

ESTHER DANIELS.

SHE DIED, after all. For long weary months she battled with the loathsome enemy. It was a terrible struggle. The corrupting germs fastened upon her upper jaw. Palliatives and extraction failed to avert the mortifying process, and poor Esther Daniels—the joy of a mother's heart, and the support of an East End home—saw the dismal cloud arise on the horizon of her young life. Her day dreams faded as she beheld the mournful look of mother and neighbour. Made almost physically speechless, the enemy channeled its course towards her eye, and the horror of darkness was added to the helplessness of her spirit. Stricken, smitten, sorrowful, she pined away on Christmas Eve, and last Saturday all that was mortal of her was committed to a match-girl's grave.

True, the men whose coffers her bony fingers had helped to line with gold did not pass her by when necrosis made choice of poor Esther as its latest victim. The high dividends of Messrs. Bryant and May enable them to "provide" for their sick workers. Doctors' bills are paid, funeral expenses are met, and the lot of the doomed, like the condemned on the morning of execution, is made easy. Aye, further, the golden bowl of pity is brought forth and condolences are carefully worded to the bereaved. At these times fine words are spun together about the "risks inevitable to trade," "the responsibility and danger of labour as well as capital," and other mock excuses for what is nothing short of palpable, deliberate and continued disregard of the principles of righteousness and humanity.

The responsibility for Esther Daniel's death is a divided one. The great monopoly of the East End must share the principal part, and the State the next; but the British Public, at whose door many a crime lies, are not guiltless. That the responsibility incurred by the shareholders in the firm concerned is very terrible, cannot be disputed. The mystery is to us that amongst the black roll of guilty persons, whose hands, morally, are red with the blood of the unfortunate match-girl, are to be found the names, not only of the ordinary folk, who may be supposed to care only for dividends, but those of ministers of the Gospel, uplifters of the name of that Christ whose name is synonymous with sympathy for the helpless. Moreover, to crown all, one of the shareholders is a man whose fame is world-wide as a British Statesman, who has repeatedly held high office in several Governments.

We earnestly hope that the Government will see their way to introduce a bill prohibiting the use of poisonous phosphorus entirely. Mr. Asquith has shown himself to be not only gifted with the far-seeing talents of statesmanship, but possessed of a determined spirit that can, when necessary, act promptly and quickly. Will he, by sweeping away this shameful blot on British industry, earn the eternal thanks and blessings of the poor? The question is by no means a new one. Several of the London dailies have, to their credit be it said, spoken out vigorously. Commissions have enquired into the causes of the disease, and various rules and regulations, more or less useless, have been framed. What is wanted is an entire abolition of the possibilities of the poor match-girls suffering these tortures at all. The voice of the Press and the Pulpit is unanimous that necrosis is the match-girl's death-summons. To touch it is not good, to handle it is dangerous, to inhale it may mean death, and yet to mete out dividends to men, who, by profession and hereditary acquirement, have enough and to spare of this world's goods, the British Public goes on buying poison-made "safety matches"—every one of which before its completion is a potential missile of death. As for us, we will neither have part nor lot in the encouragement of necrosis, and in this resolution we trust to be joined by every reader of the "Gazette," who ought to see to it that he uses—at any rate, until necrosis is slain—none but the Darkest England Match.