England's Ruin.

E. & M. Hawkins
86, Chestnut Grove,
Balham
S.W.12.

Phone Dmt 5248

ENGLAND'S RUIN

JOHN SMITH'S ANSWER TO
MR. BLATCHFORD'S PLEA FOR

SOCIALISM

As contained in the widely circulated
book

MERRIE ENGLAND

THE SUBJECT CONSIDERED FROM A

BIBLE POINT OF VIEW.

BIRMINGHAM : OFFICE OF "THE CHRISTADELPHIAN."

1908.

PRICE SIXPENCE, (IN CLOTH, ONE SHILLING).

"JOHN SMITH."

Preface.

"ENGLAND'S RUIN" first appeared in 1895. It was written by the late Robert Roberts, editor of "THE CHRISTADELPHIAN," but was published anonymously, although the authorship was an open secret in a wide circle of friends.

The reply was not originally contained in one pamphlet, but was spread over a series of six penny pamphlets, of which there have been issued some 140,000 copies.

Although "MERRIE ENGLAND" is now out of print, and Mr. Blatchford's views may have been considerably modified, Socialism itself is as much in evidence as ever, and more so. This edition of "ENGLAND'S RUIN" is therefore issued in response to the request of many who desire that the divine remedy for the woes of Society—the remedy revealed in the Bible—shall be kept before the eyes of the people.

A portrait of the deceased author here replaces the curious portrait of "John Smith" that figured in the first edition.

PUBLISHER.

May, 1908.

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ENGLAND'S RUIN.

Am I Defrauded?

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I HAVE seen all the letters that you have addressed to me through your widely-circulated book, *Merrie England.* I am going to try to answer them. It may be rather difficult for me to do so, seeing you are such a very clever writer, and I only plain John Smith. But it is important someone should answer you, for your arguments are receiving a great deal of attention, and if they are wrong, as I think they are, it is a serious thing for England. Perhaps it is better that a plain man should answer you than none, or even than some of the learned sort; you might think the upper folks prejudiced, whereas I am one of the common multitude whom you think you are going to benefit by Socialism.

I must say your letters are capitally written. They are real good reading—bright, brisk, racy, entertaining. But are they sound and safe? I cannot think so, and I will try and tell you why. But first let me say you are misinformed if you think that I look upon Socialism as a "vile and senseless thing," and upon Socialists as "wicked and foolish men." I do not consider either of them vile or wicked; I believe they are dangerous, but not because they are bad. I believe they originate in the pity awakened by human misery, and in the conviction that the misery might be ended by arrangement. Nevertheless, I believe that Socialism is a terrible mistake, and that England will be ruined if ever the day comes when it is acted on.

You call your book *Merrie England.* At first I thought you meant a sarcasm upon her present sad state; but I see you mean

England as she would be under Socialism. I call my answer by a very different name, for reasons which will appear.

Many of your ideas are good, some of them splendid, but not more so than those that led France, at the end of the last century, to an abyss in which not the monarchy or the aristocracy alone, but the democratic leaders themselves, were swallowed up in irretrievable ruin. Too late to save their heads, they discovered that they had let loose a whirlwind.

You lay great stress upon facts throughout your letters, and are incessant in your demand that I should attend to them. This is good; but facts have to be rightly put together, and then you must have *all* the facts. I do not think you put the facts rightly together, and you leave out some, I am sure.

You surprise me when you tell me that I am being defrauded by those better off than I am myself. I have to scratch the hard head you give me credit for to think what you can mean. I have always understood that to defraud is to criminally wrong another—to deprive him of what is rightfully his. Who does this to me? Do you? You have more money than I have; if I were to come to your house and claim some of it on the ground that you were defrauding me by having more than I have, would you have patience with me? I think not. I think you would say it was somebody else that was defrauding me.

Who? Is it my landlord, who takes rent for my house? Do you say he has no right to take rent? Do you mean that you would not take rent if you had a house that you did not want yourself? Or do you mean that you would not let that house, but hand it over without rent to the first comer?

I cannot understand you here. You would have to tell me what gives a man a right to have anything—to own money—to possess a printing press—to receive a salary—to accept a profit on any kind of labour. If you say a man can have no right to do any of these things, why, then, you tempt me to say that a fine theory has made a fool of a clever man. But I cannot think you would go so far as this. If you do not go so far as this, then you must have some idea that you have a right to what belongs to you at the present moment, and you must have some idea as to what that right consists in. I will consider your later definition on this point afterwards. Probably you would say you have a right to it because you earned it.

But now suppose not you, but your father, had earned it and left it to you. How then? Should you say you had no right to it in that case? I fancy not. I fancy you would stick to it, and resent any suggestion that you should give it up for the common good. You would contend that your father's right had descended to you. It would not matter whether the amount was large or small. If it was £100 you would stick to it. If it was £100,000 you would stick to it. If it was all money you would stick to it. If it was all land you would stick to it. And so, I think, would your "hard-headed, practical friend," Mr. Smith, whom you sometimes rail at as "silly," and sometimes compliment as "shrewd."

And now suppose it was not your father, but your grandfather, or your great-grandfather, that had earned the money and transmitted it to you. Would it make any difference? Would you have any scruples about holding on to it? I should be surprised if you should. I don't believe you would. You would maintain your right precisely as much as if you had earned it yourself, and sit in the comfortable enjoyment of it undisturbed by a single twinge of misgiving as to any obligation to divide with your less fortunate neighbours.

To put it once more, in another way, suppose it was not a case of earning, either on your part or the part of any of your ancestors. Suppose it was a case of gift; suppose you or your ancestors had received it as a present for some services rendered to some one who had it in his power to give—as in a time of civil war, when estates became ownerless through confiscation for treason, and were afterwards distributed among faithful lieges—should you make its inheritance in this way a reason for refusing to hold it in possession? Should you feel called upon to order a sale and distribute the proceeds?

You see I am putting it practically as a "hard-headed man." I cannot believe you would behave differently from other folks in these circumstances. I cannot but believe you would remain in possession, and be prompt to repel any aggression on your rights, even on the part of a Socialist. I cannot but think that if I presented myself at your door, declaring that you were defrauding me by your individual exclusive possession of the paternal estate, that you would have me removed as an intolerable nuisance.

I see further on in your book (chap. vii.) you make some attempt to lay down a principle of "right." When I come to that, I shall

have no difficulty in showing that your ideas are wrong in the abstract, and inconsistent in the application you give them. At present, we must look at the topics of your first chapter.

You say that under the present system, weak women and young children are enduring much misery and wrong. This is too true. But when you claim to have found a cure, I have my strong reservations, and my painful suspicions; for it often happens with new theories that the cure is worse than the disease, as the people of France found at the time I spoke of.

You say you know "means whereby I may obtain justice, and women and young children may secure peace." Brave words. They excite sympathy—perhaps a touch of admiration; but they excite also a suspicion of rawness, of inexperience, of optimistic and enthusiastic, but mistaken, youth. Justice and peace are not so easily found in this world—as the terrible lessons of a thousand years bear witness.

You are yourself evidently a little distrustful of your claim. You anticipate that I shall be sceptical. You pray me not to reject the discovery "because it is new," and remind me that a great many good and true things were new to start with. I must confess that newness is not a recommendation in my eyes in such matters. For it stands to reason that as human experience has had thousands of years to work on, a right level or average of wisdom has been arrived at in a rough sort of way at least. It certainly seems very unlikely to me that the right method of managing human affairs should only have been found out within the last few years by a few smart young fellows who are not long from school, and that for ages all the world's sapience and philosophy should have failed to discern the bearing of a problem constantly pressing itself upon them from day to day.

It was different with railways and telegraphs—these were brand new things that nobody could know anything about until they were tried. But human nature is not a brand new thing. It is a very old affair, with thousands of years' experience behind us as to how it works out under various conditions. Anything that goes dead against the lessons of a hoary experience of a familiar and universal problem is open to very grave suspicion, on the surface at all events; at least such is my feeling, Mr. Blatchford. Socialism runs contrary to the practice and the voice of all antiquity, during some periods of which it has actually been tried.

I agree with you that we must consider the question upon the evidence. But then it must be all the evidence. You keep out some part. I don't think you suspect this; but it is a fact. You look at the country and the people as they are at the present moment, and you lay it down as a certainty that with the one fertile and the other intelligent, it must be possible, by arrangements among themselves, to secure health, happiness, and plenty for all.

My dear sir, you seem to forget that the people and the country did not begin yesterday. There is a history to the affair. To leave out this history is not the way to judge the case correctly. How came the people to be here? How came the country to be as it is? Is there nothing anterior to take into account? Are we to set aside history? Are we to discard the Bible? Is there no God?

Mr. Blatchford, you speak towards the end of your book of "the glory that they call God:" is this an incoherency, or has it a meaning? If God and glory are interchangeable, has glory nothing to do with the land and the people? If so, has glory no voice in the problem of what they are here for, and why they are as they are—a state so far removed, as we all admit, from what they should be in?

Don't take my bluff talk amiss, Mr. Blatchford. You will see that, in my opinion, you don't look widely enough in discussing the problems you have undertaken to solve. I don't know what you think of Shakespeare. He said, "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will," or something to that effect. You must have some sort of faith in this, in view of the place you give to "glory." Allow it a little place then. Don't talk like an atheist. If the country and the people are not all that we would like, let us not forget the antecedent Divinity that shapes our ends. The evil state of things cannot be the result of accident. There must be something behind or below the problem that ought not to be ignored. If any knowledge of this is attainable, it is one of the "facts" to be considered—for which it appears to me you leave no room.

I have filled my sheet, so I must leave the rest to my next letter.—Your practical friend,

JOHN SMITH.

"Plenty for All."

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

THERE are some nice things in your second letter, at least on the outside look of them, but they don't hang together well when closely looked at.

You say that if the labour of the British people were properly organised and wisely applied, there would be plenty for all. Good: no man would dispute it. But how is it to be properly organised and wisely applied? Organising requires the constructive application of *authority*. Where are you to get this? You say, From the people. Have you ever thought how many foolish people there are in the world? Do you think the majority are capable of "properly organising and wisely applying things"?

You know what Carlyle said (who started off as a strong Radical, but drew in considerably before he finished): "The population of the British Islands, thirty millions, mostly fools." Do you agree with this? Or perhaps you think Mr. Carlyle was a fool.

Leaving that, should "authority" depend on the number of people in favour of a thing? If so, suppose the majority are wrong, you would have authority on the wrong side. What remedy would there be for this?

I grant that with "proper organisation and wise application," things would be right: but you see the problem goes deeper than your remarks so lightly assume. Proper organisation depends upon wisdom; power to carry it out depends upon authority; and authority depends upon—what?

Here we are up against the rock. If it depends upon what the French call "a mandate from the people," we may all be having

our heads cut off some day, for this is what they did by a popular mandate in France. They killed off respectability because it was respectable, and took to dictating the shape and quality of the people's clothes at last. What else they would have done by the mandate of the people, if Napoleon I. with a strong arm had not put a stop to their folly, God only knows: should I have said "Glory only knows"?

Granted that the present system, "each man for himself," is a pitiful principle of life by itself. But suppose it is combined with care for fellow-man, what then? Is it not all right? Is it not what you do, Mr. Blatchford—self first, neighbour next? If a man does not act for himself first, he cannot be for his neighbour at all. If he do not eat till everybody has had a bit, he never will eat, and therefore never will live: and what becomes of neighbour then, so far as he is concerned?

Let us have facts and sense. I like your discourse about your "ideal." As an ideal it is pleasing, like a beautiful poem, but when men take to making ideals the rule of practical life, they come to grief.

You think, of course, that your ideals are practical proposals; they sometimes sound like it, but, looking closer, the appearance disappears. You say, "First of all, ascertain what things are desirable for health and happiness, and then organise our people in the way to produce these things in the best and easiest way." Quite so: nothing easier, to all appearance. But, Mr. Blatchford, did it never occur to you that the most difficult thing in this world is to bring people to unity of mind as to what things are desirable for health and happiness of body and mind? Everybody has a different opinion on those points.

Out of 100, 75 might think that happiness of mind required Roman Catholic Priests and the Confessional, and 25 might think that it just requires the abolition of these. How are we to settle this difference? Are the 75 to rule? Must the 25 give in to the 75? And then suppose the 25 are right. Oh, Mr. Blatchford, it is very easy to say "First of all ascertain." But it cannot be done except by each man ascertaining it for himself and acting according to his own convictions; and where then are the organisation and the co-operation? Government by count of heads in

such matters might restore the odious tyrannies of past ages, instead of the happy age which Mr. Blatchford in his amiable imagination foresees.

I am showing you, Mr. Blatchford, that I am the "hard-headed and sensible man" which you declare me to be. You say I have reason and judgment. I hope so. It is because of this that, while I share your pity for human misery and your indulgence in pleasant ideals, I cannot agree with your principles nor your suggested remedies.

You say that, working as I now work, I am wasting my time in the effort to support idle people and vain things. How can I possibly believe your words? I am working for my neighbour in the next street. He is well off. He gets a regular income from dividends that come to him quarterly through the post. He has money and to spare, and he gives me an order for an expensive sideboard and a set of fine chairs, me being a bit of a hand in that line in my odd hours. Am I to refuse his order on the plea that he is "an idle person"? He is not an idle person at all. There is no busier man in the town than Mr. G———. Am I to refuse the order on the ground that the sideboard and the chairs are "vain things"? Who is to settle what is a vain thing and what is not? Are we to have an iron law of taste established by a gloomy majority, clipping the wings of individual fancy and enterprise, and dictating to us what we are to like and what not to like? Where then would be the happiness of mind you are aiming to secure?

Why, Mr. Blatchford, the order might actually be from you. What would you think of my sulking at it on the ground that you are an idle fellow, seeking after vain things?

I heartily agree with much that you say as to what is necessary to make an enjoyable human life. I go all the way with you as to the absurdity of making it consist of getting food and shelter and clothing merely. I shout the heartiest *amen* to what you say about love and hope and rest and laughter and music entering into the composition of human life, and as to the necessity of providing for them. But I have two criticisms to offer.

(1) You do not realise how much these things are actually interwoven with even the grimy factory life of England. There is love and laughter and joy and hope and music where there are

grimy hands and small houses. They are things of the human heart, and do not depend upon picturesque surroundings and external culture. At the same time, I have not a word to say against the improvement of the latter. God forbid.

(2) There are other things that must have a place in human life besides those you enumerate, to bring it to its natural ideal. With you, I "reverence facts." But, Mr. Blatchford, let us have them all, as you more than once say. As I have already said, you leave out some. You refer to them in a general way, but you don't give all of them their force, or you would not contend for some of the things you argue for.

You recommend me to consult, not only my own experience, but that of "the best and wisest men that have ever lived." Very well, you actually leave the best and wisest men out of your practical calculations. You say nothing as to Bible characters, beyond the casual mention of Solomon once and of Christ three or four times, and this only as items of common biography.

In your ideal sketch of the Merrie England of the future, you introduce colleges for the study of microbes, but no institution for the exercise of religion. Is not religion one of the "facts" as much as music and love? Were the men who speak to us in the Bible under a delusion? Was Christ a lunatic? Is the Bible a lie?

Mr. Blatchford, your problem goes deeper than you imagine. These questions touch upon facts. You truly say that life does not consist of eating, drinking, and sleeping. But neither does it consist of loving and singing and studying science merely. Man's *mind* does not exhaust itself upon human objects. It has some gravitations towards the "glory" you speak of, and at some conjunctions of life feels this to be of a more vaulting importance than all else besides. Why is this to be left out?

Socialism will never lay hold of the English as a religious people if you neglect provision for one of the strongest elements of their nature, even if it were sound on all other points, which I will show it is not before I have done.

You must not think these remarks irrelevant. If I accept Christ and Moses as among the best and wisest men that ever lived, you justify me in being guided by them, and I have a set of principles then for the solution of the problems that you discuss; for these

men go far beyond the ordinary run of the best and wisest men. They claim to speak with the authority of God and to make known the will of God and the purpose of God. If that claim is true, it has a very important bearing on the themes you handle so cleverly. If you make out the world to be miserable, so does the Bible, which speaks of it as "groaning and travailing in pain together until now," but with this difference—"waiting for" an event which it asserts to be in the divine purpose, "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19), while your picture is the picture of a miserable world, waiting for the organisation of the democracy, and the doubtful and hazardous experiment of a socialist republic.

You must first get rid of the Bible before you clear the way for your theory—not that you can demonstrate your theory even then, but that so long as the Bible is not proved a lie, your theories have in it a rival that will always bar their way to success. The Bible reveals not only the reason of the present miserable state of the world, which no man can change, but the fact that God has His remedy ready to introduce at the right time. If this revelation is true, it takes the wind entirely out of the sails of Socialism. If it is not true, the fact should be established incontrovertibly once for all—which I venture to consider an impossibility. It is all a question of evidence, as you said about another matter. You see there are more difficulties in the problem than you seem to realise.

You appeal to me as a practical sensible man, to look round and tell you what share of the good things of life fall to the bulk of the British people. I frankly admit that it is a very poor share indeed, and that the whole state of the population is depressing and distracting. As you say, the people have neither the money to pay for, nor the leisure to enjoy what they require. But when you tell me that they might have abundance by adopting plans that you can recommend, I can only shake my head. Do you say the state of the world is an accident? If you are not prepared to go that length, then you are bound to keep your mind open to the reflection that the state of the world is as much the result of occult and ancient force as the state of the seashore—very rough and unsatisfactory as a whole, but beyond the power of man to alter. Here and there, as on the seacoast, things may be patched up a bit,

but wide reaches of tidal ooze, and vast lengths of desert rock and shingle, will remain as the action of the elements for ages has fashioned them.

If the state of man is governed by intelligent power behind, as I believe, we ought not to leave the stupendous fact out of account in discussing that state, seeing that intelligent power has admitted us to his counsels, if the Bible be true. If you say you don't believe such an old-fogey doctrine, then all I can say is that you and John Smith stand on two different planes, on which, perhaps, we may not debate the matter to the best advantage. We must do the best we can.

But I believe you can be beaten on your own ground, and I may be able to show that your theory is impracticable and fallacious, quite apart from the special considerations connected with revelation. I believe all the facts are against you—human and divine; but I guess the human facts only will weigh with you, so I must confine my argument mainly to them, holding the others as a splendid reserve, like Lacy's 10,000 Austrian cavalry, that, at the crisis of the battle, swept in upon Frederic at Gunnersdorf, and overwhelmed a general accustomed only to victory.

Your hard-headed friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Problems—with Finger to Forehead.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

SOME things in your third letter force me to put my finger to my forehead and reflect. You say "abolish the capitalist as a curse and not a blessing," that is, have done with men who have money enough to build factories and employ workpeople. I might ask, How are you to do this? But I will rather ask, How are the workpeople to live then? They cannot earn wages without places to work in and large orders to work on. If you say, let the State provide these, then you merely change the name of the capitalist without altering the thing. Somebody must be capitalist. Somebody must be in a position to provide the costly plant that admits of workpeople earning wages; and in putting the State in this position (if you could do it), you would probably find that you had changed a good capitalist for a bad one; that you had taken the capital from a man who had a personal and fatherly interest in the work, to an official who had no interest in it beyond the wages he got.

Then, how are you to take the capital from its present holders? You could not do it without force or purchase. I understand you are not prepared to recommend violence. You say you would buy the capitalists out. Surely you have not realised what this means. Your statistics show that the capitalists get £360,000,000 out of the gross earnings of the country. If you are to capitalise this yearly income, you will make an addition to the national debt that you have not dreamt of. And where is the yearly interest to come from? It would have to be provided out of the national industries. How is this to be done

without charging to the trading account at least as much as the "capitalists" now get in the way of profits, salaries, etc.? You say the balance of the trading, after paying rent, etc., would belong to the people: but there would be no balance if you have to pay interest on the money required to buy out the capitalists. You say you would take a higher price for the goods; but you must remember you also propose to give the working men bigger wages, which would sweep away the advantage of higher prices, and then, if the goods cost more than now, the big wages would go no farther than the little wages. It would come to the same thing as now, except that it probably would not come out so well in the hands of government; for it is notorious (and in harmony with all experience of human nature) that men dealing with State funds do not exercise the same care, or thrift, or scruple, as in the management of what belongs to themselves. Men handle a national or company purse with a much slacker string than they do their own moneys. You know the adage about a company having "no body to kick, nor soul to be saved."

This is all on the supposition that the management of the national monopolies was a harmonious management. But consider the danger there would be of a want of harmonious management. Even if government officials were to prove as energetic and attentive and industrious as the individual capitalists that now provide employment for the country, what guarantee is there that they would agree in the conduct of the work? Would no differences of opinion arise on questions of contract, or methods of manufacture, or rules of discipline, or rates of wages, or modes of transacting business? Some of these questions might become very, very serious. Who would settle them? You say, the people. But the people would be equally divided about them. They are fairly of one mind just now, when they have a common class antipathy to the capitalists; but when they had got rid of the capitalists, their unanimity would disappear, and they would be as divided in opinion as human beings always proverbially are in the absence of any common enmity.

There are always parties in every community. In the United States, you have republicans and democrats; in republican France, radicals, moderates, and royalists, and in socialist England, if ever such a spectre should arise from the sea, you would have the people split up into as many parties as now, and as the whole

business would belong to the whole nation, you would, when an issue arose, have all parties intermeddling and clamouring in an angry turmoil, ending in civil broil. You would only require enough of this to bring on revolution and a dictatorship. It has always been so in the history of the world where these experiments have been tried. An imperial master is elected in France after a frantic national paroxysm of "Liberty, equality, and fraternity." Popular clamour is inconsistent with order, security, and peace. Men tire of it at last, and take refuge in the strong hand of a master.

My friend, your desires and aims are excellent, but your methods contain the seeds of worse evils than those you now bemoan. You would give us a Ruined England instead of a Merrie England. You cannot get rid of the capitalist without destroying the rights of property or turning the nation into the most bloated and unwieldy capitalist the world has ever seen. If you destroy the rights of property, you undermine the basis of society, and put us on the high road to chaos; reducing the whole population to the depressing uniformity of workhouse paupers, among whom wordy mediocrities and vulgar spouters of all sorts (made sure of their living) would come upon us like a flood, submerging all the fair features of the country's culture in a hideous level waste of ignoble life. The present system has many blemishes, but it has features of beauty and refinement that could not live in a democracy. We have to take the rough with the smooth. Many a man has bitterly repented his defiance of the proverb, "Let well alone."

Granted that competition is "a wasteful and a cruel wrong," it is conceivable in the abstract that there might be such a system for distributing the commodities of life in trade as that trade should be a dignified and benevolent exercise instead of a feverish and demoralising scramble in which bones and hearts are broken. But it would require two things that are not attainable in the present conditions of human life. You would require officials that were incorruptible themselves, but, above all, that could not be imposed upon; and you would require a government that could not be evaded or resisted. If you had not officials that could see through stone walls, infallibly detect and expose deceptions, you could not enforce the regulation price of articles, and you would have competition directly. The fairest government list of prices

would become obsolete in 24 hours. An outward compliance with the law would be joined with evasion underneath. The unscrupulous shopkeeper taking the full price over the counter would know how either to return 25 per cent. in private, or add a liberal bonus to all purchases made at his shop. The best law would be circumvented in the absence of officials capable of an infallible administration. You want officials like Elisha, who told the King of Israel what the King of Syria said in his bed chamber (2 Kings vi. 12); or like Peter who could penetrate the private understanding between Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 1-11). With men of such faculty, you might crush competition in the enforcement of a system of wise and uniform prices. Where are you to get such men? Here is where our weakness lies, Mr. Blatchford. They are not attainable.

So with the question of resistance. Unpopular measures would always be liable to resistance in a social republic. Turbulence would upset a disliked administration; but who could upset Omnipotence? I admit the evils you point out: but I see no hope of their remedy except in this direction. You may think me visionary: but it is at least a hard-headed visionariness. It is based upon the Bible, which is one of our public facts to be taken into account. If the Bible is true, as I believe, the evils you deplore will all be remedied in due time. God has His remedy in reserve. All our remedies are bound to be failures. The remedy will extend to such matter-of-fact matters as you discourse of. The factory system is certainly in need of reformation. It is, as you say, ugly—disagreeable, injurious to public health. The manufacturing districts are truly dirty, smoky, hideous. Pure air and bright skies are impossible in them. Only in the uncontaminated "country" can we get clear rivers, clean streets, beautiful fields, woods and gardens, —"cattle, streams, birds and flowers"—things, as you observe, "well worth living for."

Every sensible man must agree with you that much twaddle has been talked by the now nearly effete "Manchester School" as to these things being sentimental, and that they contradict their own arguments by getting as far away from the factories as they can for the sites of their own villas, and by spending long holidays in the most beautiful parts of the continent.

But what then? You say that I, John Smith, may get the benefit of similar advantages at less cost or labour than I now pay for the privilege of living in a manufacturing town, with its foul

air, impure water, poor food, and their unwholesome accessories of long hours, excessive labour, overcrowding, disease, and intemperance. This is where I drop my eyes and look down my nose, as it were. "May have": this is vague. How? By adopting your method. Ah, Mr. Blatchford, your method has been tried many times in the world's history. It always ends in one way—sooner or later: disagreement, quarreling, bloodshed, chaos, tyranny. It is bound to be so. Human passions, under the direction of conflicting human wills, are terrible things to deal with. Under a firm regulation, they are like the steam confined in the boiler: they can be turned to useful ends. But let them loose—give them the control, they become like the destructive tornado, the tempest let loose, the fountains of the great deep unsealed. They rise like a flood and sweep everything away.

I grant that things are not as they ought to be, and that life might be a beautiful, and a joyful, and a holy thing. But it is impossible under present circumstances. I am content, for one, to have things fairly decent, knowing they might be so much worse. Nothing short of God's own interference can give us the ideal you have before your mind. He has promised this interference, and I believe it will come. Therefore I feel I can wait. If I did not believe in Him, I might be tempted to join you in the impossible experiment of Socialism. Believing in Him, and believing also that other statement of the Bible, that He rules in the kingdoms of men, and inflicts the very evils you lament because of man's insubordinate attitude to Him, I feel I can wait.

Here you may think I am meandering again. But you say I am a practical man. I cannot but think I am. Therefore, I cannot help entertaining these expectations, with the Bible in my house, and a history of a hundred generations behind it. It is not an ecclesiastical imposture, you know. Its writers were all put to death by the ecclesiastical authorities of their day—including the founder of Christianity.

Your revering friend,

JOHN SMITH.

English Cornfields.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IT is pleasant to be able to agree with you to some extent. In your fourth letter, you prove that England, with her 50,000,000 acres of arable land, is capable of feeding six times her entire population, if the competition of other countries were kept off by a duty sufficient to keep the price of foreign corn at the home level. I sadly contemplate with you the present state of agriculture in England. The land falling out of cultivation; farming reduced to slavery at starvation prices; and those incomes curtailed out of which all trades were kept alive by the purchase of conveniences and luxuries by the well-to-do. I tremble also with you to think of what might be the result in case of war breaking out with any of those countries that supply us with the corn we need to feed the population.

But what then? It is a question of British politics. The eloquence of Bright and Cobden converted the last generation to the doctrines of Free Trade. These doctrines have become established almost with the strength of a superstition among all the political parties. Until some other talented agitators on the opposite side of the question arise, the Free Trade policy is likely to last. I do not see how Socialism could affect the question, even if Socialism could be established. A Socialist Parliament would be divided in opinion, the same as all Parliaments. Free Trade might be ended, or it might not. An enlightened despotism might end it, but you do not advocate this. What you advocate would prove, I fear, a despotism without enlightenment.

If there is any virtue in your mode of dealing with the corn question, it should not stop short at England. Why not give it a cosmopolitan range? Why not agitate to have all nations under

one Government, and all ports thrown open to unfettered traffic everywhere, like Liverpool with London, or Bristol with Glasgow? Why not abolish all national boundaries, all tariffs, all customs duties, all impediments to mutual human benefit of every kind and description?

Why not indeed? In the abstract it is a very attractive idea. Shall you therefore get up a movement to realise it? Shall you start enthusiastic lecturers to advocate a war against all nations, that England may subjugate the world, and bring the human species to earth's utmost bounds into amity and peace? With oratory fervid enough, and pamphlets smart and numerous enough, no doubt converts would be made. Conceivably, in a Socialist Republic, they might be numerous enough to return a majority to Parliament that would enter upon such an enterprise. What would the end be? A few English victories, and then English overthrow, subjugation, slavery, and beggary: the last worse than the first.

Of course, I do not imagine you could possibly favour such an insane idea. I put forward this supposition only to show you that it is not enough to place an attractive ideal before the people. Attractive ideals in the present state of things in the world are often mere *ignis fatui*, leading followers into a bog from which there is no salvation. Your Socialist idea is very beautiful as you paint it. But sober judgment, taking all the facts into account, tells us it is an impossible scheme, and one that, if by some lucky conjunction of circumstances reached the stage of experiment, must necessarily land the nation in woes exceeding its present miseries tenfold.

I can understand that those who suffer more immediately from the present miseries will be undeterred by such considerations. They are so miserable that they cannot be worse; and any change would be welcome as bringing the chance of improvement. They are to be excused for clutching at Socialism as containing some promise of a better day. But men of intelligence incur a great responsibility in hounding them on to a movement that can only end in disaster and woe.

You say, abolish the factory system; you might as well propose to abolish the shop system, the family system, the sewer system. It is wild talk. There are many ugly features in life as it is now lived, but they are inevitable, and to attempt to abolish it in our

mere desire for a better, must end in barbarism, which would be much worse.

There is a streak of hope on the horizon, Mr. Blatchford. It would please me well to see your generous mind turned in that direction. You guess what I am referring to, and I daresay you give an impatient shrug of disgust. In all these distressing social and political problems I fall back on my Bible, which is one of the "facts" of the situation not to be got rid of. It tells me that these distractions belong to our age; that it is not given to man at present to live in wise and prosperous ways; that "it is of the Lord of Hosts that the people labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity" (Hab. ii. 13). Christ, to whom you several times respectfully refer as a true teacher, declares that to this time belong "on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves (social) roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, looking after the things that are coming on the earth" (Luke xxi. 25, 26). This with the stamp of God's authority I take as a sufficient reason for resignation and patience and waiting. "Waiting," do I say? Yes, for there is much reason for it. There is much promise in all the Bible of a better day when the world will be under that one government, when the innumerable social evils which stir your sympathetic heart will be remedied by a King who will realise Hood's ideal: "A despotism in the hands of an angel from heaven." I could refer you to many parts of the Bible where these things are promised, but perhaps I should only weary you.

Do you believe in Christ, Mr. Blatchford? If you do, you ought to take his words into account; if you don't, you turn your back on one whom you place at the very head of mankind in your allusion "Salt of the earth, the light of the world;" and your Socialism, however eloquently pleaded, must necessarily prove but a part of those temporary sparks kindled in the dark, of which the prophet speaks (Isaiah l. 11).

