

went on to the announcement that theirs were the "handsomest funeral parlours" on the Pacific slope. A "funeral parlour" is, presumably, the showroom where the latest styles in coffins are on view, so that intending purchasers may have every opportunity in being up to date in their funeral furnishings. It evidently brings some comfort to the American in his last hours to be assured that his coffin has actually graced the handsomest funeral parlour in the States.

* * *

THIS is only one curious development of American funeral customs. Some of their fashions of dealing with the dead are absolutely grotesque, and would almost seem to be a desecration if judged from the solemn point of view from which the English regard the question. More especially among the middle and shopkeeper class it is a very common thing for a male corpse to have a new suit of dress clothes provided for him with stiff dress shirt, gold studs, and highly-varnished "pumps." In the case of a woman, after death, the services of an experienced dress-maker are frequently called into requisition to make a gown in the newest style with trimmings, flounces and gimps, as complete as if the wearer were to run the gauntlet of a throng of critical

eyes in a crowded and fashionable promenade. The corsets are tightly laced so as to produce the same size of waist as the corpse has been accustomed to in life; and I have known dozens of cases where a fashionable hairdresser has been requisitioned to arrange the hair in the most becoming style, with as free a use of curling irons, crimping tongs and ornamental pins, as if the victim of this artificial *coiffure* were going to a large ball instead of to her last resting-place in simple Mother Earth.

* * *

OF course this unseemly decoration is not undertaken for the benefit of the dead person's family alone. All friends and casual acquaintances and friends of friends, and as many spectators as can be gathered from the highways and by-ways, are cordially invited to come and criticise and admire.

* * *

AMONG the poorer classes, the house doors often are thrown open, and all passers-by are heartily welcomed to see the dead arranged in all their splendour. Especial publicity is given in the case of a child or young girl, as these are supposed by their superior appearance and attractions to reflect more credit on the exertions of their friends, their dressmaker, and the hairdresser.



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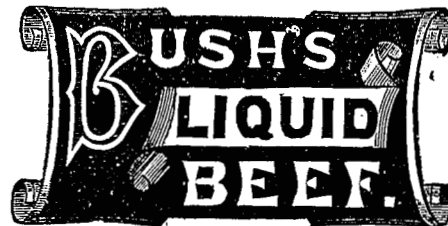
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