

A NEW IDEA FOR TREATING A PIANO BACK.

I GIVE myself the credit of having hit upon an entirely new idea for the treatment of a piano back; at least it is new to me and was not suggested by anything I have seen, and yet it is so simple and obvious that I daresay some reader will say, "Surely there can be nothing new in that?" It is not long since a design by me appeared in the "G. O. P." for an embroidered piano back, but there was no novelty in the idea, only in the design. It did not then occur to me that the back of a piano might be made decorative and useful at the same time by having a series of pockets attached to the material used to cover the back, so that music can be kept in them in some sort of order. I mean by that the music which happens to be most constantly in use, for there is no necessity to bulge out the pockets with a lot of old music that is very rarely used. Each pocket could conveniently hold up to a dozen ordinary pieces, and there need be no fear of affecting the quality of the sound, for that would escape as freely as it does where a plain embroidered back is stretched over the thin backing supplied with pianos.

Choose some good strong material, woollen canvas, linen, art serge, damask, or if silk be used it should have a backing of linen or upholsterers' canvas, for then a very thin Indian silk may be used as the strength will be obtained by the under material. Some of these thin Indian and Chinese silks are to be

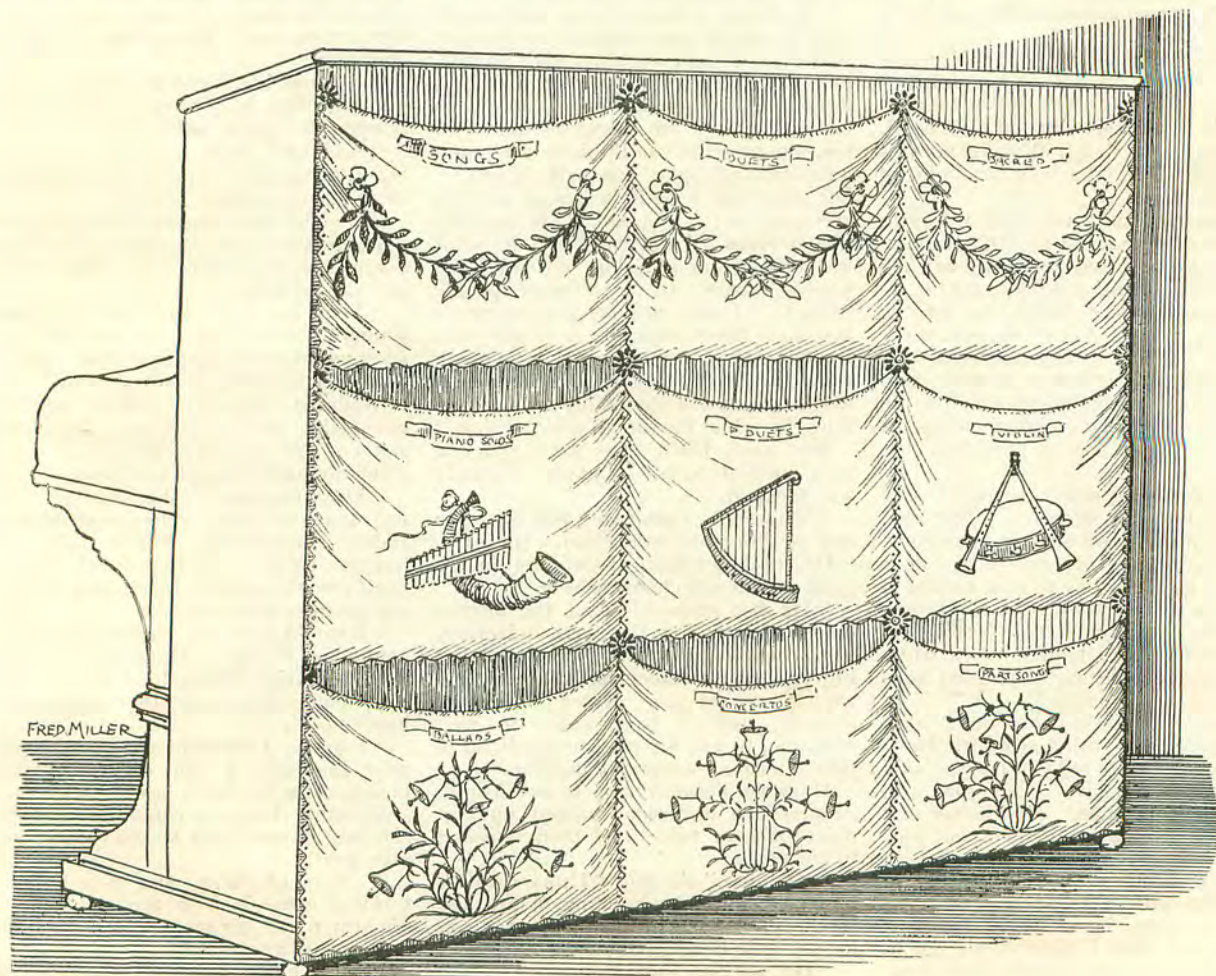
had in most beautiful colours. In my sketch I suggest a pale colour, but those who prefer it might select a deep indigo blue, blue-green, Indian red or amber. The colour of the ground will naturally influence the colour of the embroidery. Thus if an indigo blue were chosen then pale turquoise blues, greys, yellows and old gold would look well for the embroidery; if a red then I should be inclined to keep the work a harmony of reds and yellows instead of introducing a contrasting colour like green; if blue-green then grey-green, reseda and golden browns. If you elect to embroider a whitish or very pale fabric then the festoons might be in tones of grey-green, accented with pale indigo, the musical instruments on the middle row of pockets in old gold and warm russets, and the campanula-like flowers on the lower pockets in grey-greens with pale blue flowers suggested by the colouring of the forget-me-not. But do not introduce too many shades and opposing colours. The whole should harmonise and give the appearance of "oneness."

