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CHARLES BRADLAUGH

A RECORD OF HIS LIFE & WORK

BY

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER

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~~W. H. Wood~~

~~p. 216-217~~

Re R. D. Blackmore

Note result of Lawsuit

Tusherville legacy & RDB

Vol 2 Chap 4 p. 31

R

Note Note

550

Result of Lawsuit with R.D.B. over his brother Henry's will leaving his estate to Bradlaw

RDB's family letters do not say what happened.

But here the result is described in Part II P. 31

(Henry had dropped the name of Blackmore, and used his second name [illegible] instead)

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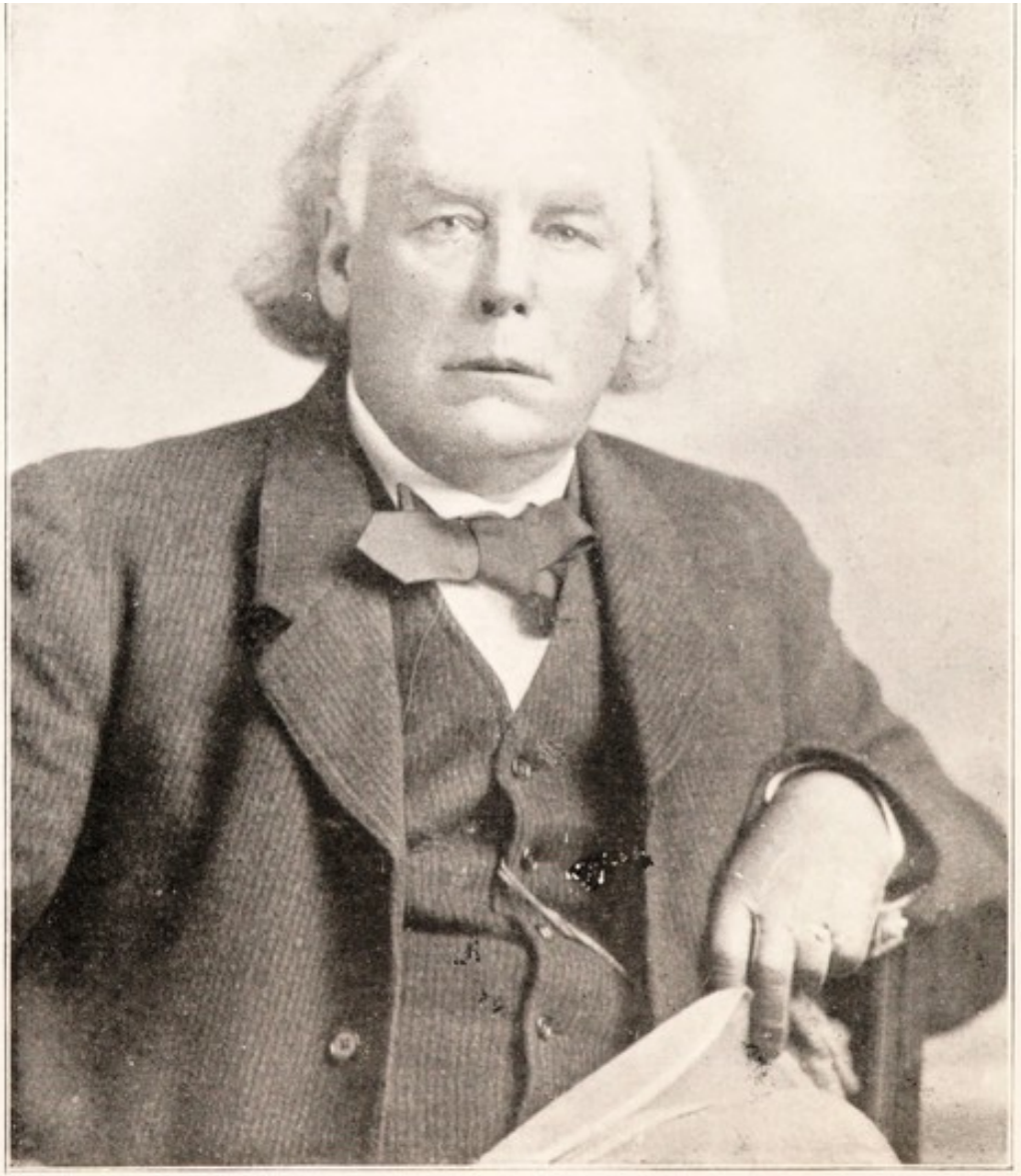

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PREFACE.

