

TWO UNSUNG HEROES

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THEY are not always the fighting-men who win wars, but also the farms of a New Zealand, the mines of an Australia, the forests of a Canada—No, that is plain platitude and has been said too often. Besides, is it *really* true? Well, the only answer in such a case is facts.

I

And to supply those the best way is to present bluntly the true narrative of Kiakaha, which is the actual name of a certain New Zealand farm. That name means in the Maori language "We will fight on." And the farm itself is managed at the present day by a very ordinary man named Jim Mackenzie, who always rises at dawn.

It is easy to say that, but rather more difficult for Jim to do the actual rising. He is getting old now, and a prey already to a dozen malignancies of the flesh. But, it can't be helped. Kiakaha is a dairy farm, one of the hundreds in lush Taranaki and other North Island provinces which together produce more butter and cheese than any other pastoral community in the world. If Jim did not rise at dawn, and work continuously till sunset and brief bed again, seven days each week with no holidays at all, his blessed cows would soon let him know about it: and twenty years hard labour would, in as many days, be irrevocably lost.

Yes, twenty years is Jim Mackenzie's sentence, and it started just after the first German war, when the youngster fought eagerly in Palestine, Gallipoli and Flanders, winning some reputation as a good man with a machine-gun, not to mention the acquiring of a weakness in the lungs as a result of gas attack and a Government gratuity that enabled him to pay the first instalment on the thousand acres of uncleared bushland where Kiakaha now stands. So Jim married, a sturdy girl immigrant from Scotland named Jessie, and together they went out with axe and saw, nails and wire, two cows, a horse and a few hens.

It was the local parson who told Jim about the name Kiakaha, and the labouring man, labouring desperately to grub out the stumps of burned trees, erect strong fences, transform a preliminary lean-to shack into a home fit for his uncomplaining wife, chose it for the name of his virgin farm in a fit of sardonic

humour. Sixty years before, said the scholar, a battle had been fought hereabouts between the Maoris and the first white settlers, who, winning, had offered the losing side an armistice. But the Maoris had replied "Ake! Ake! Kia Kaha," "For ever! For ever! We will fight on," and the white settlers had been so impressed that they had tried their best to give the Maoris a just peace. "Well," commented Jim Mackenzie, "we will have to do some fighting before we conquer this farm, so we may as well call it Kiakaha and hope for the best."

And he may well repeat those words today, as the aging man rises at dawn, twenty years after that first struggle.

The farm itself has been conquered. Perhaps the visitor from an older, long-settled land may observe a roughness about the buildings and fences, as also about the appearance and general outlook of Jim and his wife. But the expert in pastoral farming will have only praise for the sensible "lay-out" and the efficient methods which enable Jim to produce milk-products for ultimate consumption in a market at the other side of the world at a lower price than farmers next door to that market can stand. If Jim is still fighting, the enemy is elsewhere.

Just before the war, our hero had begun to enjoy the reward of his long struggle. His two sons, Clive and Massey, were old enough at last to help with the work, and his income was sufficient now to cover hired labour. Jim, prematurely old from the earlier war, could sometimes stay abed till seven at least, and could even drive Jessie in the new car sometimes to Stratford for the races.

Then the new war came—and took Clive for the Air Force,—and the hired man for a better job in the south—and finally the eighteen-year-old Massey for a swift enlistment by overstatement of age in the military force that had gone soon after to the Middle East and then to Crete. The lad was, they hoped, a prisoner now. And old Jim and Jessie were fighting again.

The war sacrifices of a country like New Zealand are compounded of many ingredients, but always it is the quality rather than the quantity which counts. A country the size of the British Isles, with a population only a fraction that of London, must work proportionately harder than larger lands to produce comparable results. So old Jim and Jessie, unable to obtain the labour which has been quickly absorbed in the armed forces and munitions industries, cultivate their all-demanding cows today with an expenditure of energy and patriotism that only

the cows themselves will ever be able to appreciate in its full extent.

They had two cows when they started twenty years ago: now they have *fifty*, just half of their peak herd in the pre-war years, but quite large enough to sicken their hearts at the prospect of each day's labour. Admittedly they are helped now as never before by wise cooperative schemes, and by Government control of the industry which relieves them of butter and cheese making—and even collects the milk from their door—paying good prices with unfailing regularity. But the Government meanwhile makes new promises to Britain to increase output, calling on the farmers, for their own and the world's sake, to honour the pledge. And Jim and Jessie, waiting still for news of their sons, simply haven't got that fund of spiritual energy which supplied their motive-power twenty years ago.

II

The second true story? Well, this concerns nothing more—or less—than a solitary *broken hill*, somewhere in the interior wasteland of Australia.

