

his pretty villa. The oasis of La Daia consists of a number of Arab villas built amongst the palm trees, where the rich Mozabites spend the summer with their families, to avoid the suffocating heat of the town. The garden was a delightfully shady place, with pergolas and tunnels and refreshing pools.

“The return journey by air to Algiers was made without mishap, thanks to the prudence of the pilot, who preferred to pass the night at the Station of Laghouat, and avoid the bad weather over the Atlas. I took the opportunity of visiting, with the radio-operator of the aeroplane, the goniometric post installed in the fort which dominates the town and the desert.

“Next day, whilst the Junker of Compagnie Générale Transsaharienne was taking me back to Algiers, I repeated several experiments which I had tried for the first time in 1934, near Amiens, on a Caudron-Phalène piloted by Conte Françoise de Clermont-Tonnerre. I found that my rod moved whenever we flew over a wadi, several of which we passed.

“It was an interesting experience, for I only looked out of the window when the rod moved, so that the unconscious muscular reactions could not have been caused by auto-suggestion.

“I did not use a pendulum, as its movements are too slow for aerial prospection. My observations could not be so complete as in 1934 and 1935, as the plane was not being used specially for radiesthetic research. However, I noticed that my sensitiveness decreased with height, and this was the more obvious as the pilot had to fly high to surmount the Atlas, which was hidden by clouds. Above 300 metres only the large gaps in the ground caused the rod to move. At 3,000 metres I detected only one wadi. Above that I felt nothing more. The decrease of sensitiveness with height shows that the dowser is being affected objectively, whilst operators on a map are not hampered by distance, as they work by intuition. It is wiser to stick to sensory radiesthesia, which is likely to give more consistent results.”

AUSTRALIAN DIVINERS

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“Dowsers,” or water-diviners, are almost as common in the Queensland bush as cattle-ticks. Although there is an abundance of amateur practitioners, every district also has its professional. You don't hear or see much of these men during

“good” seasons, but at times of drought—such as Queensland has unfortunately experienced in recent years—they are greatly in evidence.

If you care to visit the local pub—where, incidentally, there’s real water at sevenpence a glass!—you’ll probably hear that Ray Reynolds has struck water at a depth of sixty feet; Jack X—, the diviner, reckoned he’d find it at sixty-four. Pretty good, is Jack! At a spot he indicated, Stan Derrick found a good supply at thirty-four feet. Jack, indeed, appears to be as sensitive to water as most men are to beer.

So much for the professional; but I recommend you to steer clear of the amateur—the amiable neighbour who claims to be “pretty good with the stick,” and comes over to help you when the spring in the back paddock has become a bed of slimy mud, and most of your cattle are dying from thirst.

He’ll arrive looking quite business-like, whittling a forked stick, or with several short lengths of wire hung on his belt. After a preliminary discourse on “dowsing,” and his own abilities, plus a few caustic remarks about the weather, he starts off in his quest for a hidden stream.

He goes round in circles for some minutes, and then zig-zags across the paddock, while you and half a dozen open-mouthed youngsters follow along behind. The diviner will probably wander about aimlessly until you’re as dry as the ground you’re standing on. Then, when he reaches the most barren, inaccessible, and rock-strewn area on your property, he suddenly lets out a whoop of delight.

Rushing across, you find him standing rigid, with an intense look in his eyes and the end of his forked stick pointing straight down to the earth. Retreating, he tries again—several times! Yes; it’s down there all right, he announces. Stepping out first north, and then south, still holding the stick before him, he makes a few rapid calculations and presently tells you there’s a fine stream at eighteen feet.

Thereupon the pair of you return home, where the Missus is roasting your last rooster to celebrate the occasion. You tell your wife the good news, and you all sit round the table and feast. Later the diviner departs, brushing aside your profuse thanks, and you think what a good fellow he is.

