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On Darkest England, by G. W. Foote**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SALVATION SYRUP;
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**SALVATION SYRUP; OR, LIGHT ON
DARKEST ENGLAND**

By

G. W. Foote

A REPLY TO GENERAL BOOTH

1891

CONTENTS

[SALVATION SYRUP; OR, LIGHT ON DARKEST ENGLAND](#)
[POSTSCRIPTS TO SECOND EDITION](#)

SALVATION SYRUP; OR, LIGHT ON DARKEST ENGLAND

TWENTY years ago the Hallelujah Band spread itself far and wide, but soon spent itself like a straw fire. Then arose the Salvation Army, doing the same kind of work, and indulging in the same vagaries. These were imitations of the antics of the cruder forms of Methodism. Even the all-night meetings of the Whitechapel Salvationists, ten years ago, were faint copies of earlier Methodist gatherings, especially of those in Cornwall, which were described by the Rev. Richard Polwhele.⁽¹⁾ "At. St. Agnes," said this writer, "the Society stays up the whole night, when girls of twelve and fourteen years of age ran about the streets, calling out that they are possessed." At Probus "the preacher at a late hour of the night, after all but the higher classes left the room, would order the candles to be put out, and the saints fall down and kneel on their naked knees; when he would go round and thrust his hand under every knee to feel if it were bare." The Salvationists never went so far as this. Freaks of such description are left, in this age, to the followers of King Solomon in the Brighton Glory Hole. But a friend of ours, who visited an all-night Salvation meeting at Whitechapel in 1882, told us that the light was very dim, the voices were low, cheeks came perilously close in prayer, and at one moment the proceedings threatened to develope into a thoroughgoing love-feast.

1. Anecdotes of Methodism.

As far as a more cultivated age would allow, the Salvation Army advertised and recruited itself by the familiar practices of what Professor Huxley calls "corybantic Christianity." During the last six or seven years it has grown more decorous, but prior to that time its vulgarity was excessive. Its songs, its rowdy meetings, its coarse, imbecile language, its ludicrous street processions, were enough to furnish a Swift with fresh material for his indictment of mankind. The names of its officers, as reported in its journal, were curiosities to the student of human aberration. There was the "Hallelujah Fishmonger," the "Blood-washed Miner," the "Devil Dodger," the "Devil Walloper," and "Gypsy Sal." Many of the worshippers of success who are now flocking around General Booth as a new Savior of Society, would be astonished if they were to turn over the old pages of the *War Cry*.

No one can pretend that "General," Booth is a man of spiritual genius. He is essentially a man of business. His faculty is for organisation, not for the promulgation of new ideas or the creation of new material. His eye for a good advertisement is unequalled. Barnum forgot Booth in calling himself the greatest showman on earth. As the present writer said in 1882, the head of the Salvation Army is "a dexterous manager; he knows how to work the oracle; he understands catering for the mob; in short he is a very clever showman, who deals in religion, just as other showmen deal in wild animals, giants, dwarfs, two-headed sheep, fat women, and Siamese twins."

Everything in the Salvation Army is subordinated to "business." At the head-quarters a minute register is kept of all the officers. Few of them are paid a regular salary. They are largely dependent on "results." Whatever their faculty may be for "saving souls," they must rake in enough shekels, or they are drafted from post to post, and finally discharged. On the same principle, Booth has married his family "well," as the world calls it, and put them into all the higher posts.

By this means he secures a select circle of trusted subordinates, who convey his orders to the lower circles of the Army, and see to their execution. While this plan lasts there will be no dangerous mutiny; especially as, in addition, the whole of the Army's property is held in the name of William Booth. There is, in fact, a Booth dynasty; though it may be doubted if the dynasty will long outlast its founder. Certainly his death will cause changes, and his empire will probably split up like

Alexander's.

Eight years ago the General's eldest son was married to a young lady of "great expectations," who joined the Booths against her father's wishes. With a keen eye for business, the General resolved to turn the marriage into a public show. Of course, the legal ceremony had to be performed elsewhere, but the Salvation performance came off at the Army's biggest meeting-place. The price of admission was a shilling a head, and £300 was taken at the doors. A collection was also made inside. During the speech of "Commissioner" Railton, an able man who has had an eccentric career, the crowd began to press towards the door. "Stop," cried Booth, "don't go yet, there's going to be a collection." But the audience melted faster than ever. Then the General jumped up, stopped Railton unceremoniously, and shouted, "Hold on! we'll make the collection now."

During the farcical marriage ceremony the General was duly facetious. His remarks tickled the ears of the groundlings. There was also the usual spice of blasphemy. Before Bramwell Booth marched on to the platform a board was held up bearing the inscription,

"Behold the bridegroom cometh."

Begging letters were sent out by Commissioner Railton, though cheques were to be "payable to William Booth, as usual." It was sought to raise a good sum, not for Bramwell personally, but to reduce the Army's debt of £11,000. The printed slips were headed,

"Wedding Presents to Mr. Bramwell Booth," who was stated to have worked so hard for the Army that his hair was grey at twenty-seven. But the piety was properly mixed with the business, and subscribers were told that their cash would not only gladden the hearts of the Booths, but "make the devil tremble," and "give earth and hell another shock."

