

*Sin by cruel acquiescence  
in an unworthy fashion*



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**a** **NEWSPAPER PARAGRAPH** lately declared that a certain American lady of great wealth, residing in London, had conceived the strange desire to possess a cloak made of the soft warm down on the breasts of birds of Paradise. Five hundred breasts, it was said, were required for this purpose, and two skilful marksmen, the story went on to aver, had been sent to New Guinea to shoot the poor little victims whose wholesale slaughter must be accomplished [250] to gratify this savage whim. We rejoice to observe that the whole statement has been flatly contradicted by the *World*, apparently on the best possible authority; but, however little the lady concerned may deserve the reproach which the authors of the calumny endeavoured to evoke against her, the feeling it may have excited is worth analysis in a world where, if bird of Paradise cloaks are rare, most women who dress luxuriously adorn themselves in one way or another at the expense of the feathered kingdom. The principle involved in a bonnet which is decorated with the plumage of a single bird, slaughtered for its sake, is the same as that which would be more grotesquely manifest in a garment that would require the slaughter of five hundred. Too many rich people in this greedy age forget that the grandest privilege of those who possess the means is that they have the power of alleviating suffering. Too many, again, forget that the sympathies of those who rule the animate world should extend beyond the limits of their own kind; and thus we have the painful spectacle of human “sport” associated in civilised countries still, with pursuits which should no longer afford pleasure to men who have emerged from the primitive life of hunters and fishers. But how is it possible, let us consider, to stoop lowest from the proud estate of humanity in search of ignoble gratification?

- It is bad to kill any sentient creature for the sake of the savage pleasures of the chase.
- It is bad, perhaps worse, to cause their destruction for the sake of coldly profiting by their slaughter, and
- It is bad to squander money in this hard world of want and wide-spread privation on costly personal indulgence.

But the acme of all that is reprehensible in these various departments of ill-doing is surely reached when women — who should, by virtue of their sex, be helping to soften the ferocities of life — contrive to collect the cream of evil from each of these varieties, and to sin against a whole catalogue of human duties by cruel acquiescence in an unworthy fashion.

