

A NURSE'S BONNET.

WHATEVER else may be said about the various uniforms worn by Nurses, it can never be said that they are extravagant either in fashion or cost. Indeed, one excellent word of praise that can be given to the Nurse's garb, is that never surely did so many women look their prettiest, and best, on so little outlay, as our Nurses do. These sage reflections were called up by the spectacle of a most gentle-looking Nurse, in a charming little black bonnet, sitting in a Metropolitan Railway carriage, reading an article in the *Westminster Gazette* on "Extravagance in Dress." It would have been edifying, no doubt, to have heard her thoughts on the subject of that article; but in all probability some of them would have run thus:—"This bonnet of mine, that I have worn pretty constantly for the last six months, with the addition of new strings twice, cost me not more than seven-and-six, for I made it myself, and put good material into it. But here is a lady whose bonnets have in the same period cost thirty-five pounds! What a difference! Can there be any circumstances in life that justify one human being in spending so much on the covering and adornment of the head?" And then, perhaps, the Nurse wondered whether, after all, the talk about its being so good for trade might not be all, or at any rate some of it—bosh. Anyhow, there could be no doubt of it, and there was none in the mind of the one on-looker in that carriage, that the comparison between the bonnet of the Nurse and that of the young lady who sat beside her, was greatly in favour of the Nurse's, both as regards its purpose as a head-covering, and its beneficence to trade in the best sense of the word. For the Nurse's bonnet nothing had been tortured or killed. No "sweet singing throat of woodland melody" had been silenced, or "bright-plumed flash of flying sunshine," trapped and dismembered while still warm and quivering. But on the bonnet beside her was a beautiful little golden oriole, two minute humming birds, and a graceful aigrette, and, alas, the latter is cruel as cruel can be, for the aigrettes are torn from the parent birds of a species of heron, and as they only appear on the birds during breeding time, it means that the little ones in the nest are left to starve and die of hunger, or worse. It is open to question whether the well-made straw bonnet, and its neat, becoming trimming of black velvet, have not given more wholesome employment to a greater number of people, than the bird-decked bunch of tulle and stiff net, with a tiny bow of ribbon, worn by the Nurse's companion. But it is not open to question, which article of headgear best expressed dignity, simplicity, a sense of fitness, and an adequate conception of the functions of a bonnet. Then, again, the more straw bonnets and hats manufactured by the folk, whose living is made in the straw-plaiting districts of England, so much the better for the comfort and enjoyment of life in those districts; but the more numerous the birds destroyed for the garnishing of head-gear, so much the greater sorrow and anguish of Nature's sacred places, and the less the demand for ribbon and velvet. Besides, the straw industry is a wholly humane one, and the bird-trappers' is not. In that same article above-mentioned

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was given a dressmaking bill for one year, and its dimensions fairly take one's breath away. Its sum total is £1,480 10s. ! We may well ask whether such an expenditure upon clothes for one poor human body is justifiable in a country, or even a world, where little children are turning faint and dying eyes up to the thin pinched faces of starving mothers, and fading into death for want of food; where men and women commit suicide for want of work; and gentle cultured people drop beneath the burden of their poverty, and make no cry save into the ears of God. It isn't right, and its strongest condemnation comes often enough from women who have purses long enough to be as extravagant as must be the owner of the above bill, but who prefer to be good for trade, and good for humanity too, by encouraging better systems of education, better home life, higher culture, purer and more enduring pleasures, and wholesome, well-paid industries and callings, rather than by dressing for a despicable end; for as a dressmaker remarked, "Women dress to out-shine one another."

A METHYLATED MIS-ADVENTURE.

JANE MALONE'S taste in alcoholic liquor was not a refined one, but she has paid a heavy price for it, and gone into that world where spirits are supposed to be of a different kind from those that so enslaved her here. It seems bad enough to get drunk on rum, gin, brandy, or whisky, but to do so on methylated spirits is a still lower depth of depravity. Yet, this is what Jane Malone, Nurse to an invalid gentleman, did on Sunday morning. Shortly after noon she caught fire, and, though she rang her bell and ran down into the hall; the witness who tried to put out the flames with his coat, testified that "he had never seen a person so dead to danger or pain; she stood as though struck all the time her clothes were burning." The coroner's jury found a verdict of "Accidental death," and it is to be hoped the invalid will secure the services of a Nurse who does not drink. But poor Jane Malone was only one of a great number of chronic inebriates, who will drink anything and everything of an intoxicating nature that they can lay their hands on. In the lowest part of Edinburgh the smell of methylated spirit is so strong in the breath of many of the dwellers there, that it is almost impossible to get away from it.

It is alas! a noticeable feature of omnibus and tram-car travelling in London, that the smell of alcoholic breath is nearly always present with some man or woman, and it is not always the poorest and worst-dressed that smell the worst. We are all familiar with the legend of how people take peppermint to disguise the fact that they have been drinking; but it was not till the other day that it ever came within the writer's knowledge that raw onions, and even paraffin, are pressed into the service to mask the tell-tale odour of alcohol in the breath. Pity the poor invalid nursed by someone who exhaled either onion, paraffin, or undisguised alcohol; but, above all things, pity him or her whom pain and weakness places in such hands as those of a Jane Malone, who was burnt to death by mis-adventure through intoxication, caused by methylated spirits.

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