

**ACROSS**

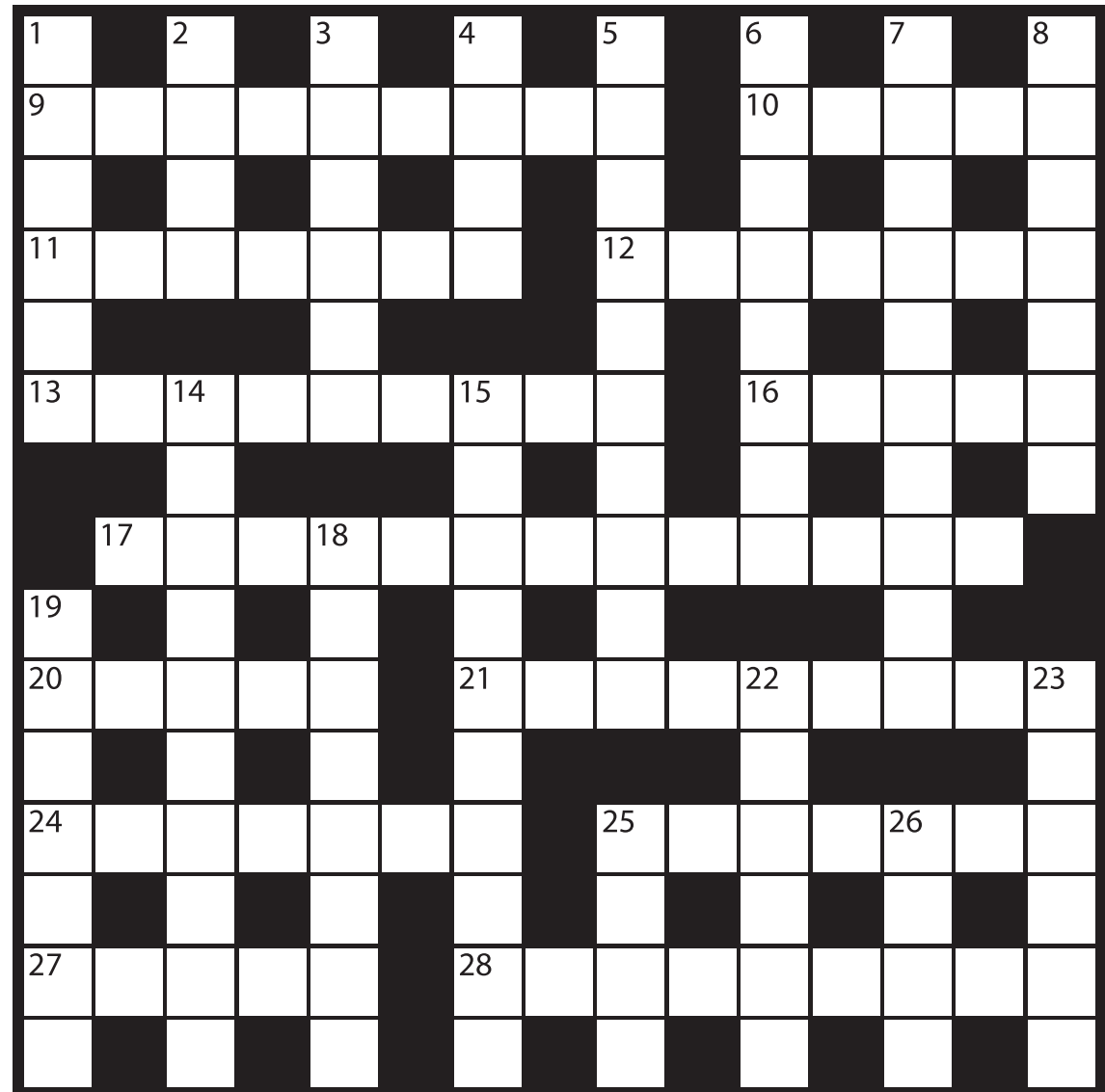
- 9** Poor, Crete aims to be the most rich (9)  
**10** Dwelling on poem, a bad start (5)  
**11** Accountant gets lock for female performer (7)  
**12** Gave warning treadle was broken (7)  
**13** Former partner giving in, we hear – that's going too far (9)  
**16** Machiavelli laid back in French city (5)  
**17** The thing must not be discussed, so say no more (4,7,2)  
**20** Nonsense is acceptable during ongoing noise (5)  
**21** Let a saint wickedly torment (9)  
**24** Unravel red plot – it's only part of the solution (7)  
**25** Said to be of the same blood (7)  
**27** Vote for but appoint no leader (5)  
**28** Reader put off by digression (9)

**DOWN**

- 1** Fight with energy causing superficial wound (6)  
**2** Warm up for part of contest? (4)  
**3** Current amount to be endlessly mollycoddled (6)  
**4** Without the French ship (4)  
**5** Shattering disaster to put in order (10)  
**6** Battle station? (8)  
**7** Pasta riot with lentil stew! (10)  
**8** Sells bicycle parts, by the sound of it (7)  
**14** Hands-on sort of building? (5,5)  
**15** Clumsiness to end, tie it up properly (10)  
**18** Casual worker slow making pattern (8)  
**19** Has dire problem, being more underhand (7)

Wednesday, 8th December, 2021

No. 15,776



- 22** Charm everybody on the river (6)  
**23** Went round repeatedly when Edward perished (6)  
**25** Cable is part of property (4)  
**26** Loudly instructed to be tight (4)