

"It's Even Good For Rheumatism"

(Continued from previous page)

"Do you get many women?" we asked.

"Yes, but usually with the men. A young couple will come in and want to have the same design on both of them, with both names or the other's name inside. I don't really approve of it for women, and anyway, what's going to happen if she marries someone else?"

We suggested that the man was in the same situation, and in any case, it was removable. But our artist shook his head. "I don't hold with it for women," he said. "I wouldn't like it for my own daughter. Still, if they ask me to in the way of business, I can't very well refuse."

However, he does another kind of tattooing specially for women, by means of which cheeks and lips can be given permanent colour. It's a very delicate operation, demanding thousands of tiny pricks, but it's worth the trouble, he claims, because you never have to worry about rouge and lipstick. "I haven't found a great demand for it here, but I did a lot of it when I was in London—mostly for women who were going to spend some years in the tropics. I've had a few customers out here, among them two New Zealand nurses who were going overseas. But I'll tell you one thing that's very popular with the girls, and that's beauty-spots. I've done a lot of them."

His Greatest Task

The biggest single job he ever did, he told me, was to tattoo the Lord's Supper, complete with all thirteen figures, across a man's back. But the greatest living memorial to his art is a certain merchant seaman of Wellington, on whom he has tattooed some 577 designs, and all without repeating himself. "This is him," he said proudly, showing us the photograph of someone clad from neck to toe appar-

ently in close-fitting and much-patterned combinations.

The favourite place for tattooing is the forearm, unless of course you're going in for it in a big way, in which case it's immaterial where you start. Dancing ladies are usually placed on top of a muscle that quivers. Backs and chests provide a canvas for larger-scale efforts. And, just to show the lengths to which enthusiasm will go, our expert even suggested that tattooing was "good for rheumatism!"

War time is of course an open season for tattoo artists, and one notable feature of this war, according to this authority, is that soldiers are just as

keen as sailors. "It's just a matter of getting started," he said. "The first time a boy comes to me he's usually a bit dubious about it, but his coppers egg him on. And once he's had one design he usually comes back for another. But I don't suppose I'd have much trade if all my customers lived at home. It's when you get a lot of boys together and they don't need to worry, at any rate for the present, about what their mothers are going to say, that they go in for such luxuries."

A strange luxury, we reflected, as we came away, but *de gustibus non disputandum*.



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