Your melancholy friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Condition of the Working Classes.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I THOROUGHLY like your fifth letter. It gives a true account of the unhappy state of things now prevailing amongst the working classes of England; it draws a beautiful picture of the state of things that ought to exist; and it makes some enticing suggestions as to how things might be altered for the better. At the same time, it treats some things too lightly, exaggerates some others, and leaves out some considerations that go far to mitigate the evils you bemoan.

It cannot be denied that "large numbers of honest, industrious people are badly fed, clothed, and housed; that thousands die of diseases that would not exist under right conditions, and that the hardest manual labourers are the worst paid and the least respected." This is a bad state of things; but it is not so bad as it looks. We must judge these things not by how they strike those who are better off, but by how they bear on the actual feelings of those who are the subjects of them. Well-to-do children, riding along the street, it may be, in a brightly polished and sumptuously upholstered carriage, see ragged street urchins playing in the gutter with broken crocks and mud pies. They imagine that these urchins must be awfully wretched. They entertain this imagination because they fancy how they—the well-to-do children—would feel if lifted out of the carriage and set to playing with broken crocks and mud pies in the gutter. But in this they make a mistake. The ragged urchins enjoy their broken crocks and mud pies more than the well-dressed children enjoy their expensive toys. Mr. Blatchford, I have been in the gutter, and I know. No keener zest have I

ever experienced than when, as a child, I played in the gloomiest of back yards with the most worthless of playthings. I did not get half the pleasure in after days from finer things. You remember what Solomon says: "The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep,"—not that I, John Smith, am rich—and "the rest of the labouring man is sweet." It applies all round. Plenty palls upon the appetite in all things. No man eats with the relish of those who know what it is to hunger. The pampered children of wealth are not so happy as the children of the poor in their romps among litter, although the children of the rich look upon the children of the poor as supreme objects of pity.

The same rule applies to the subject you write of. The picture you draw of the circumstances of the poor is a true one; but it does not mean the misery to the poor that it suggests to the rich. They have a satisfaction in their limited and meagre ways, probably greater than the rich experience in their well-kept lawns, fine houses, expensive furniture, and liberally-provided tables. The rich have cares and vexations that the poor know nothing of, and the poor have enjoyments and satisfactions that the rich never taste.

Incidentally you give me a very good illustration of this principle. You say you have known me turn up my nose at the sight of a gipsy. Perhaps so, though I was not aware of it. If so, it was because I made the mistake that you are making with regard to the poor. I must have thought the gipsy a miserable and contemptible object, whom it would be a kindness to put out of his misery. You tell me he lives a life more pleasant and free, and natural than mine. Very well, I made a mistake in failing to realise his feelings, and in judging his case by how I should have felt if suddenly placed in his position. This is the mistake you make in your overdrawn picture of the miseries of the poor.

Take my own case. I work a great many hours in the factory: but through long usage, my work comes natural to me, and I like it. Times when I have been out of work, through strikes and whatnot, I have been like a fish out of water, and have always been glad to get back. If I were not working at the mill, I should have to be doing something, and I don't know that I should be happier. I admit that work can be made toilsome: but there is not much of this now if a man is moderately well and willing. I believe I enjoy my

loom as much as the artist enjoys his easel, or whatever else it is he works with.

So with the other points. I get fair wages. I should not complain if I could have 30 or 40 shillings a-week all the year round. It would get me all I want. As for fresh air, it is capital just outside where I work; and our mill is well ventilated. As to education, I can read the papers, and any books I want I can get out of the library. The time I have when I get home is about as much as I care to have for this kind of thing. In health, I have nothing to complain of. I enjoy things pretty well when there is plenty of work. Perhaps it might not suit you: it suits me all right. Here is where I think you make a mistake about us working folks. We might be better off on some points, but we are not so miserable as we may look to people of leisure.

You have heard of the dog pitying the fish that lived in the water. He thought it must be so cold and suffocating; and the fish wondering how the dog on the bank of the pond could live where fish die. Of course, the case is not quite so strong as that; but it is a fact that things that would disgust and gall the rich give satisfaction and pleasure to the poor, and that the rich make a great mistake in judging of the poor from how the rich would feel in the same circumstances.

The same thing applies to food. You are shocked at what we eat, and you have quite hurt the feelings of Mrs. Smith by what you say about her cookery. I consider her a first-rate cook. I don't think there is a better cook in all Lancashire. When I have been out on a holiday, at Blackpool, say, with other folks, I have been right glad to get back to Mrs. Smith's cooking and my own fireside. Her way of cooking might not suit you, but I want no better. Don't make any mistake. Things might be a bit better no doubt on many points, but they are not so bad as they seem. No doubt I would like a bit of that beefsteak and potato you speak of: but I am well content with what I get as long as there is money enough to buy more; so are all my sort—most of them. You only make people discontented by your way of talking.

You hope God will improve my digestion. Why, man alive, it beats yours hollow, so that I can do with things maybe that would make your stomach turn. This is where it is. The chickens peck stones; the hippopots—or what you call them—eat river reed with their big mouths. And as for the monkeys and bears, it is aston-

ishing what they can do with, and be thankful. It would all stick in your throat. And you would ask God to strengthen their digestion! This is the mistake you make. You judge by your own weak digestion. If we could digest nails, it would not be so very dreadful to have nails for dinner, though it might seem awful to those who could not do with them.

Then you have a shy at our clothes. Well, it is all a matter of taste. If we get as much pleasure out of our drabs and glooms as others get out of their scarlets, blues, and yellows, why should you want to take our drabs from us? It pleases us, and it helps trade. You make a mistake, Mr. Blatchford, in not making sufficient allowance for the feelings of other people.

As to what our clothes are made of, what does it matter so long as they keep us warm, look tidy, and last long enough? You say they are adulterated. Well, perhaps they are: but perhaps they are improved by putting something else in. Perhaps they are cheaper: if they answer our purpose, it does not matter whether you call them pure or adulterated. Everything depends upon how a thing is liked. A poor girl's rag doll is as much to her—perhaps more—than the wax angel to the princess. Why should you try to make her discontented? It is mistaken kindness.

As to our houses, I would not object to a little more room; but they suit us. I spend many a happy day in them, with none of the stuck-up ways of the big folks, who cannot enjoy their grand places for fear of not doing the thing rightly. I certainly would not change with that Japanese house that you praise up. The house would not be warm enough in our climate: it would not be cosy enough without furniture: they have too many shutters for me: not enough windows: and there is too much danger of fire. I have no fault to find with it as a Japanese house. I have no doubt it suits Japanese very well, as water does a fish. It would not do for me. It is a mistake, Mr. Blatchford, to try and get us British workmen in love with the frail bamboos that suit the people over there.

Then you think Mrs. Smith must be terribly off without a servant, having all the cooking, and cleaning, and mending, and washing to do. You call it "slavery." Mrs. Smith doesn't agree with you. Of course, huddled all of a lump in the way you put it, it looks awful: but you must remember it is only one thing at a time, and none of them very bad. Mrs. Smith enjoys cooking,

and a rare good hand she is at it, in spite of what you say. When she is cooking, she is not washing. When she is washing, she is not mending. She does a bit at a time, and she likes it. She is glad to have us all out of the way at the mill, so as she can get on. It is her own house; she does what she likes. You call it slavery; she doesn't. I must leave you to settle it with her.

Of course things might be mended a bit, no doubt. I like your idea about stopping the smoke and having water instead of furnace boilers, and electricity instead of steam. I like the notion of re-building the towns and giving us broad streets with trees in them, and a bit of garden to each house all round; and if we could have it as you say about the railway, have no fares, and nothing for the carriage of parcels, it would be nice. I am not so sure about doing all the cooking for 100 houses at one place. It would not be so comfortable to come home and not know where your dinner was, or to have somebody from the bottom of the street to fetch it in—oh, but I see, you would have us all dine together in a hall. Well, I should not like that, Mr. Blatchford. It is better to come home to your own house, to your own Missus, and sit at your own table and eat your own victuals. And what would Missus do if she hadn't to cook the dinner and wash the dishes and mend the clothes?

But how are we to get all these fine things you propose, Mr. Blatchford? You say all that is needed is a little common sense, and that it is my fault things are so bad as they are. Heh, Mr. Blatchford, I sometimes think you must be off your head. My fault? Why, things are as I found them. And I have seen such mischief come from trying to alter things that I have always thought it is best to let well alone, even if they are not so well as you think they ought to be. Your plans are beautiful, but I cannot help thinking they are dreams. They cannot be brought about without storms and changes that might wreck everything and leave us much worse than we are now. And I don't know that on some points they would be so much better. Things might be prettier to look at; but what would wide streets be without the comforts of home, which at present is an Englishman's castle?

Your cautious friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Living Together.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU see I am answering your letters one by one, as you wrote them. I am afraid I shall not be able to do this all the way through, because I find that, in answering one letter, I am often really answering others that come after. Still, although the same ideas come up a good many times, you are such a versatile man that they are served up with different sauce each time, so that they seem different when it is only the sauce. There will be the sauce to talk about after all has been said about the dishes. Sauce is important in its place. As a rule people are better without it, but it can be made wholesome, and is sometimes worth talking about. But we mustn't be saucy on the subject, as I am rather inclined to think you sometimes are. However, your sauciness is the good-natured sort that does no harm. I cannot pretend to give it you back with nearly the same piquancy, but John Smith must do his best.

It might have been better if I could have answered each letter as it came out, instead of waiting to get the whole before beginning. This would have given you the chance of speaking back one by one, but perhaps you can speak back for all that. When I have done, you may write again and let me know if any of my shots have hit. Not that I expect they will, because most captains have some bullet proof stuff next their skin, and I don't expect you have neglected this. When men take a position publicly, they stick to it as a rule. It is not among the leaders that the converts are made—not often; it is among the rank and file who can quietly and privately converse over what is said, and decide without prejudice.

By the way, I see some of my cousins are having a shy at you. It must be by mistake surely. You see we Smiths are a large family, so that as you did not send your letters through the post, but printed them as a book, other John Smiths might imagine the letters were for them. We must pardon them, it will do no harm. I daresay you can stand a good batting, even if all the John Smiths were to take it into their heads to "have a go," especially as some of them are not good shots. They fire like the Chinese at the Japs. There is a great parade, and much noise and brag, but the shot does not carry a quarter the distance, or it swerves half-a-mile to the right or left, or the guns burst, and by-and-by they take to their heels. I don't say all the John Smiths are like this. You will know the difference when they show up. If I had known that my shilling and sixpenny cousins were going to open fire, I think I'd have kept quiet and watched the game; however, it may be all for the best. Perhaps they are the ironclads who will pound away at your big battleship, while I come in as a torpedo boat, running in and out in the narrow places, trying to blow you up if I can, though with very best of good feeling, you understand. You see, Mr. Blatchford, I am of your own sort, from the same gutter, and having under the same stress acquired the same art of fence. I won't bore you with heavy-footed statistics or newspaperish dissertations, or learned lumber of any kind. I take you in your own light-handed, racy way. I parry your rapid thrusts as you caper round the course, and shall aim to get my rapier home with the right effect before I have done. Not because I have any ill-will to you. Nay, Mr. Blatchford, nay: of a very different colour are my feelings. But it is war, you know. You have made the air ring with your clarion of defiance, and it belongs to honest men on the other side to respond to your challenge. So here goes for your sixth letter.

You think I might get a living, with a third of the trouble I now take, if I were to throw in with ninety-nine other families, and have one kitchen, and one oven, and one drying-ground, and so on. I am not so sure about this. It would be like living in a barracks or a workhouse. I think half the pleasure of life consists in attending to one's own business. You point to the army to show how well the thing works. You say it comes cheaper for a lot of people to mess together. Very likely. But we are not here merely to do things the cheapest way. We are here to live in a

decent and enjoyable manner. I don't think we could do that if we were to herd together like public schoolboys at a common table.

You say it would give us more leisure. Perhaps so: but what for? You say, "to study chemistry and the natural history of microbes!" Mr. Blatchford, this is not what working people do who have leisure on their hands. More likely they would take to pigeon-flying, and dog-fighting, and gambling, and such like. The Spartans were rare fighters.

I see you advocate the use of arms for all citizens. There! How would this work? Young lusty fellows able to use arms, and with nothing to do, I am much afraid would not leave their arms idle. What terrible times we might come to.

It is a very nice idea to have leisure to devote to knowledge; but, Mr. Blatchford, this is not how it would work. All history is against you; all knowledge of human nature is against you. With too much leisure, the common run of men would be either lazy, like niggers where there are plenty of pumpkins without growing them; or wicked, maybe, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who, when they had "fulness of bread and abundance of idleness" gave themselves up to all kinds of bad ways (Ezek. xvi. 49, 50).

You think that with a three hours' day, the colleges would be frequented. I can only say such an idea is contrary to the actual tendencies of human nature as we see it. Men do not frequent colleges with a living assured. You must not judge by the sons of wealthy men. They go to college under compulsion. You must judge by these same sons when they are free. It is hunting and horse-racing then. Where are "the noodles?" Among those who have no incentive to study.

You mistake in saying that the important questions of agriculture and medicine are studied by the rich. It is not the rich that give themselves to learning. It is poor men under the stress of necessity. I don't deny that there is such a thing as loving knowledge for its own sake; but you do not see this love in any great activity among the rich. It is men whose future is not assured, of whom the State will take no care; who are under the necessity of thinking of their wives and families; that apply themselves to knowledge and develop intellectual capacity under pressure.

The facts are against you, Mr. Blatchford. It is a pretty picture you draw of the working man, under a three hours' day,

crowding the colleges after work, for the study of science as bearing on questions of "agriculture and the microbes"; but it is contrary to nature, and inconsistent with your constant appeal to facts and natural law. The majority of men prefer amusement and excitement. They do not work from choice, but from necessity; and if they had only to work three hours, they would give the rest of the time to field sport, music halls, or something worse. The colleges would get very poor audiences.

There will come a day when wisdom will have a large and enthusiastic following, but it will not be under a Socialistic regime. It will be under a government at once royal and supernatural. The Bible tells me, John Smith, of such a day when "many people shall go and say, . . 'let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. *He will teach us of* HIS WAYS, and we will walk in HIS PATHS; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'"

Why is John Smith to shut his ears to this sweet voice? Why is he to listen to self-sent agitators, whose attempts to realise a Socialistic ideal might so easily aggravate the present unhappy state of the world? Nevertheless I believe you intend the good of your kind; and therefore I remain,

Your most respectful friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Rights and No Rights.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOUR seventh letter is very clever, but wrong, as I believe. I may not be able to show you this quite clearly, but I must try. "England expects every man to do his duty."

In this chapter, you try to define to me what gives a man a right to a thing. The object of your definition is to sustain your contention that the rich have no right to the things they possess. I think I will be able to show that you destroy your own argument. You lay down some extraordinary doctrines I must say, doctrines that you could not stick to in your own affairs.

You say a man has a right to that only which he has produced by the unaided exercise of his own faculties, and that he has no right to that which is not so produced. This is pretty and plausible, but let us define terms a little. What is a *right*, Mr. Blatchford? Is it not that which is reckoned or recognised as proper for a man to have, by those to whom he may stand related, whether fellow-men, or "Glory," who made him? If so, whatever law may be current would settle the question of right. If the law say it is right for a man to possess this or that, then it is right, for there is no other standard of secular right than recognition by a man's fellows and their readiness to enforce it.

If a man's right is not the consent of the community for him to possess, then I do not see what *is* a right, or how it can be made out. You say a man has a right to what he produces. Why? How does this give him a right? Suppose two men, one strong and the other weak. The two men work at something requiring strength; the strong man is able by his superior strength to produce three times the quantity the weak man is able to produce. The weak

man is not able to produce enough to live; the strong man is able to produce more than enough. His strength has enabled him to do this. Now, he did not make his strength, and you say a man has no right to what he does not make; therefore, he has no right to his strength, and therefore he has no right to what his strength has enabled him to produce, for as you say on the subject of land further on, if a man have no right at the start, he can have no right in the run of the thing. So I say, by your own argument, if a man has no right to his strength, he can have no right to possess or sell that which his strength produces.

It seems to me you are caught in your own trap here, Mr. Blatchford. Your philosophy is not deep enough. Your notions of right are on the surface. Right is really an artificial idea, and comes from law. There is no right among beasts, because they have no capacity to stand related to law. A tiger seizes a deer, and before he has eaten it, a lion comes along and by his greater strength takes the deer from the tiger. Does the lion do wrong? Has the tiger a right to the deer? It is a question of which is stronger, merely—it is a case of might being right. It seems to me that this is what your philosophy of right comes to as regards man —that the strong man's strength gives him right and the weak man's weakness deprives him of right; for you say, "If I, by my strength, produce an article, I have a right to it."

On reflection, you will find my definition correct.

Right to a thing is that which is recognised as proper by the consent of God or man. If this is so, the discussion you have raised as to the possession of the land by the rich is placed upon a totally different footing. You say the title to all land possessed by private owners is conquest or theft; how can you make this out, Mr. Blatchford? Take, to begin with, the case of a country previously unoccupied, Australia, or the wilds of Africa, or even Great Britain. When men first landed on these shores, they found the land unoccupied, and took it. Do you call this theft? Theft is unlawfully taking from somebody who previously possessed. In this case there was nobody to take it from, therefore it could not be theft; and it could not be conquest, for there was nobody to conquer.

But you say somebody took it from them afterwards; perhaps, but that could not be theft, because you say the land belongs to

nobody by right, and if so, land can never be stolen. Conquest is only another name for the same thing on a larger scale.

You say the land held by English peers has been in great part "plundered from the Church." What, Mr. Blatchford? Had the Church a right to it, then? Surely you do not think so. If not, how could it be plundered from the Church, seeing that plunder is wrongful taking? You do not plunder a forest that belongs to nobody if you cut down the trees. Your argument tumbles back upon itself at every step.

But you say man under no circumstances has a right to the land, because he has a right to nothing but that which he himself has made. Surely you have not thought this out. Has a man a right to his life? Surely you cannot say "No" here. Did he make it? No. See where you are. Have you a right to breathe the air? Will you say no? In fact, you mention this as a human right that cannot be alienated. Did you make the air, then? Or your lungs? Have you a right to the mutton on your dinner-table? Did you make the mutton?

Oh, Mr. Blatchford, your principle is wrong. I might run through a hundred other things with the same result. You will have to revise your doctrine of right; you will find my definition answerable to all cases, namely, that right is a title recognised by God or man, and this is a question of law, and not of production. If we had no right to anything but what we had made, we should starve, and go naked, and die, within the week, for we both wear and eat things we never made or could make, yet our title is indefeasible. We have a right to them, though we did not make them.

The land is certainly as much subject to the recognition of title as anything else. Human law recognises it in all countries; divine law recognised it under the law of Moses, under the most salutary conditions ever heard of upon the earth in any age or country. There is no land law comparable to the Mosaic system; but this is only by the way.

You say a man can have no more reason for private ownership of land than he could set up for monopolising the sea or air. This is a fallacy, according to your own argument. Your definition of the ground of right is—man's contribution to the utility or value of

a thing. He has no right, you say, to that which he has not made, but to that which he has made he has a right. Now, in the degree to which this might apply to land, he could establish a right to the land, on your own principle, for land in itself is not valuable. As you show in another connection, land requires labour and skill to make it valuable. Now, if a man by labour of his own hands, or the skill of his brain applied through the hands of another, cultivates and makes land valuable, has he not got a right to it, according to your own showing?

But how could this apply to sea or air? He could not affect or alter them in the least degree; he could not improve them; he could not modify them; he could not establish such a title as your principle would create, and as you yourself are prepared to recognise. He *can* do so in the case of land; he can *make* it fertile.

Thus you see you have your answer, Mr. Blatchford, and your argument against the possession of land on this head falls to the ground.

The fallacy vitiates all your illustrations. You say William the Conqueror stole an estate from Harold and gave it to one of his barons, who afterwards lost it by confiscation to the Crown, which handed it to a favourite, whose descendants possess it at the present day. You say the present possessors can have no right to that which was stolen in the first instance, but how could William the Conqueror steal that which did not belong in the first instance to Harold? For this is your contention all the way through—that no man has a right to the land: therefore land cannot be stolen. If you alter the terms of your argument to suit the stress, your argument will disappear. If the land belonged to Harold, then it might belong to William, and if the circumstances justified it, he might lawfully give it to a Norman baron, and the Norman baron might lawfully lose it to the Crown if treason is a punishable thing, and then, subject to the fluctuations recognised by the land law, it might at last become the property of some unworthy person whose descendants lawfully possess it at the present day, notwithstanding the unworthiness of their ancestor. It is either lawful all the way through, or unlawful. You cannot have theft at the beginning without lawful possession in the person from whom it was stolen; and if you have lawful

possession there, you may have lawful possession all the way through, for lawful possession is possession according to law.

In either case, Mr. Blatchford, your argument is gone. Get hold of the idea that lawful possession is that which is recognised by law, and your difficulty will be at an end. It will then become a simple question, what are the best laws, and not what is the ground of individual right to possession.

To talk of "restoring the land to the English people, from whom it has been stolen," is inconsistent with your argument that the English people did not make it, and therefore have no right to it. If they have no right to it, it never could have been stolen from them.

Your language is vigorous, and sounds heroic; but when closely looked into, it sounds very much like what is called "clap-trap." Nevertheless, I remain,

Your admiring friend,

JOHN SMITH.

The Landlord.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU are hard on the landlord. Just put yourself in his place. Perhaps you are there already for all that I know. If so, you know it is not the bed of roses it looks to us working men who come and go without anxiety. You know something of the worry that turns the hair grey. It is not all an affair of collecting of rents. This is the smoothest part of the business, and not very smooth either if I am to judge from a turn I once had for a brother of mine. Many people cannot pay their rents. Of course you can sell them up, but then look here, what a misery, which ever way. You have either to go without the money, which you want for the mortgagee perhaps, which is bad, or you have to make yourself feel cruel by putting in a bailiff, or threatening to do it, which, I reckon, is almost worse. You are either worried with anxiety about your own payments, or you are made to feel a monster in putting the screw on people that are not able to meet theirs.

I would not be a landlord if I could help it, Mr. Blatchford. There is not much danger, perhaps, still one never knows what may happen. It would not be good news to me to hear that some uncle had died and left me twenty working men's houses. I pity the landlords. I am much obliged to them for the trouble they take to give us houses. I always gladly pay my rent.

You know it is not only what I say, but there is the constant wear of things, and property getting out of order, frightening the landlord with constant expense. Tenants are always finding out something wants doing. It is a tap, or a door latch, or a crack in the wall, or a burst cistern, or the wall paper peeling off, or a fence getting broken by the boys, or the wall copings getting broken.

There seems no end to it. And there is no calculating of it. If you have rates to pay, or interest on a mortgage, you know what you have to find, but this endless dribble, dribble, mounts up till all the money the tenants pay you in rent is gone and more, and you seem to have all the trouble for nothing. Of course you are considered a respectable man, and people touch their hats to you, but what is that with the constant fear of hearing of some broken water-spout or burst pipes? And all the time you have to find ground rent and the interest on the mortgage (for all property seems to be put up on mortgage), and then likely the man that put up the property has compounded for the rates, and so you have a big rate bill to pay every six months. It makes you sick. You are afraid to be too hard on the tenants for fear they will shift to other houses and leave your's empty. So that when they want the gas putting in, or a new sink bottom for the scullery, you are tormented between the new costs they want to put you to and the new loss by their removal into the next street where there are plenty of houses to let. Perhaps, for a time you get everything comfortably fixed, and things go smoothly, and you think it is nice after all to have "property, property, prop—" when there comes a great gale, and down go a dozen chimney pots and 200 or 300 slates; or perhaps a terrible rain floods the cellars. The tenants are at you in no time, and there you are. What are you to do? You groan out that you really cannot do any more, and you make up your mind that you really won't, but let things take their course. But in a few days the inspector calls on you. He has been round looking at the cellars or the roof, and he tells you you will have to put the drains right, and if you don't, he will have to have it done for you at your expense.

I really look upon the landlords as benefactors. They take a great anxiety on their shoulders of which we working men get the benefit. The handling of a big property is like carrying a big plank—a little this way or that, either from the wind or the push of a passer by, is liable to send you over. You can carry a pound of tea sweetly, especially if you are taking home a present to your missus, but carrying a hundredweight of timber on your shoulder—that is another affair. And so to get a steady small income that has no trouble and no risk is very well, but when you have a large outgo that you never know the exact amount of, and that gets bigger and bigger if you don't watch it closely, the getting of a

large income to meet it is not the pleasure it seems. The man sweats under his timber, and the landlord sweats under his burdens. He never knows what belongs to him, and he never can be at perfect peace. If he goes a holiday with his wife and children, he keeps thinking of some water-rate or builder's bill and the interest he is scarcely able to meet. His face gets into a grim set. He cannot afford to be good natured. His soul is steeped in vinegar and he improves the wrong road. And then, the like of you, Mr. Blatchford, set the working men on at them as if they were rolling in wealth, and worse, as if they were robbers. It is too bad.

I say, Mr. Blatchford, you should not be so hard on the landlords. I look upon them almost as public martyrs. They give us working folks all the comfort of houses to live in without any of the worry and anxiety. Of course we pay rent, but what is that? I am glad to pay it, as I say. It is a small amount and it is fixed; we know what we have to find and we have no anxiety about it; and we are masters in another man's house all the time we pay our rent.

You speak against the rich. I am not going to deny but that there is a good deal of truth in what you say, but then I look at this: would not the poor like to be rich? And when the poor become rich, do they not behave just like the folks that are already rich? Mr. Blatchford, I have known poor folks get well off, and I am sure they were not a bit better than the rich folks. Nay, some of them turned out much worse. What's the use of talking, then, in the way you do? You are very clever, but somehow it seems to me you want a little common sense mixing with the cleverness.

You say in your eighth letter that the rich have no right to their riches. You say that no man has a right to anything that he has not produced by his own unaided faculties. I have knocked over this argument in my last letter. If my definition is correct, (that a "right" is a title recognized by the law of God or man, and which the said law is prepared to secure and defend a man in the exercise of), then the rich undoubtedly have a right to their riches till the law takes it away. The law of man recognizes it, and so does the law of God for the time being.

You give us Mr. Bounderby, one of those unhappy landlords, with his row of houses, bringing in a rental of £400 a year, and the Duke of Plaza Toro, with his rent roll of £30,000. You say the £400 a year paid by Mr. Bounderby's tenants is money that the

tenants have earned, and that Mr. Bounderby has no right to take. Mr. Blatchford, where is your sense? Does Mr. Bounderby give them no equivalent for the money? He does, in fact, give them a most important equivalent. He gives them the right to use his houses for their own private and exclusive purposes for a whole year. How important a privilege this is will be felt by those who have ever known the desolateness of having no roof over their heads. Castaway and weary, they long for shelter and habitation, and would pay more readily for it almost than for food. They feel it is cheaply obtained at the rent asked for it. They could have no house at all if they had to put it up for themselves. They have neither the money to get the materials, nor the means of obtaining the money. Now if the tenants receive such a valuable equivalent for the rental they pay, where is the injustice in Mr. Bounderby receiving it? He has provided the houses by spending money, and by the exercise of skill and arrangement. He has brought the building materials together. He has created the property—but for him it would never have existed. On your own principle, therefore, he is entitled to possess it and reap any advantages springing from the use of it.

You say he did not build the houses with his own hands, nor make the bricks or timbers of which they are composed. The work, you say, has been done by other men. Yes, but Mr. Bounderby paid them wages for what they did. If he had paid no money for the bricks and timber, and no wages for the putting of them together, or if by any process he claimed the whole of the benefit of the work when done, your objection would have force. But he does not do so. He gives a share of the benefit to the men who put the buildings together. Their share would, perhaps, be £4,000, while Mr. Bounderby's share would only be the annual £400 he gets for rent.

Now if the workmen who received the £4,000 were entitled to receive the money as wages for their part of the work, is Mr. Bounderby not entitled to receive his share of the benefit for the part he has contributed? For Mr. Bounderby has contributed a very essential part, without which all the other parts would have been of no use. He has provided the materials for the bricklayers and joiners to use, and he has contributed a large amount of care, superintendence, skill, and arrangement. The houses are the result. You would deny Mr. Bounderby his share of the co-operation, while fully consenting to the labourers having their share. Mr. Blatchford,

this is not fair. Give the first monkey his bite of the apple as well as the third. He has to sustain the weight of the other two, and hang longer on the branch.

But you say he is not to have it, because Mr. Bounderby did not make the timber and the bricks. If this is just, then the workmen ought to have no wages, for they did not make the strength by which they lifted the timber and the bricks into their places. If the workmen are entitled to wages for lifting the bricks and timbers into their places, though they did not make the muscles that enable them to do this, Mr. Bounderby is entitled to something for the labour and anxiety of arranging to have the bricks and timbers brought to the place for the workmen to lift, and yet you would send him about his business with nothing, although he has contributed to the creation of the property. This is inconsistent with your own principles.

But then you say that the money by which Mr. Bounderby has provided the building materials was never earned by his own personal industry, and therefore he had no right to it. I have already answered this. Even allowing your principle, for the sake of argument, why should the wages of labour be limited to the contraction of the muscles? Why is the brain to be excluded from the process of production? You cannot exclude it. It is the chief "factor." Take away the brain, and the muscles might go on contracting for ever, without leading to any beneficial result.

Mr. Blatchford, your philosophy is too shallow. You do not give a place to all the facts, nor formulate a defensible principle of right. A man has a right to whatever law recognizes his title to. There is no other ground of right. You may think the law wrong, and your thought may be right, but still your thought is a matter of opinion, and you know, as they say, one man's opinion is as good as another. You should not dogmatise on abstractions; you should not attempt the reformation of society on the strength of a mere notion of your own of how things ought to be. Your ideas may be very plausible, they may be ingenious, they may be true, they may be good, but they are not binding. It is not like the action of gravitation or oxygen, which is independent of all theory. It is a notion merely, which may be a good notion or a bad notion, which might work, or not work, but which cannot be laid down as binding on the strength of Mr. Blatchford's assertion that it is the right thing.

Your theory does not work out consistently with itself. It strikes impartial men as an outrage upon common sense. It strikes at the basis of all property whatever, and would upset society. It would destroy your own title to your own hat, or to your tea crocks, which you could not make; or to your house, which you could not build. It destroys your title to your own book, or your own weekly paper, or to your own life, which you have not created. Everything is the product of joint labour much sub-divided, and if a man is to have a right only to that which he has created by the use of his own unaided faculties, he can have a right to nothing. Such principles carried out would resolve society into chaos.

