

ON TOMB AND TEMPLE

The Autographs of The Infamous

THE urge to write one's name in all sorts of odd places is rarely resisted by New Zealanders. It is almost a national habit to scratch, with pen, pencil, or knife, one's name and the date of the offence. Take the desks and forms in almost any school and you will find thousands of carvings. Builders engaged recently in renovating the classrooms of a big South Island school found in the crevices of the walls, the flooring, and even tucked away in cracks in the ceiling, tiny pieces of paper carrying the names of hundreds of pupils — some of them to-day distinguished soldiers or highly respected in business life. A few of these personal documents contained pieces of satire directed at the masters of the day.

But the autographing craze does not disappear with the end of school life. One may read the names of would-be-celebrated in strange corners of any city

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hup! hup — most annoying these beads of perspiration running down my brow—hup!—hup!—no go—well, maybe I can blow out the candle—fuff!—fuff!—very difficult—fuff!—fuff!—trying to blow out—fuff!—fuff! — a candle over one's shoulder — fuff!—fuff!—hup!—hup! — fuff!—fuff!—hup!—hup!" — and so on until the entrance of the rescue party.

I feel that our radio play writers are not working hard enough. They must not rest content to jog along with these wretched monologues.

I listened the other evening to a play in which a German spy was dropped over England from a plane, and all the way down, as he swung under his parachute, he talked to himself. Maybe this was true to life. Maybe men descending by parachute do talk to themselves. I wouldn't know that, but I do know that the writer could have avoided the monotony of it. Might he not have handled it this way?

The spy is on his way down. Enter a lark, singing dolorously, and obviously very tired.

Spy: Hello there, lark.

Lark: Good evening.

Spy: You look tired, lark.

Lark: I am tired. Dog-tired if a lark can be that way.

Spy: A lark could, I suppose, be that way. How did you get so tired?

Lark: Oh, I was singing away and went higher than I intended.

Spy: You mean you sang higher?

Lark: No, I soared higher.

Spy: Well, I'm going down. Can I give you a lift?

Lark: Thanks, I'd appreciate it.

Spy: Hop aboard.

There you are, you see. And how much more interesting than listening to a chap telling himself at intervals that he ought to be down in a few minutes, checking over his equipment, and wondering loudly if he is going to make a happy landing.

or town. For instance, "Foo," who recently set Wellington agog with curiosity, has left his mark all over New Zealand. The strange signature is on walls of buildings in Palmerston North, Auckland, Christchurch and Oamaru.

Surroundings for autographings do not seem to matter a bit so long as the name is seen by the next comer, and, possibly, by the writer, years later. I confess that for many years my own initials, deeply carved, stood wind and weather on the railing of a southern pier. There is bitter disappointment, of course, when, on his return to his old haunts, the autographer finds that some conscientious caretaker has obliterated his claim to fame.

Name-writing, however, can easily become vandalism. Visitors to the grave of Robert Louis Stevenson in the South Sea Islands complain that it has

been defiled by inscriptions of tourists from the Seven Seas. Soldiers returned from this war have reported seeing names of New Zealanders scribbled on the walls of Hindu temples and the Egyptian Pyramids.

Religious exhortations are found painted in huge letters on the natural rock in scenic beauty spots. I have seen them in many parts of New Zealand, placed there to remind us that all flesh is grass. The sign marking the divide between Canterbury and Westland, in the Otira Gorge, will no doubt have a further list of names added to it these holidays.

Film stars in Hollywood observe the childish rite of implanting their foot signatures in wet concrete for "fans" to view with solemn reverence, but in that case the concrete is laid for that specific purpose and nobody suffers.

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THERE'S A KNACK IN IT

So much has to be done. You go all out—and in no time you're 'all in'. Save your strength. There's a knack about most labour which once acquired lightens the work no end—and actually improves the figure. Stooping over with a curved spine simply invites fatigue. Remember, the straight spine's the strong line, whether you are standing, kneeling, bending or sitting. A slumped chest is cheated of its full supply of oxygen, cramped digestions can't work, strained back muscles develop aches. But... straighten that spine, pull in that chin, tuck that rear under like a spanked puppy (and when you bend, bend from the hips like a native woman, as nature intended you to do), and you can hoe in to your heart's content. You'll finish only pleasantly tired, not dragged down with fatigue and exhaustion. And—it's done the figure-work of beauty-exercises galore!

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