

TALE OF A TREE

(Written for "The Listener" by DORIAN SAKER)

IF that's the way you feel about things, Joe said, it's pretty tough, but it's going to come out.

But Joe, Dad said, can't you see? This isn't a common macrocarpa — not by a long chalk. This is a special macrocarpa that I planted eight years ago on Anzac Day.

What difference does Anzac Day make? Joe said stonily.

All the difference in the world, Dad said quickly. How many macrocarpas do you think there are planted on Anzac Day? Not one in a million, I'll bet. Besides, it was only a few days after the anniversary of our wedding.

What difference does that make? Joe said, still more stonily.

Why, all the difference in the world, Dad said, because we'd just had a party and I wasn't feeling too well, and Mabel had come home, and Tim had just

bought a motor-bike. Now can you see what an uncommon macrocarpa it is?

No, Joe said, I can't, and it's got to come out. I'm not getting any sun.



... Joe, Dad said, have you the heart to do this?

Sun! Dad said, you get sun all the time. You'll get sun-stroke if you have any more—and this really is a special tree.

It's coming out, Joe said.

Now look, Joe, Dad said. How many things have I done for you lately? Did I lend you my dress suit or not? Did I lend you those two chairs when your wealthy great-aunts were staying with you? Did I go round like a stuffed rooster one whole morning just to show what fine neighbours you had, so that they'll leave their money to you?

Yes, yes, Joe said. I know all that, but haven't we made up for it? How often have you been using our telephone in the last two days, and made damn nuisances of yourselves too? And who drank all the cider that we had at that party on Thursday night?

I didn't drink much, Dad said.

You drank two bottles, Joe said.

It's a lie, Dad said, I couldn't.

You couldn't walk home afterwards, Joe said.

Well, if that's how you're going to take a piece of fun, I'll never come again, and then nobody else will, because without my concertina your parties would be like stale scones.

Keep away, Joe said, and I'll keep some cider. Now let's get this tree out.

Joe, Dad said, have you the heart to do this?

I'm as hearty as I can be, Joe said. Watch me while I take the first swing.

After all I've told you, Dad said, about it's being planted fifteen years next Labour Day. Have you the heart?

You said eight years and it was Anzac Day last time, Joe said.

What does it matter, Dad said. It was fifteen, and I've nursed it like a baby ever since.

I think this is fabrications, Joe said.

Not about a tree like this, Dad said, I couldn't.

Well I'm sorry, Joe said, but we must have light, and this tree's blocking it, so it has got to come out.

Are you taking a correspondence course on logic, or what? Dad said.

No, in common sense, Joe said, and it's a pity you don't, too.

Don't need to, Dad said.

Am I going to get this tree out, Joe said, or not?

S'pose you'll have to, Dad said, go ahead.

After some time Joe heard violent chopping at the other end of the section. With horror clutching at his heart he left the macrocarpa and hurried off to investigate.

Hey! What do you think you're doing? Joe said.

Chopping down this aerial of yours, Dad said: I didn't notice it when you first put it in our section, but it's taking all the radio waves, and we can't get any volume from our set.

BEAUTY—AND UTILITY The Islands Of Bermuda

(Condensed from talks by George Bagley from 3YA and by "Coranto" from 2YA)

A PLACE very much in the news just now is Bermuda. Britain has agreed to lease to the United States strategic points in her American possessions for use as military and naval bases for the defence of the Western Hemisphere. One of the most important of these is the group of two or three hundred small islands lying about 600 miles off the American coast, which go by the Spanish name of Bermudas, though the whole history of human life on them has been thoroughly and exclusively English.

The islands get their name from a Spanish seafarer named Juan Bermudez, who sighted them in 1527—while on his way to the Spanish Main, I suppose. But beyond dubbing a Spanish name on the islands, the gay *marineros* of Seville and Cadiz took no further interest in them. About a century later the islands were again sighted, this time by the English, and this time again purely by accident. Sir John Somers, an Elizabethan capitalist, shortly after the death of the Virgin Queen, chartered a ship and was on his way to the new American colony of Virginia to go into the tobacco business, when his ship was wrecked, and he and his companions found themselves cast ashore on a lovely island, which appeared to them like a garden rising out of the ocean. As they looked about them they saw literally

hundreds of other little islands stretching into the distance as far as the eye could see, and the pounding white surf of the Atlantic fringed each with a delicate ruff of white lace.

Tobacco and Gin

On this particular island the castaways found the vegetation was prolific, the most common tree being the juniper, or Bermudan cedar. So Sir John and his company then and there abandoned their scheme of a tobacco enterprise, christened the islands the Somers Islands, and—I presume—though history books are strongly silent on this point—they threw themselves heart and soul into the gin distilling business. Anyway, this little English settlement prospered. It spread over the 15 or 16 inhabitable islands, and the settlers by tilling of the soil—which was really not a very hard job of work—remained a self-contained and self-supporting community. In more recent years the growth of huge cities on the American mainland opened up a new livelihood to the Bermudan settlers, and they developed a flourishing trade in garden produce with the United States and Canada.

Britain, too, awoke to the value of these islands, not as a market garden, but as a naval base on the threshold of the New World, and Hamilton, the capi-

tal and chief town, became the headquarters of the West Indies Station of the Royal Navy. More recently the Bermudas have become a recognised stopping-place and refuelling point for the Atlantic Ocean air mail service. And now the Bermudas, having received an assurance that no change in their British status is involved, will shortly be offering hospitality to American warships and troops, as part of the great defence partnership of Britain and America in the Western Hemisphere.

Motor-Cars Forbidden

Shakespeare knew about the islands. He refers to the "vexed Bermudas" in his play, "The Tempest." The islands represent the northern limit of the coral

system. This is very handy because all you've got to do when you wish to build a house in the Bermudas is to dig out your building material, the coral rock, from your section. This gives Bermudan architecture a charm of its own. There is a distinct Bermudan style of architecture, and some of the houses are centuries old, and filled with period furniture are extremely attractive. Another interesting point is that motor-cars are not allowed on the islands. There are one or two motor-lorries for Government work, but no other motor vehicles, and it was reported a few years ago that even the Governor was refused permission by the legislature to import a motor-car.