Your objection to interest is similarly unfounded. Interest is money paid for the use of money. Money is a useful article, as we all know. It may be kept for personal use, or it may be hired out for the use of another. If a man have £100 that he could use with profit to himself, but which he can spare for me to use if I like, I may consider £5 a very small sum for me to pay for the use of it for a whole year. He is entitled to some consideration for giving it up for all that time. You say I have to work for the interest. True, but the use of the £100 gives me the opportunity of not only making the interest, but much more besides which I could not get if I had not the use of the money. Money "breeds money" by enabling the possessor to make money which he could not make without it; and certainly the provider of the money is entitled to a share of the result. The three monkeys are useful again here. Am I to refuse the top monkey his bite of the apple because he does not actually clutch it out of the water, but merely allows me to hold on by him while I clutch it?

All interest is truly paid by the British worker as regards the origin of the money that pays the interest, but the British worker cannot be considered by himself. He is only the third monkey, and must give the first and second their share. He is protected from foreign violence by the army; he is protected in the enjoyment of his life by the police; he is provided with many conveniences, shelter, gas, water, drainage, etc.; and the organization of society enables him to get food where he would starve. The stability of society enables him to be sure of continuance of the privileges he enjoys. It is right, therefore, that he should pay his quota towards the provision of these things, without which the country would soon be a desert and life an impossibility.

Your philosophy does not sweep widely enough. You pick out the drawbacks of the present system without recognizing the compensations. There may be something unsatisfactory in the inheritance of the results of industry being secured to those who did not earn them, but as we must have drawbacks of some kind in this present imperfect state—surely error and death are drawbacks—it is better to have the lesser than the greater ones. It is better to have ornamental and refining anomalies than to have the barbarism that would ensue on the removal of those bulwarks and securities to society and industry that arise out of the law of inheritance.

Again I am,

Your decidedly hard-headed, but respectful friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Men in Business.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IN your ninth chapter, you seem to be getting worse and worse. You not only object to the landlord having his rent, but you object to the tradesman having his profit. You object to the profits of those who take part in the process of distributing food among the people; and even in this you are not consistent, for while you would allow the coster to make a profit on the fish he buys in the market and takes round to the public, you would not allow the man who brings the fish from the seaside to the market to have his profit. Why? You call him a "middleman;" this does not settle the question, it is merely calling names. He performs a service, and you refuse him his wages. You say he "does nothing but sign cheques." This is not true. He effects a very important arrangement between the fisherman who catches the fish and the coster who sells them to the public, without which the fisherman's fish would rot on the beach, and the coster would be unable to make his living. He pays the fisherman at once for the fish that the fisherman brings to the shore, taking the risk upon himself of their going bad or not being sold, and he arranges with the railway company to have them conveyed to the various markets, where the coster can procure them to supply the public with; why is he not to have a profit and a good profit for all this risky service?

I could understand your objection if you refused to allow the fisherman to have anything for taking the fish out of the sea, and the coster for taking the fish round to the public; but to allow these two their recompense for their part of the labour, and deny it to the merchant, who carries the fish over the great distance lying between the thwarts of the boat and the cart of the coster, is absurd and monstrous. Do remember the middle monkey, Mr. Blatchford; he

is a most important link in the chain of supply. Do not call him a "snatcher of profits, taking from the producer on the one hand and the consumer on the other." There would neither be producer nor consumer but for him. The consumer could not get the fish to consume, and the producer could have no object in catching fish he could not sell. Be fair and level, Mr. Blatchford.

To speak of "the idle capitalist who pays men to work for him, and pays managers to direct them, but never works himself," is not to represent the matter candidly, or to speak reasonably. It is to speak "rumbustically," which can never serve any just cause in the long run, though it may please partisans. You might just as well speak of the captain of a ship as an idle mariner who gets other men to handle the ropes and steer the ship; or of a general as an idle soldier who gets other men to do the fighting; or of the editor of a weekly paper as an idle printer who gets other men to set the types. A man is not necessarily idle who does not use his hands. The brain worker may be the busiest man in the place and the most essential too. Of fifty hands in a factory you might spare any one or two of them without interfering with the place going on; but remove the man who does the finance and gets orders, and where would the work be? Where the wages on Saturday? The whole thing would come to a stand and the workpeople starve for want of the man you call "the idle capitalist."

You should speak with more discrimination, Mr. Blatchford, and give your thoughts a wider range. Cleverness is pretty, but to be useful, it must be solid as to facts. There is such a thing as being too clever by half, and this seems to me to be the case with much of the Socialist argument.

I am bound to admire your remarks on the indebtedness of every man to the rest of the community for what he is able to do. But it strikes me that a just application of these remarks would do more than anything to destroy the fallacious canon of "right" which is at the bottom of Socialism—the notion, I mean, that a man has a right only to that which his own unaided faculties enable him to create. According to your own exhibition of the endless ramifications of individual indebtedness, it is evident that no man's faculties are unaided. The inventor is indebted to his predecessors for the elementary ideas of levers and cogs on which he works. The gift to write a successful book is the result of various activities, which preceded and developed the writer. The subjects are

supplied by fellow-creatures. The circumstances that give readers and buyers are totally independent of the author.

This is all most true; but see how it affects your principle of right. As no man produces anything by his own unaided faculties, no man according to your principle has a right to anything! The money earned by your successful book is not yours, because others contributed the principal elements involved in its production. What are you going to do then? Are you going to divide it up? You say you must pay back to all men what they have lent to you. This is pretty. But can you do it? How are you going to find out your particular creditors? And will you keep back nothing for yourself? No clothes, no body, no life? for you are indebted to some or to all men for all of these.

Mr. Blatchford, you are a forcible writer, but you should not be absurd. You cannot pay back to all men what they have lent to you. Nobody asks you to do it. It is an amiable conceit you have invented in support of the Socialistic theory; but the theory is wrong. Consistently carried out, it would render the society of human life impossible—which is its condemnation. Human life is a fact, and before it can, it all its appetites, desires, and impulses, exist as a society, it must be put under laws and rules regulating the relation of man to man. These laws must recognise the rights of individual possession in some shape or form as the basis of all other rules, otherwise we sink to the level of a herd of cattle. Society has evolved itself in a rough sort of way on this basis. There are many blots and inequalities in the arrangement, but it is better than the barbarism that would result from the principle that a man is only to be entitled to what he produces with his own hands, and not even to that if it can be shown that others have contributed to its "creation."

If our civilisation is defective, it is better than chaos. You don't want chaos—you are not aiming at it—but it is what your principles would end in. They would set free the baser elements, and bring up a flood of ignoble life that would submerge the beautiful tracts of country that have been reclaimed from the bog. The beauty of British culture would disappear under an inundation of liquid mud, and the intellectual conquests of ages would be lost in the tide of ignorance and brutality that could not be kept within bounds when once the fountains of the great deep were opened up.

It is at the end of this chapter that you give us your amusing and telling illustration of the three monkeys hanging one upon the other in order to get the apple out of the river. I have already made frequent allusion to this; I have already pointed out that it tells against the purpose for which you have introduced it. The third monkey, who dips his hand into the water and picks up the apple, stands for the man who "by his own unaided faculties" produces the result of his labours. He alone handles the apple; therefore according to your argument about the workmen, he alone ought to have the apple—that is, the whole apple belongs to him. You say because the workmen alone handle the bricks and timbers, the house is the property of the workmen, and that the capitalist steals what belongs to them in taking the rent. You are more just to monkeys than to men. You allow all the monkeys to have a bite, though only one of them takes the apple out of the water, but you don't allow all the men to have a share in the property because only one set of them actually handles the materials of which it is made. Is it fair, Mr. Blatchford? The right system is to divide. This is what is done now. The working men get the wages; the capitalists get the profit.

But you object. I don't understand this. Perhaps it is because I am stupid. It cannot be that, though, when I think. You tell me I am shrewd. It must be so, for as I scratch my head and ponder, I see through what you say. I have a good notion of yourself, but not of your doctrines. You mean well, but you have picked up wrong notions somewhere. These notions knock their heads against each other in the most wonderful way. You tell me I have no right to myself because I did not make myself. Very well; but then you tell me that other people have a right to me, and that I must pay them the debt I owe to them. Mr. Blatchford, how can they have a right to me if I have no right to myself? If I did not make myself, certainly they did not make me; and if my not making myself prevents me from having a right to myself, it must work the same way as regards them. To get out of this, you say I have been "made by other men," because men have been made what they are by "heredity and environment." According to this, I owe nothing to those who have not contributed anything to my "heredity and environment." Well, these are the vast majority. Nearly all the millions now on earth have had nothing to do with my heredity and environment, and among all

these millions, how am I to find out the few who have? And then, suppose I could find them out, why am I to allow their share of right to me and to deny my own? If they or their ancestors have contributed something to my development, have I contributed nothing myself? Is there no such thing as self-made men? What about Mr. Blatchford? And if I have contributed something to my own making (by my industry, my self-restraint, my study, my perseverance, and what not), am I not justified on your principle in claiming in that degree a right to myself? Come, Mr. Blatchford, you say Socialism is "terribly just; implacably honest." So let it be: justice is even-handed. She distributes rights equally. Let her give me my share of right in myself. Your principle concedes it, but your words deny it. You say "there is *no such thing as personal independence* in human affairs," and that no man has a right to himself because he did not make himself. Ah, Mr. Blatchford, if you laid down this axiom for the purpose of establishing the rights of "Glory," who did make us, to our service, reason might prepare to bow; but to lay it down for the purpose of establishing the claims of men, who no more made us than the dogs of France have made the dogs of England, does nothing but excite reason's utmost resentment. It is not common sense, Mr. Blatchford. There is just a glimmer of right meaning in your words, but you do not express it rightly. When it is rightly expressed, I think it is of no use to Socialism, and in fact convicts Socialism of something just the reverse of terrible justice. If you ask me what would be the right expression of this thing, I would say the Bible has been before you in the matter: "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. xiv. 7).

I am not going outside the subject in quoting this. You have told me over and over again to stick to "facts"; the Bible is one of them. It cannot be got out of the way. It stands before us with a claim that no other book makes; and until this claim is exploded, it would be madness to leave it out of account. What it says in this case is in strict harmony with the axiom you have laid down—that a man belongs only to the power that has made him—with which in the abstract I agree. But, whereas you apply the

axiom illogically, the verse I have quoted applies it logically. God made man; therefore, God has a right to him. This is correct reasoning if your principle is right, that the power only that makes has a title to possess. When you make such an extraordinary application of the axiom as to say that fellow mortals have a right to me because fellow mortals have made me, you give us a specimen of something worse than incorrect reasoning. It is a specimen of outrageous absurdity. The absurdity is perhaps not the result of reasoning, but of the false statement at the bottom of it. The false statement is that we have been created by fellow-men. You have been caught by the fine phrases of speculative anthropology, "heredity and environment." Read Argyle as well as Darwin. You will find there is a making long before heredity or environment can act. We are not made by heredity and environment. Heredity and environment may have modified us; we could no more be made by them than a well-manured field could make potatoes without potatoes being first planted in the field. Now if the rights go with the "making," as you say, they go a long way back and very high up, even to the "Glory" of which you speak, and the "Lord" of which the New Testament speaks.

But where, then, is Socialism, with its "root principle," as you call it, thus annihilated? This root principle, you say, is that "the man owes all that he possesses to other men." If you are right in saying this is the root principle of Socialism, then Socialism will never grow, for there is no such root for it to grow from. Man does not owe all that he possesses to other men; he owes a little, but his being, his life, his faculties, he owes to God. If you are going to build Socialism on the negation of God, you are going to build on a volcano. God has not surrendered His rights in the planet, though He has appeared for a long time to take no notice.

There are some other things in your letter that I intended to notice, but I am afraid I have said as much as you will be able to read with patience this time. I intended to say that your doctrine comes to this, that the thing valuable in human labour is the action of the muscles—mere brute strength; that the action of the brain in directing the muscles is to go for nothing. You will never get the world to act on this doctrine. It is not a true doctrine. It goes directly in the teeth of what everybody can see to be common sense. Idea is of more value than labour everywhere. Idea has given us the steam engine, which a million brawny blacksmiths

could not have made without the idea; and this steam engine, which an idea has given us, can perform more labour than all the blacksmiths in the world put together. An idea can win a battle where 10,000 soldiers are of no use. The idea of the architect enables the builder to put up a beautiful edifice, where a thousand of them without the idea would only work confusion. To go one tremendous step higher, an idea preceded creation before the cosmic forces could work out heaven and earth.

It really seems as if the issue you raise were "mind *versus* body." You do not treat the subject skilfully at all—pardon me for saying so, Mr. Blatchford. You make everything of mere labour, and nothing of the intellect that directs the labour. This is making war on nature. You ought to give everything its place. Granted that labour ought to be properly remunerated, but so also ought thought. They are both forms of industry, and both contribute to the process of production. Thought is often a more arduous form of industry than labour. Let the labourer try and see if it is not so. Therefore let the industry of mind have its reward as well as the industry of labour. You seem to exalt the one to the exclusion of the other. I cannot think you mean it. I think I show myself to be,

Your "fairly-honest" friend,

JOHN SMITH.

The State of England.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I AM sorry you should say such strong things against the Government of England as I find in your tenth letter. I like to agree with you when I can, but I cannot agree with you when you suggest, in a string of questions, that this is a country where the idle men are rich and the industrious men poor, and men are rewarded not for goodness or usefulness but for successful selfishness. That some rich men are idle is true, of course; but there are thousands upon thousands more of poor men who are idle. So, it is true that many industrious men are poor, but it is also true that none are more industrious than many of our rich men. As for men being "rewarded for successful selfishness" and "not for goodness and usefulness," I cannot imagine you soberly persisting in this with all the facts brought to your memory.

God knows there is nothing to glory of in the present constitution of English society; but let us be just and candid. "Honour to whom honour is due." There is nothing more universally execrated among Englishmen than selfishness If ever they get a real chance, it is not reward they bestow on this article, unless you consider the duckpond and a howl "the due reward of their deeds." Reward, in the sense of honour and remuneration, are sometimes dealt out, either by the spontaneous action of grateful public opinion, or by the authorities acting officially—Magistrates, Parliament, the Government, or the Queen; but the rewards in these cases are never for "successful selfishness," but invariably for something "good and useful." I am surprised it

should be necessary to remind you of this. What you deny is actually what takes place: "useful and good men are honoured and rewarded." "Workers" on the average get much more than the idlers.

I am not going to maintain that England is a well-governed country when judged by an ideal standard. I am not going to contradict you when you allege that "English society is not a just society;" but I do maintain that your statements require serious qualification. The injustices do not lie where you place them. You lay them at the door of the idle classes, as you call them. You say these classes do nothing to produce the wealth they consume; this is not true. I have shown in my last letter that though they do not lift the bricks with their own hands, they contribute a number of conditions that are essential to create the opportunity for the labourer doing so. They contribute brain power, social culture, and economic stability; all of which are essential to the production and utilization of wealth. Therefore, they contribute to that production.

Then you complain that industry and self-sacrifice are often poor, while idleness and selfishness are often rich. The complaint is without point, because the converse is true also; idleness and selfishness are often poor, and industry and self-sacrifice are often rich. The idle and the selfish are far more numerous among the lower classes than among the rich. There is more industry and self-sacrifice to be found (proportionately to their numbers) in the ranks of English wealth and culture than among those who live by labour. Some of the noblest specimens of manhood and womanhood are to be found in those ranks. I do not say that all of those who belong to the upper classes or the bulk of them are answerable to this description, but many such are to be found.

The fact is, many of your questions and statements are thrown away by misapplication. You fling them indiscriminately at one class when they apply to others as well. There are all sorts and conditions of men in all classes, and it is a mistake, of which I should not have expected a cute man like you to be guilty, to generalise from exceptional cases.

You ask by what means the poor are deprived of the wealth which they create. Here again are "whopping" fallacies, right on the top of one another. The poor do not create the wealth by

themselves, and they are not deprived of the share that belongs to them. The poor contribute to the creation of wealth, but only as an ingredient in a situation having many elements, all of which are essential. Rich men supply the means of production and the market for consumption, without which there would be no creation of wealth. The poor could not work without the means of working, and the market for the disposal of what they make. The poor get their share of what is produced, and a large share; they get the wages, which is the largest share; the rest goes to others who help in the process. It is pretty much a case of share and share alike; no doubt the shares are sometimes unequally distributed; such is life and we cannot alter it.

Then you say the rich get their riches by prerogative. This is a needlessly objectionable way of putting it. You should say, by law; alter the law if you can, but while the law is law, give it its right name. Prerogative is only an accessory in the situation, Every man has it in some shape or form. It goes with a man's rights in all matters. It is your prerogative to go out and come in as you please, and do as you like, in a free country. It is so because the law recognises your right to do so. So it is the prerogative of a nobleman to possess and let the land which he holds, because the law recognises his right. Call things by their right names. Covering them up by vague and obscure terms is what in some quarters is called "blarney." I should not like to accuse you of blarney, but sometimes your statements have a wonderful resemblance to that article.

Then you go on to say that Parliament upholds prerogative. Here again is a peep of the same article; you should say, "upholds law." Is it a just ground of complaint that Parliament should uphold law? you may not like the particular law it upholds, but that is another question. Law is law, but do not quarrel with it or nickname it. Law is a fact to be taken into account as much as any fact in nature. Parliament is an institution resting on the consent of the fellow-citizens who have appointed them. If they are a Parliament of landlords, they are what the country has made them, and perhaps the country has not made much of a mistake in this. Landlords are much more likely to make good members of Parliament than men without property, because their wealth insures the culture needful to qualify for legislation and gives them a sense of

responsibility for the safety of the state which a man cannot possess who has nothing. If the Parliament of landlords are jealous of enacting laws that would undermine this system, it is their prerogative to protect what they may consider a good thing. It is one of the rights of a free country. I fancy Mr. Blatchford would do the same thing if he were in the same position. It is notorious that as soon as working men become proprietors, they become as jealous of the interests of property as any landlord, and sometimes more so.

You say you want a Parliament of working men. You will never get it. How could you expect such a thing? It is contrary to nature. Working men have not the mental qualifications necessary for enacting law. It is no insult to them to state simple facts which the intelligent among them recognise. Their own order shrink from appointing members of their own body, except in a few cases; in this they exercise a reasonable discernment. To qualify a man to have charge of the public interests, he must have a wide knowledge of those interests and the conditions affecting them. He must have breadth of culture and a width of intellectual view; a refinement of taste, a generosity of sentiment, and a maturity of experience that are not possible in the limited channel of manual occupation.

Your suppositions about the corn and the spades and potatoes and the shoemakers, &c., are very pretty; and the principle of exchange which you advocate might be worked out in a quiet country side with a few people, though I fancy, even there, there would be hitches. But when you come to the mass of commerce and the complex conditions of a highly organised life, these simple principles are no longer capable of application. Human nature is not equal to it. Its poor faculties get lost in the maze of the subtleties, and the complicacies that arise, even if it could be trusted to be disinterested. The calculation of values becomes abstruse and difficult with the best intention to be honest; and here is where the main bias would assert its sway; self-interest would give the twist. If there was no competition, you say we should hear nothing about falling markets. Perhaps not, but maybe we should hear of rising ones. In the absence of the present powerful stimulus to production, there might often arise scarcity. The scarcity would send prices up. How far up? You

could not fix a limit. There could be nothing to check the movement. It would depend upon the men at the head. The fixing of the prices would be in the hands of officials, and they would be guided by whatever considerations were most powerful for the moment. Here is where the weakness of your plan would come in.

The evils you bemoan are great. Your suggested remedies are ingenious. Your opinion of human nature is chivalrous. Your desire to succour its distress is admirable. Your enthusiasm on behalf of your schemes is beautiful. But the problem is deeper and more difficult than you imagine. It cannot be solved without an amount of insight, iron resolution, and incorruptible goodness at present unattainable in human affairs. It must appear to all thoughtful minds very certain that any attempt to solve it on Socialist lines must end in disaster from which nothing human could rescue us. I utter these sentiments at the risk of being regarded as

Your "silly" friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Cheap Things.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU have a nice chapter on waste. We are all agreed that waste is bad, but I think not many will agree with you as to the cause of waste.

You think it is cheapness that leads to waste. You think so because you once saw a drunken man in the train wasting matches. Why, surely, you are not going to get your political economy from the freaks of drunken men. Drunken men who waste matches would be likely to waste them whatever their price was. It is the behaviour of sober people you should look to. Do they waste matches because they are cheap? I have not found it so. Economical people are as economical with their matches now that they are cheap as ever they were when they were dear. Many other things are cheap. You don't find people going about wasting them like the drunken man.

Then you make a mistake in trying to make out cheapness to be a bad thing. You say that excessive cheapness is *not good for anyone.* You cannot mean this. Cheapness is good for those who pay the cheap prices instead of dear prices, of course.

Water is cheap, excessively cheap; it costs almost nothing, and people waste it. Would you propose to put a good price on it, as "cheapness is not good for anyone"?

Cheapness in itself is a good thing of course; "Not for producers if they don't get enough wages to live on." Granted. But the difficulty is that you cannot regulate this without interfering with the right that every man appreciates more than any other privilege he has, and without which he would feel himself to be a slave, namely, the right to please himself as to what he shall accept or refuse in the matter of price or wages. It works badly in some directions, but we cannot have high wages enforced by law without surrendering universal liberty. If we retain liberty, we must sometimes submit to poor wages.

The surrender of liberty would not be a hardship if the surrender was made to a government in whose hands our liberty would be safe. Give us a government that might always be trusted to act with wisdom, mercy, and truth, and there would be no danger. But where are we to find such a government? If not under royalty, certainly not under Socialism. Socialist officials would be quite as liable to be influenced by partiality, prejudice, and whim, or even malice. You would probably be shocked if I suggested that, as the favourites of a fickle populace, they would even be more liable to these influences than the officials of the present *regime*. But I fancy I should not be far from the truth.

In fact, it impossible, in the light of history, and in the light of what one knows of democratic officials, to contemplate without dismay the surrender of our buying and selling liberty to the authorities of a Socialist Republic. The proposal to hand over the manipulation of every detail of private life to the kind of men that would be popular with Socialists, is enough to turn the intelligence of England mad.

Government, under which there should be no liberty, and in which individual life should be levelled down to a common pattern by the action of restrictive and repressive laws, would certainly be worse than the present system, which, with all its blots, gives scope for individual enterprise, and fosters the expansion and development of individual talent under the stimulus arising from the action of those "splendid ambitions and aspirations" of which you make so little. Socialism would bring the steam-roller over the face of society and reduce it to a dreary level of uniformity.

You may be right when you say that much nonsense is talked by the newspaper writers of this great country. But I fear you are only adding to the stock. Your nonsense is more generous and genial perhaps—more forcibly written, entertainingly drawn out, but still, not more sensible. You would lead us into a more picturesque bog than the common one, surrounded with woods and hills, instead of barren moors; perhaps set about with flowers and water lilies; but it would be a bog all the same, in which, once in, we should struggle in vain to get out, for there would be no standing ground at all. In our present bog, there are at least many islands of sedge and sod, where we can get a footing and even build toler-

able huts, while waiting for the owner of the estate to come and reclaim it altogether. But in the Socialist bog, we should flounder in the slimy ooze without a tough bit anywhere to keep us from sinking.

You rap the editors smartly over the fingers on the subject of "work." At the same time, your own knuckles are not quite safe. Work, as mere work, is not the bad thing you make it. It is a necessity to human health. Many men contrive it apart from all question of remuneration. Look at the man with his dumb-bells, or the elderly gentleman on his tricycle, going through an amount of sheer labour that perhaps payment would not induce him to perform. Employment is necessary to prevent the mass of men from sinking into sloth and demoralization, physical and mental. A man cannot eat work, as you say, or drink it, or wear it, or put it in the bank; but he can benefit by it in being kept in trim for the activities of life, even if he did not require to work. As a rule men do not work except under compulsion. It is a beneficent law of nature that brings this compulsion to bear. If the mass of the population were not under the necessity of providing their daily bread by labour, the earth would soon be uninhabitable. Mr. Blatchford himself would have to get away from the rowdyism of crowds of idle, lusty men who would not choose to work if bread were certain, and who would make short work of officials if bread were withheld; all "trained to the use of arms," too.

You say "Men work to live, they don't live to work." Yes, this is the ideal: but if they could live without work, they would leave the work alone. Providence has not left it to their choice. They are obliged to work many hours to get enough to eat. If you artificially alter this, you will only get into deeper difficulties. If you doubled the price of commodities so as to increase the wages of labour, you would reduce also the buying power of wages, and the workmen might be worse off than before. And you might soon have loss instead of profit. You must make the manufacture pay, or it will have to stop.

You say you would employ idle hands in making roads and public improvements; but where would you get the money to pay them? A Corporation can only spend what it gets from the people, and if you prevent the people from being able to provide money by raising the price of everything, and compelling them to spend all their wages, where is the Corporation to get money to

pay all the labourers on roads and improvements? Roads and improvements don't make money: they spend it. There would be no end to the drain of money that would arise by-and-bye. And what would the end be? Discontent, disagreement, broils and quarrels; ruin and misery for all, and a new start on the old miserable lines.

Your pathetic protest against the sacrifice of human happiness and human life at the shrine of cheap commodities will touch a chord in every generous heart; but alas, Mr. Blatchford, the picture you draw is only part of a whole world of evil, which no patchwork arrangement of ours can cure.

There is only one ground for optimistic view. If it did not grow out of a "fact," I should be ashamed to refer to it again, and even with all its robust connection with true reason, I fear you will think me "soft" in working it in alongside of such practical problems. While nothing but despair is the result of a study of history, or of the system you championize so ably, there is nothing but the upwelling of a joyous anticipation when we turn to what has been written by "the best and the wisest of men." It comes in as a healing balm in the midst of all the woe. While it explains to us the reason of man's misery, it also gives us the joyful information that God Himself has a plan for the ending of human woe; that "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world by Christ"; and that that judgment will be so effectual that mankind will abandon war, and be compelled to accept a law that will bring light and life to all their ways. He will judge for the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. He will end all monopolies, and send the rich empty away. He will distribute earth's boundless plenty to the boundless blessing of earth's teeming populations, and establish good-will among men, on the rational basis of glory to God in the highest. Well may we shout with David, "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou wilt judge the people rightly, and govern the nations upon earth." Meanwhile, our prayer with thanksgiving must be his: "God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

Pardon me for harping on a string that will perhaps make you think me

Your demented friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Wages, Hands and Brains.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I MAY repeat myself a little in this letter. You have set me the example. I suppose you think it wise to hammer away at some points, so that they may go home, like the prophets of old, with their "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." Well, I hope I may not weary you in replying accordingly.

You have a deal to say against cheapness in your twelfth letter. You find it hard work to disprove that it is a benefit. The universal instinct of mankind is against you. The contention of the political economists commends itself to general common-sense, when they say that a competition that keeps down prices must be a benefit to all classes of the community, since all classes are better off in paying low prices than in paying high prices. Your great complaint is that cheap goods mean cheap labour, and therefore low wages. Your great remedy is to make all labour dear: to pay high wages instead of low wages.

Mr. Blatchford, we would all like to see wages raised: but there might not be in it—there could not be in it—the advantages you expect. If you make labour dear, you make everything else dear as well, for labour is the principal cost of everything. And if you make everything else dear, where is the benefit of raising the wages? If 40/- of doubled wages would go no further than 20/- at the present rate, because of the doubling of the price of everything, where would be the benefit of doubling the wages? Working men get more money in the United States than they do in England; but they are no better off, because things that are cheap in England are dear in the States.

Raising wages by force of law would not work beneficially unless you could control other things that you cannot control.

Things are obliged to be left to rectify themselves, which they do in the main. Competition has many good points: its bad ones work to a level. A man can only compete so far. He cannot go below the point where profit ceases. If he does, he himself will cease in course of time. As a business man he must stop, and prices return to a normal figure. Things right themselves in the long run, breaking some bones meanwhile. It is a rough process, but no other is practicable.

They recognise this in Germany, where the State has been invited to do the buying and selling of corn, so as to keep prices up for the benefit of agriculture. The Emperor, though anxious to befriend the farmers, sees that while keeping up the price of corn, he would keep down the buying power of the people, and work mischief in other directions.

You see the difficulty yourself; you say, "It is no use the workers forcing up their wages unless they can at the same time prevent the landlord and the capitalist from raising rent and interest." And you might have added, "and unless they can prevent tradesmen raising the price of goods." Well, and how are you going to prevent this? Your plan is a monopoly. You look at the working of the salt monopoly, or of the oil monopoly, and you say, "A monopoly can raise prices." Yes, Mr. Blatchford, but you do not admire monopolies. You have to admit they do not work well all round. While they raise the price of the commodity they have to sell, they also raise their own profits. They do not raise wages, as you have to lament. Why is this? It is because men are governed more by self-interest than by good-will to their neighbours. You cannot deny this. This being the case, how can you make sure that a Socialist monopoly would work for the benefit of the people? Will there be no self-interest in a Socialist Republic? Why, it is the one constant present element in all human combinations.

What you say you want is the thing you cannot get. You seem to be conscious of the uncertainty in the matter, that though a monopoly of capitalists will not serve a useful purpose, *it may be possible to find some kind of monopoly that will.* This is putting it very gingerly. The ground cannot be very solid when you think it wise to tread so very gently. No: it is not solid at all. You are walking over a bog with a very thin sun-baked crust which is certain to break through and let you in.

You say you "want a monopoly which will raise wages and keep down rent and interest." Where are you going to get such a monopoly? "Why, a State monopoly, of course," you answer. But, Mr. Blatchford, a State monopoly would be worked by State monopolists: and do you imagine that self-interest would have no part in their determinations? If there are to be rents, if there is going to be interest—which of course you cannot dispense with, even in a Socialist state,—it must be to somebody's interest that these should be high rather than low: and do you think you could succeed in excluding their interest from the working of the machinery?

Supposing you got officials of the most incorruptible integrity, how are they going to keep down rent and interest while raising the price of labour? Rent, interest, and wages, are all like separate branches of the same stream: they will find the same level. You could not prevent it. Consider. If you raise the price of labour, you increase the cost of building, and therefore the rent of houses. The same increase would increase the value of money, and therefore the rate of interest.

You could not artificially regulate these things unless you had an irresistible despotism, with infallibility. Socialism would give us despotism with fallibility, which would be worse than the present system of fallibility with freedom.

In carrying out your argument, you make a false distinction between producers and non-producers. You limit the notion of production to the actual labour of the hands. I have spoken of this before, but you bring it up again. You suppose the case of two cultivators on an estate, keeping both themselves and a third person,—the landlord,—with the corn they raise, and you credit them with the entire process of production; whereas production requires other things besides the labour of the hands. It requires land and skill. Labour could not produce corn without these. Now, if a man supply land and skill, he contributes to the production of the corn, though he perform no labour in the field. A man of your keen penetration ought to see this.