"I WISH you would tell me things, and let me write the story of your life," I said in chatting to my father one evening about six weeks before his death. "Perhaps I will, some day," he answered. "I believe I could do it better than any one else," I went on, with jesting vanity. "I believe you could," he rejoined, smiling. But to write the story of Mr Bradlaugh's life with Mr Bradlaugh at hand to give information is one thing: to write it after his death is quite another. The task has been exceptionally difficult, inasmuch as my father made a point of destroying his correspondence; consequently I have very few letters to help me.

This book comes to the public as a record of the life and work of a much misrepresented and much maligned man, a record which I have spared no effort to make absolutely accurate. Beyond this it makes no claim.

For the story of the public life of Mr Bradlaugh from 1880 to 1891, and for an exposition of his teachings and opinions, I am fortunate in having the assistance of Mr J. M. Robertson. We both feel that the book throughout goes more into detail and is more controversial than is usual or generally desirable with biographies. It has, however, been necessary to enter into details, because the most trivial acts of Mr Bradlaugh's life have been misrepresented, and for these misrepresentations, not for his acts, he has been condemned. Controversy we have desired to avoid, but it has not been altogether possible. In dealing with strictures on Mr Bradlaugh's conduct or opinions, it is not sufficient to say that they are without

justification; one must show how and where the error lies, and where possible, the source of error. Hence the defence to an attack, to our regret, often unavoidably assumes a controversial aspect.

A drawback resulting from the division of labour in the composition of the book is that there are a certain number of repetitions. We trust, however, that readers will agree with us in thinking that the gain of showing certain details in different relations outweighs the fault of a few re-iterations.

In quoting Mr Bradlaugh's words from the *National Reformer*, I have for the sake of greater clearness and directness altered the editorial plural to the first person singular.

I desire to express here my great indebtedness to Mrs Mary Reed for her help, more especially in searching old newspaper files with me at the British Museum.

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

1894.

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BY HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

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CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD.

ALTHOUGH there has often been desultory talk among us concerning the origin of the Bradlaugh family, there has never been any effort made to trace it out. The name is an uncommon one: as far as I am aware, ours is the only family that bears it, and when the name comes before the public ours is the pride or the shame—for, unfortunately, there are black sheep in every flock. I have heard a gentleman (an Irishman) assure Mr Bradlaugh that he was of Irish origin, for was not the Irish "lough" close akin to the termination "laugh"? Others have said he was of Scotch extraction, and others again that he must go to the red-haired Dane to look for his forbears. My father would only laugh lazily—he took no vivid interest in his particular ancestors of a few centuries ago—and reply that he could not go farther back than his grandfather, who came from Suffolk; in his boyhood he had heard that there were some highly respectable relations at Wickham Market, in Suffolk. But so little did the matter trouble him that he never verified it, though, if it were true, it would rather point to the Danish origin, for parts of Suffolk were undoubtedly colonized by the Danes in the ninth century, and a little fact which came to our knowledge a few years ago shows that the name Bradlaugh is no new one in that province.

Kelsall and Laxfield,* where there were Bradlaughs in the beginning of the 17th century; Wickham Market and Brandeston, whence Mr Bradlaugh's grandfather came at the beginning of the 19th, and where there are Bradlaughs at the present day, are all within a narrow radius of a few miles. The name Bradlaugh commenced to be corrupted into Bradley prior to 1628, as may be seen from a stone in Laxfield Church, and has also been so corrupted by a branch of the family within our own knowledge. The name has also, I know, been spelled "Bradlough."

James Bradlaugh, who came from Brandeston about the year 1807, was a gunsmith, and settled for a time in Bride Lane, Fleet Street, where his son Charles, his fourth and last child, was born in February 1811. He himself died in October of the same year, at the early age of thirty-one.

Charles Bradlaugh (the elder) was in due course apprenticed to a law stationer, and consequently this became his nominal profession; in reality, he was confidential clerk to a firm of solicitors, Messrs Lepard & Co. The apprentice was, on the occasion of some great trial, lent to Messrs Lepard, and the mutual satisfaction seems to have been so great that it was arranged that he should remain with them, compensation being paid for the cancelling of his indentures. I have beside me at the moment a letter, yellow and faded, dated July 30th, 1831, inquiring of "——Batchelour, Esq.," concerning the character of "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh," with the answer copied on the back, in which the writer begs "leave to state that I have a high opinion of him both as regards his moral character and industrious habits, and that he is worthy of any confidence you may think proper to place in him."

