

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

PIANOFORTES AND PIANOFORTE TUNING.

PIANOFORTES abound, and pianoforte-tuning is therefore a necessary evil, especially since young women consider it a sign of their superior education to be able to "play" these unhappy and oftentimes cruelly tortured instruments. Little thought the inventor of a certain so-called "new instrument, termed by the maker a pianoforte," to quote from an old book, that he was about to make the words, "a little music, my dear," a horror to succeeding generations. The pianoforte is a delightful instrument when *well* played, but (and of this people seem utterly unaware) it is one of the most difficult of instruments to play really ably. Having thus tiraded against pianoforte players—no, more impressive word, manglers—I now turn to the second part of my heading, "pianoforte tuning." Hitherto this has been a work sacredly dedicated to man, but woman has now discovered that she can tune too, and has entered the lists. The only qualifications needed are a good ear and a good touch. Of course the technical knowledge of how a pianoforte is made is necessary also, but this can be easily obtained by a careful visit of observation to any maker's, and then lessons in tuning can be had for a few guineas at any music agent's office. A knowledge of thorough bass and of the theory of music would be advantageous, but then none would think of starting in the pianoforte tuning line unless fair musicians—at least in their own opinion. The needful instruments, the wonderful key, &c., which looks so mysterious to the uninitiated, can be had for the modest sum of two shillings. The remuneration for piano tuning is from three shillings and sixpence to five shillings each tuning, travelling expenses also paid; but many people prefer to pay from half a guinea to a guinea per annum and have their instrument tuned then as often as they please. This practice, however, falls hardly on the poor tuner. Many women are pianoforte tuners at present, but by it alone they find they can hardly, save in exceptional cases, earn a livelihood. But it can well be combined with pianoforte teaching, which latter, too, alone, hardly brings in enough for the "daily bread." I do not believe in jacks-of-all-trades, but two hands are ever better than one, and, besides, *combine* is the cry of the age. The country and country towns offer the best openings, for pianos abound, and tuners do not; and also the "young ladies," especially in winter, practise as an occupation, and therefore the pianos need tuning often and thoroughly, and then in each house there is presented the opportunity of

advertising the teaching side, for those who have a teaching side, to this profession. But wisdom is necessary, and the trade, profession, call it what you will, must be thoroughly mastered first, else it may be with other piano tuners as with the comic man, who said, "I started once in the piany-tooning line, but failed because I tuned them so thoroughly and well that they never needed tooning again; at least," he added, "not be me."

I AM an ardent Liberal in some things (I, however, do not profess to understand politics), but I do not believe, I know, in School Boards and Board Schools as they *are*, however I may in as they *might be*. But the coping stone of educational absurdity is the idea of teaching the piano at Board Schools. Far better teach the little scholars "the theory of thrift" (perhaps the young may grasp it better than their parents do); teach them to be good house-wives, good mechanics; after all, good teetotallers and good neighbours. Teach, an it please you, the orphaned boy and girl "to read," "to sew," but, oh, do "let the *grand piano* go" out of the schoolroom! Surely if parents wish their children to learn to "strum" on the "pianny," they can afford to give them "lessons" at ninepence or a shilling an hour, which lessons will at least have one good side, namely, that of placing a little money into the mistress' empty pocket. Surely pianoforte playing is not an educational necessity, but a luxury.

CASES of breach of promise of marriage are not confined to this "right little tight little island," but are patronised also by ladies (?) on the other side of the water. Mrs. Lewis, a Tasmanian "widdy," has lately sued Dr. John James Johnson, of Tahara Estate, Coleraine, claiming as compensation for his having "changed his mind" ten thousand dollars, which proves the Doctor was richer in pocket than in brain when he proposed to her. I have obtained this little bit of colonial scandal from the pages of *Table Talk*, a very clever Melbourne Society paper, an able rival to friend Labouchere's *Truth*, though less cynical and less libellous. It is nicely "got up," and well printed. All this I know has nothing to do with women's work, but it has to do with women, or rather with a woman.

"O woman, in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
When grief and anguish rend the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

If Mrs. Laura Lewis acts up to Sir Walter Scott's high eulogy of her sex, she will most surely have to prove a "ministering angel" to the Doctor

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