It is no answer to say the landlord did not make the land. He has control of it, as somebody must in any case. You would give somebody else control, may be: but the fact is for the time being, the landlord has control. And practical men must look at practical "facts," and not go moon-gazing. Having control, and using that

control to supply the land and the direction needful for raising corn, he is as much one of the producers as the cultivators who do the ploughing and harrowing.

Even the actual cultivator of the soil cannot use his hands profitably without the knowledge in his brain to guide his hands. Is not that knowledge as much a "factor" in the process of his labour as the contraction of the muscles that lift the spade? And now suppose he has not the necessary knowledge. Suppose the man who handles the spade does not know how to use it so as to produce food; and another man does know, and supplies the knowledge to him: does not the second man contribute as much to the production of the food as the first? Undoubtedly. It cannot be denied. Mind and muscle have equal parts in the process.

The principle would apply in various other ways. The ideas imparted by the second man relate not only to the depth of the digging, and the degree of closeness with which the planting was to be done, but might extend to the easiest way of doing the digging. He might invent a machine to do the work, and provide the money to make the machine: also possibly he might pay the wages of the labourers while the crop was growing, and when, if somebody did not pay the wages, the labourer would be dead before the crop was ready.

All these are ingredients in the process of production. And to call the man who contributes them a "non-producer" or "an idle capitalist" is not to speak with the sense or the candour that we seem justified in expecting from a pen that can write such a book as *Merrie England*. It is the kind of logic you would expect from a platform ranter and not from the scientific student of the calm facts of political economy. The contributor of any part of the process of production is entitled to his share in the result, as shown by your own delightful illustration of the monkeys.

When, therefore, you talk of a State monopoly ensuring to *the worker* the enjoyment of the wealth *he* produces, you talk inconsistently with the elementary facts of the case: that is if you mean, as I suspect you mean, securing all the wealth to the men who labour with their hands, and giving none to those who supply brains. But even if you didn't mean this: but meant only securing to the labouring man *his share* of the wealth he produces, your

language would not be much more to the point. How is a monopolist government to *decide* in the first place—not to talk of "securing"—what is a working man's share of the wealth he helps to produce? You have admirably illustrated the difficulty in the case of your own cleverly-written book. The same difficulty besets every form of human industry. No man can say how much he is indebted to neighbours and ancestors for the particular gift by which he is able to create wealth. His indebtedness could not be assessed upon ordinary principles. It would have to be done by arbitrary authority.

Pause a little, Mr. Blatchford. The fallacy that awards all the results of production to those who only use their hands, will be very pleasing to working men: but it may lead them into a quagmire of want and misery from which all the fine writing in the world won't so easily bring them out. I am glad to see you don't propose any attempt to carry your ideas into effect by force. I am glad you are willing to wait the conversion of Parliament and the public. I hope you and all your sympathizers will long remain of this mind. It will meanwhile be the duty of the friends of order and religion to try to the utmost of their powers to hinder public conversion to Socialism. I am afraid that even if you converted the public to Socialism, and the public elected a Socialist Parliament, we should not have a Socialist Republic without a deal of trouble. The interests involved are so vast and the passions engaged are so deep that it is not likely the minority would peaceably acquiesce. It is much more likely we should have civil war, and money you know goes a long way in war. I fancy things won't come to this. I fancy the national conversion to Socialism is a much longer way off than you imagine. Let us hope the delay will be long enough to prevent such a calamity by allowing wiser thoughts to get the upper hand.

Your perhaps somewhat stupid and, therefore, hesitating friend,

JOHN SMITH.

The Only Remedy.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU have been arguing in all the twelve letters you have written to me, for Socialism as "the only remedy" for the evils under which society suffers. I have been contending against it in all the replies I have tried to make. It would seem, therefore, as if we ought to stop it now. But here, in your thirteenth letter, I find you bringing the subject more and more to a focus, and pushing it with greater and greater insistency. So what can I do but keep up with you? If I did not, I should be like an entrenched force in the field, which, having hurled back a dozen assaults of the enemy, should suspend fire while a thirteenth attack was coming forward with more violence than ever. Such a force would be overwhelmed, notwithstanding their dozen gallant successes. No, Mr. Blatchford, I must stand to my guns so long as the ammunition lasts, and I think it will last as long as yours.

You tell me that Socialism is the only remedy in sight. You know that I am not of that opinion. Granted that none of its ordinary opponents have any remedy to offer at all—for two reasons. 1. The mass of them are too much absorbed in their own struggle for existence to spare any time or attention for the woes of others. 2. Those of them who may have leisure and sympathy enough to feel for those woes, have also brains enough to discern that the situation is not one admitting of remedy in any thorough sense. I venture to predict, Mr. Blatchford, in view of your penetration, that you will be a convert to this latter class yourself, if you live long enough.

Experience will necessarily convince you that Socialism is an impossibility, and that in fact the condition of mankind is hopeless unless some other agency than any now at work come into the field. Whether my prediction turn out true or not, there is another remedy, of which you do not seem to be aware. I grant it is not in sight in the sense of being on the visible horizon of human affairs; but neither is Socialism. Socialism is before the public as a scheme; the other is before the public as a guaranteed purpose on the part of the Power that made man. They are both abstractions as yet. The one is a human abstraction, the other a divine one. You are labouring to turn the Socialist abstraction into a concrete reality; the power of the universe is at the back of the divine abstraction, pushing it forward to realisation in the way and time appointed, in accordance with the prayer taught by Him whom you acknowledge to be at the very top of the salt of the earth: "Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It is a race between God and man. We do not require to say how such a race must end.

But I cannot expect you to recognise any such rivalry as a fact, so I must on your own ground try to show that Socialism is not a practicable scheme, and therefore no remedy, though very much "in sight" in a polemic and literary sense.

You are very much afraid I do not understand it. It is not your fault if I don't. You define it as "a national scheme of co operation by which all the farms, mills, shops, railways, and every other instrument of production would be the common property of the people, to be used and governed by the people for the people, with the result of ensuring that they would enjoy the benefit of the wealth which they collectively create."

What I have to say about this is that such a scheme never could be carried into execution, even if you converted the whole nation to it, unless you did one thing that you somewhat ostentatiously declare you are not going to do, and that is, to seize on the property of the rich, and either confiscate it to the State or divide it among the poor, share and share alike. You have said that Socialism does not propose to do this, but to buy it, that is, to enforce a compulsory sale to the nation, under a law of compensation.

I have already suggested that it is impossible you can have realised what this means. I have already pointed out the enormous sum you would have to pay. The railways alone are worth *a thousand millions sterling*. What will house property figure at? I have never seen an estimate of this that I remember, but I should think it must be eight or ten times the value of the railways; let us put it at half that, *five thousand millions*. And then there is the value of all the industries as going concerns. If the capitalists take out of the gross earnings of the nation, *three hundred and sixty millions* (as you make out), you could not expect to buy that income under ten years' purchase, which would give you close on another *four thousand millions* to find.

Here is *ten thousand millions sterling* the government would have to pay over to the classes before it could begin the Socialist Republic. And this is making no allowance for the enormous sum represented by the shipping of the country. How are you to raise this money? It is one of your own points that the reputed capital of the country has no existence except by estimation, and that even the actual earnings of the country, though stated at so much, consists only of so much money that changes hands over and over again many times in a year—which is no doubt true. Where, then, are you going to get the ready cash to pay out the holders of property? You could not raise it if you scraped together all the money to be found on the face of the earth.

You will say, "Of course, we know that. We should not pay in hard cash—we should issue government stock, at say 2 per cent. —going lower than even the Goschen consols." No doubt the new government could do this; but it could not create the confidence needful to float such a tremendous transaction. New governments never have the confidence possessed by long established institutions, and a Socialist government, at the mercy of every popular breeze that might get up, would have less credit than any government that has ever risen in this country. The sale of the property of the country to the government would be liable to hang fire for want of confidence in the stability of the government. And suppose people having property hung back, would you force them? Here at the very beginning, would be a poor start for liberty, peace and happiness.

But suppose you got over the conversion process by some supreme effort of financial genius, and the world awoke some

fine morning to find the whole property of the nation vested in government officials, you would be face to face with the difficulty of finding the 2 per cent. Two per cent. seems a very small rate, but what would it amount to on ten thousand millions sterling? It would amount to *two hundred millions sterling!*

And with such an enormous annual revenue to raise, how could you increase wages? If you raised wages, there would be no margin left to provide the enormous interest to be paid to the ex-owners of property. The whole community would be set slaving for the payment of the stock holders, and the fine visions of short hours, and good houses, and leisure, and colleges, and music, and all the rest, would disappear in the air.

This is not all. You say you would have no wealthy idlers. But if you buy out the industries of the country, you will create wealthy idlers by the transaction. Those who get the money or the stock by which you buy the property will be enriched by the getting. How could Socialism, as you conceive it and propose it, co-exist with such an order of stock holders in the country?

There is a harder nut even than this to crack. You say you are going to stop competition, and to prevent individual liberty from hurting the community. How are you going to do this without supervising every man's individual spendings? Are you going to dictate to every man what he is going to do with his money? Of course some will have money. Now, a man who had saved money might have a poor neighbour whom he would like to benefit and use at the same time. He might say, "John, you don't fill up all your time, I will give you £5 to look after my garden this year." Is he to be forbidden to do this because the State supplies gardeners at fixed wages? Or he might say, "John, you are a tailor, you only work three hours at the shop; I will pay you so much a suit to make my family some clothes in your odd hours." Is John to be forbidden to do this? You could not prevent it, even if you passed a law to prevent it, unless you set police to watch every house, and even then John might escape the police, and slip away into the woods and ply his needle among the solitudes of thicket and rock, like the Covenanters of old. Fancy the police, like gamekeepers, prowling through the woods to see that there were no tailors busy making clothes!

Mr. Blatchford, it is absurd: it is childish, it would not work. It is no answer at all to point to the post office and the telegraph: there is no parallel. A man cannot carry his own letters or send his own telegraphic messages; it does not come into the structure or exercises of his private life; but when it comes to a question of what a man is to do *in his own house*, with *his own time*, and with *his own money*, Englishmen would not stand the dictation that you propose. Your theory is possible only on paper, and scarcely there.

Think of this other difficulty: what are you to do with the wealthy who would have enough to live on without work? Are you going to make them work whether they will or no? If so, you will turn the country into a place of oppression and slavery in the name of liberty. The English race are of stuff that would not stand it. You would soon have revolution and chaos.

Under the most favourable circumstances for a Socialist experiment, even if you succeeded, say after a civil war, in steam-rolling the whole population into a flat level of equality, you could not prevent the revival of class through natural difference of capacity and culture, unless you absolutely dragooned the people into a military or workhouse uniformity. Men allowed to live on their incomes, or to use their savings as they liked, would be of more social consequence than those who had nothing beyond regulation wages. They would be deferred to, considered, consulted, and conciliated: you could not prevent it: it is a law of nature. And you could not help working men and government servants of all classes desiring to get into this position and aiming to live independently. Therefore you could not prevent the endeavour to accumulate money. You could not exclude the temptation to adulterate food, and practise other forms of deception, in order to make more money than the State allowed.

State management, which may be suitable of some kind, would be intolerable when applied to private business. This is the distinction which you fail to observe. The post and telegraph are public services. What a man shall do with his time and his money is an affair of personal liberty to which State management could not be applied. You seem to argue as if it could. You say that "the postal and telegraphic service is the standing proof of the capacity of the State to manage *the public business* with economy

and success." Granted, but what is "public business?" This is the whole question. You confound public business with private business. You make public business of what has usually been considered private business and nothing else. Shall I choose my occupation? Shall I be a mason or a joiner, or a merchant, or a musician, or a doctor? Shall I buy or shall I not buy? And, in buying, shall I give the price that is asked, or shall I offer less? Shall I sell or shall I not sell? And in selling, shall I ask a low price, or a high price, or a middle price? Shall I make money or shall I spend it? Shall I work or shall I not work? All these are private questions, which you cannot hand over to the State without reducing us to the position of social machinery working at the bidding of social cranks and shafts and gear wheels, who would extinguish our manhood. Society would become a mere army of privates, keeping step to the commands of the drill-sergeants. Englishmen would rather take to the Welsh mountains and be shot in the last entrenchment of resistance than submit to such a system. Your Socialism would necessarily end in a huge fiasco, and hell upon earth.

Therefore, though your sociable,

I am,

Your un-Socialistic friend,

JOHN SMITH.

"Socialism Begun."

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I CANNOT help thinking from your fourteenth letter that you are conscious of the practical difficulties in the way of the establishment of Socialism. You "approach the question" of "how it is to be accomplished" "with great reluctance." Why, how is this, Mr. Blatchford? This is the kernel of the whole question. It is very easy to conjure pretty ideals. It is very good of you to give us entertaining sketches of the state of things that ought to exist; but it is not quite so good of you, just as our teeth are beginning to water as it were—just as the thing is beginning to enlist our attention, and just as we are beginning to ask, "Well, and how are we going to bring this about?" to sheer off with the remark that "you have not given so much attention to the question of how Socialism is going to be established, and how it is to be organised."

You say, "Socialists are practical people in these days, and know that coats must be cut according to the cloth." You therefore ought to be ready with pattern and scissors according to the piece flung on the counter. You show us splendid plates of the newest styles, and when we point out some difficulties in the way of producing the garment, you say you had not thought of these, and that "you have no system cut and dried." This is suspicious. You are worse than a bogus company promoter. He not only paints the advantages of his scheme in glowing colours, but he has got the whole *modus operandi* at his finger ends, and can rattle off his calculations in the most convincing style. He can show "how the thing is to be done." But you "approach this question with great reluctance."

You show us the picture of a "Merrie England," with a clean, well-dressed, happy population, working, many of them, only three

hours a day; living in opulent villas, in spacious tree-bordered avenues, and spending their leisure time in attending concerts and crowding colleges to hear lectures on the extermination of the microbe, and the utilization of manures in agriculture. And when we ask how it is to be brought about, and how conducted, you say "these are the two branches of the work to which I have given least attention!"

Really, Mr. Blatchford, you might as well tell us at once of "the happy land where the apples drop off the trees into our open mouths; the fish come out of the river and fry themselves for dinner; the looms turn out ready-made suits of velvet with golden buttons, without the trouble of coaling the engine;" where the people are pure as "stained-glass angels;" who never swear; "who always love their neighbours better than themselves, and who never need to work unless they wish to."

I cannot but think that it is your felt inability in the practical department of the question that leads you to take refuge in the pretence that "Socialism is begun," for it is a pretence merely. The abolition of toll bars, the prohibition of back-to-back houses, the compulsory inspection of mines and factories, etc., to which you refer, are not phases of Socialism at all, in the sense of the Socialism you are advocating. They are not interferences with individual liberty in individual matters, but the regulation of individual liberty in matters affecting the community. This has been a characteristic of all law ever since there was human society upon earth, and if this is Socialism, then Socialism as a distinctive name has no meaning. But this is not Socialism. Socialism is not the regulation, but the extinction of individual liberty, by the fusion of society into a petrified conglomerate body, in which individual enterprise, individual distinction, individual aspiration, and even individual choice would no longer be possible. It would provide a State officialism, which would lie like a heavy incubus on the community, squeezing individual life into the dead level of a similar condition and a common type, and that the lowest type. It would bear society downwards by a uniform common pressure, instead of affording it scope and breathing room for development upwards through the action of stimulus from below.

It is a smart thing to say that Socialism has begun. But it is not true. Society has always regulated the liberty of the individual in defence of the well being of the community—sometimes less,

sometimes more. It has recently taken some special strides in this direction. The art of living together to mutual advantage is being cultivated to a little greater perfection; but the art itself is nothing new.

But Socialism is a new thing so far as the general practice of mankind is concerned. It proposes to crush the liberty of the individual for the sake of benefits of a theoretical and highly problematical kind. It would place the community at the mercy of experimenting doctrinaires sent to Parliament by the least instructed of the population, to act as delegates in the enforcement of crude theories that would work ruin to the best interests of the country.

There are such things as "freedom of contract" and "rights of the individual," though they may be abused. You rightly scout their abuse, but their extinction is not the remedy. The remedy for their abuse is not to extinguish them, as Socialism proposes, but to impose upon them their reasonable limitations, of which a democratic Parliament would not be the best judges. Such a Parliament would set up a despotism that would crush all superiority and joy out of life.

You are not entitled to use the gas and water supply as an argument in favour of Socialism. No man can supply his own gas and water. It is a thing that can only be done by some community extraneous to himself, it matters little to him which, whether a voluntary company or the town authority, taking over the business from the company. Individual liberty is in no way imperilled by such a mode of supply. He is not even obliged to have the gas or water, though the company or corporation is ready to supply it. He can have it or leave it as he chooses.

But Socialism would propose to compel men to have their bread, clothes or boots from a government store, whether they liked it or not; and to make it penal for them to get these articles from any private citizen who might be willing to supply them; and it proposes to forbid him trading with his own capital, or giving or taking his own prices. This is a different thing altogether. It is not the regulation but the extinction of individualism. The government management of the post office and telegraph is not of this character at all. These are great public conveniences that the individual is at liberty to use or let alone as he likes; they do not encroach on individual liberty.

The more the subject is thought out, the greater will the difficulties appear. The English working classes may be so acted on by the sophistries of brilliant writers—mis-called "education"—as to vote in favour of the experiment. It is not a bold prophecy to say that it would not be in operation five years before it would explode in a tempest of popular indignation. Socialism in the hands of a democratic Parliament would become an intolerable tyranny. It would smother society under an exasperating officialism of which Englishmen would soon get rid. They have not forgotten their national motto, "Britons never shall be slaves." They will not become slaves for the sake of having plenty to eat and drink. There are things dearer than life, without which Englishmen would not consent to live.

Part of your plan is to put agricultural labourers and tramps on State farms. You anticipate the objection to saddling the nation with the maintenance of a vast army of paupers. You don't dispose of the objection. You think the farms would pay. It would all depend. Do you think the labour of tramps, except under the task-master's rod, could be made to pay, if bread is to be cheap and wages high? You would treat the tramps as "honourable gentlemen"—a rather difficult performance, I should think, except at the hands of fellow-tramps; and these only in mock respect. You cannot force facts in obedience to a theory.

The honourable gentlemen would work the farm among them, and then "when rent and other charges were paid to the State, the balance would be divided." But suppose there was no balance to divide? Suppose there was not enough to pay wages? Suppose the farm did not produce enough to feed the colony on account of the slack-handedness of the "honourable gentlemen," who would probably prefer play to work? Suppose agriculture languished for want of the energetic initiative and superintendence of individual proprietors, and for want of the compulsion of necessity which now spurs every man to activity—every man, on the contrary, taking it very easy in the knowledge that the State would look after his maintenance — the agricultural Minister, "responsible for the feeding of thirty-six millions," would have rather an anxious time of it.

Yes: the question of Socialism is become a very important question. It threatens a great public disaster which it is the duty of every citizen to prevent if possible.

Your perhaps somewhat obtuse, but not rash or altogether unpenetrating friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Human Nature.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I CONSIDER your fifteenth letter, in a sense, the most important of the series. It deals with a subject that lies at the root of the whole question. The chief objection to Socialism, turns on what we might call, *the nature of human nature.* You have one view of this; your opponents have another. Which is right? Prove you wrong here, and the whole of your beautiful fabric disappears as completely as the rainbow when the sun goes down. To prove you wrong here will not be difficult.

You recognise the argument of your objectors. They say, human nature is not good enough for Socialism. You say, in effect, in reply to this, that human nature, while not good enough at present, would become so, under right conditions. You say it is bad because it has for a long time been exposed to conditions that are not right. You say that men "instinctively prefer light to darkness, love to hatred, good to evil." This view you try to establish by, what I might call a piece of military strategy; you bring your whole force to bear on what you consider the weakest position; unfortunately for your effort, it is a non-essential position—a mere earthwork, thrown up by an irresponsible volunteer, the capture of which leaves the main position as it was.

No man of discernment would seriously maintain that "greed is the motive power of humanity." Human motives are complex. The question is, what is their leading drift, when left to evolve themselves, under the power of nature's bias?

Yet you fix on this one item—avarice; and you work it to death with much eloquent writing. You quote or paraphrase the argument of someone to this effect; "Socialism is impossible because it would destroy the incentive of gain." You fix on the word

gain with almost a glare in your eye. You seize it, you toss it, you turn it over and over, like a dog worrying a rat, and you succeed in killing it of course: but this is not the enemy that is attacking you; when you have killed the rat, you have lions, tigers and crocodiles waiting, not to speak of British linesmen and blue jackets.

You are able, of course, to show triumphantly, that many human beings are not animated by mercenary motives, but you cannot show that they are not impelled by "incentive." There are various kinds of incentive. All men require incentive of some kind. Apart from it, human nature stagnates. The objection to Socialism is, that it would arrest the motive to exertion, by insuring the supply of every man's wants independently of his own effort. The native tendency to inaction would certainly be fostered by a system which secured a man's well-being apart from his individual exertion. You will pooh, pooh, this idea of course; but the laws of nature work themselves out, whatever we may say. The majority of men would lie in bed all day, if the necessity of providing daily bread did not compel them to get up. Others would lounge in the fields, if they did not know they would starve if they did not work. The necessity of providing food is a constant whip on human sloth, and keeps all men busy. Socialism would arrest this whip. It would try to keep it going in some way of course; but it would be powerless against the enervating effect of the conviction in all men's minds, that they would be provided for by the community. You may say you would compel men to work; how? By withholding food or wages? By flogging them? This would not be Socialism. What sort of an ism it would be, it might be hard to say. It would certainly be a very unsocial "ism." It would not only be coercion with a vengeance; but it would involve an amount of espionage on private life that would be utterly alien to all ideas hitherto in vogue in England. We should get to a deeper depth than on the Continent; for how are you to know that men are skulking, unless you put officers over them to watch? (And by the way, the officers might skulk.)

You accuse your opponents of the densest ignorance of human nature. This must be a false charge, Mr. Blatchford. It is impossible that men of average intelligence, dealing with human nature every day, can be ignorant of it. It does not require a very great amount of study, or much depth of penetration, to become acquainted with human nature. It is not a thing in a corner, and

does not require seeking out. It is before us and within us all day long; very ordinary men can scarcely miss a tolerably thorough acquaintance with it.

How can you expect to make an impression on intelligent readers, when you rail against men of capacity in various walks of life, as victims of the densest ignorance on this matter of every-day knowledge? Such extravagance is useful in one way: it shows the wide gulf lying between the commonsense of the community, and the principles on which Socialism is founded, and it suggests a very strong suspicion that principles must be wrong, that go so directly in the teeth of the ordinary experience of men. The most charitable treatment of such principles is to set them down to generous imagination.

This, in your own case, is evidently the origin of them. You say, you look to "Poets, Novelists, and Artists," as the authorities on human nature. Why, Mr. Blatchford, these are the last men in the world I should have thought of regarding as authorities on human nature. The knowledge of human nature is an affair of accurate discernment and very practical fact. "Poets, Novelists, and Artists," are men of imagination, who see the world through the chromosphere of their own ardent temperaments. I should say that the business men, and educational men, whom you dismiss so cavalierly, would be much more likely to be "authorities," as to human nature, than dreamers and idealists.

But, in fact, the subject is not one requiring "authorities" at all. It does not require any special gift to know human nature. Very average intelligence has only to open its eyes in the daily walks of life (and it cannot well close them), to obtain a tolerably accurate knowledge of the "complex and awful thing" in question.

You rightly deny that avarice is the strongest motive in human nature; but you seem to fail to grasp human nature's fundamental characteristics, and therefore miss the force of the real objection to Socialism arising out of these characteristics. You give us a series of graphically drawn men and women of various kinds and characters, and you finish each graphic sketch with the telling remark, "And that is human nature." But this is not a scientific elaboration of the subject. Human nature, for the purposes of scientific analysis, is that which human nature is, *when left to evolve*

itself by its own force and bias—free from all external constraints and illuminations.

The lady nurse at the seat of war, is not a spontaneous evolution of human nature at all. She is the product of influences and principles, which are no part of human nature. There never would have been such a lady, apart from the ideals of the Christian religion operating through generations, and acting powerfully on her individual self in the various activities of family and educational life.

Similarly, it is not "human nature" that we see in the best ranks of European society, but human nature modified and elevated by influences extraneous to human nature, traceable for their source to the Semitic cradle of civilization.

There is a history in the case which cannot be ignored, in a scientific treatment of the subject. The work and influence of Christ, in the course of centuries, have affected the types of human life all through Europe.

Human nature is not the same thing in nations and countries where there has been no modification from external sources. You apparently recognise this in "the Mongolian, Turanian, and other inferior races," which you expressly exclude from your argument. You should not exclude them. You cannot exclude them in a just treatment of the subject. You are formulating a theory of human nature; and if your theory is a true one, it will account for all its types. It does not do this. It does not account for the condition of the vast mass of mankind. The "inferior races" are the bulk of the race. The Caucasian type is a small minority. How comes it that the majority are "bad" if the natural tendency of human nature is in the direction of good?

You are misled by special samples. You must look at human nature as it unfolds itself by its unaided resources, to see what it is in itself. A peach, a potato, a rose, a cabbage, will all develop their several qualities, quite irrespective of soil or treatment. Granted that they will thrive best and come to the finest maturity under the best conditions of soil and sunlight; but culture or no culture, meagrely or bountifully, they will develop rose nature, cabbage nature, peach nature, and not the nature of anything else. *Their qualities are inherent.* Is it so with human nature? Yes, as to certain qualities but not as to others. Bad qualities are inherent like the cabbage qualities in a cabbage: good qualities do not

come of themselves. This is notorious. Knowledge, kindness, honesty, and good manners are good qualities. A child when it is born has no knowledge: and it will never get any if it is not put in. If it is left to itself it will not seek it, but will run wild in the streets and the fields, and grow up a pest to society. But though it does not bring knowledge into the world, it brings instincts of various kinds, which it does not require to learn. It brings appetite, desire, resentment, cupidity. It has to learn to be kind. It does not know what honesty is till it is taught. As for good manners, consideration for others, they are a matter of painful acquisition.

Therefore, when you see a refined, intelligent, self-sacrificing man or woman, you do not see a specimen of human nature as it is in itself, but human nature with extraneous grafts. The qualities that constitute moral excellence are not inherent. No man left to himself would develop into an intelligent, self-controlling, disinterested man. Left to himself, he would grow up an ignorant and brutal savage. Human nature is the material that can be shaped into the image of the divine; but it will not of itself yield that image. The image has to be superimposed from without. Human nature is but the quarry marble that requires the artist's chisel to form it into a statue. The chiselling operation comes with agencies that have been divinely introduced into the world for the purpose. You cannot dissociate them from the name and work of Christ. It is only where this is influential that you see the work in its perfect form. There are many blotches: the models are all directly related to Christ.

I see you refer to phrenology. There is no doubt that phrenologists are right in their theory of the native capacities of human nature, and that the recognition of the truth which they teach would simplify the problem of human nature, where it has been hopelessly perplexed by the artificial philosophy of the Greeks. The human brain—the seat of the human mind—is a bundle of blind impulses which are in themselves the raw material of mentality. Out of this raw material, education of the right sort can form a noble being; but what is the right education is a question. One thing is certain, that no education is complete that leaves out any of the faculties. Another thing is certain, that the finest faculties are in the crown of the brain, and embrace those which give us reverence for the eternal, and affinities in spiritual direc-

tions; and that, therefore, a Socialistic education that would leave out God and religion would leave out the education of the best part of man, and give us a poor and arid result in the kind of men it would breed.

You disagree with the Bible in holding that human nature is not innately bad, and you disagree with the notorious lessons of experience to which I have referred. Mr. Blatchford, this appears to me like disagreeing with all truth, natural and revealed. The facts are all against you. If human nature were not innately bad, it would not develop badly, as it does, in every case where it is left to itself in an individual or a nation. Bring up a child to manhood with a dumb nurse, cut off from contact from all other human beings, and you would have a speechless imbecile, a beast of prey, nothing but evil. Nations having had no contact with instruction exterior to themselves are nations of savages.

It is a world-wide lesson. If the innate tendency of human nature were good, human beings would be good wherever we found them, whereas they are the reverse, without exception. The necessity for education is the standing proof of the fact. You don't require to educate dogs and monkeys and lions and tigers. They grow into proper lions and tigers, dogs and monkeys, of their own natural growth. Their dog and monkey qualities are inherent, and they develop spontaneously. But man, in his proper human qualities, does not develop spontaneously. They have to be engrafted from without. Of himself, he turns to evil. Why it should be so is another question. At the present, we are only concerned with the fact. It is a fact that I just find recognised in an unexpected quarter: by no less an authority (as people reckon) than a Parliamentary document. So recently as Tuesday, April 23, the Departmental Committee on Prisons issued its report. In this report, (as quoted by the *Daily News*, of the following day), the committee quote with approval the evidence given before them by Mr. Michael Davitt. They say: "Mr. Davitt told us that he was speaking to an educated habitual criminal in Dartmoor, and was pointing out how foolish it was, apart from the immorality of the thing, to risk getting seven years' penal servitude for £10 or £20 of stolen goods. The man replied, 'Well, yes, that is all right coming from you, but put yourself in my position. I never knew my father or my mother. My first recollection is being turned out of a workhouse. I fell among thieves. I got educated in crime.

I learned to read and write in prison. Unlike you, I have had no moral training. Now, I hold that man is naturally a thief. Take, for instance, a child in its mother's arms; anything that excites its fancy it wants to get, and if that natural feeling is not corrected by parental training and moral influence and education, it gets stronger as the child grows older. Now, I am such a product of your civilisation. You allowed me to grow up with these animal instincts uncorrected.' "

Mr. Blatchford, facts govern the conclusions and theories of wise men; you write like a wise man. Perhaps you may yet show that you are really so, by yielding to the lesson of all experience, and abjuring the faith you have professed before all the world in *Merrie England*, that man is inherently good.

You say human nature "only becomes bad when it is poisoned and perverted and defiled." Mr. Blatchford, the truth is just the other way round—that human nature only becomes elevated when it becomes anti-doted, harmonised and cleansed by a process from without. The poison, the perversion, and the defilement are all within. This view may be unacceptable, but if it is true, what a stupendous and disastrous mistake it is to ignore it in the attempt to construct a new social system. You are committing the very blunder which you lay at the door of your opponents—building your economic science upon a false estimate of human nature, and therefore rearing a structure that is bound to come down in ruins. God avert "England's Ruin."

JOHN SMITH.

Union and Rivalry.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I DO not quite like the way you talk in your 16th letter. You talk forcibly and picturesquely, as you do all through your book; but you offend my sense of justice by saying things that are not true, and my sense of symmetry by using illustrations that are not applicable, and my sense of logical fitness by drawing conclusions that are not warranted by the argument. You do it all in such a rushing way and with such a wealth of elegant diction that most readers are liable to be carried away.

