

PRINCESS ALICE.

The 'S.M. Herald,' in a two-column review of the published 'Life of the Princess Alice,' managed to suppress all reference to the most striking circumstance connected with that excellent woman. The Princess Alice was a declared Freethinker during all those years of her married life in which her virtues as a woman, as a wife, as a mother, and as a daughter, so embellished her station. There is no question that Alice was an admirable woman: the flower of the Royal flock, her father's darling, and her mother's tender counsellor and friend. Her wedded life, despite troubles and sorrows, which brought her nearer than any of the family to the great world of work-a-day folks, was, in the main, exceedingly happy—a condition in no small degree due to her own beautiful character and loveable disposition. Her husband, who has now so oddly exhibited a disgraceful disrespect for her memory, was, while she lived, entirely devoted to her: and, by every token of genuine affection, illuminated her life with the joy of domestic happiness. In letters, written at intervals of several years, she bears testimony to the fact that it was not a mere honeymoon fondness which subsisted between her and her husband. In one, she writes: "There is such a feeling of security, and we two have a world of our own when we are together, which nothing can touch or intrude upon. My lot is indeed a blessed one, and yet what have I done to deserve that warm, ardent love which my darling Louis ever shows me? I admire his good and noble heart more than I can say." Two years afterwards, the Princess says: "Our life is a very happy one. I have nothing on earth to wish for, and much as I loved my precious Louis when I married him, still more do I love him now and daily." The pair were all the time not only as poor, comparatively, as church mice, but absolutely harrassed by duns. It doesn't seem to have been altogether, if at all, their fault, either. Prince Louis had been pretty wild in his younger days, no doubt, and had been reckless in money matters. But he is scarcely blameable, as he had been led into financial indiscretions by his own father, who seems to have encouraged him to be extravagant, in order that he might find himself in a fix, and, consequently, well-disposed to join in encumbering certain entailed estates, which could not have been hypothecated without his concurrence as heir. His father's affairs were frightfully embarrassed long before he, Prince Louis, had arrived at years of discretion; and as, when he came of age he joined with his father in encumbering the family property, he was obliged, throughout his wedded life, to make all kinds of sacrifices to keep the old man afloat and steer his own barque as well. The Hesse-Darmstadt family has long been hard-up. They used to sell their subjects for soldiers to England, at the time of the American War of Independance, and right up to the fall of Napoleon. Later on, one reason given to Parliament for the Crimean War was that Russia had sought for influence in Germany by paying the debts of the Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt; the Czarwitich of that day being son-in-law to the Duke then reigning. Of course the poverty of a Prince's household is a relative term. It is probably fraught with some mortifications which a common person would escape, but it never touches the real misery point, in which, after every insult, mortification and indignity become chronic, and actual cold and hunger afflict the sufferer, children cry for bread, and are thrown into depraved company, and afflicted by poisonous surroundings both moral and physical; babes starve at the breast, and death is an escape rather than an ill. The gentle Alice suffered in her degree. Magnificence was denied to her, and she had even some actual discomforts. But the bitterest drops were, of course, unknown to her. She seems never to have made her troubles occasion for actual complaint. The sweetness of her disposition, and her strong sense, saved her from that. But the instances she gives of her worries indicate how far remote they were after all from the real agonies of the world's poor. Thus she writes: "We have sold four carriage horses, and have only six to drive with now, two of which the ladies constantly want for theatres, visits, &c.; so we are rather badly off in some things. The straitness of the

family's means did not prevent their building a new house -on tick. The result, very simply recorded in one of Alice's letters, brings to mind the incident of Ruggles, the ex-butler, who had let his house in Mayfair to Colonel Crawley and Becky his wife. Writes the princess: "The man who built our house has nearly been made bankrupt and wants money from us to save him from ruin, and we can scarcely manage it;" The fate of "the man" is not disclosed in subsequent correspondence; but it seems that even the furniture of the new house was obtained on the "time payment system." On receiving a present of money from her mother, the poor Princess writes: "The money will go at once to Louis's man of business, towards paying off the furniture, and is, indeed, very, very acceptable, more so under present circumstances than anything else you could give us; and that part of the furniture will then be all your present." Poor Princess Alice! She was a good woman. Her character is embosomed in charms. In every domestic relation she showed herself an example worthy of universal imitation, and the strength of her intellect was disclosed no less by the degree in which she emancipated herself from the traditional system of training which corrupts the minds of royal personages by the misconception that the people exist for their benefit, and not they for the benefit of the people, than by the independence with which she liberated herself from the shackles of orthodoxy, in her best years. It is, indeed, a most notable fact that, during the very time when the Princess Alice was most actively displaying virtues which endear her memory alike to the people of Darmstadt and of England, she was an earnest Freethinker. In 1879, when the Princess's husband and children got the scarlet fever, she nursed them herself. During the forced seclusion, she became acquainted with David Strauss, the theologian; and the Princess, with that courage of opinion which was characteristic of her, allowed him to dedicate to her his work on Voltaire, which approved of the French philosopher in many essential points. It has been said, indeed, that she recanted, later. But the authority for this is more than dubious. Her last illness was very short. Orthodoxy never fails to allege either a recantation or a frightful death-bed. To allege the latter with respect to a Princess so universally beloved as Alice of England, would have been injudicious. The former was safer. No doubt the same will be said of Alice's sister, the Princess Royal of England and Crown Princess of Germany, when she dies. But as she is still alive, and a pronounced Freethinker, silence is the present expedient. Dead people cannot contradict falsehoods about themselves. Live people can.-- 'Sydney Bulletin.'

THE SALVATION ARMY.

Monseur D. Conway writes to the 'San Francisco Chronicle':—"The Salvation Army appeared to have found a particularly congenial soil in Australia. Howe, the famous bushranger, used to read the Scriptures regularly to his robber gang and swear them in on the prayer-book. One need only refer to the Australian 'War Cry' for evidence of the extent to which the army is recruited from the criminal classes. In this democratic country a notable sign of conversion to the army is a sottish egotism displayed in those whose cases must call for humility and penitence. At one of their frantic meetings a 'sister' declared: 'Once I was a vile wretch, not fit for hell; but now my elder brother the Lord Jesus, has taken me in hand, and I feel too good for Heaven.' Another 'sister' remarked that she had 'knocked about with no one but the Lord Jesus Christ.' There is a true larrikin ring about such expressions as these, and they can hardly fail to diffuse among the converts an impression that immorality, or even crime, is a light thing, easily washed away by the 'blood,' and quite compatible with swift promotion to sainthood and paradise."

Mr. W. Pratt, President of the Christchurch Freethought Association, has been elected Vice-President of the National Secular Society, of which Mr. Charles Bradlaugh is President.