

## THE BIRTHRIGHT OF THE FREE.

[Mr. HALDANE, in exposing his new Army Scheme, gave it as his opinion that the country "will not be dragooned into conscription." In other, and less conventional, terms it is the inalienable right of the freeborn British citizen to decline to lift a finger in his country's defence.]

O CITY clerk, in whom the hopes are stored  
Of England's manhood, let me talk with you—  
With you whose pen is mightier than the sword  
(And far, far safer, too).

Soon you will trip to some salubrious Spa,  
Or pluck delight from Southend shrimps and tea,  
Flaunting beneath a so-called Panama  
Beside the so-called sea.

There you will blow the expense and softly lie  
In some hotel abutting on the brine,  
And have your food (*en pension*) served you by  
A waiter from the Rhine.

Him you will treat with well-deserved contempt,  
Poor Teuton, seared with vile Conscription's brand,  
Not, like yourself, a gentleman exempt  
From duty to his land.

You are a free-born City clerk, and boast  
That you can buy the necessary slaves—  
Tommies that undertake to man the coast,  
And Tars to walk the waves.

Besides, the leisure hours in which you slack  
Are owed to Sport—the Briton's primal law;  
You have to watch a game of ball, or back  
A horse you never saw.

Splendid, *mon brave!* you have a sporting nerve  
Unknown to these dull churls of Teuton breed;  
Yet here's a man has learned at least to serve  
His Fatherland at need.

He sings his *Wacht am Rhein*, and, if the thing  
Wants watching with a rifle, he'll be there;  
When you've invited Heaven to "save the King"  
You think you've done your share.

They've taught him how to march in fighting kit  
And drill a likely hole in human butts;  
You have no discipline and couldn't hit  
A haystack, not for nuts.

His women-folk are safe in their appeal  
To his protection when the bullets skirl,  
While your "fionsy"—well, I really feel  
Quite sorry for the girl.

For this poor "conscript" whom the tyrants grind,  
Though he may miss your British freedom's scope,  
Yet knows the use of arms, where you would find  
Your legs your only hope.

So doff your hat to him when next you meet,  
And pray that, when his prentice task is done,  
If you should cross him on a raiding beat,  
He'll give you time to run.

O. S.