

The Axe and the Knife

by "SUNDOWNER"

"IS that a white pine you have there?"

"No, we don't have him."

"That tall one. What is it?"

"Him? He's a kike."

"Kike?"

"Yes. It's really ki-katee, but we leave out the tee."

"The milk and sugar, too, I suppose."

"That's right. The milk and sugar, too. Cripes, I'll remember that, Tea, milk and sugar."

APRIL 30 "You don't have pukatea here?"

"No, I never heard of that one."

"A very big tree with pale bark and a struted base. The wood won't burn, so you see the great trunks lying about for years."

"Yes, I know him. Buckatee. I used to see him up north. He doesn't grow here. Too cold, I think."

"Cold doesn't seem to trouble your manuka. Look at that big stuff by the creek."

"That's man-OOKA. He grows everywhere. Great burning when he's dry."

"What about kowhai? You must have it here, but I haven't seen any."

"Co-eye? Oh, go-eye! No, he's gone. Used to make great fencing posts, but

there's nothing worth cutting now. Funny the way you call him.

"Kowhai?"

"Yes. Co. Co for company. Like you see on a bill."

"You prefer go? Go for get a move on?"

"That's right. Get a move on. Like the sentimental bloke. Shake your bloody boots. Cripes, I'll remember that. Ever see the sentimental bloke?"

"I met the man who made him."

"What?"

"The man who made him. Dennis. The man who thought him up and wrote books about him."

"Books? No, it's not the same. The bloke I saw was in a picture in Gore. Hell, he made me laugh."

"You laugh easily, don't you?"

"Me? You said it. I can laugh my head off at nothing."

"Well, to get serious again. Have you any matai here?"

"No, I don't know him."

"Or rimu?"

"No."

"No red or black pine at all?"

"Yes, we've black pine. Red, too, but not much nowadays. Never had much red."

"You still have plenty of black?"

"No, not plenty, but some. Can't beat his roots for firewood. Hard, though. Hard as hell to saw, and heavy."

"Tough wood for tough men."

"That's right. Tough wood for tough men. Cripes, I'll remember that. D'you know what we call jokers like you down here? Dags. That's it. A real dag. Ever go to a pub?"

"Now and again. This is the day, I think. Come on."

* * *

I IMAGINE that most men, before they submit to an anaesthetic, turn over their chances of coming through. If they are very sick or in great pain the thought of oblivion is no doubt pleasant; but I am thinking of those who have all their faculties, all their doubts, all their fears, and no over-riding physical discomfort. In those cases, I am sure, there is much secret anxiety and many dark questionings. Are they sure that their heart is sound? Would the doctor know if they had a thymus? Do doctors ever know enough about anyone to be able to foresee all the reactions? What is the anaesthetic mortality? One in a thousand? One in ten thousand? One in a hundred thousand? Who knows, in any case, that he is not that one?

MAY 1 So I suspect, it usually goes on, if we have enough knowledge, enough intelligence, and an active enough imagin-

tion. It certainly went on like that with me. I will not say that I had to whip up my courage, since there is no courage where there is no fear. Courage is facing what we do fear, and accepting the risks. I had no difficulty in accepting them. But I had difficulty in forgetting them. In remaining quite calm and quite normal from the day the operation was ordered till the morning when it took place.

But as it turned out, I was never unconscious. A spinal anaesthetic shuts off pain but not sight or hearing or memory. I was never, I suppose, fully aware of the succession of events, but I was never completely blind to them. When I was wheeled away an hour and a half later I knew in my head what had happened to me, even if my body told me nothing.

* * *

THE jests at scars who never felt a wound. But no one in hospital feels his wounds when he gets them. What he feels is nausea; sickness, humiliation, and disgust. It is necessary, he knows, that life should be reduced to its simplest terms; that neither habit nor training nor shyness nor squeamishness should go to bed with him; that he should become what he was in the beginning, naked and unashamed. But even nakedness has degrees. It can be passive and simple, a state to which we soon adjust ourselves; but it can also

MAY 3



WHY YOUR GROWING CHILD NEEDS THIS MORE COMPLETE RELIEF FROM COLDS!

At school and at play, your child is constantly exposed to colds which can tear down resistance to dangerous childhood diseases. Neglecting any cold, or "half-treating" it, may be dangerous!

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