And this particular true yarn starts nearly one hundred years ago: when a certain English explorer named Charles Sturt departed in search of a fabled inland sea beyond the Barrier Range of New South Wales. His only discovery was illimitable desert—dominated in the centre by this grim, serrated hill.

The feature was curious. It rose gauntly some 150 feet above the plain, a callous outcrop of splintered rock. The brazen land below was bereft of aught but the most elementary vegetation. Nothing could live there, reported Sturt after an expedition that had itself been a tragedy; and his verdict was confirmed often in the succeeding years.

That broken hill continued to stand sentinel over desolation for nearly a human generation further.

Then it was visited by the wretched army of gold prospectors that rushed inland during one of Australia's periodic economic slumps. Desperate men would suffer any hardship in the hope of gold. Some of them returned from the broken hill, half-demented with privation and disappointment. Others remained, to leave their whitening bones as an awful witness to their failure. The hill malevolently resumed its vigil.

Thus another twenty years passed, till it was 1883, and men

had grown daring again. Some found silver in the Barrier Range, and primitive mines were opened. But still the fateful hill at the end of the range, and the surrounding, lifeless country, were left carefully alone. It was a profitless as well as dangerous tract of land, said the prospectors and bullockies; and young Charles Rasp probably felt the same when he rode to the hill one day in the course of his duties as a boundary rider. Then he paused, dismounted, and lifted a small rock. It had a promising appearance. The young man carried that rock to the saddle, lashed it on and rode swiftly away.

The next day he returned with two companions, one of whom knew something about rocks. And it was true. The rock had been analysed as solid oxide of tin. In that case, the whole hill . . . So Rasp and his companions set spurs to their horses again, and were galloping off to establish official claims to a fortune.

The claims were established, but the fortune?

Well, when Rasp returned to the station where he worked and said he was handing in his checks and starting as a prospector, the young man was keenly questioned by the station manager, one George McCulloch. The lad explained all, and had to accept McCulloch and some others as additional partners. A little money was raised, and a shaft sunk in the hill. Nothing was found!

In disappointment some of the men sold their claims, or just abandoned them. McCulloch put up half his share as a stake in a euchre game, and lost it. The broken hill grinned down again upon desolation.

But next year, 1885, that nasty piece of outcrop met its master.

He was a sturdy Scot named William Jamieson, formerly an official of the New South Wales Department of Mines. He sank another shaft, and took an essay to reveal over 1,000 ounces to the ton not of tin but—of *silver*! And in that moment Jamieson actually laid the foundations of modern Australia's industrial strength.

Indeed, Jamieson's was the energy that first uncovered the potential mineral riches of the most remarkable little mountain in the world—a solid mountain of silver, lead and other valuable metals. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company, Ltd., was founded by Jamieson, McCulloch and others to exploit the find; and within three years the desolate outcrop had yielded no fewer than 7,679,291 ounces of silver, 27,988 tons of lead, and a total cash return of £1,579,377. After six years the half-

share which McCulloch had gambled away was worth £1,250,000. The sterile plain about the hill was already a busy scene of human activity, with a town, a railway and a water supply system that defied the fatal drought. Shares in the ever-growing company were sold to fortunate investors across the world.

And there it might very well have ended.

The silver could not last forever, and there had been many equally spectacular finds that had gradually petered out.

But it so happened that the men behind this particular enterprise were each gifted with the quality of prescience. Instead of spending their quickly-found fortunes, they reinvested them in the business, and turned the business to other fields and hills.

The world slowly realizes now that Australia is capable of something more than cricket and farming. But the world may find it difficult to believe that the great industrial power which enabled Australia to supply a large part of the munitions requirements of the Pacific war was the product, indirectly, of that single broken hill.

The hill yielded its wealth to the men who mastered it. They in turn used that wealth to open other enterprises, always sober, reliable and profitable. A great smelting industry was established by the Broken Hill Proprietary at Port Pirie in 1889; iron and manganese deposits were mined at Whyalla, Monarch and Knob in South Australia, deposits with a capacity of at least 21,000,000 tons; coal was discovered and mined; industries were founded for the production of steel wire, tin-plate, nails, benzol, tar and fertilizers. And finally there arose from that hill—Australia's Newcastle.

Here the Company built, during the first German War, a great steel works. This steadily expanded until now, with such an urgent demand for its products, Newcastle, N. S. W., has the most developed and efficient electric-foundries and blast-furnaces in the entire world. The equipment is so complete and efficient that, although the workers receive the highest wages ever paid to steelmen, the metal they produce is the cheapest in price on the market. Anderson and Morrison shelters in Britain have been made of it, sea-mines in millions, "tin-hats" in billions, great guns and little, essential steel pins which hold the engines of Spitfires together: and Australia could play a really important part in the expanding Pacific war just because there were once some farseeing men—and a solitary, broken hill.

They are not always the fighting-men who win wars.