This experiment was so successful that the General has repeated it on several occasions. But he carried indecency to the point of disgustfulness at the funeral of Mrs. Booth. The poor lady's corpse was dragged hither and thither by the inveterate old showman. It was brought up from Clacton-on-Sea and exhibited to the public at Clapton. Collection boxes were well in evidence, and although there was no charge to see the corpse, there were significant hints that a trifle was expected. Then the corpse was removed to Olympia, the scene of Barnum's triumphs. No effort was spared to secure a great success. Officers were ordered up from all parts of the kingdom. The rank and file of the Army were also invited, and tickets were available for any number of outsiders. With regard to the performance, we must remember that tastes differ. But one portion of it was calculated to shock every person with any delicacy of feeling. Booth and his kindred stood up to sing around the coffin the hymn they sang around Mrs. Booth's death-bed. The performers seemed to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, you were not present when we sang your mother to glory, but just look and listen, and you will see how it was done."

For a third time the corpse was shifted to Queen Victoria-street. Unlimited advertising brought a tremendous crowd of sight-seers. Booth headed the procession, followed by the Booth dynasty, and all of them bowed and smiled to the cheering multitude.

Even in a funeral coach the Grand Old Showman had an eye to business.

Such being General Booth's attitude towards the public, what is his attitude towards the Salvation Army? Any one who reads his "Orders and Regulations" will see that he has his cattle well in hand, and not only can drive them where he pleases, but flick them smartly on any part with his long-reaching whip. He subjects them absolutely to his personal despotism. Every part of his soldiers' lives is regulated. They must court and marry within the ranks. "Should a soldier," he says, "become engaged to an officer who afterwards gives up or forfeits his or her commission, the soldier would be justified in breaking off the engagement." The General wishes to *breed* Salvationists. He tells them what to eat and what to wear. He informs them that they are only passengers through this world. "Though still living in the world," he says, "the Salvationist is not of it, and he has, in this respect no more business with its politics— that is, the public management of affairs— than he has with its pleasures." When the General wants his soldiers to vote or act politically, he will issue a manifesto, and every one is then expected to "act in harmony with the rules and regulations laid down for him by his superior officers." These superior officers, who take *their* orders from General Booth, must be perfectly obeyed, for "they have the Spirit of God, and will only command what is right."

Now it is well to remember all this in discussing General Booth's new scheme of social salvation. He insists on retaining absolute command of all the funds, and on working the whole scheme through the Salvation Army. All who assist him, therefore, are helping to promote the development of a vast body of religious fanatics, under the despotic control of a single man, who will not scruple, when it serves his purpose to, use his voluntary slaves, for political as well as social objects. For General Booth has his own notions— crude as many of them are—and it is not in human nature to refrain from using power for the realisation of one's ideas. And Pope Booth is more absolute than Pope Pecci. The Vicar of Christ at Rome is unable to move without his Holy Council of Cardinals; but the Vicar of Christ in Queen Victoria-street, London, is the unchecked and irresponsible ruler of the whole Salvation Army.

General Booth's success as an organiser is great, though he has had a comparatively easy task in organising *sheep*. Now, however, he proposes to deal with the *goats*. Some of his scanty leisure has been devoted to studying the social question, and as the interest in the Army's old methods is obviously declining, he proposes to raise a million of money, and reform that part of the population which John Bright called "the residuum." In other words, the wily old General has launched a new boom.

Plaudits are heard on nearly every side. The religious bodies give him the homage of fear. They shout approval because they dare not show hostility. Next come the mob of cheap philanthropists. This consists of rich ladies and gentleman, who feel twinges of remorse at living sumptuously while others are starving, and who are ready to pay conscience-money to any social charlatan. When they have written out a cheque they feel relieved. "On with the dance, let joy be unconfined." But it is not thus that the spectre of poverty and misery will be laid.

Evil is wrought by want of thought,

As well as by want of heart.

If the so-called lower classes are to be elevated, the so-called upper classes will find they will have to do some *thinking*. Social knots cannot be cut, they must be untied. The Sphinx says you must *read* her riddle. All the money-bags in the world will never smooth her terrible brow.

General Booth's scheme of social salvation is before the world in the form of a book. Let us examine the prophecy of this would-be Moses of the serfs of poverty and degradation.

An ordinary author would sign himself "William Booth," but this one is "General" even on a title-page. In *Darkest England* is an obvious plagiarism on Stanley, and *The Way Out* is suggested by his long travel through the awful Central African forest.

In the preface General Booth acknowledges the "valuable literary help" of a "friend of the poor, who, though not in any way connected with the Salvation Army, has the deepest sympathy with its aims, and is to a large extent in harmony with its principles." The friend is Mr. Stead. This gentleman has "written up" the scheme in the manner of "the born journalist," that is, in the fashion of the *Modern Babylon* and the adventures of Eliza Armstrong. He contributes the descriptions, the gush, the hysterics, the sentences crowded with adjectives and adverbs. Sometimes he writes a whole chapter, unless our literary scent misleads us; sometimes he interpolates the General, and sometimes the General interpolates Stead. One result of this twofold authorship is that the book is twice as big as it should be; another result is that it often contradicts itself. For instance, the General states in the preface that he has known "thousands, nay, I can say tens of thousands," who have proved the value of *spiritual* means of reformation, having "with little or no temporal assistance, come out of the darkest depths of destitution, vice, and crime, to be happy and honest citizens and true sons and servants of God." Elsewhere (p. 243) he speaks of them as "multitudes." Yet in the very next paragraph of the preface Mr. Stead (if we mistake not) breaks in with the assertion that "the rescued are appallingly few," a mere "ghastly minority."

This little contradiction may throw light on the rumor that Booth has been urged into this scheme of temporal salvation. Once upon a time he was down on "Commissioner" Smith, whose tendencies in this direction were obtrusive; and how long is it since he wrote in the new Rules and Regulations, that the members of the Salvation Army had nothing to do with the world, its politics, its business, or its pleasures? The hand is the hand of Booth, but the voice seems the voice of Stead.

