

1933

## Scratches

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# The Hornbook

*"Being ambitious to commence author,  
I was composing a new horn-book."*

ANON. (1763)

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## SCRATCHES

Go to a desk blotter, a scratch pad, or a telephone booth and read the scratches and figures which have been made. Behold! a whole new field of study is opened. And it is interesting. No one makes the same mark. Often one person alone will make a dozen different scratches depending entirely on his mood. These can tell an observer many things. Sometimes it is evident that the marker is interested in athletics by his pictures of baseballs, footballs, even rules scratched or printed. Other times flowers drawn on some scratch pad show a person interested in nature.

Observe your own scratchings. They were made most likely when you were waiting for something or somebody. Your subconscious self protruded in a stray moment. Your pet interest cropped up, and down went the figure on the nearest space which could be used for writing.

To youth, school desks mostly serve. If hearts are printed or cut in a desk you maybe sure that the carver is in love. If he put initials down inside the hearts, his love affair has gone so far that he is really proud of the fact. He has passed the bashful stage. He loves little Annie Rooney, wishes the whole world to know it, and proceeds to write her initials over his own and surround them both with a heart.

Suppose one carves his initials in the desk, writes them on all his books, and makes a habit of it. He can easily be

distinguished by this show of self-pride. However, if in his disinterested moments he draws Indians, swords, or guns, the pseudo artist manifests a marked romantic character.

This same habit does not disappear on growing up. Some of the worst offenders to public property are college students. On a survey of desks in a small college many developed forms of expressing the subconscious were found. Probably the most popular way to decorate your desk is to print fraternity initials on it. On counting the number of times this mark was put down in one room alone, it appeared 120 times. To the person interested in one's character, could not these initials portray a certain pride in one's associations, maybe a superiority complex?

One desk, however, had all the fraternities on the campus printed in a column. Might it be said that that particular party had a communal complex. He leaned towards the brotherhood of man. He may even now be holding a seat in the World Court or League of Nations.

Another college student spent his moments in printing radio announcements. His desk read like this:

"Canada's Cheerio Station presents Rudy Richardson's Rowdy Rythm Rascals, and Snakefish and his 12 Rattlers in a battle of rythm. Their first number will be 'Sweet Adeline vs. Ben Boldt'."

Was that student merely facetious who inscribed on his desk the following legend: "R. F. S. Harvard 1926. Si deus vult"?

A collection of these markings at once becomes divided into two groups, the practical and the impractical or aesthetic. In the first group are those whose scribblings show mathematical or scientific tendencies. They carve or print squares, circles, concentric and otherwise, cubes, parallel lines, and all types of geometric figures. They also believe in playing safe by working arithmetic on the desk top.



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The students of science are more technical. They draw retorts, bunsen burners, radio stations, pulleys, cats, and constellations. Models of ears decorate their desks. Every angle was noticed, from the side view of a Rolls-Royce to the back view of a Model T Ford. They even crib scientifically. In the corner of many of the desks were light, intelligible scratchings of a formula or a historical date.

On the other hand are those whose thoughts soar towards the heavens while their pencils dig into the varnish; their marks will be different. Their natures tend towards art and beauty. The figures they make range over a wide field. Women's heads seemed most popular. Sometimes the result is a beautiful girl. A few, too, see the beauty of the commonplace and a scout woman is depicted. Profiles of men, landscape (which is usually fatal to the desk), cartoons, famous verses are some of the many ways the subconscious appears.

There is still a third class—miscellaneous. Some people have a "pet peeve" and give vent to their feelings through written sentences. For example, in the college survey, short statements were found such as: "Bill — is a booby" or, "Youse is a viper, professor."

So much for the individual in discovering the real trend of his character. If you are in the professions a knowledge of the subconscious mind is quite handy. The doctor can find what is wrong with his patient by observing his scribblings. If they are impractical the victim is usually under the influence of love. But if they are in the practical class, his business worries him. Likewise the professor is aided. He would do well to look once a month at the desk tops. Too much disfiguring, especially in back seats, most likely means his course is dry. When the competent professor is sure his subject is interesting but finds too many of his students are flunking, he need not go far to

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discover what is the matter with them. His solution lies in plain view on the desk top.

The simple markings that you make are significant—A plumber does not scratch Greek letters, neither does the college professor indent his desk with X's. Each one's mark means something. Those who delve into fortune's secrets could well pass their time in developing this new science. Certainly it will give you as much satisfaction as the town oracle.

William R. Mark.

## DOGWOOD

You are beautiful—  
Cold, alluring, white,  
Dogwood.  
Long, shimmery ears,  
Tapped ribbed petals.  
Background by tapestries  
Of singing leaves;  
In your earthen vase  
Free, gay, seductive.  
Here another tapestry  
Of Flemish weave,  
In your potter's vase  
Sad, drooping, seductive.

—Martin Kahn.