

Smokescreens and Sunshine

by "SUNDOWNER"

CALL us A and B and C—three donkeys resting under a kowhai tree and putting up a cloud of smoke.

A (who has just finished a cigarette and is now filling a pipe): I never heard of lung cancer till the King died, and even yet we don't know that cancer killed him.

B: We know that he died.

C: Why he died, too.

A: It has never been officially admitted. In any case, admissions prove nothing. A man was murdered the other day in America and found afterwards to have been dead before the bludgeon crushed his skull.

B: In that case even the murderer would find the fact pleasanter than the fiction. But we prefer the fiction. We refuse even to think of the fact.

A: Aided and abetted by the doctors themselves. If they believe in the danger they do nothing to avert it.

C: They can't. They are like us—victims of a habit they are not strong enough to break.

B: But they don't urge others to break it. They don't preach non-smoking any more actively than they practise it.

C: Give the poor devils a chance. We don't want them to be humbugs as well as weaklings. I swear. It is a deplorable habit. But I don't preach non-swearing to my kids.

A: I do. I tell them that if they don't avoid bad habits when they are young they will not escape from them when they are old.

C: Do they listen to you?

A: That I will never know. All I know is that I don't justify my own weaknesses.

B: But this tobacco business. I think we all know that we would be safer if we did not smoke. No one risks his life by going without tobacco.

A: Not directly. No. But many men, and I think more women, need physical sedatives. I make no claim that smoking

is good for me. I decided long ago that it is good for my wife.

C: Do you think she needed it before she ever tried it?

A: That is a tough one. But I think she needed something. Civilisation deranges everybody; but it upsets some faster than it upsets others, and I think these are wise to defend themselves against it.

B: With a puff of smoke?

A: It is more than a puff of smoke, or why do we worry about it? It carries soothing and irritation in unpredictable degrees. Where the soothing is more marked than the irritation the habit seems to be justified.

B: Who pays for the smoke in your house?

A: That is a question I can't answer off-hand. If smoking is a vice, we both pay. If it is harmless, I pay, because I don't get much pleasure out of it and my wife gets a great deal. If it is good—

"Yes, thank you, we all take milk. Sugar for one, please."

* * *

I HAD an exciting letter yesterday from Mr. Barton, of Massey College. Though I am determined not to read more into it than Mr. Barton says, he has given me a hope—in fact a belief—that sheep will be born without tails before some farmers now living have died. The foundation of this hope is

an article contributed by Professor

A. L. Rae, of Massey College to *Advances in Genetics* (Volume 8, Academic Press Incorporated, New York). Though I have not seen the article, or the publication in which it appeared, Mr. Barton has sent me "a few bits and pieces" from it which convince me that science is well on the way to sheep without tails, or

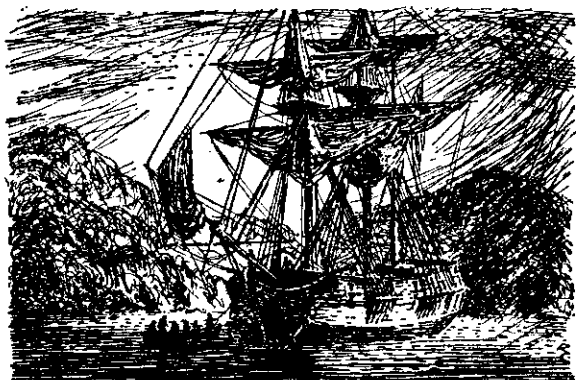
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Cook's Endeavour

WE know where Nelson's Victory lies—can walk her decks if we have the price of the fare to—but who can say what happened to Captain Cook's Endeavour? This is the subject of a talk by Leo Fowler, *What Happened to the Endeavour?* to be broadcast from YA and YZ stations at 9.15 p.m. on Thursday, November 15.

Many different fates have been claimed for the ship of Cook's first voyage to New Zealand, and relics of supposed Endeavours have been held in good faith by all sorts of people from Queen Victoria to James Fenimore Cooper. The American author's relic came from a ship that ended her days at Newport Harbour in Massa-

chusetts: the Queen's from a ship sunk in the largest of New Zealand's West Coast fiords. Was either of these ships Cook's Endeavour? Did she, instead, become a floating prison for female convicts? Or did she end in the English coastal coal trade? These are some of the questions which Mr. Fowler examines in his broadcast.



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