Eventually you start to sink your well. The ground is dry and hard, and at six feet you come to rock! You use dynamite—cases and cases of it! Slowly you blast a gaping hole—fourteen, sixteen, eighteen feet deep, but there’s no sign of water. You carry on, hoping against hope, till you’re down thirty feet,

the rock remaining as hard as iron, and the hole completely dry. Meanwhile, half your cattle have died, and you've shifted the remainder to the river-paddock, where they're eating all the grass you were saving for the milkers. Finally, in despair, you confess you're beaten, curse all amateur diviners, and hunt up Jack X—, the professional.

When he arrives he looks the paddock over for a moment, and then gets busy. Within less than thirty minutes, very often, he has located water at fifteen feet.

It's in a far better site than the first one—just where you'd always reckoned you'd like a mill. And at fifteen feet, as prophesied, you find the stream—a copious flow of clear, cool, life-giving water!

This sort of thing makes even the most hardened sceptic sit up and wonder. Can these "dowsers" really find water? Without a doubt some of them can, but a great many more can't. Some fellows honestly believe they possess the gift, others merely delude themselves, and a minority are just charlatans. But there remain a few star performers whose records prove incontestably that they are able to locate underground streams and even indicate pretty accurately at what depth the spring will be reached.

So much for the water-diviner. We will now pass on to another type of "dowser"—the man who hopes to discover deposits of gold and other minerals. He's an altogether different sort of fellow; he doesn't do it as a hobby or to help his neighbours. He's after riches and all the good things riches will procure, and he works entirely for himself.

You're liable to encounter him anywhere—up in the dry hills, deep down in some gorge, miles from the nearest habitation, or even close to a town. He usually has a bent piece of No. 8 plain wire protruding from his extended hand, and in action he resembles a sleep-walker, taking slow, measured steps, with his face set in a granite-like expression. Over one shoulder he'll probably be carrying a pick, shovel, dish, loam-bags, and possibly a dolly-pot and pestle!

To be a really good gold-diviner it is necessary to possess enormous faith in one's abilities, great patience and tenacity, and a good deal of stamina. Believe me, it's mighty hard work. I know, because I've tried it!

When the diviner is on the job the dowsing-rod is supposed to swing parallel with the reef or vein directly the operator arrives immediately above it. Then the real toil begins! The

prospector must dig a hole, fill his loam-bags, and "knap" samples from the reef (if any). Then, heavily loaded, he makes for the nearest water, washes the loam from the bags and "dollies" his reef-samples. Sometimes he may raise "colour" (traces of gold), but more often he doesn't.

Even if he does, he's not much wiser, for "colour" is almost universal on most of the fields. Don't imagine, however, that I am trying to discourage the members of this honourable craft for, believe it or not, they *do* occasionally make a "strike." There was Bill Cairns, for instance, who found the "Broken Bottle." One morning Bill was demonstrating his "dowsing" to a number of friends and noticed that his rod became very lively at one particular spot. Digging down, they found gold just under the grass-roots—plenty of it, in a thin vein which "lived" down to seventy feet.

Lately there has come into existence another type of gold diviner—the man who works with a lump of gold suspended from a piece of cotton or string. This method, I suspect, is a variation of the wedding-ring trick people sometimes employ when endeavouring to "sex" hens' eggs.

These fellows dangle the nugget over likely crevices. The theory is that, if the fissure is barren, the pendulum will remain still, but should gold be present it will commence a circular movement.

There are, however, decided drawbacks to this method of divination. For one thing, it does not give any indication of the *quantity* of gold; secondly, if there are any frogs or other living creatures among the rocks the nugget will "work" on them in exactly the same way. The operator, therefore, more often finds himself digging for frogs than gold!

All the same, this nugget-swinging is a fascinating hobby, and on worked-out fields can save a lot of toil. I have often tried it myself with varying results. But it is no quick road to fortune, and will not uncover anything that could not be located by ordinary prospecting methods. Fantastic though it may sound, I am pretty certain of one thing about the method—that it is possible, by its aid, to discover alluvial gold buried deep in crevices. My conviction is so strong that I advise brother prospectors, the next time they go on a trip, to take a small nugget and a piece of cotton along and try out the idea for themselves.

It may bring results!