Now, *I* am not going to be carried away. You abuse me a good deal in the course of this letter. You say I am "rather slow, John," that I "fall into stupid error, partly because I have not very clear sight nor very clear brains"; that I "cannot grasp a new idea"; that, in fact, my theory is "rank blockheadism."

I don't find fault with you for expressing your opinion in this vigorous manner, but it makes me "stop and think." It stirs what I suppose every man of character has a little of—a certain amount of mere donkey that refuses to be dragooned into even the right road—a good serviceable Anglo-Saxon quality. If I am touched a little, it helps me to look all round your flaming sentences, and see if I really am the stupid and benighted creature you have written so many clever letters to enlighten. The result is entirely satisfactory. I do not say I make out the dulness to be on your side. You are far from dull. You are bright and nimble as the airiest waterfowl. But people are often bright and nimble that are not exactly accurate and reliable.

You say the theory of competition is "the most fatuous and bestial of all senseless and brutal theories that practical men support." The ardour of this declaration can be excused if we consider it as inspired by the horror attendant on the abuse of competition, but it is impossible in the calm exercise of reason to receive it as a statement of fact.

You say much in the early part of your book about laws of nature and facts of nature. Now, it is a law of nature that you cannot extinguish the desire to excel, the impulse to be first. Like every other law of nature, it is destructive working by itself. But, in its place, it is a most helpful element in the human constitution. It acts as a valuable check to the mere inertia that would hold life in stagnation; and contributes a valuable share to the activities that lead to development and improvement. If you will examine history, whether in books or in the scenes of life enacted before our eyes, you will find that all men who have borne a useful part in public life are actuated in measure by this feeling of emulation. It is the impulse known as ambition when acting nakedly. It is a pity when it acts nakedly or out of combination with the higher sentiments, but still, even in its naked action, it leads to many good things being done that would be left undone if it were not there.

But you propose to go dead against it, and to exclude its action altogether. In this, you are not scientific. A scientific man allows for all the conditions of his problem. You are going to put yourself in opposition to one of the most palpable and powerful. Human nature, as it is now constituted, works by rivalry.

I don't say solely, but largely, and whatever may be said about the evils of competition, it remains true that the world benefits by the rivalry of individuals, and that if this element were excluded, social life would stagnate and wither.

You do not put the case correctly when you say that it means war. Rivalry is not necessarily war, though it may lead to war if not regulated. A man through rivalry may shoot ahead and get more money than his neighbour, and yet not hate or afflict him. Nay, it may put in his hand the power of blessing him. If he is properly subject to the law prescribed for human nature by the Contriver of human nature, he will make this use of power which rivalry may place in his hand. Rivalry is good and not bad when working in the right way; it becomes bad only when out of the

right association, like oxygen, which preserves life when mixed with other gases, but kills when separated.

What would you say, Mr. Blatchford, to a man who, after witnessing a chemical demonstration of the destructive character of naked oxygen, should ever afterwards swear at oxygen, and propose its exclusion from all air that human beings should ever breathe. Out of your strong vocabulary, you would find some suitable names for him, I have no doubt. This is what you appear to me to do in the matter of competition. Because it works disastrously by itself, you declare war against it in every connection. This is absurd. You say, "It means that a nation where every man tries to get the better of his neighbour will be happier and wealthier and more prosperous and more enlightened than a nation where every man tries to help his neighbour." This is not a true statement of the case. It means that a nation where every man tries to do the best for himself, and at the same time is kind and helpful to his neighbour, will be better off and happier than a nation where through the sloth that reigns in the absence of emulation, every man is unable to help his neighbour, though very sentimentally inclined.

Your illustrations are very cleverly put, but they do not support your contention at all. The case of two men trying to get a cart up the hill, one pushing it up and the other pushing it down, does not illustrate competition. Competition would be illustrated by two carts and two men, each cart with a man behind it and £5 offered to the man who should get his cart to the top of the hill first. It is very certain that both carts would be up the hill sooner under that arrangement than one cart with both men behind it.

So, with catching the colt, each man trying to prevent others from catching it would not illustrate competition. Let us have two colts and two men, with a reward to the man who should catch his colt first, and we should have a quicker catch.

As for the navigating of a steam boat, that does not apply at all. Granted, the vessel would never get to harbour if all the crew scrambled for the steersmanship. The argument in that case would be good for organisation; it would not be against competition. Set each man to his post, certainly; all the world will agree

to this. But even here competition comes in. The best posts will be given to the men who fill them best, and you then get the best men by competition.

Your illustration of the hundred loaves to be scrambled for by a hundred men, looks a little more relevant, but it is not really so when examined. It illustrates a wrong system of division merely. It has nothing to do with the best and quickest method of getting the loaves made, which is the strong point.

You would have to suppose the question of making the hundred loaves put to the hundred men, as to which of them would get the hundred loaves ready quickest, the man who would do it quickest to get the job.

You would certainly get them ready more quickly by this plan than by leaving each man to get ready his own loaf.

When the theory of competition is stated correctly, it loses much of its odiousness. No doubt it is an evil thing in certain developments; but the evil is not inherent, it comes from the absence of regulation. The total abolition of competition would be a greater evil than all the evil we suffer from its abuse. It would consign mankind to lethargy and death. Monopolies, as you admit, always serve the public worse than competitions.

You prefer to call your system co-operation, and not monopoly. Co-operation is a finer name, but it would not alter the thing. The thing would be monopoly—monopoly for a different reason perhaps, but still monopoly; nobody else would be allowed to do the work. And with human nature such as it is, such a system could not fail to work detrimentally. In the absence of rivalry, the coach would go at a very deliberate pace.

Some things, no doubt, the State could work better than private enterprise, railways, and perhaps coal mines; but when you propose to allow the State to take charge of our private business, you are crossing the line where service ends and tyranny begins.

The State monopoly of the postal and telegraph departments works well, but not by excluding competition; you must remember that there is competition within the service. The best men are put into the best places, and every man knows that if he does not look sharp, he will have his place and his bread taken by others. If all

the men were sure of their berths as you propose to make every man sure of his bread, you would soon see a different state of things.

You seem to make a point when you object to competition on the score of its increasing the expense of distribution by employing a multiplicity of firms and appliances; but there is nothing in it, Mr. Blatchford, when a sufficiently wide view is taken. Human life is not to be decided from a merely arithmetical point of view. Life cannot be conducted with a view to statistics. You must remember that life is made up of many picturesque details and healthful activities, which you would destroy by turning it into a single concern. Though it might cheapen the business, it would not necessarily be a benefit to have the public standing by seeing their business done for them. I once proposed to my wife to pay her domestic accounts so as to save her the trouble. She said:

"Oh, but I like to do it; it gives me something to go out for, it gives me a pleasant variety of occupation." I saw the point, and it bears on the problem before us. The subdivision of business, as the result of rivalry, gives variety of occupation, colour, picturesqueness, and spice to life. To run it as one concern might save the cost of much book-keeping, and travelling and canvassing, but it would also save (or destroy) a good many other things that people are the better to have. Your new social system would be too grim: your arguments look too much to one side of the subject.

The way in which you propose to deal with inventions shows how badly it would work. You propose that all inventions should be handed over to the State, and that the inventors should be content with a medal, or the attachment of their name to their inventions. How many inventors would invent under these conditions? You must make allowance for the motives by which men are actuated in this matter. Where one or two invent from the love of it, a hundred invent under the stimulus supplied either by the pressure of want, or the desire to get money for use.

You say the inventor under your system, being made sure of food and clothing and leisure, would have as much of essential things as he requires. "Requires!" Would he have as much as he *desires?* Desire is a far more powerful element in human nature than requirement. Are you to leave it out of the account?

You say he could not spend more money if he got it; this is not intelligible, unless you propose to prevent people spending money according to their own desires and ideas, which I suppose you do, and which I must say is absurd and monstrous and impracticable.

You say he would have no necessity to think of the future, that his wife and children would be sure of the care of the State:—quite so; all incentive taken away; for what incentive acts with a man so powerfully as providing for his wife and children?

You think we require a new reading of the proverbs to harmonise with the system of competition. The suggestion is ingenious, and you work it out prettily. But the effort is a failure when rightly looked into. Truly, union is strength; but a society in which every man is at liberty to do the best he can for himself, blended with the precautions and regulations which would prevent the liberty from working harm, would be a stronger society than one in which no man would be allowed to get more power into his hands than his neighbour, from a theoretical fear of his abusing it. In the one case, individual benevolences would be fountains of blessing; in the other, all the fountains would be stopped, and good men, as well as bad, reduced to the condition of dry wells.

Union is strength, but it must be union reasonably applied, otherwise union may be weakness itself. If you tied twelve men together with ropes, this would be union, but I fancy there would not come much strength out of it. There are other ways of tying men together to their hurt. If a community is too much taken care of, it will become debilitated. The eagles push their young out of the nests. Men have often to be pushed away from home, and thrown upon their own resources, to be fully brought out. If they are looked after all the while, they remain undeveloped. It is well for people to be compelled to look after themselves. This is not a house divided against itself, but a house building itself on the principles of a true masonry, that will stand the breeze.

Then you propose to make the proverb read, "It is better to make one enemy than a hundred friends." Well, even this might have its application. All friends and no enemies might suffocate.

It is better to have an enemy who will tone you up and put you on your mettle.

Then you would have the new reading, "The greatest good for the smallest number"; nobody will own to this, of course. The good of all is the true motto, but how is this to be achieved? This is the question. Not by coddling everybody, but by giving everybody an opportunity of developing good for themselves, which involves a degree of rivalry. Rivalry is wholesome when it is not carried too far.

Your aims are excellent, Mr. Blatchford, but your proposals are not all suited to their accomplishment. The management of human society is a delicate problem requiring the adjustment of many apparently conflicting principles, like the counter-working parts of a highly-finished engine. Some of these principles you see clearly; others you see only dimly. Under the ardour of philanthropic impulses, you would make the mistake of leaving out some, to the destruction of the whole machine. I fervently pray that you and your Socialistic brethren may never have the opportunity of making the disastrous experiment.

Your anxious and "slow," yet hopeful friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Where lies the Wrong?

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

THIS is the pith of the question which you discuss in your 17th letter. It is really the kernel of the whole controversy; and it pains me to see how embarrassed you are in its treatment by the acceptance of a wrong principle at the hands of your adversaries. You believe in "the survival of the fittest"; that is—in the action of a law that preserves and improves the strongest by killing off the weakest. You believe that man is what he is as the result of the operation of this law, through a long line of inferior creatures in ages past; and yet you complain of its action, or at least object to its application, to the development of human society. This is inconsistent as well as unfortunate on your part.

If it really be the truth that man with his superior capacities is the product of a blind and merciless mechanical law that preserves only those who are fit to live, you cannot by any amount of protest avert its application from the further evolution of the noble species in society, and you cannot maintain a show of reason in making such a protest. Your opponents have undoubtedly the best of the argument in maintaining that the dreadful state of the poor and the overblown opulence of the rich are but branches or subdivisions of a natural law with which it is folly to interfere, if such a law exists.

In your chapter on "The Incentive of Gain," you avow your belief in "The Scientist's view—that man is a being risen from lower forms of life." Therefore you have given yourself away on this point. You need not have done so. You need not have been afraid to challenge your opponents here. Recollect Darwinism is an unproved hypothesis. Perhaps you noticed the symptoms of a

turn in the tide of Scientific opinion at the last meeting of the British Association. Lord Salisbury, in the opening address, said that the Darwinian theory "had not effected the conquest of Scientific opinion, and that there was no unanimity (among Scientific men) in the acceptance of natural selection as the sole, or even the main, agent of whatever modifications may have led up to the existing forms of life." He pointed out that the Darwinian theory was beginning more and more to appear in the position of a mere dogma for which no other authority was forthcoming than the inability of Scientific men to conceive of the participation of design in the development of the universe. As the most signal proof of this, he quoted the statement of Professor Weissman (a Darwinist) that Darwinists accepted the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, not because they were able to demonstrate it, *nor because they were even able to imagine it*, but because it was the only possible explanation of the development of living forms which they could conceive, apart from the help of a principle of design.

Look at this, Mr. Blatchford: Darwinists *cannot conceive* of the action of natural selection in the development of species, yet they accept it; they *cannot conceive* of the co-operation of design, *therefore* they reject it. Here is a pretty position! I should say sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If the inability to conceive of the co-operation of design is to be a ground for the rejection of design, which explains all difficulties, a similar inability confessed in the case of natural selection should be fatal to natural selection. But no! They can swallow the one inability because it is agreeable: they cannot swallow the other because—because—ha, ha, Mr. Blatchford—"the natural mind is enmity against God." I pray you to remember your own excellent advice on page 131: "Don't let us mistake *the hasty deductions of erring men* for the unchanging and triumphant laws of nature."

You need not have got down on your knees to the survival of the fittest. You would have found it easier work to deal with your opponents if you had not done so; though I do not promise you could have got the better of them even then, because on this particular question of Socialism, they are as much in the right as you.

You put the case well when you say "the noblest is really the most proper to survive"; but see how you in this contradict your own profession of faith in "the survival of the fittest." The noblest

does *not* survive. As you pithily express it, "Brigham Young was wealthy and honoured; while Christ lived a mendicant preacher, and died the death of a felon." The question is constantly coming back on you. Why? Why? As you plaintively say: "The question, are the poor unworthy, or is it the arrangement of society that is unworthy, has still to be answered." Where are you to look for the answer, Mr. Blatchford? You admire Christ; do you think He can contribute nothing to the answer? The issue of matters will show, in the long run, that the answer is with Him, and with no one else. I, for one, accept His answer, and see no other.

Man is all you claim for him in his unmeasurable superiority to the beasts; and because he is higher than they, a higher explanation of his misfortune must be sought for. How is it that the noblest species upon earth should be the greatest failure? This is the question to which no naturalist systems of philosophy can give a philosophic answer. Christ's answer meets the case in every way. It is this—that man, for the time being, has broken away from God, for whom he was made in the first instance, and that he is in a banished state for the time being, with however the prospect, and the purpose, and the effort (in due progress) of being brought back by God's own hand. This may seem strange language to you, Mr. Blatchford, but time will show it is the language of truth.

Your Socialism does not propose to bring man back to God, but to the study of microbes. It would not accomplish a great reform if it accomplished this, and it is not in the power of Socialism to accomplish even this. Socialism is the multitude at work in the endeavour to make the world what it ought to be; but the multitude does not know what the world ought to be, and in the clash of discordant wills, it has not the power to bring it to what it ought to be even if it knew.

You demonstrate that the present conditions of society are unfavourable to the survival of the fittest. You show that practically they give "the race to the swift, the battle to the strong, the weak to the wall, the vanquished to the sword." In the absence of law, "the man with most strength and ferocity would take by force of arms the goods of the weak and timid, and their lives." In the presence of bad law, you describe commercialism as a war of arts—a gambling or fighting with weapons of parchment and the like, and really plunder by force of cunning, instead of by force of arms.

And then you ask a question that goes to the root of the matter: "*Is it not desirable that the conditions of society should be so moulded and arranged that noble qualities shall have full play, and base qualities be kept in check?*"

Is it not, Mr. Blatchford? Is it not? Certainly it is! Who would say nay? Probably the whole world would give a unanimous vote here. But then, where are we when everybody has said yes? Just where we were. It is *most desirable* that the conditions of society should be rightly moulded and arranged; but who is to do it? Who is to answer the subtle questions as to what the right moulding and arranging is? And who is to do the superhuman work of the right moulding and arranging when ascertained? Who is to decide authoritatively what are noble qualities and what are base qualities. There would be great difference of opinion here if the decision is to rest with the *vox populi*.

You put a most pertinent question to me. You say, "Will you tell me, Mr. Smith, who *are* the fittest to survive? A great deal depends upon our answer to that question." It does, Mr. Blatchford, it does. A great deal depends upon the answer. I am prepared with an answer, but I am afraid you will not accept my answer. I get my answer from the Bible. My answer is: The fittest to survive are those who fear God, do His commandments; those who follow after righteousness; the meek, of whom the Bible says they shall inherit the earth and dwell therein for ever; but that those who forget God shall be turned into the grave and be put away like dross. "Yet a little while," says the grand old book, "and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be."

Now suppose this the true answer, it follows that the Socialist answer would be nothing to the purpose. The Socialist answer would be the answer of the mob, of course. The mob have always voted the righteous a nuisance, and have hounded them off the face of the earth. Even the Jewish mob shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Mr. Blatchford, there is something deeper the matter than you recognise. I am quite touched by another question you put: "Is there any natural obstacle to the establishment of a community on just terms? Is there any known law of nature that denies bread to the industrious and forces wealth upon the idle? If a natural law

makes waste and want imperative, what is the law? Tell me that I may know it?" This is your plaintive inquiry. The only fault about it is its narrowness. It shuts us up to nature. Nature is the work of God: you do not say there is no God. You have a reservation in favour of "the glory that men call God." Now, if God exist, and is managing the world for His own ends, why should you exclude Him from the question? Why not say, "Is there any known law of nature, *or of God*," &c.

Perhaps you think a law of nature and a law of God are the same thing. Not so, Mr. Blatchford. All natural laws, or attributes of the substance that constitutes nature, are of God's appointing: but He is higher than nature, and can supplement or over-ride the attributes of nature, as, of course, you would not deny if you believe in God. It is a law of nature for a dead man to remain dead; but "God raised Christ from the dead" (Acts xiii. 30-31). It is a law of nature for fire to burn animal substance; but the bodies of three servants of God were preserved alive in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (Daniel iii. 24-27). You see I believe in the Bible.

Now, then, if you had asked, "Is there any known law of God requiring the present evil state of things?" I should have been ready with an answer which would not only have commanded your assent but satisfied your reason provided you believe in Christ. I think you do believe in Him—in a way, at all events. You place Him at the top of your list of good men. Now, if He was a good man, He was a true man; for no man is a good man who lies. He tells us then that God sent him to fulfil the Bible, and that the Bible is the writing of the word of God, and that the Scripture cannot be broken. If I believe this (which I cannot help believing with all the evidence before me), then I am bound to believe there is a law of God requiring the present evil state. The Bible tells us we are "made subject to vanity by Him," and that it comes in punishment of man's rebellion against Him (Isaiah xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6). It points to the Jews as an illustration, *e.g.*, "If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God . . . the Lord shall send upon thee *cursing, vexation, and rebuke* in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do until thou be destroyed and until thou perish quickly, because of the wickedness of thy doings whereby thou hast forsaken me" (Deut. xxviii. 20). It points further back than this. It points to the beginning of human history: "Cursed is

the ground for thy sake . . . dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

I thus get an answer to your pathetic question in every way satisfactory if you could but accept it. It explains why, after such a long run of things, the state of man should be so very unsatisfactory. It explains why no human method of treating human affairs has brought about, anywhere, in any age or country, the state of well-being which man desires. It may serve to convince Bible believers that Socialism cannot succeed in mending their affairs, even if there were not those other reasons which I have brought to your notice.

It goes one step further, and gives as a reliable prospect of reformation which is absent from all human schemes whatever. For the same Bible that tells us that human affairs have been marred by divine displeasure, tells us also that after a certain appointed period of subjection to evil, those affairs will be the subject of healing and "all families of the earth shall be blessed," but not apart from Christ, whom you recognise as the purest of the salt of the earth. "Without me," Christ said, "ye can do nothing." It is "in Him" that "men shall be blessed and all nations shall call Him blessed." He said when on earth that He would be taken away (and He was). He said His friends should mourn in those days (and they do). He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice" (and they will), but this is to come: and when this comes, the problem that distresses you and all other good men will receive its effectual solution in a true system of Socialism pinned together at a centre of superhuman power and goodness and wisdom. Then indeed, Mr. Blatchford, and never till then, will "*the conditions of society be so moulded and arranged as that noble qualities shall have free play and base qualities be kept in check.*"

I am afraid you will think that in these remarks I travel entirely beyond the province of a discussion turning on contemporary "facts." I implore you to resist this thought. One of the greatest facts in the situation of mankind is the existence of the Bible. It is the phenomenon of all literature. It expressly claims in a thousand explicit and formal asseverations that what is written in it is as "thus saith the Lord." It is either the falsest or the truest book upon earth. Carlyle says it is the latter (see *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. vii., p. 221). Its whole character when thoroughly grasped and calmly considered justifies this verdict.

notwithstanding all the adverse criticism which this generation has witnessed.

It is distinctly a factor in the problem you have so ably placed before the public. It will not—it cannot—be ignored by thoughtful men in the consideration of that problem. If it were a proved deception, the problem might be considered and would have to be considered apart from it; but it is so far from this that some of the brightest intellects of the age are found arrayed on its side, *e.g.*, Mr. Gladstone amongst the Liberals, Mr. Balfour amongst the Tories; and vast numbers amongst the educated members of the community.

A plain man like me, then, may well be excused for pressing it upon your earnest consideration, even at the risk of being regarded by you as

Your superstitious, credulous, and behind-the-age friend,

JOHN SMITH.

The Springs of Human Action.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IT may seem to be making a long descent from the ground taken in my last letter to discuss with you the question of human motives as affected by "Pay." But this is the question you deal with in your 18th letter; and as it has some bearing on the scheme of Socialism, I must follow you.

And first I must point out to you that you make a mistake in narrowing the consideration of pay to the mere question of possessing money. "This paltry plea about pay" (as you express it) involves much larger elements. Money is of no value except as a means of accomplishing desire. The man who desires to possess money apart from this, is the poor mean creature you make him out to be. It is not so with the man who desires it for what it will enable him to do. To such a man, it represents what he wishes to be done; and you must realise that what a man wishes to be done —whether good or not very good—represents the very strongest incentive that could possibly be brought to bear upon him. What stronger incentive could a man possess than the prospect of being able to accomplish what he wishes to be accomplished—whether it be the benefit of his family, the gratification of his friends, or the advantage of some class in society? I leave out of account all base desires. You would do such a man a gross injustice if you disconnected such a prospect from the incentive he derives from the prospect of obtaining money. It savours of vulgar claptrap to set down this incentive to "greed," "avarice," the "love of pelf," &c. You might just as well attribute the appeal for funds put out by various philanthropic and other societies to avarice.

Because, therefore, it appeals to a man's most powerful motive to hold out to him the prospect of enabling him to gratify his dearest desire, whatever that may be—(the culture of the arts, the practice of music, the growing of flowers, the study of literature, or,

on a larger scale, the endowment of friends, the relief of the needy, the development of one's own town, &c., &c.)—the prospect of obtaining money acts as a powerful incentive without exposing any man to the imputation of the lower motives represented by the terms "greed, cupidity, avarice," &c. It is not, therefore, according to true enlightenment, Mr. Blatchford, for you to talk, as you do in your 18th letter, against the bestowal of money as an incentive. It is an incentive that appeals to all men.

The very admissions you are compelled to make ought to suggest to you that there is something wrong with your theory. You exclaim, concerning Mr. Bradlaugh, for example, that his attitude in the matter was "a marvellous thing." Mr. Bradlaugh opposed Socialism on the ground that in abolishing high wages for high work, it would remove the incentives that have produced the clever men of society. You cannot understand this; you say it comes curiously from his mouth. You turn round upon him and exclaim: "Was gain your incentive?" Oh, Mr. Blatchford, this is not the issue. You are putting it on too low a ground. "Gain" is but a subordinate phase of the greater subject of incentive. By itself, it has the low sense you attach to it; but in the discussion you have tabled, it cannot be considered by itself. It is not scientific to consider it by itself. The gain of money is only the gain of power to accomplish one's desires; and in this sense, gain is not a low motive, but may be said to be all men's incentive, including Mr. Blatchford's, I am quite sure. You think well of Mr. Bradlaugh, evidently. Well, Mr. Bradlaugh knew his own mind, and he confesses that the taking away of the possibility of making money would be taking away the incentive of human action. You must either suppose he was a low fellow, or that his view was conformable with that high opinion you entertain of him. It could only be the latter if he took the large and only reasonable view of the subject that I have presented—namely, that money is an incentive to all classes of men, because it is the key that opens the door to all incentives. If this was his view—and, Mr. Blatchford, it is bound to be your view on calm consideration, for you cannot deny that money is a power with all men, good and evil—if this was Mr. Bradlaugh's view, it ought not to be "marvellous" to you—unless you are in that verdant state of mind to which everything is "wonderful" and "prodigious"!—or unless (which is the likelier view) a false theory compels you to regard as mar-

vellous that which is not marvellous at all when the true theory is recognised.

So, when you contemplate "practical statesmen" who endorse Mr. Bradlaugh's view, you exclaim, "With how little wisdom is the world governed!" And you ask me to realise the low morality, intelligence, and knowledge of those who advocate such a view. Mr. Blatchford, do you really think Mr. Morley and the class you lash so severely are foolish, immoral, unintelligent, or ignorant? or do you not think it more likely that the fault lies with the theory that compels you to think they are?

You do not dispose of Mr. Morley's objection that "the genius of the people would die out under Socialism." You do not state his objection fairly, though, no doubt, you intend to do so. He does not say that existence requires to be a sordid struggle for money in order for the genius of the people to keep alive. He maintains, what every man of observation and thought must acknowledge, that genius is a thing of development under stimulus. Mentality is not a fixed quality or quantity. It is the delicate result of brain activity, and brain activity is the result of the stimulus of external circumstances. Without external stimulus, the brain would sink into an inactive and fallow state. A human being is all the time in a state of flux with the circulation of the blood, which deposits its energies according to the consumption going on in the various tissues under the special activities set up by the stimulus of circumstances. Any state of circumstances that would end stimulus would end activity, and the ending of the activity would end development, slightly at first, but profoundly as time went on. The result would certainly be what Mr. Morley says:—Mind would sink to a stagnation level if men were provided with all they need, and nothing depended upon individual exertion.

This does not mean, as you offensively put it, "that the noblest of the race are actuated by avarice." It means that all men are acted on by circumstances, and that where circumstances do not call for exertion, no exertion will be made.

You think the argument implies a contention on the part of your opponents that under the system of competition the people are in the enjoyment of civilization and refinement. This is a mistake on your part. Under the system of competition, the race, as a race, are in the enjoyment of a large measure of these things. That

measure is unquestionably due to the stimulus arising from the necessity of individual exertion. As Carlyle expresses it, there is a black ring of necessity all round every man's horizon threatening to narrow in upon him to his extinction unless he exert himself. Socialism would destroy this condition of existence, and, altering the condition of existence, it would alter the nature of existence itself, and entail woes and confusions not dreamt of by those who make the mistake of reasoning from what the few accomplish under rivalry to what the many might realise in its total absence.

Self-preservation is a powerful instinct which is not to be confounded with avarice. Your arguments are all directed against the imputation of universal avarice. This is a mistake. The contention you are opposing is not disproved by the apparent inconsistency of the man who in the same breath maintains that the incentive of self-advantage is essential for individual exertion, and that men in Parliament serve the nation better for honour than for money. Men who serve for honour in Parliament serve for that which they value, and which to them therefore is an incentive. Honour is an incentive. The influence that belongs to an official position is an incentive. These incentives are more powerful than money; and men actuated by them might feel that the offer of money for the services for which they are otherwise so richly rewarded would be a degradation. Yet this would not be inconsistent with the fact that at another time, under other circumstances, the acquisition of money would be a powerful motive to these very same men. The control of money has, with other things, enabled them to obtain Parliamentary honours and influence. They knew in the first instance that without this control, they could not obtain those advantages. Therefore, before they got into Parliament, the desire to get into Parliament was a motive for obtaining money, which ceased to operate when the possession of money had enabled them to get there.

There is no inconsistency in these men now saying that the desire to get money was essential to the individual efforts which they put forth in trade, but that any such desire in connection with service in Parliament would degrade that service. And as for the suggestion of "avarice," it is beside the question. Money is perceived to be a means to an end. Desiring the end, men strive to

obtain the means, but disconnect the end from the means, and the motive to strive for the means is taken away.

All this must be plain to impartial commonsense. The clever point you make out of it is only *badinage*. You should not ignore the facts for the sake of making a point. What money cannot do is no disproof of what it can do. That it can do much no reasonable man will deny. The opportunity of getting it by individual exertion, therefore, brings tremendous motives to bear, and leads to powerful individual exertion for which there would be no motive under Socialism.

Under the Socialist system, you would level the artist down to the workman. You object to paying the artist or clever man more than the common workman. You ask, "If the workman has enough for his wants, why should the artist have more?" In this you assume that the wants of the artist and the wants of the workman are the same. This is a fundamental mistake. Different men are differently organised, and have very different needs above and beyond the mere physical wants of food and sleep. A man of expansive intellect requires more scope for his mind in the materials and conveniences under his control than a man whose faculties are only equal to manual labour, and whose needs do not go beyond food and shelter. In ignoring this you would ignore a law of nature, and establish a tyranny that would crush out the noblest flowering of manhood.

But you say, "The artist's talent is a boundless source of pleasure to him, and its pleasure its own reward." How can it be a source of pleasure to him if he have not the adequate means of its gratification? and how can he obtain these unless he have more than is allowed to the common workman, whose needs are so much less?

The true hero, you say, works for service and not for pay. This is "book-learning," Mr. Blatchford. There are many false platitudes for which an artificial literature is responsible. Let us get back to truth. "Heroes" are pretty much creations of popular imagination. They are getting scarce, as you say. In truth they never existed in the clean-cut form of legend. They have always been flesh and blood, inclined like other men to have things comfortable if they could, and to have some result from labour put forth. The popular idea is a myth. This is why you "cannot explain why the supply has failed." There has been no failure in the sup-

ply; the trouble is that the article supplied has been misrepresented by fictitious sample.

If you are going to build your new system on the assumption of a large, or even a tolerable, or even a small supply of men who will delight in serving the State without any advantage to themselves, you will find you are building without bricks or foundations.

You do not dispose of the objection as to the enormous number of officials that a Socialist management of the community would involve. You retort that we have already "an enormous number of officials" in the army of clerks, travellers, canvassers, &c., employed by commerce. But, Mr. Blatchford, these are not the same thing. "Clerks, travellers, &c.," are mere servants to both their employers and the public. An official is not a servant, but a master. A factory inspector coming into a place is a very different person to deal with from a traveller calling to show you his samples. Under Socialism we should be overrun with an army of officials, to the intolerable vexation of life.

Notwithstanding all these reservations, Mr. Blatchford, I admire your protest against the brutality of the "economic conditions of society." You truly contend that the present system of commercialism is not conducive to the survival of the noblest, but to the survival of the baser intellects and the most brutal physiques. This is all an argument in favour of an ideal system; but then where is it to come from? You cannot construct it out of present materials. When you ask, "Is there any natural obstacle to the establishment of a community on just terms," you touch the kernel of the problem, and you ask a question that requires the answer indicated in my last letter. There is a natural obstacle at present to its establishment, and that obstacle is the natural incapacity of man to carry on such a system. Man is not fit to govern himself in the sense of educing ideal results. All his attempts are failures. They have been so from immemorial history; and you will not persuade intelligent men that what has failed under every form of experiment in all ages and countries is going to be a success now when the conditions are so much more arduous and unmanageable.