Here is another contradiction, and this time a vital one. The General curls his upper lip (p. 18) at those "anti-Christian economists who hold that it is an offence against the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to

try to save the weakest from going to the wall, and who believe that when once a man is down the supreme duty of a self-regarding Society is to jump upon him." Without dwelling on the fact that this is a shocking and perfectly gratuitous libel, probably meant to pander to Christian prejudices, we content ourselves with drawing attention to a contradictory declaration (p. 44) that "In the struggle for life the weakest will go to the wall, and there are so many weak. The fittest, in tooth and claw, will survive. All that we can do is to soften the lot of the unfit and make their suffering less horrible than it is at present. No amount of assistance will give a jellyfish a backbone. No outside propping will make some men stand erect." Thus the General, or Mr. Stead, joins hands with the "anti-Christian economists" in the doctrine that it is useless to try to save the weakest from going to the wall. Of course he does not endorse the policy of jumping on them, but that policy is merely a production of his own pious imagination.

This contradiction we say is vital. The first statement is a sneer at Natural Selection, the second is a frank admission of its supremacy. They represent two antagonistic philosophies. They mark the parting of the ways between the Christian and the Evolutionist. They are as incompatible as oil and water, and no thoughtful man would attempt to reconcile them. But Booth (or isn't it Stead?) combines incompatibles with the alkali of sentiment. And this failure to discern the distinctiveness of opposite first principles shows the book to be the work of sciolists, and vitiates its scheme of social reform from beginning to end. No work can succeed without a knowledge of materials. Every effort at improvement has in it the elements of success or failure as it recognises or ignores the special laws of human nature, and the more general laws of biology that lie behind them.

An amusing contradiction occurs in another place (p. 14), to which we call attention in order to show the chaotic character of the writing; and this time, we judge from the style, it is Stead contradicting Stead. Speaking of the harlot, he says—

"But there, even in the lowest depths, excommunicated by Humanity and outcast from God, she is far nearer the pitying heart of the One true Savior than all the men who forced her down, aye, and than all the Pharisees and Scribes who stand silently by while these fiendish wrongs are perpetrated before their very eyes."

The theology of this passage is worthy of the wild exaggeration with which it closes. The poor harlot is "outcast from God," but near the "pitying heart" of Christ; in other words, God the Father is on the side of injustice and cruelty, and God the Son on the side of justice and mercy. One person of the Trinity is played off against another, and it is not for us to settle the difference between them. We leave the matter to the second thoughts of Mr. Stead, or the divine illumination of General Booth.

Indeed, the entire theology of this book is worthy of Bedlam, and especially of the criminal lunatic department. A personal Devil is seriously trotted out (p. 159) for the laughter of intelligent men and women, and even of decently educated children. Prosperous people, we are told, see something strange and quaint in the language of the Bible, which "habitually refers to the Devil as an actual personality," but Hell and the Devil are certitudes to the Salvationists who work in the slums.

Well, if the Devil is so active, what is God doing? Apparently nothing. Booth is going to reform our drunkards, or try to if we give him the money, but he candidly admits (p. 181), perhaps in a moment of forgetfulness, that the confirmed toper will drink himself "into a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell," unless he is "delivered by an Almighty hand." It is God alone, then, who can save the most fallen. Their fate lies in his hands. And what does he do for them? The answer is to be found in General Booth's appeal. A million of money, and the co-operation of a multitude of men and women, are requested for the purpose of saving at least *some* of the poor wretches who are beyond the power of self-help, although "the Almighty hand" could easily pluck them out of their degradation. Nor does Booth expect that *all* will be saved by his scheme, however well supported and successful. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the God he worships will allow men and women to perish whom he might promptly save; yes, allow them to perish in this world, physically, intellectually, and morally, and afterwards torment them for ever and ever in Hell. And it is this God, this incredible monster of wickedness, in whom General Booth trusts, and whom he bids the Freethinker look up to with admiration and love. Nay, he regards "trust in Jehovah" (p. 241) as the chief credential of the Salvation Army for carrying out an enterprise which is to cost a million sterling. Let the worshippers of Jehovah support him then. The Freethinker will necessarily regard this insane theology as a rottenness at the very heart

of the experiment.

Without going through all the insane theology of this book, we may—nay, we must—give a crowning instance of it.

“I am quite satisfied that these multitudes will not be saved in their present circumstances. All the Clergymen, Home Missionaries, Tract Distributors, Sick Visitors, and everyone else who care about the Salvation of the poor, may make up their minds as to that. If these people are to believe in Jesus Christ, become the Servants of God, and escape the miseries of the wrath to come, they must be helped out of their present social miseries. They must be put into a position in which they can work and eat, and have a decent room to live and sleep in, and see something before them besides along, weary, monotonous, grinding round of toil, and anxious care to keep themselves and those they love barely alive, with nothing at the further end but the Hospital, the Union, or the Madhouse. If Christian Workers and Philanthropists will join hands to effect this change, it will be accomplished, and the people will rise up and bless them, and be saved; if they will not, the people will curse them and perish.”—(p. 257).

Did ever a human being excogitate such blasphemous nonsense? God is openly declared to be a passive spectator of the great struggle between good and evil. At the end of it he will save the succeeders and damn the failers; although, according to Booth’s own admission, hosts of both classes are what they are through the pressure of circumstances. Compared with such a God the bloody Moloch was a respectable deity.