Charles Bradlaugh stayed with these solicitors until his death in 1852, when the firm testified their appreciation of his services

---

* A friend studying the *Topographer and Genealogist* found the following extract in Vol. II. :—

"Hoxne Hundred.

"Kelsall Church. Brass; no figure. John Parker, gent., who married Dorothy Bradlaugh, alias Jacob; died 24 April, 1605, aged 66.

"Laxfield Church. On a stone which had the figure of a man and two women still remains a shield with the arms of Bradlaugh alias Jacob."

"A stone in the north wall of the vestry for Nicholas Bradley alias Jacob, buried 8th August, 1628."

by putting an obituary notice in the *Times*, stating that he had been "for upwards of twenty years the faithful and confidential clerk of Messrs Lepard & Co., of 6 Cloak Lane." He married a nursemaid named Elizabeth Trimby, and on September 26th, 1833, was born their first child, who was named Charles after his father. He was born in a small house in Bacchus Walk, Hoxton. The houses in Bacchus Walk are small four-roomed tenements; I am told that they have been altered and improved since 1833, but I do not think the improvement can have been great, for the little street has a desperate air of squalor and poverty; and when I went there the other day, Number 5, where my father was born, could not be held to be in any way conspicuous in respect of superior cleanliness. But in such a street cleanliness would seem to be almost an impossibility. From Bacchus Walk the family went to Birdcage Walk, where I have heard there was a large garden in which my grandfather assiduously cultivated dahlias, for he seems to have been passionately fond of flowers. Soon the encroaching tide of population caused their garden to be taken for building purposes, and they removed to Elizabeth Street, and again finally to 13 Warner Place South, a little house nominally of seven rooms, then rented at seven shillings per week.

The family, which ultimately numbered seven, two of whom died in early childhood, was in very straitened circumstances, so much so that they were glad to receive presents of clothing from a generous cousin at Teddington, to eke out the father's earnings. The salary of Charles Bradlaugh, sen., at the time of his death, after "upwards of twenty years" of "faithful" service, was two guineas a week, with a few shillings additional for any extra work he might do. He was an exquisite penman; he could write the "Lord's Prayer" quite clearly and distinctly in the size and form of a sixpence; and he was extremely industrious. Very little is known of his tastes; he was exceedingly fond of flowers, and wherever he was he cultivated his garden, large or small, with great care; he was an eager fisherman, and would often get up at three in the morning and walk from Hackney to Temple Mills on the river Lea, with his son running by his side, bait-can in hand. He wrote articles upon Fishing, which were reprinted as late as a year or two ago in a paper devoted to angling, and also contributed a number of small things under the signature C. B———h to the *London Mirror*, but little was known about

this, as he seems usually to have been very reticent and reserved, even in his own family. He had his children baptized—his son Charles was baptized on December 8th, 1833—but otherwise he seems to have been fairly indifferent on religious matters, and never went to church.

This is about all that is known concerning my grandfather up till about the time of his son's conflict with the Rev. J. G. Packer, and what steps he took then will be told in the proper place. His son Charles always spoke of him with tenderness and affection, as, indeed, he also did of his mother; nevertheless, he never seemed able to recall any incident of greater tenderness on the part of his father than that of allowing him to go with him on his early morning fishing excursions. Mrs Bradlaugh belonged undoubtedly to what we regard to-day as "the old school." Severe, exacting, and imperious with her children, she was certainly not a bad mother, but she was by no means a tender or indulgent one. The following incident is characteristic of her treatment of her children. One Christmas time, when my father and his sister Elizabeth (his junior by twenty-one months) were yet small children, visitors were expected, and some loaf sugar was bought—an unusual luxury in such poor households in those times. The visitors, with whom came a little boy, arrived in due course, but when the tea hour was reached, it was discovered that nearly all the sugar was gone. The two elder children, Charles and Elizabeth, were both charged with the theft; they denied it, but were disbelieved and forthwith sent to bed. They listened for the father's home-coming in the hope of investigation and release; there they both lay unheeded in their beds, sobbing and unconsoled, until their grandmother brought them a piece of cake and soothed them with tender words. Then it ultimately appeared that it was the little boy visitor who stole the sugar; but the children never forgot the dreadful misery of being unjustly punished. The very last time the brother and sister were together, they were recalling and laughing over the agony they endured over that stolen sugar.

