

# THE UNSEEING EYES THAT GAZE DOWN

(By a staff reporter)

TAKE another hard look at the faces you see below on this page. Study them carefully. Then try and remember if you have seen them before. If you have not, you have no excuse other than careless observation.

All of them are easily visible features of New Plymouth buildings and fountains. All should have been seen by thousands. Three of them, ornamental features of two Devon Street buildings, should be seen by thousands each day, if only those thousands would take their eyes off the asphalt footpath, the glittering shop window, the traffic, or the shapely office girl to glance upward for a moment.

Most people will recognise the lion as the same one that stares angrily from the Queen Victoria memorial fountain, near the band rounda by the main lake in Pukekura Park. Fashioned in marble, it is possibly the most impressive of the quintet.

The tattooed Maori head graces the arch above the entrance to the New Zealand Insurance Company's building. Because of a verandah jutting out from the entrance, the head cannot be seen by people entering the building—not that many would look up in any case.

### Unnoticed

One woman who has worked in the building for the last 20 years admitted that she had not noticed the stern Maori head before. Nor have many of the countless thousands who have trudged up the other side of the street on the way to and from New Plymouth's present chief post office. It is clearly visible from that side.

Then there is the picture of the grinning face. Intriguing. But where is it? Climb Marsland hill, and look at the old fountain commemorating the Boer War. There

you will see the same lifelike face. However sculptured it produced a spile that has survived many decades, and probably for years longer than most of you have lived.

Finally, there are the two mysterious heads taken from an old wooden building on the seaward side of Devon Street, two buildings along from the Bank of New Zealand on the corner of Devon and Brougham streets. These too, one a man, the other a woman, one on each side of the building, can be easily seen from the other side of the street.

### A passed age

All of these heads are relics of an age that has gradually passed. Such ornamentation is no longer wanted on the straight angled structures of steel, concrete and glass erected by modern man and his machines. Architects today consider that the human form has no place on a building. Their point is that the human body has little in common with concrete, steel or stone.

The male and female faces pictured here are embellishments put on to brackets. When stone buildings were erected, it was not possible to have overhangings at the top of buildings in any great magnitude without supporting brackets. To relieve the plainness of these, they were embellished, usually with heads or perhaps with leaves or some other design of the living thing.

The large wooden buildings erected in New Zealand, largely peculiar to this country, were built in the style of stone buildings. Arches were used when arches were not needed with wood, and the designs necessary for stone buildings were slavishly followed by architects. Thus the old wooden buildings had

brackets—not necessary to support any overhang—and these were embellished in the manner of the heads in the photographs.

### Gargoyles

The heads of the fountains serve as rainwater spouts, or gargoyles. Ornamentation of buildings and common feature of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. The ornaments were used more in ecclesiastical buildings than on public buildings, and it was common to portray the saints. It was left largely to the craftsmen to decide what ornamentation should be placed on a building, and they, not the architects, would dictate the type of ornament.

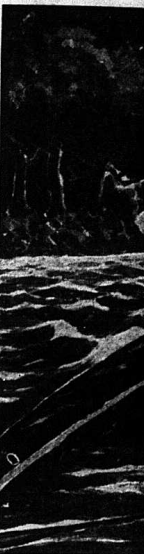
The ornamental heads were placed on buildings here to conform with the accepted classical designs of stone buildings. The era was not one of abstract or geometrical design, and the craftsmen seemed to have felt that it was more appropriate to depict a living thing.

Although no longer favoured, there is no doubt that such ornamentation did give lift to a building. And after all, humans plan buildings, erect them and use them.

### A reaction

Today, however, ornamentation is kept to a minimum. It is quite possible though that there might soon be a reaction against the harsh, functional, although pleasing lines of modern buildings and a return to a certain amount of ornamentation.

The ornaments such as the faces in these photographs really reflect the outlook of the time in which they were erected. One cannot help harbouring a secret admiration for these fascinating relics of a departed building fashion.



### Sleepy drivers

German highway authorities plan to carve "slits" into the edges of the Frankfurt-Mannheim two-way autobahn in the hope that drowsy drivers may be roused by the bum of their cars straying from the cent of the road. The slits are to be about one inch deep. The Frankfurt-Mannheim autobahn has become known as the "highway death" in West Germany because accidents are frequent on the bus straight stretch.



## BACK-STAGE By CLIO

New Zealand theatrical history will be made when "Pep Show II" is presented in New Plymouth next week. It will be the first revue in the Dominion during which the curtain does not fall throughout the programme, except at the interval.

Well-known drama producer Cybil Strang brought back the idea from her recent overseas trip and suggested that this new technique would be suitable for the "Pep Show."

The organisers thought so too, and so there will be a non-stop show for those who attend the revue on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

"Pep Show II," inspired as was the first revue by Edward and Jean Hill, has some other unusual features:—

● All the proceeds, as did those from last year's "N-UPP-Z" and "Pep Show I," will be for the school's assembly hall fund.

Selection of Alan de Malmarche as producer for next year's Festival of the Pines play spotlights the conjecture already going on about the choice of the play. This year's selection was Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion." Well produced and well acted though it was, the play probably succeeded more because of the novelty of its Brooklands Bowl setting than its suitability for open-air performance.

For the 1939 festival, all the entertainment must be really first-class since the organisers can no longer rely on the now accustomed beauty of their festival site to draw the crowds.

The play will, therefore, have to be chosen with an eye to the box office, the restrictions of an outdoor production and the need to find something with a very wide appeal.

One of the best suggestions I've heard to date is a pantomime, a form of stage entertainment rarely