Four men are living within sight and sound of each other, and one of them goes to the bad. Thereupon it is the duty of Smith, Jones, and Brown to rescue Robinson. If they succeed, God will give him a seat in Heaven; if they fail, or neglect their duty, God will cast him into Hell. Thus Robinson’s fate depends upon the sympathy, self-sacrifice, and wisdom of Smith, Jones, and Brown. Want of heart on their part, and even want of sense, are alike fatal to his chance of salvation. God lets them do their best; if they do nothing, he is just as serene; and at the day of judgment he sends Robinson to bliss or damnation, accordingly as Smith, Jones, and Brown—separately or collectively—have succeeded or failed in keeping him out of the gutter.

What a view of God! And what a ghastly, roundabout way of stating the truth that religion is powerless to save the fallen, that men and women can only be elevated by secular agencies!

This truth has always been proclaimed by Freethinkers. It is a commonplace of their teaching. Yet the Churches have ignored or denied it. Here is General Booth, however, announcing it clearly enough to all who will take the theological wadding out of their ears. True, the discovery is late, but better late than never.

It is upon this truth that Booth’s scheme is founded. Sometimes, indeed, he forgets it, and talks as though the preaching of Christ and him crucified were enough to regenerate society. But this truth, that man is very largely the creature of circumstances, and that evil circumstances should be changed if there is to be any improvement, is the governing idea of his project.

No doubt the “General” seeks an escape from the logical consequences of this truth. He says, for instance, that (p. 286) “to me has been given the idea,” as though God *had* intervened and selected him as the human agent. But this is all nonsense. In the first place, if God gave Booth the idea, he might as well have given him the cash. In the second place, the idea—or rather, the set of ideas—is by no means a revelation. Every part of Booth’s scheme has been advocated by other men, and several parts are already reduced to practice, though not on the gigantic scale he contemplates. His Farm Colony is admittedly borrowed from Mr. B. T. Craig, a veteran Freethinker who was the soul of the Ralahine experiment. With this gentleman Booth has had interviews; indeed, the “General”—perhaps with Mr. Stead’s assistance—has simply picked other men’s brains, although he takes care to conceal his indebtedness.

Naturally, too, the astute leader of the Salvation Army recognises the necessity of a *pious* appeal to wealthy Christians. He therefore “asserts in the most unqualified way that it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving souls” that he “seeks the salvation of the body” (p. 45). And he declares (p. 3) it must not be supposed that he is “less dependent upon the old plans” or that he “seeks anything short of the old conquest.” At the same time (p. 279) he “does not think that any sectarian differences or religious feelings whatever ought to be imported into this question.” Is it not better, he asks, that miserable crowds of men and women should have work, food, clothes, and a home, even with “some peculiar religious notions and practices,” than that they should be “hungry, and naked, and homeless, and possess no religion at all”? Put in this way, of course, the

question admits of only one answer. But this way of putting it begs the wider question; for it does not follow that Booth's is the only possible scheme of social reform, or even that it is calculated to succeed.

The real fact is, disguise it how it may, that Booth's scheme is only an extension of the Salvation Army. He promises that there shall be no compulsion, that the poor he gets hold of shall not be pressed into any form of faith, that religious freedom shall be respected. But what will the promise avail? The whole scheme, from top to bottom, is to be worked by the Salvationists; every penny is to pass through Booth's hands, and every order is to issue from his brain. Outsiders are only wanted in the shape of subscribers. Is it not idle then, to suppose that the scheme will, in practice, be anything else than a huge recruiting system for the Salvation Army? We venture to say that if Booth's *first* thought were for the poor, he would invite the formation of an influential Committee, and not seek the monopoly of all the cash and credit for his own sect.

Let us now turn to the scheme itself. Let us see what evils are to be remedied, and the nature of the remedy proposed.

In the opening chapters, written almost exclusively by Mr. Stead, there is a vivid, but, of course, exaggerated, picture of the diseases of society. The writer has walked through the "shambles of our civilisation," until "it seemed as if God were no longer in this world, but that in his stead reigned a fiend, merciless as Hell, ruthless as the grave." Of course the grave is neither ruthless nor tender; and, of course, it is not Hell, but the God of Hell, that is merciless. But, apart from these criticisms, it is evident that Mr. Booth-Stead or Mr. Stead-Booth, is aware of much preventible evil; nor are we disposed to quarrel with him for calling it "a satire upon our Christianity," although we might suggest the impossibility of satirising a creed which has to make such shameful confessions after so many centuries of wealth, power, and privilege, and such a supreme opportunity of cleansing the world if it had the capacity for the task. This Christianity has failed—disastrously and ignominiously; yet has it played the dog in the manger, and refused to allow Science and Philosophy a trial; and even now, when condemned and self-condemned, it only whines for another chance, like an old offender for the hundredth time in the prisoners' dock.

Eighteen centuries after the advent of "the Redeemer," and in the most pious country in the world, it is Booth's calculation that one-tenth of the population, or about three millions of men, women, and children are sunk in destitution, vice, and crime. In London alone, the city of churches, where everything but religion is tabooed on Sunday, there are 100,000 prostitutes, 85,000 thieves, and drunkards galore, to say nothing of the paupers, the idle, and the temporarily unemployed. And the disease is getting worse, according to Booth, who declares that something must be done immediately. Well, we will neither dispute his statistics nor his forecast, but just take his plan of campaign and see whether it has the remotest chance of success.

What is General Booth's scheme for dealing with the "submerged tenth," or three millions of the poor, the unemployed, and the vicious? And in what spirit will he set to work if he gets the hundred thousand pounds down, with the prospect of the rest of a million pounds afterwards?

Booth is a bold man and his promises are magnificent.

"If the scheme," he says, "which I set forth in these pages is not applicable to the Thief, the Harlot, the Drunkard, and the Sluggard, it may as well be dismissed without ceremony."