Pardon me if I seem
Your hopelessly obtuse though highly
sympathetic friend,
JOHN SMITH.

Slavery.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

EXCUSE me saying that I think you labour in vain, in your 19th letter, to refute Mr. Herbert Spencer's opinion that "Socialism would result in a more odious form of slavery than any the world has yet known."

In your eagerness to get rid of this imputation, you actually contradict your own earlier words. You say that Mr. Spencer is mistaken in thinking that Socialism would compel men to work against their will. You say "Socialism would not compel any man to work." Mr. Blatchford, you are the authority for the opinion that it would. If the opinion is a mistake, you are responsible for it. In Chapter xiii., page 202, you say that Socialism would not only refuse to tolerate competition: "it would do more than this . . . it WOULD COMPEL EVERY MAN *to do some kind of useful work.*"

You talk of having your opponents on the hip. Where have I got you here? You have either forgotten or contradicted yourself. I think the latter.

You must mean what Mr. Spencer says you mean, and what you say Mr. Spencer is mistaken in thinking you mean. You must mean that you would compel every man to work, for if you do not compel every man to work, three-fourths of the population would elect not to work if their living were sure without it, as you propose.

You make it quite certain that this is what you mean by what you go on to say, for you go on to say "If a man declined to work, he would certainly have to starve or leave the community." What is this but compulsion? Mr. Spencer was not mistaken in thinking that Socialism would compel men to work against their will. And if this isn't slavery, the word has no particular meaning. The only

practical difference between this slavery and the old slavery of the South American planters would be that the compulsory power would be in the machine of the State instead of in the hands of an individual master.

The enormity of compelling men to work against their will would be most manifest where there was no need to work. There would be many such cases even under Socialism: for you propose to give compensation to the persons from whom you would take over the railways, mines, and industries of the country. There would also be the funded debt of the country to take over, amounting to about £750,000,000. If you paid money to the holders of this debt and the owners of the industries of the country, these people would have money to buy food, clothing, and other things without working. If they refused to work, you would send them into exile, for you could not starve them into submission. Think of this outrage on liberty, that a man having property—property which the nation had sanctioned by giving it to him—should not be allowed to live on it: should not be allowed to spend it in the country that had awarded it to him as "compensation," unless he shouldered a bricklayer's hod, or handled a spade, or wielded a sledge hammer, at the bidding of the Socialist officials.

Do not deny, Mr. Blatchford, that Socialism would compel men to work against their will. This is exactly what it would do, and what it would have to do to defend itself against the return of the old system through the crevices of compensated privilege. Admit it and face it out.

You cannot rebut the allegation that this would be the worst possible form of slavery. Your object might be the benefit of the community, but slavery would be your means—the subjection of all classes to labour by compulsion. The community would sell freedom for comfort.

It has been well said that the human race cannot afford to exchange its liberty for any possible comfort. You do not attempt to dispose of this. You only say that they have got no liberty to exchange. The allegation is not true. Every man out of restraint has perfect control over his own actions, however unfavourable circumstances may be to the exercise of that control. He has perfect liberty to choose whatever avocation may come within the range of his choice; or to spend as he pleases the money he may earn from that avocation. The avocation might not be much to

his mind, and the earnings might not be very liberal, but independence is sweet. The pleasure of doing as one chooses makes up for much. It is a very common saying that a man would rather starve in a garret with liberty to do as he likes, than have the comforts of a palace under bondage. This sentiment is a very common one among the poor: as for the rich, you might break an Englishman's back—you could not bend it. You do not sufficiently take this national characteristic into account.

Under Socialism, he would have to do as he was told. If he was one of the holders of State compensation, having no need to work, he might want to give himself to study; all in vain. He would be obliged to take the job assigned to him by the district inspector, who might be a district taskmaster as well—for it would be no new thing for mediocrity to strut and swagger under "a little brief authority." Human nature would be the same as now. A man might want to buy from some of his neighbours on better terms than he could supply himself from the State stores; no, he mustn't. He must buy where the officials order him. He might want to sell something that he did not want to some friend who wanted to buy; he dare not. The eye of the official would be upon him. A tip might do something; for the officials, as you tell us, are not going to be stained-glass angels. But what a degradation for Englishmen to have to bribe their way into what is now the common privilege of all men.

The citizens in general would not only have to surrender the rights of buying and selling; they would have to abandon all ideas of improving their position or enlarging their sphere of influence and activity. They would be tied down into a fixed place and shut up to so much eating and drinking and the wearing of such clothes and ornaments as the State (mere parish beadles in most cases) might think good for them. Private life in all its details would be under the heel of State regulation. Such a state of life would be impossible of endurance.

You say "the Socialistic State would prevent a man living on the work of others." This sounds beneficent. But what does it mean practically? Would you prevent a man from employing a lad to run errands? He might want a boy to fetch something that he required in the making of something with his own hands in his own house, and to which by Socialistic principles he would have a right as the production of his own industry. Would you forbid

him using the boy on the plea of preventing him from "living on the work of others"? Must he fetch the article himself? If so, to what abject slavery would Englishmen be reduced! If not—if you would allow him to give the boy a penny to fetch the thing, how are you to "prevent men living on the work of others"? for if he might employ a boy to run an errand, he might employ the same boy when he came back to cut something, or polish something, or lift something. Or he might employ him to sell *Clarions* on the street. And if he might so employ one boy, he might employ two. And if he might employ boys, he might employ men; where could the line be drawn? There is no middle ground between the absurd and outrageous tyranny of interfering with a man's right to get what help he likes in his own house, and allowing men to "live on the work of others."

It sounds plausible to say, "If you enjoy the benefits and share the wealth of the commonwealth, you must obey the laws and share the labour." These fine words do not disguise the nature of the system. When you do not allow a man to choose his own labour, or its conditions, and prevent him acting in accordance with his own likes and preferences, you impose upon him a system of slavery, whatever you may call it. Liberty is freedom to act according to individual choice in any given circumstances. You propose to substitute for this, permission to do as we are told—and told by bailiffs and beadles! It is quite too monstrous. If that is liberty, what is slavery?

You suggest that we have the same difficulties to contend with now. You say that the work is apportioned by capitalists now, and that, therefore, there ought to be nothing impracticable in its being apportioned by the State. But, Mr. Blatchford, there is no apportioning of work by the capitalists now in the sense that you propose the State should apportion it. No capitalist decides for a man what he is to do. He may tell him what there is to do, and what he may do, but the man can leave it alone if he likes. Under Socialism, you would compel him to do it. This would make all the difference in the world. You must know human nature very superficially if you do not know that men who would do almost anything left to their choice will refuse to do anything that is forced on them. This is the answer to your remark that men are not free now. They *are* free in the sense in which men like to be free. They are free to act according to circumstances. Socialism

would not allow this freedom but would compel them to a line of action out of the house and in it.

You say boys would be as much at liberty to choose their occupation under Socialism as under the present system; but in dealing with objections, you make it manifest that this would not be the case. Your opponent suggests that all the boys would want to be doctors or architects: none of them would choose to be chimney sweeps and scavengers. What is your answer? That if too many boys wanted to be doctors, the authorities would have to say, "We have enough doctors, you must be a candlestick maker," and to the candlestick-making they would have to go. Quite so: it would not be a case of people choosing for themselves but of the officials ordering them about. Your only rejoinder is that things are not well ordered now. This is not an answer. Granted that things are not well ordered now, the objection is that they would be worse ordered under Socialism, because whatever advantages Socialism secured would be secured at the price of freedom, for the loss of which there could be no compensation. If it gave food and clothing to people, it would take from them that which gives food and clothing their chief value. It would paralyse all the forces that make for the development of mankind through the stimulus of incentive and the pleasure of independent choice. Men are not animals to be made comfortable in lime-washed stalls, cowsheds, kennels, or cages: they require scope for the unfolding of their faculties in a fair field, and no favour. If they are too much taken charge of, their manhood will stunt, and they will become a race of effeminates. Under Socialism we should be like drilled soldiers: we should all step to a pattern, work to a pattern, dress and feed to a pattern. Individual enterprise would be extinguished. We should be the drilled slaves of the commonwealth. If there is slavery in the present system, it is at least liberty to be slaves: but under Socialism there would be no choice. We should have to do as we were told, or starve or leave the country.

You think you are going to make ladies of the factory girls by Socialism, and to make the humblest citizens at home in "the best of art, science, literature, music, poetry or the drama." Mr. Blatchford, it is a pretty conceit and nothing more. It could not be. The nature of things is against it. You cannot develop ladyhood and high culture except in the leisure and refinement that come with wealth. But you propose to make everybody work; so that

instead of making ladies of the factory girls, you would make factory girls of the few ladies we have, and bricklayers and candlestick-makers of our artists, scientists, literati, &c. You would obliterate the refined and picturesque features of society, as it now is, without sensibly improving the working class in whose name Socialism is invoked: for how could you get much general improvement out of 3s. 6d. more for every 5s. they now have, and things much dearer? Remember, the working class take £500,000,000 of the gross earnings of the country; the employers take only £360,000,000. Now, if you take the £360,000,000 from the employers and hand it over to the working classes, it would only amount to 3s. 6d. per head more than the 5s. they now get, of which they would not sensibly be the better, as regards culture, while the body of Society would be much worse. The point is well illustrated by a paragraph that appeared the other day. A working man told Baron Rothschild he ought to bless the world by dividing his great wealth. The Baron asked him how much blessing it would confer. The working man thought a good deal. The Baron reckoned up, and, handing him over 3d., said, "There is your share."

Your pretty generalizations are enticing, but they are fallacious at the bottom. The system could not be made to work the splendid results you foresee, unless you kill off all the moneyed people, and take over the whole property of the country without a farthing compensation. Even then, you would merely have the arithmetical elements of a possible success. You would lack many others that would be essential. The thing could never begin, and if it began, it would never go on.

It is not capitalism that restricts the advantages of life to the few. It is an entanglement of evils which it is not in the power of man to unravel. So helplessly thinks,

Your despairing yet not hopeless friend,

JOHN SMITH.

The Misery of the People.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IN your 20th letter, you rightly object to much that is said by "pressmen, parsons, and politicians" with reference to the misery of the masses; but I am not so sure that you improve much on their doctrine. They say that the misery of the people is due to their own sin: you say that "it is due to the sins, negligences and ignorances of those who rob them." I am afraid, Mr. Blatchford, that you both go too far in opposite directions. There is a little truth in both statements; but, as usual with all extremes, they want mixing not only with each other, but with other truths which will make a blend unlike both.

No doubt you are right in objecting to the common habit of attributing the state of the poor to the fact that they are idle, shiftless, and drunken. They are so in multitudes of cases as a matter of fact; but the question is, how come they to be so? The answer cannot be given in a breath. The cause is not simple. It comprises a number of elements. It partly lies in the system under which they live: partly also in their own native tendencies. Their state calls for compassion more than censure. Incessant drudgery necessitated by their poverty makes it possible for their higher powers to develop. There is great excuse for their tendency to intemperance; they work too long, and not in wholesome trades, and in unhealthy places. Their situation is responsible for their characteristics, and calls for pity and reasonable efforts of mitigation.

At the same time, it is not true that "the real culprits are the grasping employers, jerry builders, slum lords, and knaves who grow rich by selling poisoned liquor." The fact is, Mr. Blatchford, it is impossible to put your finger upon the real

culprits. All classes of society are in a bog together. There is not one of the poor but would be to-morrow what the jerry builders and slum lords are to-day if they had the opportunity; and there is not one of the jerry builders and slum lords who would not contract all the disfiguring vices of the poor if they were in their place. It is not so much a distribution of guilt that is possible, as a recognition of the universal misfortune and its specific cause. As to what this cause is, your arguments and declamations suggest no answer. You thrash the branches of the tree. But there is a root to the tree; so long as this root exists, the branches will be reproduced, however much you may cut them down. You cannot reform from the top: you must begin at the bottom; and in this matter, the bottom is out of your reach. The whole of society is victim to the evil.

To rail at the more fortunate classes does not bring a remedy; it only causes exasperations. It makes the poor more discontented with their lot, and the rich more fearful of conceding even reasonable demands. To the poor it seems an incontrovertible doctrine that their sorrows are due to the grasping monopoly of the rich. But the rich know how unreasonable it is to set down at their door sorrows which they have done nothing to cause, which they are powerless to remove, and which would not be ended if the whole of their wealth were distributed among the poor to-morrow.

The misery of the people is partly the result of the unequal distribution of the means of life; but you make a mistake in calling this a robbery perpetrated by the rich. All sensible people must feel this way of putting it to be an outrage on justice and commonsense. The rich are as much the creatures of a system as the poor, and if the poor were in the place of the rich, they would no more think themselves guilty of robbery, or of coming down from their position, than the rich do; they would resist being divested of their riches with all the reckless tenacity and determination with which men on a sinking ship scramble into the boats, or men in a burning house rush to the doors.

If the misery of the poor is the result of a wrong system, cease swearing at the rich, and enquire, rather, why is the system wrong? And is it possible to get a right system out of materials which are in themselves incapable of being combined into a right system? This is going deeper than your enquiries reach, but only as deep as

the subject demands. I have already indicated the cause of the failure of all systems—the self-interested, time-serving, evil nature of man in the mass, rendering him incapable of contriving or sanctioning those legislative arrangements which wisdom would require for his true well-being; and secondly, his inability in a physical sense to successfully cope with the mutinous oppositions and clamours of brute force that are certain, sooner or later, in all societies to break out against that which is wise and good. Man wants wise and firm and irresistible handling.

You cannot alter the state of man by altering the system of man's incompetent arrangements. Socialism would only be a new form of fallible and corrupt government, and would necessarily give us only the same evil in another shape. You are to be excused for thinking it would secure the blessing you desire. You are to be sympathised with in your advocacy of the claims of the poor. Your loud and impassioned denunciation of their wrongs must touch a chord in every benevolent heart. But you are only like the captain swearing at the wind; it is no use. The wracking storm goes on its way. Men cannot control nature, and they cannot control the state of man. There is One who can, though men shut their eyes to Him. Jesus of Nazareth, who stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, will yet calm the larger storm of human life that rages everywhere.

If you believe in him, as you seem to indicate in various parts of your book, you ought to allow for his work, and not write as if he had never appeared on the scene. If you do not believe in him, I can only feel pity inexpressible at the task you have undertaken, a task so hopeless though so noble. You cannot "give the people healthy homes, human lives, and a due measure of amusements; pure meat and drink." The materials for such a gift exist on the face of the earth, doubtless, but they require super-human wisdom and power to put and keep them together. It is out of human power to do it. The people require what you cannot give them; they require divine law, divine oversight, divine guidance, divine life, worship and love. They will get these when a divine kingdom administers affairs in all the earth (Dan. ii. 44). Till then, all that is possible is to work in harmony with the divine ends contemplated in the present evil state—which are revealed in the Bible.

If you are wrong in laying the misery of the poor at the door of the rich, your opponents are certainly not much more right in main-

taining the cheap and shallow doctrine that the misery of the poor is due to their own sin. There is a good deal of stupid selfishness in this doctrine. It is an easy solution of the problem, flattering to the self-esteem and soothing to the comfort of the better classes, but having only a modicum of truth in it. Much popular misery is due to popular sin doubtless; but to what is the popular sin due?

To put the whole responsibility of this upon the poor is as reasonable as it would be to blame the Africans for being black and cannibals. The Africans being black, and (some tribes of them) given to man-eating, is a reason why we cannot make intimates of them; but it is no reason why we should say they are to blame for their unsociable habits. How can a poor little black, with his ebony shining skin and his polished ivory teeth and his grinning face, help growing up to be what his father and mother were before him? It is his misfortune to have an incapable mind and bad neighbours, and a dreadful training. He can be helped by those who may be able to take him away from his baneful surroundings, and bring him up in a right way; but to blame him is neither just nor helpful.

So to rail at the unlovely poor, and say that their sufferings are due to their own vices and follies, is a folly of which it is impossible that discerning or human persons can be guilty. No doubt the poor suffer from their folly and their vices, but then their folly and their vices are due to their surroundings, as you contend. You want to convince me of this. You needn't. I am convinced. It seems to me that any man of observation must be convinced on this point. But then it also seems to me that my conviction goes deeper than yours. You seem to think that the poor have no share at all in the responsibility for their miserable state. You are bound to revise this opinion if you consider that all the poor are not in the same state. Many are industrious, sober, thrifty, and happy, where others, quite as well off, are idle, intemperate, improvident and wretched. The difference lies in the ways, and not in the circumstances of the two classes. Your denial that the misery of the poor is due in any degree to their own sin is contrary to self-evident fact; you give yourself needlessly away to opponents in this denial. It is due largely to other causes which make the poor what they are. Recognise all the facts, and your arguments will be safe, but then you will have to alter some of your conclusions. You seem to think that the wealthy classes are in a good state because

they have plenty to eat and drink, and plenty of time to please themselves. In this you undoubtedly make a great mistake. The Bible is much nearer a true philosophy of the case in saying that while poor men are vanity, the rich men are a lie; that is, they seem to be happy, but they are not. Upon a sufficiently wide view, Solomon's verdict will be endorsed, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

It is a curious illusion that is at the bottom of the contrary opinion. Every man appears at his best under the eyes of his fellows. Those who see him are apt to take the impression of how he feels habitually from what he seems at the moment of his intercourse with them. They meet him in the street it may be, or at a meeting, or in a friend's house, and under the stimulus of sociality, he seems blithe and nimble and healthy and happy. They put him in their mental album (as it were) as a fellow that is at the top of the tree of good fortune, and the ideal of what they would wish to attain. They make a mistake altogether. They know nothing of him in the interval. They cannot feel his *real feelings*, but form an impression from a transitory sunlit aspect. If they could follow him into his quiet hours, they would find him subject to the same weariness and anxieties and mental vacuities and distresses which they experience; and they would very likely find that he has put them just where they would have put him. He has conceived of them as happy, fortunate people, and cursed himself in his own misery that he is not like them.

The fact is, the whole world is a misleading picture to every individual composing it. The optimistic views come from looking at the world objectively, but inaccurately; the pessimistic views, which are truer views, come from one's own actual experience within.

The tired man who has had a long trudge on a cold highway looks at the top of a passing 'bus with a feeling of envy at the people who are in Elysium there. The people on the top of the 'bus, chilled to the bone with a long ride, look down at the pedestrian and think how well off that fellow must be who is keeping the cold out of his bones by exercise.

Every man is wearied of his own way, and sees his neighbour's way as a pleasant change from his own. Much of it is illusion. So it is with rich and poor. The rich have their anxieties and frets that take away appetite, and they envy the poor with no respon-

sibilities. The poor, often lacking bread, feel as if they could do with any amount of anxiety, if bread and butter were sure.

The fact is, they are all in evil plight together. The rich have a little less evil than those who live in squalor, but they are equally subject with them to a constitutional weakness of body and mind which no alteration of the social system can cure. The sufferings of the rich do not strike the eye so glaringly because they are concealed under a decent veil of reserve. The well-to-do are not so outspoken and unblushing in their ways, because they fear each other. The poor have no fear of public opinion, and therefore all the deformity comes out to view. But the human species is one, and their woes are common. You make a mistake in supposing the well-to-do are not subject to the evils of their race; they may not know the want of food, but there are other wants which afflict more keenly.

Thus your opponents are wrong (some of them), and you are not right. You will see by this time where the third view comes in and unites all in a harmonious body of truth. It is a little true what your opponents say, that the misery of the poor is contributed to by their own unwise ways. It is a little true what you say that it is largely due to a wrong distribution of the wealth of the world. But there is another truth that neither takes into account. The whole world is groaning under evil in one form or other because the world and its Maker are not friends. You may smile a pitying smile at the enunciation of this view. But it is not so superficial as this generation imagines. It is deep truth that will stand the wear.—Do forgive

Your admiring, though demurring friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Is Drunkenness Responsible for Poverty?

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

THE question that I have written at the head of this letter is scarcely inside the question of Socialism. Yet you discuss it in your 21st letter. I suppose it is because the opponents of Socialism say that drink is the cause of the poverty of the working classes, and not the bad system under which they live. You felt called upon no doubt to reply to this rejoinder of theirs to your accusation against the present system.

I might well pass this by, only you might think if I did that I agree with all you say in your 21st letter, which I don't. I agree with a good deal that is in it, of course; but some things don't tally with what I have found to be true in my rough journey through working-class life.

First of all, there can be no question that drink has a good deal to do with both with the extreme poverty and the extreme moral degradation of vast masses of the working population. It is no use denying this. It is proved in the most direct manner by the fact that among those who do not drink, there is a degree of tidiness and comfort, and even of sufficiency, that makes them almost a class separate to themselves. If all the working classes were as well off as those I am referring to, there would be no occasion for the outcry raised by Socialists about the poverty of the working classes. They not only live fairly well, but they actually save money, besides dressing decently and enjoying occasional holidays. I know many such, and they get no more wages than their mates

who are worse off. The difference is, they don't drink: they are steady, reliable workmen, and consequently are not so often out of work.

Mind you, I am not going to say that our industrial system is perfect. I am not going to say it is not responsible for many of the evils we suffer from. I am not going to say, with rabid teetotalism, that if drink were banished, we should have "heaven below" straight away. But I do say that experience shows that the working classes would not be so badly off as they are if they were not so given to this universal habit of taking intoxicating drink. And therefore I don't think you help your cause by seeming to deny it.

You think there is great excuse for their taking refuge in the dramshop or in the dram privately at home. Well, perhaps so; but that is another question which ought not to stand in the way of the fact first set forth. Let it first be granted that the drinking habits of the working classes are responsible for a good deal of, though not for all, their wretchedness, and there will be more chance for an excuse getting a proper hearing. But let the excuse be the right one. It does not seem to me that your first excuse for them is the right one. You seem to admit that working men are oftener drunk than men of the middle class, yet you deny they are the heaviest drinkers. This sounds odd. Frequent intoxication must be the result of frequent drinking. You seem to escape on the word "heavy"—at least you try to escape, but I don't think you really escape. ("Heavy," I suppose, means the quantity taken at one time.) You mention the case of a journalist and a sailor that once drank a quantity of whiskey, rum, and stout that would have turned a poor labourer mad four times over, and yet were able to attend to their business. But this proves nothing to your purpose. It only proves that these particular men were heavy drinkers. It does not prove that the working classes are lighter drinkers than the middle classes. Why, nothing can prove this, Mr. Blatchford, in the face of the notorious fact to the contrary. The working classes drink a deal more than is good for them; so do the middle classes for the matter of that; but they do not go to the same extreme with it, and it is not among them the cause of poverty and misery that it is among the working classes. Of course there may be several good explanations of this, but the fact is visible to anybody.

Your explanation certainly does not strike me as the right explanation at all. You think it is owing, first to the lower health of the labourer as compared with the middle class. It is something new to me to hear that the labouring man suffers more from low health than the clerk or the shopkeeper or the merchant. I am sure it is not correct, as far as my experience goes. Of course, your experience may be different. Indeed, I am inclined to think, Mr. Blatchford, that your idea on this subject is strongly coloured by your own case. You are a man of the mental temperament; and if you have been a working man, as I gather from the particulars of your life that were published by Mr. Stead, then I can well believe that you found manual labour not good for your health at all. But the common run of labouring men are not of the slim and nervous build. They are men of big bone and iron sinew. They are what are called "able-bodied." They inherit this from mothers and fathers that were not Italians; and their occupation tends to strengthen what they inherit. Hard work in the open-air makes them brawny and healthy and strong. If you shake hands with one of them, it is like putting your hand in a vice. Whereas those who use their brains and spend most of the time indoors grow thin-bodied and delicate by comparison, and are much oftener out of health. If "a low state of health" makes drink hurtful to a man, I should say it is just the middle-class man that ought to be hurt by drink, and the working man that ought to be able to stand it without harm.

Then you think "the labourer does not drink with any caution or method." Well, this is just what your anti-Socialists say in another shape. They say the working people as a rule drink recklessly and excessively, and consequently make away with more money than they can spare, and keep themselves in chronic poverty which a cautious and methodical way of life would enable them to avoid, as many of them do. In fact, Mr. Blatchford, here you admit the charge instead of turning it on "the highly-respectable middle-class gentlemen."

Then you suggest that one cause of the intemperance of working men is the impure nature of the liquor supplied to them. Oh! Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Blatchford, you must have felt hard put to use such an argument as this. Why the "purer" the liquor, the stronger its intoxicating power; and if the working classes get so

often drunk on fourpenny, what would they do with "Old Tom," "Irish Whiskey," and Scotch "Mountain Dew?"

You say drunkenness is a disease. I do not find this true in the way you put it. You say "it is just as much a disease as typhus or cholera." If you had said there are cases where it has all the spontaneous force of a disease, through inherited predisposition—cases of dipsomania, in fact, where the unhappy victims are not responsible for their actions—you would have been strictly within the bounds of truth; but you err in writing as if all drunkenness were of this character. Very little of the prevalent drunkenness is of this character. It is almost all the sheer mechanical result of taking drink that the drinkers could leave alone.

The working classes are to be excused for drinking, as you say, but the excuses don't lie exactly where you put them in the opening part of your letter. They partly lie where you place them a little further on. Most of them lead "dull and cheerless lives," as you say, "working too hard and too long," and they naturally find an agreeable diversion in the public-house, with its cosy bar and flaming lights, and jovial company, and refreshing liquor. But this is not the whole explanation. The cause is mostly mental. A man with a well-furnished mind has a resource within himself that would not only make him independent of the stimulus that comes with public-house drinking, but that would lead him to scorn such a resource of exhilaration. If the mind is empty, the spirits are soon depressed. We all know the difference between pleasing thoughts, and the state in which we have no thoughts at all. We all come through these different states at different times. If a man is habitually in the vacant state, he falls an easy prey to external sources of excitement, among which drink and joviality is the most easily accessible to a working man. He "keeps his spirits up by pouring spirits down." If he was well fortified mentally, he would not make this suicidal mistake.

How is he to attain this state of mental fortification? This touches the root of the whole question. It is here where the chief excuses of the working classes begin to appear. They are not favourably situated for attaining the mental state that would enable them to surmount the difficulties of their position. They do not receive a proper education even if they pass all the popular standards—which very few of them do. Popular education is addressed to the intellect merely—which is only a part of man's

mental being, and not the controlling part. The controlling part of the mental mechanism lies in the desires and sentiments—to which the trained intellect becomes but a servant. Man has low desires, and he is capable of having high desires generated within him by divine truth. As a rule, divine truth is neglected, though theoretically acknowledged. The consequence is, that a man goes into the world without those regulating elements of duty and love and reverence and fear and hope which are the spiritual floating power against the tendency to sink, or the spiritual weapons by which a man successfully fights the terrible battle of life in which so many are slain.

Going out into life in this unfurnished state, what chance has the poor working man? His physical energies are spent in drudgery; his mind supplies no counter force to the mental depression natural to such a state. He craves help against his own feelings. He cannot find it in himself. He cannot find it in his cheerless home. He lacks the means of providing it by change and travel. He finds it ready-made in the public-house; the tobacco pipe, and the beer mug, and the song of companions supply him with an atmosphere in which his senses are soothed and his spirits fortified, and the miseries of his lot alleviated for the time being. He "drinks and forgets his sorrows," little dreaming the terrible price he has to pay for his consolation if he continues, as he probably will, in that line of things. The thing is sweet to a depraved taste, and, under its indulgence, he becomes demoralised to an extent that only becomes apparent when you compare him with the enlightened mechanic who finds his alleviations in the comforts and well-being of a well-kept home. He becomes insensible to the claims of his wife and family. He never has money to spare for their simplest necessities. There is nothing like drink for diddling money away and keeping a man in perpetual poverty. Food imposes its own limit, but drink becomes an endless swill in which a man's wages are spent long before the week is out, with perhaps a long score at the "pub" besides. His house is squalid; his wife meanly clad; his children in rags. They run the streets, and are often without food. He is in a rut from which he cannot lift himself. Rent gets behind, and by-and-bye the man and his wretched family are turned out of doors, to find shelter in some more squalid den for a time. Then, as an unsteady man, he easily gets out of work, and the story ends in darkness.

For all this, Mr. Blatchford, drink is responsible. But then a higher misfortune is responsible for the drink. The difficulty is to suggest a remedy powerful enough to deal with the higher misfortune in such cases. Who shall take hold of the working world to give it the right education, and then secure it the right conditions for turning that education to account? I see no answer except the one I have several times pressed upon your attention. I am certain that Socialism is no answer, for you leave out the principal ingredient of social well-being. You give us the study of microbes for the culture of the religious faculties. Oh, Mr. Blatchford, such a system, even it secured bread and butter for all, would only give us clever devils, and unhappy ones at that. It would not necessarily give us even temperance in the sense of banishing drunkenness. Is it only the poor that drink?

This touches another question, or, rather, the same question in another department. You seem to take it for granted that with a right industrial system the poor, no longer poor, would give over drinking. I don't think you are any more correct here than you are in many other parts of your brilliant but illogical argumentation.

There is a great deal of private intemperance among the upper classes. There is a great improvement, no doubt, as compared with the habits of the last generation; but it is questionable if the tide has not begun to turn again, if we are to trust the testimony of some medical men, who complain especially of the spread of drinking habits among ladies. It is not to be wondered at. The general acceptance of Darwinism, with a corresponding loosening of moral restraints, was certain to leave people a prey to the strongest bent of weakness. Ladies who suffer from lowness of spirits are very likely to avail themselves of the readiest help if there is no particular reason why they should not do so. Once persuade men and women that they are improved monkeys, who will by and bye disappear to give place to (perhaps) higher specimens to come after them, and none of them ever to re-appear again under any possible circumstances, you destroy any motive for any restraints beyond those imposed by public opinion. The crime in every case then consists of being found out. Private drinking was likely to flourish under such a habit of thought.

If, then, good circumstances are no preventive of intemperance under the present system, how slim is the ground for your happy

thought that in your "Merrie England," intemperance will disappear before the prevalence of plenty for all. It is a vain thought. Even if you secured the expected plenty, you could not (with a microbe religion) avert that listlessness of mind that would crave for excitement, and find it in its very easiest and most effective form in the "wassail bowl" that Robbie Burns glorifies in his poetry.

