

## Over the Hospital Tea-cups.

"WHERE ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise" moralised the Pro as she tugged at her cap in a vain endeavour to get it to "set straight." New Pros are often untidy about the head, and the unwonted gear of frills and muslin is apt to look somewhat rakish and unprofessional.

"What a very blissful person *you* must be," retorted the Staff Nurse, whose temper had been a little "put out" by visiting-day, and questions asked about No. 2, and by the detective attitude she had been obliged to assume lest "6," a bad typhoid, should be surfeited with new walnuts and fresh picked rosy apples.

"Well, I thought I was, but I have eaten of the tree of the fruit of knowledge, and a more dismal Pro you couldn't find in London."

"Well, I don't see what there is to grumble at, but we Nurses are all alike. Nothing seems good enough. Did you, Pro, ever hear of the American who went to heaven and complained that his 'halo' didn't fit? Well, that's about the sort of thing Pros —"

"But I'm *not* a 'Pro,' I'm a White Slave. The *Daily News* says it, and of course it's true. And I was once so happy and content. I liked my work and enjoyed my life, and thought I was having a gorgeous time. But all is changed. I am a *White Slave*, with fetters and handcuffs, and skilful and dark cells to sleep in, and I shudder every time I cross the ward and hear the chains at my feet rattle at every step. Oh! I wish I didn't know what a miserable victim I am."

"And I feel just the same," said "the guinea." "As I passed out at the gate yesterday by the porter, who looked at me out of his little grating, I nearly said 'Good Morning, Warder,' and when I showed him my pass I felt just like a ticket-of-leave person who had committed some awful crime. It's a horrible thing to know you're a White Slave, with no hope of escape."

"Yes, and I used to be so proud of my uniform, and take such pains with the white frill and strings of my bonnet. But now I feel that the uniform is the garb of slavery, and the cap-strings sear into my flesh like a brand of red-hot iron."

"And an awful thought came over me yesterday when the brutal warder (I used to think the Porter such a nice cheery man, but now I believe that little lodge of his is full of whips and handcuffs, and horrible things), at the gate smiled as I went out 'on leave.' It was a fiendish smile, and seemed to say 'You can't escape, your uniform proclaims you to the world as a "white slave," and flight is im-

possible. We can track you out in the deadliest swamp—I mean the most remote street in London.' And as I walked about I seemed to hear the people jeer and whisper 'White Slave.' I *do* wish mother could buy me off."

"Talking of buying reminds me that this is pay-day," said the Pro. "And how proud I used to be to get my monthly pay. It wasn't much—just £8 divided by twelve—but I used to think it just splendid to earn something by my own work. And I used to wonder why I was paid anything at all when I was getting such a grand education. And I had my first half-sovereign punched with a hole through it, and a charming little loop, and gave it to father to wear on his watch-chain. It was the 'first-fruits' of my labours. And father used to show it to everyone, and tell them what a capital Nurse his little girl was going to be, and perhaps even a Matron! And it seemed so generous of the Hospital people to pay us. But I see it all now. The *Daily News* says it is 'a traffic in human flesh and blood,' and that our young lives are being bartered away for a contemptible sum. And when I get my salary to-day I shall think it's 'blood money,' and I shall 'grue' all over as the Scotch people say."

"I don't see what Navies and Armies are for, and torpedo-catchers and things if they can't be used to rescue White Slaves. We hear a lot about what England does for the slaves in Central Africa. And I don't see why we're not as good—if we *have* got white skins and pretty faces—at least, some of us have," and the "guinea" looked complacently self-satisfied as she thought of her pink complexion and dimpled chin.

"And I thought we had very nice dinners and things till I read that correspondence. I'm sure the jam tart on Sundays and shepherd's pie for supper *used* to taste good. But the papers tell us we're starved, and now everything tastes like sawdust. And as for appetite, I really believe I did very well. But now the correspondents say our appetites are 'jaded by vitiated air and long hours in close attendance on the sick, and need tempting.' So that I shall turn up my nose at anything short of oysters and champagne. And I shall grumble, and grumble, and lead my slave-owners a fearful life."

"I'm sure you could if you tried," said the Staff, "and I wouldn't give much to be in a Matron's place now this White Slavey business is in the air. If only the Editor of the *Daily News* could come and see you two healthy, bonny girls consuming hot buttered toast and unlimited tea, I believe he'd think he'd better release his hard-worked reporters from *their* white slavery. And perhaps the Editor of a

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