We suspect that the Sluggard will be the toughest subject of all. Booth has to solve the insoluble problem of how to put nervous energy into a body in which it is constitutionally lacking. Common sense says the thing cannot be done. You may galvanise the Sluggard for a while, but the effect will not last. Energy is not acquired, it is congenital. If Booth would take the trouble to read Mr. Havelock Ellis's book on Criminals, not to mention more recondite ^ works, he would see that the Sluggard and the Thief are first cousins. Both have a defective vitality, only the Thief, and the Criminal generally, is capable, like all predatory creatures, of spasmodic activity. The type is well known and should be dealt with scientifically. Inveterate criminals should be segregated. There is no necessity to treat them with cruelty. They should be surrounded with comfort, but they should be rigorously prevented from procreating their like. Science shows us that the only permanently successful way of dealing with these classes is to cut off the supply.

Certainly there are many persons in gaol who are not congenital criminals, and these should be dealt with in a spirit of wisdom and humanity. Were they treated like men, subjected to proper discipline, and rewarded for good behavior and industry, instead of being punished so liberally for bad behavior and idleness, most of them would be

reclaimed. In ordinary prisons —so wretched, so inhuman, and so imbecile is the system—eighty per cent, of first offenders come back again; while in the one great American prison which is conducted on a better method the percentage is exactly reversed, only twenty per cent, returning to gaol, and eighty per cent, joining the ranks of decent society.

General Booth is not a scientist. He knows nothing of the lessons of Evolution. He is not aware that thousands of men and women are born in every generation who are behind the age. They are types of a vanished order of mankind, relics of antecedent stages of culture. Natural Selection is always eliminating them, and General Booth proposes to coddle them, to surround them with artificial circumstances, and give them a better chance. He does not see that most of them, however propped up by the more energetic and independent, will always bear the stamp of unfitness; nor does he see that he will enable them to beget and rear a more numerous offspring of the same character.

The law of heredity is a stern fact, and it will not budge a hair's-breadth for General Booth and all the sentimental religionists in the world.

Take the Harlots, for instance. We are far from denying that many girls, after being seduced by men, are pushed into a life of vice. Christian society has no mercy on female frailty; it drives a girl who has listened to the voice of a tempter, or the first suggestions of her sexual passions, into a career of infamy; and then, when it has helped to poison her life, it hypocritically sheds tears over her and sets up associations for her rescue. This is true enough—damnably true—but it is not the whole truth. Just as there are congenital criminals, there are congenital harlots. They are cases of survival or reversion. Discipline of every kind is hateful to them. They prefer to do what they like, how they like, and when they like. Animality and vanity are strong in them, but they have little steady energy and no self-control. In a polygamous state of society they would find a place in a harem; but in a monogamous and industrial state of society they are hopelessly out of harmony with the general environment. Here is an instructive little table from General Booth's book. He takes a hundred cases "as they come" from his Rescue Register.

Twenty-three of these girls had been in prison. Only two were pushed into vice by poverty. Seduction, wilful choice, and bad company, come to much the same thing in the end. In any case, one-fourth of the whole hundred deliberately took to prostitution. Now:

Causes of Fall:

Drink	14
Seduction	33
Wilful Choice	24
Bad Company	27
Poverty	2

Total 100

if General Booth fancies that the money he spends on these is a good investment, while a greater number of good girls are trying to lead an honest life in difficult circumstances, with little or no assistance from "charity," we venture to say he is grievously mistaken; and we think he is basking in a Fool's Paradise, unless he is trading on pious credulity, when he looks forward (p. 133) to the girls of Piccadilly exchanging their quarters for "the strawberry beds of Essex or Kent."

Facts are facts. It is useless to blink them. The present writer did not make the world, or its inhabitants, and he disowns all responsibility for its miserable defects. But when you attempt to reform the world there is only one thing that will help you. Humanity is presupposed. Without it you would never make a beginning. But after that the one requisite is Science. Now all the science displayed in General Booth's book might be written large on thick paper, and tied to the wings of a single pigeon without impeding its flight.

General Booth himself, in one of his lucid intervals, recognises the hard facts we have just insisted on. "No change in circumstances," he says (p. 85), "no revolution in social conditions, can possibly transform the nature of man." "Among the denizens of Darkest England there are many who have found their way thither by defects of character which would, under the most favorable circumstances, relegate them to the same position." Again he says (p. 204):

"There are men so incorrigibly lazy that no inducement you could

offer will tempt them to work; so eaten up by vice that virtue is abhorrent to them, and so inveterately dishonest that theft is to them a master passion. When a human being has reached that stage, there is only one course that can be rationally pursued. Sorrowfully, but remorselessly, it must be recognised that he has become lunatic, morally demented, incapable of self-government, and that upon him, therefore, must be passed the sentence of permanent seclusion from a world in which he is not fit to be at large."

These very people, who are the worst part of the social problem, Booth will not trouble himself very greatly about. Here are a few extracts from the Rules for the "Colonists," as he calls the people who come into his scheme.

(a) Expulsion for drunkenness, dishonesty, or falsehood will follow the third offence.

(b) After a certain period of probation, and a considerable amount of patience, all who will not work to be expelled.

(c) The third offence will incur expulsion, or being handed over to the authorities.

Expulsion is Booth's whip, and a very convenient one—for him! He will soon simplify his enterprise. All who come to him will be taken, but he will speedily return to society all the liars, drunkards, thieves, and idlers; so that when the scheme is in full swing, society will still have the old problem of dealing with the residuum, and in this respect Booth will not have helped in the least.

