

delight in torturing my nerves, interfering with my work, and depriving me of my natural sleep. Many a time and oft have I prayed that the whole breed—grands, uprights, and cottages—might be swept from the face of the earth. But a great change has come over me within the last ten days. When I read the magnificent conduct of the piano on the 'Tasmania' at the wreck of that ill-fated vessel all anger towards the race of pianos died out in me. It may be said that what praise is going is due to Mr Porter, the gentleman who sat down at the instrument, and when all on board were harassed with doubt and fear, evoked merry music that made them half forget the danger. I admit all that, and would not withhold one grain of honour from a quarter where it is so richly deserved. But the old habit of ignoring the player and treating the inanimate combination of strings and hammers as if it were endued with life and reason is not to be so easily broken, and when I think of that little incident on board the sinking ship, it is not Mr Porter, but the old piano which is the hero. Kipling in his inimitable way has sung the praises of the banjo, and rather inclines to throw cold water on the piano; and one was inclined to side with him, for the piano had always seemed to me a conservative, genteel instrument, incapable of doing anything heroic. But now I know we were all mistaken, and that on great occasions a piano can be equal to them. How indescribably cheering must have been its song, singing old familiar ditties above the noise of wind or wave! I can fancy how it beguiled them for the moment into thinking that they were just leaving a merry concert room for their comfortable homes instead of a sinking ship in the wild sea. And all the time it was singing its own death song, too. May the waves lie light on thee, noble Broadwood, or Encke, or of whatever family or nationality thou art! May the sharks not vex thy triple chords, nor ugly strange fishes take up their abode in thy melodious frame. Thou wert worthy of much better things—even I—I who, a month ago, would gladly have consigned thee and all thy kinsmen to Davy Jones' locker—even I say so. Thou art at rest now. No more will the inept hand of the ambitious amateur or of the child who must play, not because the gods meant it, but because her mother did, will never vex or torture you again. Thy notes will lie untouched except perhaps by the light fingers of the merry mermaids at their deep-sea concerts, and that is a disturbance you need not object to.

THE HABITUAL DRUNK.

THE New South Wales Government are taking up the case of habitual drunkards. They are moved thereto partly by economical motives, for it has been ascertained that nearly one-fourth of the prison population of the Colony belongs to the unfortunate class; but whether economy or philanthropy prompts does not much matter, the main fact being that they are seriously thinking of taking charge of the poor drunk and treating him by more rational methods than those commonly recognised in the police cells. Our Government here has had the same matter forced upon its attention time and again, but as yet nothing has been done by the State. It is left to private individuals to attempt the reclamation of the drunkard, either as a commercial spec. or as a deed of Christian charity. The position Society at large takes up with respect to the drunkard is a curiously contradictory one. We have all agreed to regard habitual inebriety as a disease like typhoid or cancer, yet we make no effort to prevent or cure the one as we do in the case of the others. We systematically flush our drains to guard against the typhoid germ, and we have skilled surgeons to treat for nothing the impecunious sufferer from some malignant growth. But we do practically nothing to save the drunkard from the public-house, and no hospital opens its door to the poor wretch who is a hopeless victim to the dread malady. It is surely time that this state of affairs was altered. That it will be at no distant date is pretty apparent to everyone, but one would like to see the reform hastened. If New South Wales carries out the idea that has been mooted, namely, the establishment of an inebriates' asylum, a splendid object lesson will be presented to the Colonies from which they may all profit. I am deeply interested to know how the institution will work. There is a general sort of belief that the habitual drunkards would flock to such a place to be cured. It is a commonplace nowadays to say that the drunkard hates himself and his vice more than his greatest enemy does. But I very much question whether when it comes to the point the bibulous fraction of the New South Wales prison population will voluntarily submit themselves to be cured. The real truth is that a very large proportion of the habitual drunkards do not wish to be made to loathe the poison. A taste that has been so assiduously cultivated is not the thing to be ruthlessly destroyed in these days when the consolations of the palate help a good many to bear the ills of life. Don't let us be too sanguine about converting the drunks. They have some say in the

