



THE foundation of the Auckland Auxiliary Asylum—destroyed by fire last Christmas—has been laid, and consists entirely of concrete, which, at present, has the appearance of small paths very neatly arranged. The site is the same, but the new building—of brick—will present a very different appearance to the previous wooden structure. Dr. Hassell, the medical superintendent, most skilfully drew the plans, his designs being based on practical knowledge of the requirements of insane patients. When completed, it will be a very handsome building. The extensive grounds around the Asylum are looking exceedingly well, thanks to the unceasing care and supervision of the doctor. He has carefully laid out each part of the land to the best advantage, using only the labour of the patients, to their great physical and mental benefit. The newly-planted orchards, large concrete swimming bath, model dairy, and far-away piggeries all testify to the untiring energy and patience of Dr. Hassell. The two latter are also concrete buildings, all three made by the patients, and designed and superintended by the doctor. In fact, the whole place is an example of what can be accomplished when brains and common-sense are united to determination and perseverance.

THE death of the Dacres in Australia has formed a sad topic of conversation in this and the other colonies, and a very wide and deep sympathy has been manifested in their melancholy fate. Unhappily we are so accustomed to hear of murders and suicides that such occurrences have ceased to move us very strongly, and it may be that we sometimes treat with the traditional horror and aversion cases which we would regard very differently did we know the exact circumstances attending them. There is little danger of us taking too harsh a view of the last deeds of Mr Dacre. Here was no vulgar crime where a man in a moment of drunken frenzy or brutal passion takes a life and then ends his own to escape the consequences. Nor is it one of those instances, so frequent nowadays, of the swindler and gambler who, having shipwrecked his fortune and that of others, basely flees through the portals of death. The sad exit of the Dacres and the circumstance leading up to it suggest rather one of those tragic scenes which are met with in the works of the great dramatists—scenes in which the unfortunate pair had often taken their part in the pursuit of their profession, never dreaming that by the irony of fate they should one day enact in real life what they simulated on the stage. Who is there that would condemn Romeo and his lady Juliet that they preferred the poisoned cup and the dagger to a lonely, loveless life? Who shall say that Cleopatra should not have nursed the asp at her bosom, or that Othello should have endured an existence loaded with remorse? And may there not be cases in real life in which one can look on actual tragedy with the same lenient eye, and almost say of them, as the dying Charmian said to the Roman soldier, 'It is well done.'

I do not mean to say that the Dacre case is one of these. Heaven only knows that! But I certainly do think that it is one which calls forth nothing but pity and compassion. It is surely a most gratifying evidence of the spirit of humanitarianism and sympathy which is abroad in these days that the public should have been unanimous in the view they have taken of this tragedy, and that there should not have been a note of condemnation heard. They recognised that the burden of life had become too heavy for that man and woman before they agreed to lay it down, and they tacitly justified them. That extreme readiness to recognise and to justify, while no doubt due in a great measure, as I have said, to a humanitarian spirit, may not be altogether a healthy symptom. It may indicate a loose hold on life which is one of the worst characteristics for a nation to manifest. The qualities wanted in a young nation are perseverance and hopefulness in the face of all difficulties, however insuperable they may appear. The philosophy which justifies a man ending his life when he chooses may have the warrant of antiquity, but it is not one we wish taught here, much less practised. There is, of course, another view to take of this sad affair, and it certainly is the commonest as well as the most satisfactory way of dealing with such cases. This is the view which ascribes Dacre's terrible act to insanity. I have not touched on this explanation. It is so well known that it does not call for special comment, but the other view held by many that a good man may be guilty of such deeds while in a perfectly sound frame of mind deserves to be looked at too, and that is why I referred to it.

A FRESH indictment has been lodged against football. I should hardly dare to make the announcement during the football season when our brawny young barbarians are at play, but at present, when the willow has ousted the leather for a season, and the enthusiasm of the half and quarter-back has subsided a little, I may do so with comparative safety. Many are the indictments, as everybody knows, which have been brought against football in the past. It has been charged with causing no end of broken limbs, and sometimes necks too, and has been allowed to go with a caution in spite of all the physical injuries it has inflicted. But now it has been found guilty of an unpardonable assault on the morals of the young, and it remains to be seen whether it is to be left off so easily. The facts are these:—In Birmingham the enthusiasm for the game has attained such a pitch that the youths in the factories are tending to neglect their work during working hours, and the leisure time which they have on Sundays, which they are expected to devote to the church and Sunday-school, they devote to fighting over again their battles of the previous day. The teachers declare that no more serious hindrance to the conduct of the Sunday-schools has arisen in the last quarter of a century than this passion for football which has infected the young generation. The boys introduce football editions of the papers into their classes, and instead of manifesting an interest in Biblical history, as we used to do when we were young, they devour the descriptions of Saturday's matches. It would seem that even such bloody encounters as the hewing of Agag in pieces before the Lorde are tame to the youthful imagination compared with the football match between the 'Break-his-bones Rangers' and the 'Bruise-his-shins Wanderers.' The one event is far back in the dawn of history, and who was Agag that we should rejoice in the fact that he or his people were made into mince meat? But it is quite another matter when we come to Dick having his eye knocked out in a scrimmage, or Tom being lamed for life. These are contemporary facts, and Dick and Tom are youths who have come within the circle of our own experience, and though they have no poet to sing their battles, they have, nevertheless, the sincere homage of their fellows for the time being.