Those who design their own patterns should always strive to get a harmony between the design and the purpose to which their work is put. I chose campanulas for the bottom row of pockets as the bell flower naturally suggests music. The musical instruments of course are obviously intended to hint at the divine art, and I think it would be better to keep these three pockets in outline embroidery. The

labels on all the pockets should be kept in the same colour, say a russet brown, a tint you would make by mixing raw umber and yellow ochre. I have suggested in my sketch that the pockets be attached to the back cloth by an ornamental zig-zag or herring-bone stitching, and flax would be the material to use as it is stronger than silk. Cut the pockets large enough, so that the music can easily be slipped in. Of course you will plan out the whole so that each of your pockets is the same size and occupies the same amount of space on the back-cloth. The pockets should all be sewn on to the back-cloth before you fix it in position, and this must be done thoroughly so as to insure strength.

By the way it would probably look well to have the pockets in a lighter material than the back-cloth. A good art serge of a soft blue or green with white figured silk pockets would be striking. A damask-like material, that is one in which the pattern is produced by the alteration of the warp with the weft, as in a table-cloth, looks very well embroidered.

In fixing the work on to the piano you will find small brass carpet-pins useful. You must attach it securely all round the edge where the existing back-cloth is tacked, and in many pianos there are wooden struts running vertically which divide the back into three divisions. If these struts exist it would be well to attach



EMBROIDERED POCKETS TO HOLD MUSIC.

the work to them, as well as all round the edge, but if they do not exist it will be secure if you nail all round the outside and sew strips of webbing on the back where the pockets are stitched, and see that you sew the pockets through here and there on to this webbing; you will then have little to fear as to want of strength if you nail this webbing on to the piano at top and bottom.

In a work of this kind you want to work

out a decorative scheme of colour, so that when you take in the effect as a whole there are no jarring notes. It is difficult to give exact advice, but avoid introducing too many colours. A wide piano would take two rows of pockets wide enough to receive the music placed upright, whereas in the sketch I have arranged for the music to lie oblong.

The *motifs* used in the embroidery are fairly familiar. The festoons on the upper

pockets are quite simple in design and should present no difficulty to the worker.

The musical instruments are modelled after familiar forms, but they are to be taken symbolically, and as I have suggested worked in outline.

The campanula-like flowers can be treated in two tones of colour, and very simply, as you do not want to be naturalistic.

FRED MILLER.

SOCIAL EVENTS IN A GIRL'S LIFE.

By LA PETITE.



PART VII.

A CRIPPLES' TEA-PARTY AT THE MANSION HOUSE.

ANY and varied have been the functions I have attended at the Mansion House, but I am bound to admit that the one which stands out clearest is a Cripples' Tea-Party.

There was the usual crowd round the side-door as we approached, and vans were standing before

it, but the guests showed none of that eagerness to descend and enter that one might have expected, and I soon saw the reason for this want of alacrity.

Chairs were brought out, and those who could, scrambled painfully down by their means, while others had to wait till strong arms were extended to bear them into the hall.

At last they were all inside; a pathetic assembly with sad eyes, which failed to see the humour of the Major Domo being shut out on his own doorstep (which very nearly occurred), and glanced shyly at the gigantic beings in rich liveries and powdered hair, who were standing at ease around them.

When heads had been counted, and those in authority were quite certain that not one of the fifty-six were missing, a move was made upstairs.