Your whole theory is vitiated by the radical mistake of ignoring inherent tendency in the direction of evil. You look at the surroundings of the people as the cause of their vices. The fact is, there is a reciprocal action. The surroundings have something to do with the production of vice, but the chief cause is inside the people themselves, in those deficiencies and affinities and susceptibilities in which (in the absence of enlightenment) the surroundings find their leverage. If there were no responsive affinity, bad surroundings would be innocuous. Your mistake is the mistake that a person would make who should blame the sea for the sinking of a ship. It is true the sea sinks the ship, but the efficient cause is the hole in the ship's bottom. It is the proclivities of the uninstructed people that give unfavourable surroundings their demoralising power. Without these the "surroundings" could not produce vice, as absolutely proved by the fact that they do not produce it where the mind is fortified against it by the power of enlightenment.

Your dissenting, though respectful friend,

JOHN SMITH.

"How far should Liberty go?"

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IT is a pleasanter subject than drunkenness that you bring forward in your 22nd letter. Perhaps it is not so interesting to some people. It belongs, as I understand, to what they call "the dismal science," the science of political and social economy. But these dismal science subjects, I find, have a good deal to do with things that are not dismal unless the dismal science is neglected, and then they are liable to become very dismal indeed—like the state of a house with the chimneys and drains out of order.

Everybody is deeply concerned in the right regulation of liberty. England has found this out by bitter experience in past times when particular classes in the nation domineered over other classes. She will find it out again more bitterly than ever, as I believe, if ever the tyranny of the community (as in the proposed system of Socialism) is brought to bear in the extinction of the individual. You would not own to this being the object or even the effect of the system you advocate; but I have shown in former letters that such an effect would be inevitable.

You put the question wrongly in making it an issue between individualism and socialism. This is not the issue; the issue is between society as it now is, and society as you propose it should be. Society as it now is is not a system of individualism. There is no such thing as absolute individualism in any country that possesses even the germ of civilisation.

All reasonable men will agree with you that the rights of the individual ought not to be exercised to the detriment of the community. You truly say that "every member of a society must give up some fragment of his own will and advantage in return for the advantages which he gains from association with his

fellows." It is in the application of this doctrine where serious disagreement arises.

Mr. Herbert Spencer himself, whom you particularly single out for animadversion, and also Mr. Levy, both admit that the liberty of the individual must be curtailed for the benefit of a community associated for mutual advantage. The question is, How far must the curtailment go? Individual liberty might be curtailed to the point of slavery, on the plea of collective advantage. Individual liberty might be destroyed by a false theory of the interest of the whole. This is the objection to Socialism, that it would undermine and destroy the most valuable conditions of life for the sake of some other advantages, which, while essential, are to be secured without paying such a terrible price. The whole question is the one you put yourself—"Where are we to draw the line?"

You talk of protecting society from scoundrels: nobody will object to this, but who are the scoundrels? and how is a scoundrel to be dealt with? A man might be a scoundrel, and yet do things that he has a right to do.

Take the sweater: what does he aim to do? Does he aim at the murder of those he employs? No; he is only aiming at making a living, and in hundreds of cases scarcely succeeds. Does he force those who are in his employment to remain in his employment? No; he has certain work to be done which he offers to anyone who is willing to do it on the terms he proposes. He does not force it on anyone; the wage he offers for the work may be small, but in this, it may be, he has no choice. If he pay a higher wage, he may not be able to sell the goods, because the same goods are being sold at a price that does not admit of a higher wage, and if he cannot supply them at that price, he has no chance. He is as much the victim of circumstances as the unhappy toilers in his stuffy shops. It is a confusion of ideas to call him a criminal. It is not criminal to offer work at a price. It is not criminal to make a living. It is not criminal to do the best he can for himself. It is what all the world, even the most respectable, are doing. The sweaters' objects are lawful enough, and even commendable. The methods to which he is forced may bear hardly on those who do his work, but he cannot justly be held morally responsible for this.

So with the rent of houses: the owner offers to let the property to anyone willing to pay the rent. He does not force

anyone to take his terms: everyone is at liberty to leave his houses alone. He asks what he considers a fair rent. This is perfectly lawful, so long as it is lawful for a man to possess property and to let it, and this is the law of the country at the present time. To call a man who does that which is lawful, for objects which are lawful, "morally worse than a footpad or a scuttler," because the houses he has to offer are poorly adapted for comfort, is merely to scold. It is a confusion of moral perception.

It is the motive of an act that constitutes its moral character. The footpad intends to kill and steal: the sweater and the rack-renter intend neither. They aim at making a living, or making money, by methods that are universally recognised as legitimate. The unfavourable circumstances under which they have to follow those methods are the results of conditions over which they have no control. It is a case for discernment and compassion, and not for vilification. A change is needed on most points, no doubt, Mr. Blatchford, but do not swear at the unfortunate men whose guilt amounts to no more than adjustment of measures to an evil state of things. It is not individualism that they practise.

You may find individualism in the dreadful forest that Mr. Stanley explored on his last visit to Central Africa, where the dwarfmen each fight for their own hand; but the English society that you wish to overthrow is a stringent compromise between the liberty of the individual and the interests of the community. Individual liberty is respected, and the interests of the community are considered. This is as it ought to be, but Socialism would push the interests of the community to the point of extinguishing individual liberty by over-regulation It would invade the privacy of home, and dictate the form of individual life.

You say it would give us as much liberty as we need; how much is this? Opinion might differ here. Some might be content with the liberty to eat and clothe and sleep, but this would not satisfy the typical Englishman. He has intelligence, and taste and ambition, and enterprise, and these constitute the very flowering of life. It would not be enough for a man endowed with these faculties to merely have plenty to eat and wear: he wants scope for the unfolding of his mental energies. Socialism, as you propose to apply it, would fetter and repress, and finally extinguish these.

You might conceivably lure Englishmen into the bondage by fair prospects of three hours' work a day, and plenty of time to stroll about and listen to music; but they would not be long under its operation without finding it an intolerable oppression, under the galling burden of which they would rise like a manacled Samson, and burst their bonds asunder to the alarm and discomfiture of the Philistines.

You mildly grant that State Socialism "would imply some interference with the liberty of the individual." How much is "some"? It might be much or little. I have shown that it would be much; it would be nearly complete on all points.

A man would not be at liberty to own his house; he would not be at liberty to buy and sell; he would not be at liberty to devote himself to intellectual occupation; he would not be at liberty to possess property; he would not be at liberty to employ his neighbours in their leisure time; he would not be at liberty to wear what he liked or eat what he liked, nor educate his sons as he liked, nor put them to the occupations he would prefer. He must take his directions from the State officials, and submit to their dictation on all these and many other points.

The effect of such a system, supposing it could be carried out, would in the long run be to emasculate manhood, and reduce the population to a uniform and drivelling type. It would be as if they were all put into a "devilling machine" and reduced by a common friction to a common state of cipher. No, Mr. Blatchford, it would be interference not a little, but interference much, with the liberty of the individual, to its total destruction.

But then you ask, "Which individual?" and you answer, "The scoundrel." No, Mr. Blatchford, this is not correct. No doubt it is the scoundrel you would aim at extinguishing, but you would extinguish the community for the sake of extinguishing the scoundrel, like the quack killing the patient to cure the disease. You would reduce every individual in the community to a state of serfhood for the sake of having a community in which scoundrelism would have no chance. This is altogether too drastic a cure. You would squeeze all the beauty out of life for the sake of circumventing scoundrels. Most people would prefer that the scoundrel should have a chance of a little, rather than life should be reduced to a state in which it would not be worth living for anybody.

You say you would prevent the rascal from taking what is not now his own. This is most desirable, but don't prevent the honest man from getting at the same time what is *his* own. This is what your system would do. You would deprive the rascal of a breathing-place by suffocating honest men, for your system would certainly stifle intelligent enterprise. You would make life not worth living for the best sort of men, for the sake of preventing the worst sort having a chance. God prevent you ever making the experiment. Nobody would be more shocked at the result than yourself, I am sure, if I rightly read noble enthusiasm and generous aim in your brilliant writing.

I don't think you mean to be unfair, but many of your remarks have a smack that way. You give a wrong meaning to Mr. Spencer's obvious definition of society as "consisting of individuals." You make it mean a concourse of independent atoms, and not a united whole. Now, the statement is not intended to convey, and cannot bear, such a meaning. It is exactly the reverse of Mr. Spencer's meaning. His meaning is that though it is a whole, it is a whole consisting of individuals, and must therefore be compacted on a plan recognising their separate rights, or it must cease to exist. You make him deny the societyship, which is what he affirms. You make him affirm the independency of the individuals, which is what he denies. His aim is the reconciliation of the two which is what you ignore.

Society is indeed a multitude of connected units, which is Mr. Spencer's contention; but you make him declare the units to be unconnected, which is what he repudiates. The fact is you have to make Mr. Spencer utter nonsense before you can answer him, but the nonsense recoils on Socialism. A society is an organisation of connected parts in mutual subordination one to the other, but Socialism would destroy the parts by boiling them all down into a workhouse compost.

When you say that society as it now is, consists of antagonistic parties united for purposes of social warfare, you write a vigorous sentence; but you do not utter a truthful statement except in the shallow sense in which a country bumpkin, seeing a factory engine for the first time, might say there was a deal of going backward and forward for no purpose. Capital may seem to be antagonistic to labour, and labour may seem to be antagonistic to capital, but, in

fact, they are as essential to each other as man and wife. How could the masters get on without the working-men, and how could the working-men get on without the masters? Like separate parts of an engine going contrary ways, they are both essential to the result for which the whole concern has been put together. And so it will be found through all parts of the Social machine—even down as low as a gentleman's gardener and up as high as a royal duke. Much of the bad feeling that exists is due to agitation and the want of understanding.

You say that where an independent individual is found, he is either a good man trying to bring the combatants to reason, or a bad man trying to fleece them. I can only say, Mr. Blatchford, if you believe this to be true, your acquaintance with British Society must be a very circumscribed affair. Why, sir, in every considerable town there are thousands and thousands of independent men who are certainly not fleecers, but growers of fleece, and who, if their voices are not heard in trade disputes, have eyes that keenly follow and anxiously watch the movements of public affairs, and are only passive because they are helpless in the distracting complications of an evil time.

You should not misrepresent the contention of those who say that Socialism is impracticable. They do not "claim that men should be left free to fight each for his own hand," without respect to the interests of the community. They claim that individual liberty should be left inviolate within a certain clearly-defined circle, outside of which alone the individual should be compelled to submit to conditions imposed for the good of the whole. This is, in fact, the present constitution of Society, to which Socialism would put an end by letting the community invade the inner circle of private life and private rights. There is not the amount of love and justice rife that good men long to see, but there is something to be thankful for in that line. What there is grows out of the preservation of individual rights. If these were overrun and destroyed, love and justice would necessarily perish with them.

You talk of this liberty of the individual tending only to the cozening of the strong and the destruction of the weak, for the sake of useless gain. I can only call this an extravagance of partisan rhetoric. It ignores the balance of truth. There is

doubtless much abuse of personal liberty, but this is not confined to the well-to-do: it extends to evil men in every class. But what an extraordinary argument it is that would destroy liberty because of its abuses. As well propose the abolition of medicine because of poison; or the abolition of food because of gluttony; or of water because of drowning; or of Mr. Blatchford because of the Anarchists.

Society is truly "a union of people for mutual advantage." No wise man will quarrel with your philosophy here; but no wise man will agree that it is an advantage to suppress individual liberty for the sake of preventing its abuse. Rather let us have its occasional abuse for the sake of its boundless blessings than sacrifice the boundless blessings to prevent its occasional abuse. The burglar and the thief—or even the sweater and the usurer—we can deal with, and endure, while we are permitted to arrange our own affairs in our own way; but who would consider even empty prisons and white gloves at the assizes a sufficient compensation for the surrender of private life and private rights to the dictation of the parish beadle? You see I continue to show myself

Your "hard-headed and shrewd," and therefore protesting friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Necessities and Luxuries.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOUR invective against luxury is a bright and forcible composition, as all your writing is; but it is not written with that clearness of discrimination that constitutes the chief value of literary effort. Your statements require most important qualifications; and some statements are contrary to truth—though I am sure you never intend it. To the latter belongs the major premise of your whole argument on the subject.

You say that "the luxury of the rich is the direct cause of the misery of the poor." If this were true, the ending of the luxury of the rich would end the misery of the poor, whereas it is notorious that if the luxury of the rich were distributed to-morrow, the misery of the poor would not be sensibly abated. A few shillings to each of the population would exhaust the fund. The money would be spent by the end of the week, and the poor would not only be where they are in the week following, but they would be much worse; for they would be without the employment which the spendings of the rich creates. They would have to say with the bewailers of Babylon's overthrow: "No man buyeth our merchandise any more." The articles they live by making in many cases would find no purchasers if the rich were abolished.

You object to luxury in the abstract. This is unnatural, and it is an objection you would not and could not act on in your own case if you were made President of the Socialist Republic. It is no condemnation of luxury to call it "superfluity." It may be superfluous as regards one requirement of man and not as regards

another. Man has more than one requirement. Eating, sleeping, and clothing do not exhaust his needs. Some things are essential to his life; and if you are to limit his needs to those, no doubt all else is superfluous. But what man of judgment would propose to tie him down to food, clothing, and house-shelter? These things do not minister to all his capacities, faculties, or desires; and therefore they do not in the correct sense supply all his needs. He might manage to do without some things; but it does not follow that those are not on the list of his requirements in the full development of his being. Many things minister to his highest and noblest enjoyments which may not be essential to the continuance of his physical life.

Physical life without the mental activities, of which physical life is but the basis, would be an objectless phenomenon, not worth the trouble of its maintenance. These mental activities are as much a law of nature as the physical necessity for food and sleep, and any theory of life that would ignore or repress or violate them is an unnatural theory, and bound to be self-stultified in the working of things sooner or later. It is a law of nature, whose operation is seen in the development of all communities.

In a new country, the material wants of the settlers receive the first attention; when these are satisfied, then affairs of taste and culture begin to be considered. Would you deny taste its gratification, Mr. Blatchford? I think not. You objected to our drab clothes. You said "the Sunday clothes of the British working classes" were "ugly and mean to a degree," "too sad for tears." I think you asked me if I knew the meaning of the words "form and colour." Very well, you would give form and colour their place. But we could get along without form or colour. We could live with baggy coats and drab dresses. A close fit and a right match for the complexion are not necessaries of life. They are superfluities, but you would tolerate them. They are luxuries, but you would advocate them.

Now, look here, all tastes are not the same. You have one standard; your "silly" friend has another. Are you going to impose your standard on your silly friend? Surely not, Mr. Blatchford. You would allow each man to suit himself; and in suiting himself, you would have to give liberty, not only as to the form and colour that would please him, but as to the quality, therefore

price, of the stuff, would you not? How could you object? How could you lay down a law that a man's wife's dress shall be so fine and no finer?

If you did not allow this liberty, but wanted to lay down a cast-iron rule that all dresses must be a certain shape, a certain colour, a certain texture, a certain price, how would you decide as to whose taste should be the standard? Would the members of the Government decide it? They might be men of no taste, though good managers of co-operative stores. Or if they were men of taste, they might differ from the bulk of the people. How then? The people might revolt from their decrees. You say, "Well, the people would have to decide." If so, what an extraordinary prospect—the turmoil of a general election on the cut of our coats, or the shape of our wives' caps, or the colour of their ribbons!!!

If you say, "We would allow liberty in such matters," then I have to return to the charge: if you would leave each man and woman to settle the style of their own apparel, how could you object to other articles of attire? Some people find unspeakable satisfaction in wearing jewellery: are you to forbid this gratification? The love of ornament is not a human invention: it is a law of nature. Are you going to set the Socialist Republic against a law of nature. If so, you will find nature too strong for it. If you oppose the wearing of diamond rings, or fine studs, or gold chains, or bangles, the people would vote you out of office, and assert their natural rights; and there would be a demand not only for saucepans and brass candle sticks, but for brooches of costly stones, and earrings and gold watches. And you could not set a limit to the price to which a citizen might go in the purchase of these things. They are luxuries, and they would be bought; and those who had the most money would get the most expensive articles.

And now suppose others could afford carriages and horses, and beautiful pictures and buhl cabinets, on what principle are you to interdict their indulgence? Mr. Blatchford, you could not do it without becoming a tyrant and violating the laws of nature. You could not exclude luxury even from a Socialist state without an impossible restriction of all the people to a fixed expenditure, and the confiscation of all savings above that expenditure. You could not do it without despotism, and despotism would not last a week

in a self-governing Socialist community. It is not in human nature to consent to laws against natural wants.

And luxuries come into the class of natural wants, since they are the result of natural desires. The fact that many cannot indulge in them does not disprove that they are natural wants. There are natural wants that cannot be dispensed with, and there are natural wants that may be denied without incurring starvation; but they are none the less natural wants for being outraged. All indulgence is the gratification of natural desire. Luxury comes into this category. In excluding luxury, you would be excluding nature. You would be opposing "facts."

Remember what you said about "facts," and the necessity for harmonising with them. Remember your telling question: "Is not love a fact? Is not hope a fact? Is not laughter a fact?" Allow me to add to the list: Is not taste a fact? Is not the love of the beautiful a fact? Is not the desire for honour, and ease, and pomp a fact? Mr. Blatchford, you must not set yourself against facts. You must not declare war against luxury.

Even if you abolish it, luxury would insensibly creep into a Socialist Republic in another way. You could not crush out the sentiment of respect for worthy people. You could not prevent the people deferring to popular ministers of the Republic. Now, the sentiment of respect always seeks expression in ornamental ways. The Prime Minister or Minister of Agriculture visiting a town or village would be sure to receive an ovation, of course; would this be confined to shouting? Would the people not decorate the railway station a little? Perhaps lay down a bit of carpet for him to walk across the platform on? And, perhaps, even provide a carriage and pair to drive him to his hotel? Would you forbid the shouting and the flags and the conveyance for the sake of the interests of the community? Mr. Blatchford, you could not. Human nature would be too strong for you. You cannot suppress the exuberance of human generosity when its admiration is excited. You would have to submit to the ovation and the flags and the brougham; and, perhaps, if you happened to be President, you would not greatly object.

And now, would you stop short there? Would not the town officials engage the finest hotel for the President? Would there be no carpets on the stairs? no finely-upholstered chairs and sofas in

the apartments? no magnificent bedstead in the bedroom? And when he sat down to lunch, would there be no elegant service on the table, no cut-glass, no silver-plate, no shining cutlery, not even electro spoons or coffee-pot? Mr. Blatchford, all these are luxuries. Their use comes from a law of nature. You cannot fight against nature. Luxury is the natural indulgence of taste, out of respect either for yourself or your neighbour; and it will find gratification wherever the means exist. Its prohibition could only be enforced where arbitrary power existed; and such power could not exist in a Socialist Republic.

It is a mistake to blame the rich for indulging in luxury. It is what you and every Socialist would do if you had the chance. Contend, if you like (though it is a vain contention, as we have seen), that the rich have no right to the possession of money; but you cannot, as a reasonable man, object to their using the money as they like while they have it. And do admit that while the present system lasts, the purchase of luxuries by the rich provides employment for the working people. It cannot be contradicted. The question is not how things would work if another system were established, but how is it with things as they are. On this there cannot be two opinions. Of course, the Duke of Argyle is right for the time being—that if the rich were not to spend their money the money would lie idle, and thousands of working people would starve who now find remunerative employment.

To contend that it is the indulgence in luxury by the rich that is the cause of poverty in the people is really to do injustice to your own evident powers of penetration, Mr. Blatchford. Your own other argument is that it is not the spending of money by the rich that is the cause of the present evil, but the existence of a system that permits them to have money to spend. This is another thing. You are only partly right here; but still there is a semblance of sense in it which there is not in the other argument. You blame the rich for a system which they are no more responsible for than you are. They have the money and they spend it; and this is what every man in the same position would do, and what every Socialist would do if he could get the money to-morrow. And in doing so, they would provide occupation for the people under existing circumstances.

As for the system that allows them to have the money, are you going to alter it? How? You say you are not going to seize the wealth from those who now have it. Are you going to take it over under compensation? How is this going to improve things? You would only hand them back their wealth in another form, and continue the existence of the classes in the midst of the Socialist Republic. Are you going to play a trick? Are you going to give them money in compensation, and then enact a law forbidding them to spend the money in the country, and thus deprive the money of all value and make the compensation a mockery? Or are you going to force them to leave the country with their money, and impoverish England to the advantage of other nations?

You see, Mr. Blatchford, the problem bristles with difficulties. The more you think of them the tougher they seem. You have an insoluble problem in hand. I could understand Socialism as a proposal for the seizure and re-distribution of property and the construction of a new system, without reference to present individual rights; but I cannot understand it as a proposal to take over the national industries at a valuation, with the expectation of working them at a profit, while handing over the profit to the old holders in a new form.

No doubt luxury is carried to a scandalous extravagance, and the contrast between the lavish opulence of the rich and the squalor and want of the poor is shocking and painful in the extreme; but you cannot prevent it so long as the rich are allowed to possess money. It is impossible that you can dictate to men of money how much they are to spend, and in what way. A man's purse alone must be the measure of his expenditure. If you are going to interfere with the management of a man's own purse, farewell to liberty.

You would like the capitalists to leave the country, but you say you would like them to leave their property behind them. Here you are again—knocking your head against the sharp corners of your problem. How can you hope that the capitalists will leave the country? Would they leave of their own accord? You know better. Would you drive them out penniless, like the nobles of France a hundred years ago? What, then, about your declaration that you do not propose to seize their property? To drive them out of the country and "nationalize" their property would be seizing it most effectually.

To buy it from them would saddle the Socialist Republic (supposing it established) with a debt that would sink it at the start. To compensate them would have the same effect. You would create a class—an "idle" class—in the country; or else you have to perpetrate the atrocious folly and injustice of turning out of the country its most valuable citizens for no other crime than the crime of possessing what the State had given them.

Mr. Blatchford, you have hold of an impracticable scheme—an unsettleable question, a problem you cannot solve. The attempt to solve it must either end in goading the people into acts of violence against the existing order; or in filling them with dangerous anger and disappointment against the mistaken leaders that have lured them on a false hue and cry.

Your increasingly anxious friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Loafers, Artizans, Peers, and Delicacies.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU deal with quite a cluster of difficulties in your 24th letter. If you do not deal with them successfully,—if, after you have most adroitly pitched them out of your path, they come back on you like the boomerang, the fault is in the subject, and not in your handling of it.

You foresee the difficulty of having loafers and idle people under a system that would require everybody to work. You propose to kill them off by starvation. This is simple and effectual certainly; but it would have its drawbacks. You might possibly kill off some who were not loafers. How are you to tell when a man is a loafer? You say that the mere fact of a man begging under a system in which there would be work for all, would be proof that he was a loafer. But there might not always be work for all. It might happen sometimes in a town or village that all the coopering or smithing work was in hand, and that some cooper or smith might turn up who could not find a job. It might be some weeks before there was work for him. Meanwhile he would have no wages coming in; he is not a loafer, but he cannot starve, so he begs.

Or a man might be unwell and unable to earn his wages, and might be under the necessity of begging. "Oh, but," you say, "we would provide for cases of illness." Aye, but might there not be shamming? Of course there might, and often would, for many men would prefer to skulk if there was no danger of wages being discontinued. How would you do with the shammers? You would look upon them as self-convicted loafers, and kill them off. "Serve them right, too," you

say. Yes, but might not men be suspected of shamming who were really ill? There is no question about it. Men are sometimes ill enough to be unfit for work, when not ill enough to be above suspicion. Suspecting him of shamming, you would refuse him food, and be guilty of murder.

It is easy to say you would "oblige the loafer to work or perish." In the process, you would cause many others to perish —not only by mistakes of the kind suggested, but often by the action of malice. For see what a weapon you would put into the hands of officials having a grudge. They would only have to raise the cry "You are a loafer" to have legal warrant to stop supplies and starve those who did not please them.

The scavenging also you recognise as a difficulty in a Socialist State. Scavenging is not agreeable work, and if men were under no pressure of necessity, they would not choose scavenging. You think you might get over the difficulty by making scavenging hours shorter than any other kind of hours. But suppose the attraction of short hours was not sufficient to overcome the repulsion of nasty work, and there was a deficiency of volunteers, how then? Would you force the citizens? Would you allow the parish official to serve notice on some ex-railway director or bank-manager (say) or some large holder of Socialist State compensation scrip, that he must become a cleaner of drains or a night-soil man or a street-cleaner, or a chimney-sweep? What would be the right name for the country where any man was exposed to such freaks of officialism?

You rejoice that under Socialism, snobbery would perish and gentility get quickly ready for burial. It is probable that a good many other things would also be ready for burial at the same time. Hearts would break, refinement vanish, and the beauty of English civilisation become a memory of happier days. The life of the country would be thrown back 500 years, and if Socialism outlasted the indignation of outraged liberty, an iron chain would be tied round the chances of recovery. The only hope would be in revolution, in which the forces of enlightenment, assisted by such of the common people as might mourn the departed glory, would rise in irresistible rebellion and sweep away the odious tyranny erected in the name of liberty and plenty.

Another difficulty: many working men own their own houses as the result of their own frugality. What would become of their houses in the change to Socialism? Would they continue the property of their present owners, or would they be taken by the State? You do not answer this. You think that perhaps the State would "nationalise" them—that is, take possession of them—that is, rob the working man of his house: on the ground that the State would in return confer greater advantages than the possession of a house would be. The State, you say, would ensure him a provision for his old age, and provide for his wife and children in case of his death. Well, but the State would do this for all working men: for those who had no houses as well as for those who had. You take from the frugal man what the frugal man has acquired by his frugality, on the plea of giving him something that is given equally to the non-frugal man. There is want of even-handedness here. The frugal man might say, "You put me on the same level as the spendthrift: you give me no compensation for what you take from me, and ask me to be content with what the spendthrift gets equally with me. I say it is not fair."

And then he might complain, that while you compensated the classes from whom you took the land, you gave no compensation to working men from whom you take their houses.

You say that "idle men now in receipt of large incomes might under Socialism continue idle, but would not continue rich." How is this, Mr. Blatchford? On page 99, you say, "Socialism does not propose to seize the property of the rich and share it among the poor." If not, what does Socialism propose to do with the property of the rich? The land is the property of the rich. On page 107, you say you suppose compensation would have to be given for the land, but you hope it would be kept as low as possible. On the same page about the mines and railways (also the property of the rich), you say "they could be bought, and the smaller the price, the better." Here is the principle of compensation and purchase in the transfer from the present system to Socialism.

Now, while you would try and keep the amount of the compensation and the size of the price as low as possible, you could not prevent its being a just and therefore a large amount.

The very law of compensation and purchase is based on the value of the thing taken over. Therefore the rich bought out or compensated for the loss of their property would be rich still, or else they would not be "compensated." And if so, would not the frugal working-man have ground to complain that you compensate the rich on "nationalising" their property, but do not compensate him in "nationalising" his house?

It looks as if you didn't quite know your own mind on this point, Mr. Blatchford. If the rich, as you say, are no longer to be rich under Socialism, then you are going to "seize on the property of the rich." If they are to receive "compensation," and their properties are to be "bought," then they are to continue to be rich as the result of the acquisition of their property by the State. It looks as if you put it both ways—which is certainly convenient—it enables you to pacify the classes, and please the masses while conducting your agitation. It is possible it may have the contrary effect. Working men will lower their brows when they find you mean to really let the rich down gently; and the rich will give rein to all their alarms when they see reason to suspect that with all your talk of compensation, you really mean confiscation and extinction.

It would be better to put your proposal fair and square, and let the trumpet give a certain sound. If the frugal workman is to lose his cottage, and the idle peer is to lose his palace, and gentility is to perish, and all men and all manners are to be squeezed down to a common street level; if all property is to be put into the national pot, and boiled down into a sort of workhouse skilly to be ladled out to all classes turned into one class, among whom there will be no rich and no poor, no masters and no servants, no employees, no working men, no gentlemen and no common people,—you may well recognise that "Socialism will not be a perfect system of life." Most people will think that with all its killing of tramps and finding work for all (chimney sweeping if necessary for artists out of work, and sewer cleaning for superfluous doctors)—it will not be so good as our present system, which, with all its wretchedness, at least secures the picturesque variation and enterprising initiative that comes with liberty and individual incentive. It has certainly large compensation in the vigorous development of capacity, refinement, art, science, intellectual culture and

taste, and beauty of all kinds that would be impossible under Socialistic repression. The present form of society is comparable to the diversified aspect of nature in mountain, valley, stream, woodland, lake, and ocean. Socialism would gather all into a monster crushing machine, and serve out a liquid concrete to be spread over earth's fair face in dismal level wastes. We prefer the landscape to the dreary triumphs of the steam roller.

Then there are the delicacies. Who is to have them? Your mode of dealing with this question is, I must say, amusing. There is only so much salmon and pineapple, of course. There would not be enough to go over everybody. Who is to get what there is, in a Socialistic State, where all are equal, and where nobody is supposed to have more money than another? What a dilemma! Everyone looking on with teeth watering, but nobody quite sure what to do. There would be Socialist magnates, surely. Would not the members of the Cabinet be of more consideration than the railway porters? It could not be prevented. And might they not be excused for thinking themselves entitled, at the end of an arduous and exhausting session, to indulge in a little turtle soup and whitebait? But evidently out of doors there would be such a glare of envious eyes that they dare not think of it. Mr. Blatchford thinks of a compromise. He thinks the delicacies might be "reserved for invalids and old people, and delicate women and children." Do you really think, Mr. Blatchford, that the Parliament, even of a Socialistic State, could be trusted to vote all the nice things to the inmates of hospitals? It is a funny idea. It is false to nature. It would never be realised. If the fear of the people deterred them from voting a member's allowance of the delicacies, it certainly would deter them from voting against the people having a taste. And so, in all probability, if the question came up, they would decide in despair to let the delicacies go to those who could afford to pay for them, which would necessarily include the ex-owner of mines, railways, and peerages, if you carried out your professed purpose of giving them compensation.

Mr. Blatchford, your scheme is as thickly set with difficulties as a hedgehog is with quills; and I am afraid you will all find yet that it will do nothing but prick the hands and vex the souls of all that meddle with it.

I am obliged to be,

Your outspoken and impartial friend,

JOHN SMITH.

Christ and the Agitators.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

YOU dispose pretty successfully of the outcry against paid agitators, but, of course, you must recognise that there is a little truth in the current invective against them. The agitators are not all disinterested men, like you; they are not all sincere, fervent, sympathetic, and talented, like the writer of "Merrie England." Some of them, at least, are noisy, shallow, mercenary fellows, who spout Socialism from the love of notoriety, or the pleasure they find in tearing down things that are up. Perhaps, too, some of them find it an easy way of getting a crust of bread. At all events, you can excuse the strong things that may be said against yourself, considering there are men to whom they justly apply. You are evidently not one of those who disturb the general calm for the mere liking of the thing. I should judge that the "shaking of old and rotten institutions" gives you no particular pleasure, and that you would rather see the respectable rascality transformed. If you "bawl at shameful untruths, and trample on venerable shams," it is not that you take delight in such a performance, but that your rage is rage against wrong, and your grief a grief excited by helpless suffering, and your denunciation the honest outpouring of an outraged sense of justice.