At the age of seven the little Charles went to school: first of all to the National School, where the teacher had striking ideas upon the value of corporal punishment, and enforced his instructions with the ruler so heavily that the scar resulting from a wound so inflicted was deemed of sufficient importance some nine or ten

years later to be marked in the enlistment description when Mr Bradlaugh joined the army. Leaving the National School, he went first to a small private school, and then to a boys' school kept by a Mr Marshall in Coldharbour Street; all poor schools enough as we reckon schools to-day, but the best the neighbourhood and his father's means could afford. Such as it was, however, his schooling came to an end when he was eleven years old.

I have by me some interesting mementoes of those same school-days—namely, specimens of his "show" handwriting at the age of seven, nine, and ten years. The writing is done on paper ornamented (save the mark!) by coloured illustrations drawn from the Bible. The first illustrates in wonderful daubs of yellow, crimson, and blue, passages in the life of Samuel; in the centre is a text written in a child's unsteady, unformed script; and at the bottom, flanked on either side by yellow urns disgorging yellow and scarlet flames, come the signature and date written in smaller and even more unsteady letters than the text, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 7 years, Christmas, 1840." The second specimen is adorned with truly awful illustrations concerning "the death of Ahab," not exactly suggestive of that "peace and goodwill" of which we hear so much and sometimes see so little. The writing shows an enormous improvement, and is really a beautiful specimen of a child's work. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 9 years, Christmas, 1842," is firmly and clearly written. The third piece represents the "Death of Absalom" (the teacher who gave out these things seems to have been of a singularly dismal turn of mind), with illustrations from 2 Sam. xiv. and xviii. The writing here has more character; there is more light and shade in the up and down strokes, as well as more freedom. As an instance of the humane nature of the teaching, I quote the text selected to show off the writing: "Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men of Joab's smote Absalom and slew him." As a lesson in sheer wanton cruelty this can hardly be exceeded. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged ten years, Christmas, 1843," which is surrounded by sundry pen-and-ink ornaments is, like the text, written with a much freer hand than that of the other specimens.

The boy's amusements—apart from the prime one of going

fishing with his father, which he did when eight years old—consisted chiefly in playing at sham fights with steel nibs for soldiers, and dramatic performances of "The Miller and his Men," enacted by *artistes* cut out of newspaper. Then there was the more sober joy of listening to an old gentleman and ardent Radical, named Brand, who took a great affection for the lad, and used to explain to him the politics of the day, and doubtless by his talk inspired him to plunge into the intricacies of Cobbett's "Political Gridiron," which he found amongst his father's books, and from that to the later and more daring step of buying a halfpenny copy of the People's Charter.

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD.

Now came the time when the little Charles Bradlaugh should put aside his childhood and make a beginning in the struggle for existence. His earnings were required to help in supplying the needs of the growing family; and at twelve years old he was made office boy with a salary of five shillings a week at Messrs Lepard's, where his father was confidential clerk. In later years, in driving through London with him, he has many a time pointed out to me the distances he used to run to save the omnibus fare allowed him, and how if he had to cross the water he would run round by London Bridge to save the toll. The money thus saved he would spend in books bought at second-hand book-stalls, outside of which he might generally be found reading at any odd moments of leisure. One red-letter day his firm sent him on an errand to the company of which Mr Mark E. Marsden was the secretary. Mr Marsden, whose name will be remembered and honoured by many for his unceasing efforts for political and social progress, chatted with the lad, asking him many questions, and finished up by giving him a bun and half-a-crown. As both of these were luxuries which rarely came in the office boy's way, they made a great impression on him. He never forgot the incident, although it quite passed out of Mr Marsden's mind, and he was unable to recall it when the two became friends in after years.

The errand-running came to an end when my father was fourteen, at which age he was considered of sufficient dignity to be promoted to the office of wharf clerk and cashier to Messrs Green, Son, & Jones, coal merchants at Brittania Fields, City Road, at a salary of eleven shillings a week. About this time, too, partly impelled by curiosity and swayed by the fervour of the political movement then going on around him, but also

undoubtedly with a mind prepared for the good seed by the early talks with old Mr Brand, he went to several week-evening meetings then being held in Bonner's Fields and elsewhere. It was in 1847 that he first saw William Lovett, at a Chartist meeting which he attended. His Sundays were devoted to religion; from having been an eager and exemplary Sunday school scholar he had now become a most promising Sunday school teacher; so that although discussions were held at Bonner's Fields almost continually through the day every Sunday, they were not for him: *he* was fully occupied with his duties at the Church of St Peter's, in Hackney Road.