ONLY an editor knows the full awkwardness there is in having to answer lady correspondents who give no indication in their letters whether they are matrons or Misses. One cannot judge by the handwriting whether the lady is married or not—at least ordinary mortals like myself do not pretend to read character in the dot of an i, or the stroke of a t, or to tell from the formation of a 'u' whether a lady has a husband or not. For my part I am often not certain whether it is a lady or a gentleman who is addressing me till I look at the Christian name in the signature, for the ladies nowadays, unlike their grandmothers, who wrote the fine Italian hand, affect a masculine dash and vigour. I generally address the unknown lady as if she were unmarried for various reasons. In the first place married ladies, as a rule, have too much to do in their own

families to write to the papers. The great army of feminine writers are young or old women who have never entered into the bonds of matrimony. Then again I find that it does not displease a married lady to be addressed as a Miss. It makes her feel younger and more attractive—a feeling every woman should cultivate. But notwithstanding all this there is a decided awkwardness in not knowing whether the woman you are addressing is a Mrs or a Miss. The tone you might adopt towards the one might be very different from the one in which you would address the other. The sentiments you might give expression to would be modified in many respects. The advice you might tender would vary very considerably. But how is the confusion to be avoided? Only by the ladies adopting some title significant of the fact that they are no longer unappropriated blessings, such as Madam, Dame, or Mrs, and prefixing or affixing it to their signatures. Among the ancients it was easy to make the distinction, for the maidens and matrons were distinctively attired, and in some countries to-day the law prescribes such differences of dress. Nay, even among savages, who wear no dress to speak of, there are peculiarities in the nose ring or the girdle of shells by which the initiated eye can at once tell whether the lady has a lord and master or has not. In this advanced country, where the ladies have so much power in their own sweet hands, surely they might introduce some reform of the present system, so that one might know the position of unknown lady correspondents.

I HEAR frequent complaints in several parts of the colony of the recklessness and thoughtlessness of 'cyclists.' It appears that a good many gentlemen and ladies—if persons guilty of undoubted rudeness deserve the name—are in the habit of rushing round street corners on their machines, and never think of warning, by a touch of their bells, a pedestrian who may be in their way and unaware of their near approach. They ride him or her down, and only trouble to give a startling shout when within a few feet of him; or, what is equally bad, they glide noiselessly past without a word. It is easy to understand that very serious consequences might result from either practice. Coming suddenly without warning on a nervous woman those thoughtless riders would give her such a start as might be very dangerous. The 'cyclist' must remember that pedestrians have some rights as well as himself. They have the right of prior possession on the road. Before he and his wonderful machine were ever heard of men were accustomed to walk on the public streets, and he must not fancy we are going to yield to him without a struggle. I am afraid, however, that in the end we shall have to give way to the tyranny of the wheel. Everybody is going in for a 'bike,' and that new invention, the road skate, on which man can do thirty miles an hour, is coming in to complicate matters. As James Payne in a recent note pointed out, 'things are looking somewhat lively for the pedestrian, with bicyclists and road skaters progressing at twenty miles an hour, and electric road cars with noiseless tires, his humble occupation will be hazardous.'

IT appears that now that the ladies have for some time had the privilege of using a voting paper just like the men, they are beginning to sigh with Solomon, 'And behold this, too, is vanity.' When the dear creatures got the franchise a good many of them believed that a new era had dawned for the world, or at least for New Zealand. I have seen no visible signs of this new era, but I wisely hesitated to say so till now, when I have the authority of one of the lady members of the Auckland Women's Political League for speaking out. In an essay recently delivered before the League this lady gave her audience to understand that the hopes which they and she had cherished as the result of the extension of the Franchise had been cruelly destroyed. Their visions of the social millennium, which was to date from last election, of the new political heaven in Wellington, and the new political earth throughout the rest of the colony have, alas! not been realised. They find that women are just as bad as men when it comes to choosing a candidate; that they are just as narrow and prejudiced in their views, and as little given to enquire into a man's character as their fathers, husbands, brothers, or sons are. It is a trifle rough on the present House of Representatives to doubt their integrity of purpose and purity of life, but this is pretty much what the fair essayist did when she deplored the fact that the women had not banded together to secure the return of men of sterling honour and unstained character. I confess that I had hoped to see more clear evidence of the influence of the women's vote in Parliament than we have seen, unless the length and verbosity of the Session is an evidence, which I, for one, decline to believe. But at the same time it is somewhat premature to form an opinion on the results of the first election. Wait till next election, and see then what