

"MANTLES AND MISERY" or "HOOD UP TO DATE."

"MARY ANN" has often figured in novels, plays and essays, as the pseudonym for domestic drudgery, but last week she appeared as the piteous figure-head of the slavery of the needle. Here is a cutting from a daily paper, setting forth yet one more of the "short and simple annals of the poor."

"MANTLES AND MISERY."

"At the Guildhall yesterday, before Mr. Alderman Treloar, a mantlemaker, was summoned at the instance of Mary Ann Ellis for the payment of £1 4s. 10½d. for work done. The claim, as set out, was as follows:—Making forty-six mantles at 1d. each, 3s. 10d.; forty-four at 3d., 11s.; sixteen at 3½d., 4s. 8d.; six at 4d., 2s.; six at 6d., 3s.; pence brought forward, 4½d.—total, £1 4s. 10½d. Defendant admitted the work had been done, but the complainant, he said, had taken away some cloth, and the price of this should be deducted. The complainant admitted taking some "rags," cuttings, which were perquisites. The Alderman.—What is this about making a mantle for 1d.? Complainant.—It means I did all the sewing of fashionable mantles that sell for £5. (Sensation in Court.) Eventually the Alderman made an order for the payment of the money, with costs, £1 10s. 10½d., a decision which was received with applause."

Verily, there is something extremely "rotten in the state of Denmark," when such a matter as the above is allowed to come into Court, apart from the miserable payment which speaks with terrible eloquence of the straits to which women are reduced, whose brains, time, and labour can bring them no larger reward. What about the loveless, heartless bond between employer and employed, between man and woman, that exists when brute force will refuse a merciful, let alone a just recognition of the needs of the toiler? Dishonesty takes on many forms, and stealing labour is not the least dangerous to the individual, and to the nation. The lazy loafer, and the helpless incapable are so heavy a burden on the rates, and such a blot on our boasted civilization, that it is simply suicidal to get rid of these, if the lot of the honest toiler is weighted with misery, and hard work is dishonoured by the disadvantages under which it is done. One would like to know, of course, how much sewing there is to be done in cloaks "that sell for £5." But taking the one that is lying on a chair near me, as I write—a small one—it would be a very skilful hand indeed that would do the machine work in it under an hour; and the finishing up by hand, such as sewing on the straps through which the arms pass, hemming down the inside of the collar, sewing on the tape by which it hangs up, and putting on buttons and making buttonholes, under half an hour. Bye and bye the prices paid to the workers will be a matter of official inspection, just

as the hours, drainage, and ventilation of workshops and factories under the Factory Acts are now. But comfortable women might do a great deal more than they do, even now, to help their poorer sisters in their struggle for life, by making inquiries through the proper sources as to how and where, and under what conditions, the ready-made clothing which they buy is made. Miss Clementina Black, Secretary of the Women's Trade Union, 122, Mile End, E., has a list of firms who pay, and treat, their employées properly, and she is most kind and courteous in giving information. It is a very unpleasant thought to think that the mantle on one's shoulders, by which one is shielded from the keen east wind, is chill with the death-cold of the starving fingers that put it together,—that unshed tears have blurred its stitches, and a slowly breaking heart pulsed ever more and more feebly against its woolly softness. Elijah's mantle brought power and inspiration to Elisha. Does the modern mantle shaped in misery, and sold in dishonour, bring a silent, unknown curse to the buyer?

TRAINED NURSES AS POLICE MATRONS.

WOLVERHAMPTON provides us with a painful object lesson as to the need for police matrons, and their need of being efficient and properly paid women. A poor drunken woman was taken to the lock-up and died during the night. It is very sad to think she had no kind attention, no pitying ministrations in those last dreadful hours. Where was the Matron? For it appears there is one—"passing rich on forty pounds a year." In most of our jails and lock-ups there is not a woman at all; and such a state of things is against decency and humanity. Where women are taken up and marched off to the lock-up, there may be most urgent reasons for securing them the skilled attendance and supervision of a woman. The permanent injury to health, resulting from unspeakable hardships endured on arrest, was never contemplated as part of the sentence meted out to any offender, man or woman; but when we think of police blundering, and divisional surgeons evading their responsibility in doubtful cases, we know that the hardships must and do sometimes end in chronic injury to health, and even death. A well trained Nurse as police matron, especially if she were a religious woman, might be of untold good in looking after the physical and moral welfare of transient inmates; and it is surely not less than we ought to demand that all our Institutions for dealing with crime shall reach out a strong up-lifting hand to the criminal. But when people who have committed a first offence, or are unjustly accused, are arrested, it is the barest justice not to add pain to pain by placing them in a condition of despair.

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