matter themselves, and if many of them are like an individual I heard of the other day, it will be a harder task to persuade them by logic or medical treatment to renounce the flowing cup. The gentleman I refer to was advised by his friends to submit himself to some so-called experts to see what they could do to cure him of the terrible habit. He smiled at the suggestion, and looking his adviser between the eyes—he was quite sober then—he asked incredulously, 'Why the— (unsuitable for publication) he should deny himself the only real pleasure he had on earth.' Later on he expressed himself as deeply envious of a nightwatchman in Melbourne who was recently drowned through falling into a vat of beer. 'What a beautiful death!' he explained. There will have to be a separate ward for such as this

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Notice to contributors.—Any letters or MSS. received by the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC will be immediately acknowledged in this column.

'INQUIRER.'—The result of the Story Competition was published in last week's GRAPHIC.

'Mrs S.'—Most decidedly teach your daughter all sorts of housework. It will prove of as much use to her as her French and German lessons. A knowledge of housework in every branch is the primer of the housekeeper. Every girl, as she grows up, should be taught even the humblest branches, not because her parents anticipate an absence of serving maids in her future ménage, but so that she may with discretion and intelligence direct the servants under her charge. The first step in housework, which it is expedient to teach to a little girl, is probably the care of her own room. As a rule she has no time for this on school days, but Saturday and perhaps Sunday morning both give opportunity. Let the little girl once be instructed in making her bed and setting the room in order, and she will in future have the highest appreciation of the value of this sort of labour, and in times of domestic disturbance will be glad to be of material assistance. Before going down to breakfast she will open the bed and window, and will hang in their places any garments discarded the night before. She will also leave her toilet articles in their accustomed order on the dressing-table, then when she returns after breakfast there will be no clearing up to do simply the making of the bed, caring for the washstand, and a little pleasant work in dusting the pretty trifles which are so full of meaning to her. To help her work, and to stimulate her interest in it, let her have her own little stock of implements—a dust pan and brush, cloths and duster and a cake of sapolio—in all of which she will glory as in personal possessions.

'Madame B.'—Please do not apologise. Every good woman troubles herself, more or less, about her household arrangements. It is, in fact, the duty of every wife and mother to see that everything goes on smoothly, that meals are well-cooked and punctually served, and that her husband is not worried with domestic annoyances. As to what you can live on 'comfortably,' that all depends upon your style of living. With two children and one servant, no late dinner, you should have your bills something like this. I am taking for granted that you give the baby and the little girl of three plenty of good milk instead of meat. Milk and butter, 6s to 7s, which includes a pound of pastry butter per week, bread, 2s 6d. You probably make scones about twice a week; they cost more than a 3d loaf, but are a nice change. Meat, 4s; fish, 1s. You may be able to spare a little more to buy a fowl one week, 3s, or a tongue to boil for breakfast, about the same price. Scraps of meat and potatoes come in well for dainty breakfast dishes. The grocer's bill varies wonderfully. From him bacon and cheese can be got, also flour, tea, sugar. For cakes you require currants, etc. Taken on an average per week, you will not get your groceries under 10s. Then you want eggs. A shilling a week should cover these. Vegetables, if you always buy them, cost at least 3s per week; but some people are much fonder of green food than others, and this item might easily, including fruit, mount up to 5s. A shilling's worth of oranges or bananas a week in winter is a good investment. In summer you will spend more perhaps, especially when jam-making comes into season. Then, also, the sugar bill mounts up. You can manage comfortably on 2s to 3s for actual cost of living, that is, on an average. Then comes the question of servants' wages, coal, etc., and house-rent. I know one lady who does all this on two guineas a week (she does not pay the house rent), and often has little afternoon teas, or a few friends to lunch. I should be very glad if some practical reader would give her ideas on this point. No one need know where her letter comes from.

'J.B.'—Very many thanks. Will bear the hint in mind.