General Booth's scheme is thus, in the ultimate analysis, merely one for dealing with the unemployed. On this point his ideas are simply childish. He seems to imagine that *work* is a thing that can be found in unlimited quantities. He does not suspect the existence of economic laws. It never occurs to him that by artificially providing work for one unemployed person he may drive another person out of employment. Nor has he the least inkling of the law of population which lies behind everything.

In his Labor Shops, in London, he proposes to make match-boxes. Well, now, the community is already supplied with all the match-boxes it wants. The demand cannot be stimulated. And every girl that Booth takes in from the streets and sets to making match-boxes, which are to be put on the market, will turn some other girl out of employment at Bryant and May's or other match factories.

Similarly with the Salvation Bottles (p. 120) and the Social Soap (p. 136). Booth's soap, if it gets sold, will lessen the demand for other people's soap, and thus a lot of existing soap-makers will be thrown out of work. If he collects old bottles, and furbishes them up "equal to new," there will be so many less new bottles wanted, and a lot of existing glass-bottle makers will be thrown out of work. The wily old General of the Salvation Army, owing to a want of economic knowledge, falls into a most obvious fallacy. He is like the Irishman, who lengthened his shirt by cutting a piece off the top and sewing it on the bottom.

Getting hold of fish and meat tins, cleaning them up, and manufacturing them into toys, is hardly worth all the eloquence spent upon it by Booth's literary adviser. Nor is there much to be said in favor of an Inquiry Office for lost people. If it be true that 18,000 people are "lost" in London every year, it may be assumed that the majority of them do not want to be found, and it is the business of the police to look after the rest. Neither is there any necessity to subvention General Booth to obtain workman's dwellings out of town instead of ugly, dreary model dwellings in the midst of dirt and smoke. Nothing can be done until provision is made by the railway companies for conveying the workmen to and fro for twopence a day, and when this step is taken, as it must be, private enterprise will construct the dwellings without Salvation charity. With regard to the scheme of the Poor Man's Bank, it would have been but fair to say that the idea is borrowed from infidel Paris, where for many years a benevolent Society has lent money to honest and capable poor men with gratifying results.

The giving of legal advice gratis to the poor would be a good thing if it did not lead to unlimited litigation. Of course General Booth does not say, and perhaps he does not know, that Mr. Bradlaugh has been doing this for twenty-five years. Thousands of poor men, not necessarily Freethinkers, have had the benefit of his legal advice. No one in quest of such assistance has ever knocked at his door in vain. Finally, with respect to "Whitechapel-at-Sea," a place which Booth projects for the reception of his poor people when they badly need a little sea-air and sunshine, it must be said that this kind of charity has been carried on for years, and that Booth is only borrowing a leaf from other people's book. In fact, the "General" collects all the various charitable ideas he can discover, dishes them up into one grandiose scheme, and modestly asks

for a million pounds to carry out "the blessed lot."

Singly and collectively these projects will no more affect "the unemployed" than scratching will cure leprosy. Every effect has its cause, which must be discovered before any permanent good can be done. Now the causes of want of employment (if men desire to find it) are political and economical. The business of the true reformer is to ascertain them and to remove or counteract them. Pottering with their effects, in the name of "charity," is like dipping out and purifying certain barrels of water from an everflowing dirty stream.

At the very best "charity" is artificial, and social remedies must be natural. Work cannot be *provided*. People have certain incomes and allow themselves a certain expenditure. If they give Booth, or any other charlatan, a hundred pounds to find work for "the unemployed," they have a hundred pounds less to spend in other ways, and those who previously supplied them with that amount of commodities or service will necessarily suffer. Shuffle one pack of cards how you will, the hands may differ, but the total number of cards will be fifty-two.

General Booth talks infinite nonsense about the "failure" of Trade Unions because they only include a million and a half of workmen. Rome was not built in a day, and even the Salvation Army, with God Almighty to help it, is not yet as extensive as this "failure." Nor does the world need Booth to tell it the benefits of co-operation. He looks to it as "one of the chief elements of hope in the future." So do thousands of other people, but what has this to do with the Salvation Army?

The only part of Booth's scheme which is of the least value is the one he has borrowed from a Freethinker. The Farm Colony is suggested by the Rahaline experiment associated with the name of Mr. E. T. Craig. But not only was Mr. Craig a Freethinker, the same may be said of Mr. Vandeleur, the landlord who furnished the ground for the experiment. At any rate, he was a disciple and friend of Robert Owen, who declared that the great cause of the frustration of human welfare was "the fundamental errors of every religion that had hitherto been taught to man." "By the errors of these systems," said Owen, "he has been made a weak, imbecile animal; a furious bigot and fanatic; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but into Paradise itself, a Paradise would no longer be found."

The Rahaline experiment was a co-operative one, while Booth's is to be despotic. He proposes to put the unemployed at work on a big farm, and afterwards to draft them to an Over-sea Colony, where the reformed "thieves, harlots, drunkards, and sluggards" are to lay the foundations of a new province of the British Empire. Something, of course, might be done in this way, but it is doubtful if Booth will get hold of the right material to do it with, or if his Salvation methods will be successful. Much greater effects than "charity" could realise would be produced by a wise alteration of our Land Laws, which would lead to the application of fresh capital and labor to the cultivation of the soil. It is, indeed, one of the prime evils of Booth's scheme, no less than of almost every other charitable effort, that it helps to divert attention from political causes of social disorders. No doubt charity is an excellent thing in certain circumstances, but the first thing to agitate for is justice; and when our laws are just, and no longer create evils, it will be time enough for a huge system of charity to mitigate the still inevitable misery.

