along the lines of the title and I thought what a lot can be learnt about heat and cold. For instance, did you know that the thermal conductivity of the eider-down in your sleeping bag is 0.00001 calories-per-second-per cubic centimeter-per degree centigrade, while the same property of a woollen blanket is 0.0002 dittoes- or twenty times as much. Even Dumb Dora can see that you keep much warmer in a down sleeping bag. However, we have to remember that eiderdown loses much of its insulating effect if it is flattened by the weight of the sleeper. Hence the common practice of putting extra material underneath, where the down must of necessity be compressed and lose its "fluffiness".

.....

Most people know of the chilling effect, produced by evaporation, when wind blows on a wet water-bucket of japara or canvas. It should be obvious, then, that waxing your bucket to slow its leakage rate also retards this evaporation and makes it a much less satisfactory spot to store the butter when in camp. By the same token, walkers may discount the advice to wrap the butter jar in a wet towel and stow it in the centre of the pack. A wet towel is not a scrap colder than a dry one unless it has a wind blowing on it to cause evaporation. Few of us have rucksacks as full of holes as that!

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Changing now to consideration of cold weather, I recall a night of May when, camping in Kangaroo Valley, we experienced bitter cold, damp and fog. Morning found the interior of our A tent dripping steadily with water. This, of course, was caused by warm, moisture-laden breath striking the cold tent and depositing water. This water had no tendency to evaporate as it would do, for example, in the equally cold, yet dry conditions one might experience at Corral Swamp.

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The same phenomenon is responsible for the oft-heard cry : My groundsheet is not waterproof ! Wearing a groundsheet while walking in rain, we frequently seem to get the sheet just as wet inside as outside. Why is this? Simply because the groundsheet, wet with rain, forms a cold, condensing surface to trap the moisture from the warm air which surrounds the walker's body, just as a cold glass mirror condenses moisture from one's breath. The inner surface of the cape, therefore, becomes wet, not with rain water, but with condensed perspiration !

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Next month we shall delve into the marvels of the human body's temperature-regulating mechanism which has, particularly in the case of walkers, to be able to adjust itself to as many variations of temperature as a Sydney-sider dependent on coal.