Some toiled up on their crutches, while every able-bodied person present tenderly lifted a tiny burden, finding it, alas, all too light and easy to carry.

What, however, struck me as the prettiest sight of all was to see each of those gigantic footmen before-mentioned stoop over a helpless little guest, and, lifting the tiny body, carry it up as deftly and delicately as a woman.

The contrast between stalwart, lusty young manhood and suffering, pain-racked childhood was inexpressibly touching, and my respect

for those who are sometimes half-contemptuously called "flunkeys" went up by leaps and bounds. The pinched, white faces nestled confidently against the gold cords and lace, and their contented looks showed that the strong arms and capable hands had adapted themselves to the fragile nature of the burden.

It is said that a really gentle man is always more tender than even a woman, and our brothers need not think it "mawkish" to cultivate this virtue, since thus they may earn for themselves in the best way a title they would all like to lay claim to—that of a true "gentleman."

We have wandered away from the little procession of cripples toiling up the grand staircase, but we can soon overtake them, for progress was slow to those who preferred to drag themselves up independently of help, since they could not bear even the lightest touch.

Every step they took must have been a revelation, and one event alone of that wonderful afternoon would have been enough to feast their poor starved imaginations upon for a week, whereas not one but a succession of events took place, each more fascinating than the last.

First there was the walk through the saloon with its wonderful furniture and tapestry, its glittering mirrors and lofty roof.

Next came the entrance into the Egyptian hall, where they were distracted by the many pleasures and surprises in store for them, and hardly knew which way to look or where to begin, so to speak.

Lively music greeted them, and a most beautiful lady was waiting to take each little hot hand in hers and lead them to the semicircle of chairs arranged in front of a small platform, which seemed to promise further delights.

As to the lady, opinions were divided, some thinking she was the Queen, and others that, if not, she ought to have been, but when told she was at any rate "Queen of the City," they felt quite satisfied and gave themselves up to the charms of having downy, delicate-hued cushions tucked behind their aching backs by her white, jewelled hands, and extemporised couches arranged for their small, suffering limbs.

Once settled they had time to look round and admire the noble proportions of the hall, its rainbow-coloured windows and rich banners; but it had high screens arranged all round three sides of it, and many were the speculations as to what those screens so jealously hid.

Now a smiling, pleasant-faced gentleman mounted the platform and began to do the most wonderful and indescribable things.

I think a good many of his audience would have liked to know how he produced coins of the realm from their curls and collars with a view to thereby increasing the family income; but though he did it with surprising ease—

making jokes all the time—he never explained how it was done, which was a great omission.

How they laughed when he requested the loan of a gentleman's high hat, fixing his eyes rather sternly on the front row of small boys. But an ominous pause followed, and they began to be anxious, until some tall person (a nobleman of course) handed up the glossy article required.

Everyone agreed afterwards it would have been an immense pity if it had not been forthcoming, for the most marvellous things came out of it, such as are not generally kept in a hat.

A perfect shout of delight went up when a beautiful, curly brown wig came to light, though why the owner of the hat carried that about with him was not clear seeing that he had a very good head of hair of his own.

So this wonderful conjuror went on, finding nothing too difficult, saying the funniest things, so that a tiny ripple of elfin laughter accompanied all he did, and making things appear and disappear until, if he had not looked so kind, one would really have felt quite nervous.

That was a proud boy who was allowed to hop on to the platform and assist him, though the pride was tempered with fear.

Being asked to value a lady's gold wedding-ring, he promptly responded, "Five shillings," and was apparently puzzled at the smiles with which his answer was received.

His mentor, however, did not let him feel discouraged, but proceeded to do magical things with that ring (with his assistance), and handed him politely down at the end as hopelessly in the dark about it as anyone.

Presently an interval was announced.

Their wonderful entertainer disappeared behind one of the mysterious screens, and they were free to lean back and talk over all they had seen and heard.

But they were not expected to do so unfortified.

Various ladies and gentlemen threaded their way between the rows of chairs, and laddled out generous handfuls of most delicious sweets which the grown-up visitors themselves did not disdain, and, as for the small ones, they got into the most charmingly sticky condition, and gave great sighs of contentment as they nibbled luxuriously at chocolate-creams. The pleasure caused by this interlude had barely subsided when the Lord Mayor appeared, in private dress, it is true, but wearing his chain of office, having donned it simply to give pleasure to his small guests, and not in any way because he came in his official capacity.

He wouldn't even make a speech, but the few words he did say went straight to one's heart, and more than one found they had a bad cold coming on when he said how gladly and promptly he would make them all well and strong if only he had the power.

I think every one of us felt the same, but, since we could not do that, we did our best to