So far we have discovered nothing original in General Booth's scheme. Its elements may be reduced to three. There is (a) the reformation of weak, vicious, and criminal characters, which is a rather hopeless task especially when the attempt is made with *adults*. Something might be done with *children*, and in this respect Dr. Barnardo's work, with all its defects, is infinitely more sensible than General Booth's. Then there is (b) providing labor for the unemployed, which, whether attempted by governments or charitable bodies is an economical fallacy. Finally there is (c) the planting of town populations on the land, which has a certain small promise of success if the scheme were to take the form of allotments to capable cultivators; but which, on the other hand, will surely come to grief if the experiment is made with even the selected residuum of great cities.

But supposing the scheme of General Booth were in itself full of social promise, a reasonable person would still ask, What are the qualifications of a religious body like the Salvation Army for carrying out such a scheme?

First of all, let us take the General. He plainly tells us he is to be the head of everything. He is not only to be the leader, but the brain; in fact, he expounds this function of his in a long passage of dubious physiology. Now, the General is undoubtedly a clever man.

But is he such a universal genius as to "boss" everything, from playing tambourines to making tin toys, from preaching "blood and fire"

to the administration of a big farm, from walking backwards for Jesus to superintending a gigantic emigration agency? Unless he combines a vast diversity of faculties with supernatural energy, he is sure to come to grief; for absolute obedience to him is indispensable, and if *he* fails, the whole experiment fails with him.

Even if General Booth prove himself equal to the occasion, the despotic nature of the management makes the success of the scheme precarious. Everything hangs upon the single thread of his life, which may be snapped at any moment. Even if we admit his consummate and comprehensive genius, what guarantee is there that his successor will inherit it?

General Booth bids us remember that the Salvation Army *has* succeeded, and its past achievements are a pledge of its future triumphs. But let us look into this, and see how much it is to the point.

That the Salvation Army is a striking success is not to be disputed. But what is the *character* of its success? This is an all-important question: for a man, or an organisation, may be very successful in one direction, and hopelessly impotent in another.

Undoubtedly the Salvation Army caters for hysterical persons who are sick and tired of the "respectable" forms of religion. But is it true that the Army reforms the thief, the drunkard, and the profligate? Now in answering this question it is well to bear in mind that solitary cases prove absolutely nothing. There is no principle, no system, no organisation, which has not absorbed some persons who previously led lives of selfish indulgence, aroused in them an interest in impersonal objects, and surrounded them with a restraining public opinion. The real question is this—How is the Salvation Army in the main recruited?

Again and again it has been asserted by outsiders, and admitted by candid members, that the Army is principally recruited from other sects. Some years ago this assertion was publicly made in the *Times* by the Rev. Llewellyn Davies, who was prepared to prove it in his own parish of Marylebone. Mr. Davies was answered by "Commissioner" Railton, who indulged in vague generalities, which were cut short by the simple request to produce the notorious sinners converted in that parish. Of course they were not produced: for the most part these "converts" exist on paper.

The Army's pretensions are disproved by statistics. It boasts of nearly ten thousand officers and a million of adherents. Now if these, or a considerable proportion of them, had been drawn from the moral residuum of England, a very serious impression would have been made on the ranks of vice and crime. But what are the facts? While the Education Act has made a difference in the number of young criminals, there is no perceptible diminution in the number of hardened offenders. Prostitutes, also, are as numerous as ever, and the national drink-bill actually increases.

Revival movements have always boasted of moral successes, but history shows that they make no real impression on the community. The method is unscientific and doomed to failure. A salvation meeting, with its noise and excitement, has as much effect on public morality as a savage's tom-tom has upon the heavens. The noisy things in nature are generally futile. Whirlwinds and earthquakes affect the imagination, but it is the regular action of air and water that produces the greatest changes, and the gentle action of rain and sunshine that ripens the harvest. These "spiritual," and nearly always hysterical, agencies for human improvement, are based upon a denial of the physical basis of life, and of the doctrine of moral causation. They attract great attention, and their leaders gain tremendous applause. But all the while the real work of progress is being done by other agencies—by the spread of knowledge, the growth of education, the discoveries of science, the silent triumphs of art, and the gradual expansion of the human mind. Agitation is not necessarily progress. What is wanted is a new ingredient, and that is furnished by the more obscure, and often lonely men, whose greatness is only known to a few, although their thoughts are the seed of future harvests of wisdom and happiness for the human race.

Suppose, however, we concede, for the sake of argument, all the claims of the Salvation Army as a religious agency of reform. This would afford a presumption of its continued success *on the old lines*. But the *new lines* are a fresh departure. General Booth himself admits that "the new sphere on which we are entering will call for faculties other than those which have hitherto been cultivated." What guarantee has he then, beyond an unbounded and possibly exaggerated belief in himself, that those "faculties" will come when he "calls for" them? Will men of the required stamp of character and ability enrol themselves under the despotism of General Booth? And if they did, how long would he be able to hold them together? First of all, at any rate he has to get them. The

ordinary Salvation Army captain is not equal to these things. This is obvious to General Booth; hence his fervid appeal to persons of greater capacity to throw themselves into his enterprise. But we do not believe he will obtain their assistance. It is far easier to extract a hundred thousand pounds, or even a million, from a gullible public, than to induce men and women of the stamp required in the successful conduct of a big social experiment to place themselves at the absolute command of a religious revivalist.

Let us now turn to a tremendously important aspect of General Booth's scheme, which up to the present has been only alluded to. Lady Florence Dixie has pointed out, with her accustomed courage, that the scheme would, if successful, increase the pressure of population in the worst way by multiplying the unfit. Booth does not believe in celibacy, and we agree with him. But we are far from approving his idea of setting up a Matrimonial Bureau and bringing marriageable persons together. The marriages he is likely to promote will, of course, be chiefly among the classes he will try to reclaim. Such a prospect is anything but pleasant to those who understand the population question, and is quite appalling to those who understand the philosophy of Evolution.

