

Tobacco

BY A KORERO STAFF WRITER

THERE is a monument to the tobacco industry in the Marlborough district. It is a kiln for the drying of tobacco-leaf standing starkly out of place in the onion-fields of Grovetown as an ever-present reminder to would-be tobacco-growers in the district that "It can't happen here."

During the depression one Grovetown farmer decided to plant tobacco on land that had previously been used for grain and seed crops. The reason for his decision lay in the firm tobacco market which was enabling Nelson growers to weather the economic storm. It was difficult to find a paying market for his previous produce. His soil was good. The Nelson and Marlborough climates were similar enough to allow a reasonable hope that tobacco could be grown successfully in Grovetown.

So he realized on some of his dwindling assets, swotted up the detail from the experience of Nelson growers, built his kiln to approved specifications, and planted his crop. It grew magnificently. It was 6 ft. high in no time, then 7 ft., then 8. The difficulty was that it would not stop growing; neither would it ripen; and when, in desperation, the farmer picked some green leaf and kiln-dried it the result was ample and conclusive proof that Grovetown soil was not tobacco soil.

Yet just over 100 miles away around Motueka tobacco-growers are producing about half the leaf used in tobacco-manufacture in New Zealand to-day. To their success and Grovetown's failure the "good earth" holds the key. Tobacco prefers a slightly acid soil; light sandy soils and sandy loams. Marl-



borough soil in that locality was too rich, and this, coupled with slight differences in climate, meant disaster for Grovetown growers.

Thus there are no monuments to the tobacco industry around Nelson. The Motueka-Umukuri-Riwaka kilns are packed each season with golden leaf, which, when dried and cured, helps to fill the "tailor-mades" or roll-your-owns smoked by serviceman and civilian. Whatever may be your brand, a large proportion of New Zealand leaf is adding to your smoking enjoyment.

Over 3,000 acres of Tobacco

New Zealand tobacco was first grown from Virginian seed in the Nelson district in 1927. To-day there are over 3,000 acres planted in tobacco in that area. The crop is grown under contract to the manufacturing firms, who must pay an average price of 1s. 10½d. per pound for the total quantity they purchase. Individual growers may receive more or less than this minimum average according to the quality of their leaf, but purchasers cannot go below 1s. 2d. per pound. Fine-quality leaf will fetch up to 3s. 6d. per pound.

A good average yield is 1,000 lb. of leaf per acre, which means about £100