'Modena.'—There is a slight reactionary effect against overloading the dinner and luncheon tables with decorations. On grand occasions it is more usual to see the table dressed with a white cloth of finest damask on which the floral decorations rest. This gives opportunity for individuality in the arrangement of the flowers about the table, and the prettiest effects ever made in table decoration are done by the means of a tasteful arrangement of ferns and flowers on the cloth. Embroidered centre-pieces are by no means discarded and form just as necessary a part of the housekeeper's outfit as they have ever done, but the inclination is to limit them to everyday use. When the dinner table is set for the family dinner, flowers are not usually present in profusion. An embroidered centre-cloth, either round or rectangular, will take their place in a large measure if a small jardiniere or vase of flowers stands upon it. The inclination of the moment in embroideries is toward conventional designs rather than floral, and in accordance with this I suggest the use of figures on delft ware and which must be executed entirely in shades of blue and white. It is to be deplored that those who order such matters should have decreed the withdrawal of floral designs, for they have just reached a state of such exquisite perfection as to rival painted flowers in their capacity for delighting the eye.

'Maggie.'—If your skin has a dull, dead feeling throw a few drops of either eau de cologne, gin or whiskey in the water, and give your face a thorough bath with it. This tends to exhilarate the skin, and if the circulation is bad will bring the blood to the surface so that a pretty blush is the result. Where the skin is inclined to be dry, vaseline or cold cream, well rubbed in at night and thoroughly washed off in the morning, will tend to make it smoother and less harsh.

'A Fiancée.'—It is very bad taste to put 'no presents' on your wedding cards. People who think at all have gotten over that old idea that an invitation to a wedding necessitated a present, and so it would seem rather too suggestive of your expecting them for you to decline them in advance.

'Economical.'—It is really quite easy to make lace tabs for your collar and cuffs. You will require seven yards of fancy Honiton point lace braid, and three yards of ordinary point lace braid. One with an open centre is lighter and prettier than the plain kind. The pattern is simply filled in with twisted bars and wheels made with Taylor's No. 9 point lace thread. The little edge is easily worked in No. 6 thread, and is a plain loop with two (or if preferred, three) button-hole stitches on each. Instead of the cuffs, some ladies prefer to put three tabs on the sleeves of the dress, in which case the centre tab should be a little longer than the others. The collar tabs can be put on a muslin band, but they are easier washed and set better when sewn on the dress separately. 'Dentelle de Luxeuil' is another name of modern point braid lace.

'Mr Curiosity.'—The second wedding anniversary is the 'paper wedding.' As far as possible the decorations are made of paper, and the presents also.

'Judge.'—No, decidedly not. You must get a proper introduction. Cannot you find some married lady of your acquaintance who knows the young lady, and get her to ask you at the same time to her house? Of course, any man you know can perform the ceremony.

'M.L.S.'—When choosing flowers to send to an invalid select those that have a very delicate perfume, and that are as suggestive of life and health as possible. White flowers, although most beautiful, lend neither colour nor brightness to the sick room, and to a mind weakened by sickness are apt to be suggestive of death, while those of a bright crimson or a deep yellow will almost always please and gratify the convalescent. When ordering the flowers ask your florist to send long-stemmed ones, they arrange so much more prettily than those that are cut with short stems.

'Bush Girl.'—(1) Pastry and layer cake should be eaten with a fork. (2) Have a table in the corner of the room nearest the door, so long as it is not in the way of people entering, and let the maid bring in the tea and coffee and place it there. She can hand the tray round if you prefer, with cream, milk and sugar beside the cups. Then another maid hands the cakes, immediately following her. In this case, arrange everything on the dining-room table, and see yourself that all is ready before your guests come. But if you have only a few visitors and wish to be very friendly, pour out the tea yourself in the room, and let the eatables be also on the table. A maid in the room, or a manservant, at once imparts an air of formality. If you merely have callers, not on your day, you can tell the maid to bring in the tea, which she usually does, poured out, with one plate of cake.