When Archdeacon Farrar was preaching at Westminster Abbey on behalf of General Booth's scheme, he made this observation:—"The country is being more and more depleted, the great cities are becoming more and more densely overcrowded, and in great cities there is always a tendency to the deterioration of manhood—morally, physically, and spiritually. Our population is increasing at the rate of a thousand a day, and the most rapid increase is among the destitute and unfit." Precisely so; and it is among these very classes that General Booth, if he honestly means what he says, will do his best to promote an increase of population. In this respect his scheme involves a grave social danger. On the whole, it seems pretty plain, as Professor Huxley observes, that if General Booth does sixpennyworth of good, he will do a good shillings-worth of harm.

To conclude. Except for the Farm Colony, which we do not see how Booth is to manage successfully, we are able to perceive nothing in his scheme which really touches the heart of the social problem; while as a remedy for the "unemployed" it seems to us perfectly ridiculous. The whole project, at bottom, is a new gigantic device for furthering the interests of the Salvation Army. If the other Christian bodies do not see this they must be lamentably deficient in insight. It is all very well to say that no pressure will be put upon the men and women in the Refuges and the Colonies, for they will be subjected to the omnipresent influence of the Salvation Army, which is to carry out the scheme to its minutest details.

Unless we "are greatly mistaken, this truth is very apparent to General Booth. He insists on having absolute control of the funds and the arrangements, and although he may have no mercenary motives, he is doubtless seeking to gratify his ambition and love of power as well as to promote the "salvation of souls."

On the whole, however, we shall be glad to see the "General" get the money he is soliciting. The cash he collects will probably be diverted from other religious enterprises, and in this respect a Freethinker need not be in the least afflicted. His experiment will, in our opinion, do a real service to society. It will demonstrate before the very eyes of people who know next to nothing of history or economics the absolute futility of religious efforts to reform the world. When it is discovered that the poor rates, the statistics of drink, the number of the unemployed, the condition of the very poor, and the miseries and degradations of what is compendiously called the social evil, are not perceptibly affected by General Booth's efforts, the very dullest will see the deception of such enterprises, and turn their attention to the scientific aspects of the great social problem. This will be a great gain, and will amply compensate for the waste of a hundred thousand or even a million pounds.

POSTSCRIPTS TO SECOND EDITION

GENERAL Booth signalled the inauguration of his Social Scheme by quarreling with Mr. Frank Smith, who had acted as the chief officer of the Social Wing of the Salvation Army. Mr. Smith felt obliged to resign.

From the correspondence which appeared in the newspapers, it seems that the principal ground of his complaint was General Booth's refusal to keep a separate account of income and expenditure for the Social Scheme. The accounts were to form a part of the general book-keeping of the Army. This was in defiance of the spirit, if not the letter, of Booth's promises, and Mr. Smith would not connive at what he considered a deception. After his resignation, however, the General declared there had been a misunderstanding, and the accounts would be kept separate. Whether they have been so kept, is a question which outsiders have no means of determining.

(2) General Booth has raised his £100,000. He has found, however, that his success in this direction has diverted about £10,000 from the ordinary income of the Salvation Army. He does not state—probably he does not know, and perhaps he does, not care—how much he has diverted from the ordinary income of other bodies. Many loud complaints have been raised, which, taken in conjunction with Booth's own confession, seem to vindicate our contention that there is a certain amount of money available for philanthropical purposes, and that what is gained by one solicitant leaves so much less for division among the rest. Here, as elsewhere, there is a struggle for existence, and the fittest, in the circumstances, survive.

(3) Many persons have desired to know how the profits of General Booth's book have been allotted. It has had a very large sale, and there must have been a considerable sum to be disposed of. Probably a generous remuneration has been received by Mr. Stead, who generally succeeds in reconciling profit with enthusiasm.

(4) General Booth declares that he has never derived a penny of profit from the operations of the Salvation Army. This may be literally true, but virtually it must imply a reservation. Booth began as a very poor man. He is now in a more flourishing position. It was reported in the newspapers, a year or two ago, that he had paid £4,000 for a new residence. Mr. Bramwell Booth recently lost a considerable sum of money by the failure of a stock-broker. The other members of the Booth family seem to be well provided for. The present writer has seen them travelling first-class when he has been riding third, and they looked fully conscious of their importance as they walked along the platform.

(5) Up to the present the Social Scheme has made no appreciable impression on the poverty and misery of London. General Booth has set up a match-factory, and is now selling Salvation matches. They are said to be worth their price, but it must be remembered that the General gets all his capital for nothing. It will also be obvious that every box of matches he sells will diminish by so much the demand for matches supplied by other firms. He therefore gives employment to one man by taking it away from another.

(6) The foreign and the colonial tours of General Booth are a curious illustration of English modesty. It is difficult to understand why the inhabitants of Berlin and Paris should be expected to contribute towards the cost of reclaiming the poor and depraved in London. Every country has its own troubles, and should meet them in its own way. It is worthy of notice, however, that General Booth recognises far less misery in "infidel" Paris than in orthodox London.

(7) The recent "riots" at Eastbourne, where the Salvation Army insists on playing bands through the streets on Sunday, in defiance of the local bye-laws, suggest a curious reflection. General Booth takes his leisure and recreation at Clacton-on-Sea, and I am given to understand that he does not encourage the noises of his Army in that seaside retreat. If this be true, it must be allowed that he acts like a sensible man—but why does he keep the Army out of Clacton-on-Sea and inflict it upon Eastbourne, where other persons go to restore their jaded constitutions?

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