This being so, bear with the privileged classes if they rail, and with the oppressed classes if they surmise, and with the lazy classes if they murmur. Stand by your guns as long as you think your cause is right. Stick by the argument until you are shut up. Perhaps even this might happen, if you are the honest man you seem to be. Perhaps the field is wider, and the problem deeper, than you have yet realised; and on a maturer survey of the whole subject, you may come to the conclusion that Socialism cannot

be established by constitutional means—that if attempted by violent means, it must fail, and that even if it were to be established, peaceably or violently, it could not work out the good results you desire. Should you come to this conclusion, perhaps you may place your talents at the disposal of a higher movement, which contains both the promise and guarantee of all the excellent things you wish for the suffering race of humanity.

But one thing does grate upon me in this chapter on agitators —namely, that you should put Christ in their category. Oh, Mr. Blatchford, this is a terrible mistake! It brings Christ down to a depth, or puts the agitator up to a height, where neither belongs at all. Christ was no agitator, though he produced agitation. You recognise that he was not only a true man, but at the very head of the "salt of the earth," to use your own expression.

This being so, we are bound to take him at his own estimate. He said, "I work the works of *my Father;* the works that I do, I do not myself; the Father who sent me, He doeth the works." What agitator ever made a claim like this? Can you make it, Mr. Blatchford, in the very faintest degree? I should say you are too modest and honest and sensible a man for such a sacrilege.

Then it was not merely that Christ made this extraordinary claim, to be a worker of works which were not his own, but he allowed the reasonableness of his claim being treated as an open question. He referred the bystanders to the evidence of his claim. He said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." You see he was not a fanatic or an enthusiast, carried away with sublime moral delusions. He was a rationalist in his mental methods: "The works that I do," he said, "*bear witness of me* that my Father hath sent me."

When you consider what these works were, you can see how perfectly sane was the claim he made that he was no human agitator, working out his own ideas, however excellent. The character of these works comes out very explicitly in connection with the interesting enquiry of John the Baptist, sent from prison, where he was confined, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" We are informed that when the messengers arrived, "In that same hour Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues"; and then, turning to the messengers, said, "Go your

way, tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that *the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised*" (Luke vii. 19-22).

Could any agitator, paid or unpaid, do such things as these? Which of them can say, "I came down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent me"? Which of them can challenge their contemporaries to convince them of sin? Which of them can say, "The Son of Man shall be put to death, and shall rise again the third day"? Which of them after death can induce their friends to go through the world proclaiming their resurrection, in the teeth of persecution, spoliation, and death?

You will remember that during the French revolution, a new religion was proclaimed, but the new religion did not catch on; and while the leaders were wondering what they should do to make it a success, Talleyrand said, "If one of you gentlemen will allow himself to be crucified, and rise again the third day, the thing will succeed."

Now, Mr. Blatchford, I put these things to you because you evidently revere Christ, which you could not do if you thought He was an impostor and a liar. If He was no impostor, and made the claims, and did the things recorded in the gospels written by His companions and friends, then He was as far above the tribe of agitators as the sun is above the street lamps. If so, He was one of the facts of the world, one of the elements of the problem, and deserving of the consideration you accord to questions of labour and capital.

Why should you leave Him out? Perhaps you have not given him sufficient attention. He is the key of the position. If He is what He claimed, He is the light of the world, and the Saviour of mankind from all their woes. If this is true, Socialism is barred by His own words: "Without me ye can do nothing."

I have shown natural reasons for recognising this to be a fact; how much they are strengthened by such a declaration. If Christ is true, Socialism is a false cry, although I believe on your part an entirely honest one. It is a cry that will lure the populace into deeper depths of woe than they are now in, and that perhaps it will take the arrival of Christ to extricate them from.

My talk may seem wild; it will seem otherwise when your eyes are opened to all the facts that are before the world. It sur-

prises me that shrewd and capable men discussing the world's life should so totally ignore its most palpable ingredient; for the teachings of Christ are not only a power in modern society, but His personal reality is one of the most undeniable realities of human history. Oh, Mr. Blatchford, you are fired with noble impulses, but consider how bootless are all your proposals if this simple proposition should happen to be the truth, that Christ is the living and coming master of mankind.

You propose the election of labour members to Parliament, and with this view you are labouring to make the people Socialists, and earnestly recommending them to enroll themselves members of Socialist societies, and to agitate in committee rooms for the bringing out of Socialist candidates. Consider what a mistake it all must be if Socialism is impracticable, and Christ the coming reformer. You are then wasting English strength, diverting English industry from profitable objects, and embittering English life with dangerous class irritations and antipathies, by will-o'-the-wisp proposals that can only lure the working classes into deeper mire. With admiration and pity,

Your much-concerned, yet hopeful friend and neighbour,

JOHN SMITH.

What is Wanted.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

IN the course of your letters, you have given me some insight into the sort of social system that in your judgment would ensure a fair share of the good things of life to all. I cannot better respond to your efforts in this direction than by expressing some thoughts in the same line.

I am in love with most of the objects you propose, though in strong dissent from your proposed methods of effecting them. I agree with you as to the mischiefs that come from a system of unfettered individualism and unrestricted liberty of competition and aggrandisement. It has developed an exaggerated individual importance, the adjunct of congested wealth on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has debased vast masses of mankind by disconnection from hereditary estate and subjection to incessant toil for a bare subsistence.

Between the two extremes, the true aims of human life have been lost and abortion of all kinds produced. Mankind, instead of living together as the common and delighted sharers of mutually ensured benefaction, are insulated from each other by exigencies which compel them to be competitors, and reduce them to the position of a scrambling crowd of dogs, quarrelling over food thrown promiscuously among them.

There ought to be an end to the frightful inequalities which are the bane of the present system. It ought not to be possible for such splendour and squalor to coexist side by side. It ought not to be possible to create large estates. There ought to be not only such a distribution of the land among the population as would afford the basis of a social equilibrium, but such a

system as having once established such an equilibrium would protect it from the gradual overthrow that comes more or less to all systems from changes in human circumstances. There ought to be such a system as by its own automatic operation would render it impossible for the community to be impoverished. There ought to be no impoverishment of the community on the one hand, and no amassing of immense individual fortunes on the other. There ought be no brutalising depths of poverty side by side with Parnassian heights of inflating opulence such as oppress and disgrace the civilisation of this much vaunted but most-afflicted age.

Where are we to find a system that would work in this desirable way? You recommend the suppression of individualism. I have shown many reasons why this is out of the question. Individualism is a law of nature, and must be allowed for in any system that is to work out the good of the community. Nevertheless, it ought to be impossible for individual avarice and the exigencies of individual misfortune to interfere with the general good. It ought not to be in the power of capable greed to add field to field till there is no room for the less gifted. It ought not to be in the power of any man to annex vast areas which are for the common weal. It ought not to be in the power of misfortune to remove the population from the land and huddle them into pens.

There is no doubt that you are right in thinking that a right settlement of the people upon the land lies at the root of the question. The land is the source of all that man requires; and it ought to be so distributed and kept distributed as to make its benefits accessible to all. It is evident that before this could be done, there would have to be very radical changes calling for very drastic measures. The land is now monopolised, and would never be given up by its present owners. To buy them out would frustrate the objection of division by saddling the land with a charge which would give us the same evil in another shape. And you say you are not going to seize. I do not see on your plan how the world is ever going to get at the right reform. What is wanted is what you say you do not propose. You must get

rid of the present monopoly without leaving a compensation burden behind.

The ground wants clearing as it only can be done by irresponsible and irresistible power.

Let me call your attention to a historic illustration of this process, which is not so foreign to the point as you may at first thought imagine. When Israel came out of Egypt, the land for which the law of Moses was designed, was cleared by the hand of divine power co-operating with them. The order was "Slay utterly old and young, leave nothing alive that breatheth." This order related to the Canaanites, who were sunk in wickedness. Extermination cleared the land. On the land thus cleared, a new settlement was made on a system that has never been approached by human legislation for wisdom and beneficence. No questions of compensation were in the way.

You will think this goes beyond even the wildest dreams of the Anarchists. But you will observe, I am not making a proposal. I am only calling your attention to what was done in a historic case with special reference to the fact that the Bible holds out to us the prospect that what was done on a small scale under Moses will be done on the universal scale under Christ, when the time comes to "pull down the mighty from their seats, and send the rich empty away."

The land will be divided among the people; to every family a possession, according to their number, each holding an inalienable family possession which cannot be sold or permanently mortgaged. If the family get into difficulties, they can let the land for so much until the year of jubilee—a year recurring once in 50 years. This letting would be a kind of mortgage unknown in our times—a self-extinguishing mortgage on which no interest has to be paid. At the jubilee, the law would compel the restitution of the land to its original owners without the repayment of any money. The result of this will be to limit the borrowing powers of the family; the only sum they can raise on the property is the value of its occupancy during the number of years that might have to run to the year of jubilee. This puts it out of their power to permanently beggar themselves; the family lands

are bound to come back in a certain number of years. There is no question of injustice to the lender or buyer in such a case. The buyer or lender would get back the sum advanced, by the fruit of the land during the years of occupancy.

Such was the law in Israel. It prevented many evils well known to Gentile life. It stood in the way of the creation of large estates. It kept the land in its original distribution among the mass of the people. It preserved social equilibrium by nipping in the bud those fearful inequalities that are the bane of modern life. A modern mortgage lasts for ever, and adds unpaid interest to principal in an ever-increasing burden which at last sinks the property into perdition.

This is a great difference. All Israelitish mortgages were killed by time, and left property unencumbered, at last to come back into the hands of its original possessors. The one is full of blessedness, the other is full of woe. The one is the device of beneficent wisdom, the other the outcome of human avarice. The one secures the general diffusion of the goodness of God, the other allows of astute men fleecing their neighbours under the guise of legitimate legal formalities, and enables them to scramble to eminence over the prostrate bodies of the helpless.

To the general body of people in our day the subject may not appear to have any interesting or obvious bearing on human welfare. They know nothing of the possession of property beyond the tables and chairs which they use in the consumption of hard-earned daily meals, and the subject of mortgages and land laws is to them a far-off and repulsive legal affair. But the subject comes very near for all that. One of the cures for the world's present social derangement lies in the application of a wise land law; and no land law now in force is wise. The only wise land law is the law that God gave to Israel.

The proposed "nationalization" of the land might be an improvement upon the present utterly bad system; but it would not come near the Mosaic land-law which, while conserving the economic interests of the community, fostered family life in the strongest and most ennobling form.

"Nationalization" would leave land open to traffic and exploitation as now—in a different way, but with the same

unhappy results. "Familization" is the true system, with a periodic year of release and general free restitution.

This system is unattainable except at the point of the sword. Divine coercion alone can bring it. It is interesting, meanwhile, to be able to realize the excellence of the system as a feature of the divine law once in vogue on the earth, in view of the express Bible prophecy that it will be re-established for all the earth when Christ reigns. It was established by the sword in that case, and it will be established by the sword again.

Such a land law firmly administered by the right sort of rulers would diffuse the wealth of the world among all classes. Still, poverty would creep in here and there, through special incapacities. For this also, the Mosaic land law provided. Every seventh year, the land was to be allowed to lie fallow. Agricultural science has discovered the virtue of giving the land an occasional rest to prevent the exhaustion of its fertility: this may have been included in the objects aimed at in the Mosaic law. But the specified object opens out quite another line of consideration: "*that the poor of thy people may eat*, and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat" (Ex. xxiii. 11). The land, left to "rest and lie still" during the seventh year, would bring forth "that which groweth of its own accord" (Lev. xxv. 5). This was to be at the service of all comers, with one condition only—that they were poor. That year, there would be no trespass laws. There would be common thoroughfare over all lands, with a free welcome to whatever might be found useful.

The priestly tribe of Levites were not to have any inheritance in the land. They were to find their maintenance in another way. They were to be supported by a fixed contribution of a tenth from the produce of all the land. Nevertheless, they were to have cities of their own, though no fields or estates in the country (Joshua xxi. 1-3). "All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs" (verse 41). These cities were scattered throughout the territories of all the other tribes. The enumeration of their several localities is minutely set forth in Joshua xxi.

The business of the Levites rendered this distribution necessary. Their business was to keep God before the mind of the people and to instruct them in the law: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. ii. 7). They were intended to be a spiritualising element in the population. The tribe of Levi was separated for this very purpose (Num. viii. 14: xvi. 9). How excellent a feature in national life was this—the wide scattering through all the land, of these Levitical cities as radiating centres of light and wisdom—protecting the surrounding population from the mentally benumbing effects of a merely agricultural life while not interfering with the invigorating and broadening tendency of an out-of-door and opulent occupation.

The system has been imitated and reproduced somewhat in the parochial system of Christendom: but with the lamentable result of a mere travesty. To an extent, no doubt, it has had an ameliorating effect on the rude populations of Europe. But there is a great difference between the divinely-appointed Levitical system working under suitable conditions in a country divinely arranged in all its details, and the artificial arrangements of a merely human ecclesiasticism, established with human ends in countries where the population has no divine relation.

No better social arrangement could have been contrived than an agricultural community territorially impregnated with the elements of a divine civilisation. That it was a failure we know: but this was not the fault of the law, but of the people, and principally of the teachers: "Ye (priests) are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts." It was against them that the denunciations of Jesus were principally directed under the name current for them in his day, Scribes and Pharisees. The reproduction of the system under Christ will be attended with very different results: "I will settle you after your old estates, and do better for you than at your beginnings." "I will give you pastors after mine own heart that will feed you with knowledge and understanding." "The people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever."

When we extend our view beyond the settlement of the people in families on the land, on the basis of inalienable inheritance (subject to unconditional and compulsory release every fifty years), to the further laws given to bring individual life under reverence, and purity and gratitude, and to rouse up public life into recurring seasons of joyous social activity, we see features of public law that have not ceased to be adapted to the social, religious, and political needs of man. They are features of public life that would never be seen in a Socialist republic of the merely human type. They will be established by the strong arm of man's truly social Friend when He returns to finish the work of which He laid the foundation 1,800 years ago. So, at all events, believes

Your not mad, though apparently fanciful, friend,

JOHN SMITH.

What is Coming.

My Dear Mr. Blatchford,

I COME now to your last letter. I am strongly exercised by the powerful appeal it contains. I thrill responsively to the idea of bringing human life into harmony with "the smiling fields and laughing water under the awful and unsullied sky."

It is quite superfluous, if you knew, for you to ask me, if all the misery of the world is nothing to me. I tell you it is more than you may believe. I am terribly affected by it; the thought of it often makes me feel as if I could not eat my own dinner.

But when you ask me to "strike a blow to save the fallen and to help the weak," the idea seems very foolish when I try to carry it out. What blow can I strike that will be good for anything? If I speak to the poor inhabiters of the slums they laugh at me, or perhaps curse me. If I breathe a doubtful word to the respectable people I meet on the street, they ask me what I mean, and talk of handing me over to the police. If I summon up courage and try a speech at the street corner about the shameful state of the poor and the downtrodden, I get an audience of impertinent boys, who make fun of me.

You say, "Join the Socialists, agitate against idle peers and fraudulent capitalists; vote for labour candidates, and try to change the present system." Mr. Blatchford, I would even do this if I thought it would save the people. But I believe

instead of this, it would deprive us of the blessings we have. It seems to me you might as well ask me to join a Limited Liability Company to reclaim the Sahara, or drain the Atlantic basin. Under excited appeals, men sometimes try impossible things. They may work energetically for a time, but the hopelessness of the work glares in on them in time, and that not a long time. And then think of the bitterness of the rude awakening to the discovery that they have thrown away good time, strength and money on a theoretical fad. Attending Socialist meetings and agitating Socialist doctrines may be a pleasing occupation for some people. I am persuaded that so far as practical results are concerned, it is a mere sowing of the wind with the whirlwind waiting round the corner.

It is well to long for the end of the evil that is affecting mankind. It is noble to yearn for a reasonable order of society in which men will be a mutual blessing instead of a mutual curse, and in which they will all find scope for the full enjoyment of beautiful life in all its elements, and the full development of the God-like powers that are latent in every human breast. But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that a man may earnestly desire all these things, and go the wrong way about it to get them. This I believe to be the case with Socialists. They are proposing to hew out cisterns that can hold no water while forsaking the one great cistern of living water.

You speak of "the pulsing of the universal heart—and the awful eyes of the universal soul gazing up, dim and blurred and weary, but full of wistful yearning for the unrevealed and unspeakable glory which men call God." I have no place for this conception except as the broken rays of refracted light—the incorporeal shadow of a reality lying elsewhither. Where I think the substance lies I have indicated more than once. If there is in the universe an "unspeakable glory" to be yearned after, there is an unspeakable glory that can be revealed. You pronounce it "unrevealed." If Christ was true, you are wrong in this. It is testified of Him that though "no man hath seen God at any time," "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father hath *declared Him*." It is what He Himself said, "*I have manifested thy name* to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world;" and again, "Thou hast hid these things

from the wise and prudent, *and hast revealed* them unto babes (John i. 18: xvii. 6; Matt. xi. 25).

Now if "unspeakable glory" exist and has been revealed, it is not conceivable that the state of man upon earth should be outside the range of His counsels and purposes and revelations. It is not conceivable that the problem of evil should be a chance problem, or its solution left to the bungling wits of man. If I, John Smith, am to be guided by the Bible, I cannot but have very positive convictions on this point, and therefore very positive views on the nature and prospects of Socialism.

The Bible tells me that evil is from God (Isaiah xlv. 7; Amos. iii. 6), that its prevalence on earth is due to man's insubordination (Is. i. 1-20). At the same time it tells me of a time when evil will be abolished; when there shall be "no more curse, no more pain, no more death" (Is. xxv. 8; Rev. xxi. 4; xxii. 3). For the change from the one state to the other, it tells me that "God hath appointed a day" (Acts xvii. 31) "according to the good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in *the dispensation of the fulness of times*, He might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10); for the effectuation of which purpose He will "set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces all other kingdoms and itself stand for ever"; in which "all peoples, nations and languages shall serve" the appointed king from heaven (Dan. ii. 44; vii. 15).

Now, Mr. Blatchford, I must either believe this and reject Socialism, or believe in Socialism and reject this. I could show many reasons for holding that the rejection of the Bible is a logical impossibility. I feel compelled to receive the revelation from "the unspeakable glory which men call God." But this would be out of place in these letters. I must, therefore, conclude with an attempt to show how entirely adapted to the needs of the world as diagnosed even by Socialism, is the coming change of system promised in the Bible.

Then, Mr. Blatchford, the well-being of man requires that the whole world should be under one government. If there was only one government, there would be no danger of one nation making war upon another; and there would be no need for those prodigious standing armies and formidable fleets that suck the blood and prosperity from the people, by

the stupendous cost of their maintenance, and no need for international customs duties, and war of tariffs putting shackles on human industry, and fetters on human life in all countries. Think what a difference this would make to the living facilities of mankind. The enormous sums that go yearly to pay fleets and armies would be available for the feeding, clothing, and housing of the poor. Not only so, but the enormous bodies of men set free for industry by the disbanding of the armies, would swell the ranks of the producers while reducing the number of the mere consumers. This change alone would make a vast difference to the state of the world.

Can Socialism hold out hopes of this kind? So far from this, Socialism itself proposes to teach *the entire population the use of arms*, so as to be able to repel foreign aggression!

The Bible tells us that when the day of Christ comes, there will be "One King in all the earth" (Zech. xiv. 9), and that "all peoples, nations, and languages shall serve and obey him" (Dan. vii. 15), "and study war no more" (Mic. iv. 3), "and his kingdom is to break in pieces all others." It will have no rival, no contemporary, no competitor. "A mountain filling the whole earth" is its symbol (Dan. ii. 35, 44, 45).

First of all, as I indicated in my last letter, the present systems want breaking up and dismissing. You have shown this to us many times over. The ground wants clearing of all monopolies without compensation, that a right system may have a right start and a clear field for developments. The Socialists don't preach this. Yet this is what is wanted. No regeneration of the world can be effected without it. Any attempt to compensate or buy out the monopolists must strangle the new system with the old cords tied on in a new way. The most long-headed of the Socialists see this, but they dare not avow it for fear of destroying the chances of the Socialist propaganda.

Now the Bible plan proclaims in advance the very thing which you, Mr. Blatchford, see to be necessary but dare not advocate. "Unspeakable glory," says to Christ: "I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts

of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt *break them* with a rod of iron and *dash them in pieces* like a potter's vessel." "He shall save the children of the needy and break in pieces the oppressor." It says He will "fill the hungry with good things and the rich he shall SEND EMPTY AWAY." It reveals that the governments of the world will "make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb shall *overcome them* . . . and the kingdoms of this world shall become his, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Psa. ii. 9; Luke i. 53; Rev. xviii. 14: xi. 15).

Next after the complete overthrow of the present order of things, the world requires a wise, strong and incorruptible government before the best system can succeed. If it is not wise, it will enact laws that are not for the good of the community. If it is not strong, its orders will in the end be disregarded, and the best laws defeated. If it is not incorruptible, the administration of the wisest laws will become weak and uncertain, and the people will fail to get the benefit of them.

Now Socialism cannot ensure any of these conditions. You have said that human nature is "a complex and an awful thing." It therefore requires a complex and penetrating system of government for its proper management. But what could Socialism offer? The opinion of a body of short-sighted men enforced through an executive of the same character. Their measures would necessarily be limited to proximate ends. They might see how to increase the crops, but not how to impart right principles to the people. They might understand how to improve manufactures, but not how to make the people happy. Happiness and righteousness are the results of many conditions (some of them very subtle), which could not be made the subject of Republican legislation.

As for strength, how could a government be strong that was dependent upon the goodwill of the people? It might be strong enough in the sense of having the army and police behind it while in office, but it would be very weak in the conditions governing the possession of power. It would have to please the people. It would not be the wisdom of a policy, but the opinion of a working man majority that would determine its acts, which would often therefore be vacillating acts and foolish acts. It might have physical force enough at its disposal but not moral fortitude enough in the use of it.

What is wanted is a strong hand on the helm, guided by wisdom, inspired by kindness, not dependent on popular favour and not afraid of incurring popular displeasure. The kingdom of God will supply this want. Socialism never could.

As to moral incorruptibility, no man would pretend that a Republican Government would be an incorruptible government. It might be fairly trustworthy in ordinary times, but there would necessarily arise opportunities of turning official influence to personal advantage, and temptations to wink at breaches of the law from fear or favour: and it would be something new in the history of mankind if such opportunities were not too much for human frailty. Malfeasance and peculation in high office would not be too hard on the same thing among minor officials, and thus the rot would spread and justice suffer to the detriment of the common weal.

Where Socialism would fail, the Kingdom of God would be a perfect provision. Infallible wisdom pervades the entire administration of a system in which the head would be a King who "shall not judge by the sight of his eyes nor reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and might, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times." Princes of like character surround his throne and enforce his authority chosen beforehand of a process of natural selection not recognised by modern science. Natural selection through the operation of spiritual principles in the current age of darkness and faith—"conformed to his image"—made like him, morally and physically, and reigning with him in exaltation after suffering with him in the day of his dishonour.

A government with such gifts of insight would be able to formulate laws that would work well for mankind in all the details of life. There would be no experiments and no miscarriages: no undue repression of individual liberty and no helpless toleration of individual abuses—land and labour rightly adjusted and no strangling entails of compensation surviving from this barbarous age. The wisdom would exist at head-

quarters able to give the world the right system and the power also to carry it out without failure.

Such a government would be strong, as government has never been strong before. It would not depend upon popular suffrage. It would be an absolutism without being a tyranny. The people would have to obey, at the peril of life, laws that would work out for their highest good. "Every soul that would not hear that prophet should be cut off from among the people." The King would "rule with a rod of iron" as regards the inflexible firmness of his reign: but would be as "the dew upon tender herb" as regards its influence of kindness, mercy, gentleness, and truth. He would be the friend of all men who were willing to do well—the foe only of the villain and the oppressor. The prophecy of him combines these features: "He shall come like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. He shall judge for the poor and needy, and shall save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor."

The moral incorruptibility that cannot be depended upon in the operations of flesh and blood will belong inherently to a government immortal and divine. It is written of the head of it: "He loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" and again, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," and again, "The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."

It is with a sense of almost natural expectation fulfilled that we read, "Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

And now, Mr. Blatchford, when men get a good thing, they like to keep it. But when the world gets a good king or a good statesman, it has to part with him very shortly; the day comes when he must die, and all his ripe experience and wisdom go with him to the grave. If you were to establish a successful Socialist state to-morrow, 50 years would sweep all its founders off the scene; and who could tell what sort of successors they might have—wise men or fools? As likely the latter as not;

and then the result? This is the weakness of all human systems. Death disintegrates them and ruins them in a few generations.

But the coming *regime* which will be so super-excellent on all other points will be perfect in this—that the King and his friends will be irremovable by death. "Death hath no more dominion over him," as the New Testament informs us. "God has given him length of days for ever and ever" (Psa. xxi. 4), "His name shall endure for ever," "his name shall be continued *as long as the sun.*" Christ declares the same thing of those with whom he will share his throne. "*They shall not die any more*" (Luke xx. 36; Rev. iii. 21). Here is an element of stability lacking to every possible arrangement in the power of man to make.

Finally, the Bible that tells us all these beautiful things, reveals to us also this, that this management of all mortal affairs by an order of immortal heads and rulers is with a view of at last admitting a sufficient number of the whole population to the immortal state of their rulers, so that death itself may be finally abolished from the planet, and the earth become an everlasting abode of efficient and joyful life (Isa. xxv. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26; Rev. xxi. 4, 5).

This magnificent prospect is no idle dream unless the Bible is a lie, which all attempts have hitherto failed to prove—including the ponderous efforts of our friends of the "Higher Criticism." Further, it has to be remarked that such a prospect is in harmony with the reasonable presumption arising from the natural aspect of things. It is evident that this planet has a long history before it as well as behind it. It is evident that its future is an endless future, both by Bible declaration (Psa. cxlviii. 6) and scientific presumption.

How terrible is the problem of human prospects if we have nothing but Socialism and natural light to look to. Consider this: the population is steadily increasing with each generation, while the earth's capacity for maintaining life is fixed and limited. Where shall we be in the progress of the ages when there are more human beings upon the earth than there will be room or food for? It is no imaginary problem.

You may put it off as a problem not affecting the present time, but the problem is there, and throws its disturbing shadow over all men and human schemes of human management. The Bible prospect alone solves it perfectly.

To bring these scattered ideas to a focus, I here give you a peep at what will come if the Bible continues to be as true a prophecy of the future as it has proved in the past. The contemplation of it ought to comfort your distressed soul and calm your indignant feelings, because while surpassing the idealisms of Plato or Sir Thomas More, unlike their pleasing pictures, it is no mere reverie of human imagination, but the delineation of a purpose formed and revealed "by the glory which men call God."

It shows that the wisdom that has contrived the earth has also a plan for its use and settlement, and that in this plan alone lies the solatium for the distress that fills the generous souls of such men as the author of MERRIE ENGLAND.

A Peep at the Future depicted in the Bible.

A king reigns, who combines in himself all the sweetness and manliness of Arthur, all the grace and ability of Cyrus, all the energy and capacity of Alexander, all the talent and celerity of Napoleon, all the irresistible velocity of Charles XII., all the military invincibility and organising skill of Charlemagne, all the pertinacious genius and paternal disinterestedness of Frederick, all the impressive and dignified splendour of Louis XIV., all the wisdom of Solomon, all the kindliness and fervour of David, all the patience and faithfulness of Moses, and all the patience of Job.

But differing from all kings that ever were before him, he has a body of incorruptible substance; life immortal; and a presence radiant with a natural glory and majesty.

And He excels them all in having power to control the natural elements, to still the storm, or cure disease. He can launch the thunderbolt, fertilise a country, or arrest the movements of man. His name is above every name even now.

His mother was the descendant of kings, His Father was the Creator of the Universe. He was killed 1,800 years ago for His denunciation of wickedness, and raised from the dead, and taken away from the earth. He has now returned to reign where He was crucified. He is located centrally at the junction of the three great continents of the eastern hemisphere—in the land where His ancestors on His mother's side lived as strangers, under a promise that God would give them everlasting possession in a day then afar off (Gen. xiii. 15; Heb. xi. 13). The land, for long a desolation, has been turned into a paradise (Isa. ix. 15; Ezek. xxxvi. 35). He has built a stupendous temple on the original site of Jerusalem excelling in dimensions and glory all edifices ever erected in the earth before (Hag. ii. 9; Zech. vi. 13). This temple is "the place of his throne"—the centre of his government (Ezek xliii. 7). His empire embraces the entire globe (Dan. vii. 14). The whole earth waits for His law (Isa. xlii. 4), which He promulgates from Zion (Micah iv. 2).

He is assisted in the work of the government by an innumerable body of friends, who have been fitted for association with Him by previous submission to the principles that actuate Him: by faithfulness to His requirements in the days of His absence: by acknowledgment of His headship when men disowned and dishonoured Him, and now by a physical transformation which has assimilated their resurrected bodies to His incorruptible and immortal nature (Rev. i. 6: ii. 21: v. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 53; Luke xii. 8 xix. 11-19).

There has been a prolonged and terrible war in which the old régime has perished in all countries. Kingdoms, empires, and republics have all disappeared before the terrible blast of His power, and His authority is now acknowledged everywhere, from Japan to the Emerald Isle; from the banks of the Neva on the north to the Cape of Good Hope on the south; and

everywhere throughout the turbulent countries of the Western Hemisphere.

This government, for the first time in the history of the human race, supplies every condition requisite for their well-being. It does not, like human systems, either provide for physical wants merely, or starve the community with an excess of churches and priests. All the needs of man are supplied. Its authority comes from above, not from below; it cannot be put aside. It cannot be called in question. It requires no renewal. There is an end to elections. The rulers hold their authority by a permanent patent of nobility from God. They have omnipotence behind them.

Mr. Blatchford, it is written: "The earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." I will say no more at this time, except that if the Eternal Power that has, by whatever process, constructed the fair fabric of nature, has also a plan in operation for the redemption of the fairest creature that roams over the green and smiling fields of earth "under the great and solemn sky," we may well "Rest in the Lord and wait for Him," as recommended, and desist from schemes that will only madden and destroy with endeavours too great for man.

With entire respect, I beg to remain,

Your practical, hard-headed, revering, melancholy, cautious, respectful, admiring, demurring, "fairly-honest," "silly," anxious, "slow," hopeful, apparently-superstitious, credulous, behind-the-age, highly critical, truly sympathetic, despairing, yet not hopeless, dissenting, "shrewd," candid, impartial, much-concerned, and not-mad though Bible-believing and fervent friend,

JOHN SMITH.