At this time the Rev. John Graham Packer was incumbent at St Peter's; and when it was announced that the Bishop of London intended to hold a confirmation at Bethnal Green, Mr Packer naturally desired to make a good figure before his clerical superior. He therefore selected the best lads in his class for confirmation, and bade them prepare themselves for the important occasion. To this end Charles Bradlaugh carefully studied and compared the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the four Gospels, and it was not long before he found, to his dismay, that they did not agree, and that he was totally unable to reconcile them. "Thorough" in this as in all else, he was anxious to understand the discrepancies he found and to be put right. He therefore, he tells us, "ventured to write Mr Packer a respectful letter, asking him for his aid and explanation." Instead of help there came a bolt from the blue. Mr Packer had the consummate folly to write Mr Bradlaugh senior, denouncing his son's inquiries as Atheistical, and followed up his letter by suspending his promising pupil for three months from his duties of Sunday-school teacher.

This three months of suspension was pregnant with influence for him; for one thing it gave him opportunities which he had heretofore lacked, and thus brought him into contact with persons of whom up till then he had scarcely heard. The lad, horrified at being called an Atheist, and forbidden his Sunday school, naturally shrank from going to church. It may well be imagined also that under the ban of his parents' disapproval home was no pleasant place, and it is little to be wondered at that he wandered off to Bonner's Fields. Bonner's Fields was in those days a great place for open-air meetings. Discussions on every possible subject

were held; on the week evenings the topics were mostly political, but on Sundays theological or anti-theological discourses were as much to the fore as politics. In consequence of my father's own theological difficulties, he was naturally attracted to a particular group where such points were discussed with great energy Sunday after Sunday. After listening a little, he was roused to the defence of his Bible and his Church, and, finding his tongue, joined in the debate on behalf of orthodox Christianity.

The little group of Freethinkers to which Mr Bradlaugh was thus drawn were energetic and enthusiastic disciples of Richard Carlile. Their out-door meetings were mostly held at Bonner's Fields or Victoria Park, and the in-door meetings at a place known as Eree's Coffee House. In the year 1848 it was agreed that they should subscribe together and have a Temperance Hall of their own for their meetings. To this end three of them, Messrs Barralet, Harvey, and Harris, became securities for the lease of No. 1 Warner Place, then a large old-fashioned dwelling-house; and a Hall was built out at the back. As the promoters were anxious to be of service to Mrs Sharples Carlile, who after the death of Richard Carlile was left with her three children in very poor circumstances, they invited her to undertake the superintendence of the coffee room, and to reside at Warner Place with her daughters Hypatia and Theophila and her son Julian.

When my father first met her, Mrs Sharples Carlile, then about forty-five years of age, was a woman of considerable attainments. She belonged to a very respectable and strictly religious family at Bolton; was educated in the Church with her two sisters under the Rev. Mr Thistlethwaite; and, to use an expression of her own, was "quite an evangelical being, sang spiritual songs, and prayed myself into the grave almost." Her mind, however, was not quite of the common order, and perhaps the excess of ardour with which she had thrown herself into her religious pursuits made the recoil more easy and more decided. Be this as it may, it is nevertheless remarkable that, surrounded entirely by religious people, reading no anti-theological literature, she unaided thought herself out of "the doctrines of the Church." After some two-and-a-half-years of this painful evolution, accident made her acquainted with a Mr Hardie, a follower of Carlile's. He seems to have lent her what was at that time called "infidel literature," and so inspired her with the most ardent enthusiasm for Richard Carlile, and in a less

degree for the Rev. Robert Taylor. On the 11th January 1832, whilst Carlile was undergoing one of the many terms of imprisonment to which he was condemned for conscience' sake, Miss Sharples came to London, and on the 29th of the same month she gave her first lecture at the Rotunda.

On the 11th of February this young woman of barely twenty-eight summers, but one month escaped from the trammels of life in a country town, amidst a strictly religious environment, started a "weekly publication" called *Isis*, dedicated to "The young women of England for generations to come or until superstition is extinct." The *Isis* was published at sixpence, and contains many of Miss Sharples' discourses both on religious and political subjects. In religion she was a Deist; in politics a Radical and Republican; thus following in the footsteps of her leader Richard Carlile. I have been looking through the volume of the *Isis;* it is all very "proper" (as even Mrs Grundy would have to confess), and I am bound to say that the stilted phrases and flowery turns of speech of sixty years ago are to me not a little wearisome; but with all its defects, it is an enduring record of the ability, knowledge, and courage of Mrs Sharples Carlile. She reprints some amusing descriptions of herself from the religious press; and were I not afraid of going too much out of my way, I would reproduce them here with her comments in order that we might picture her more clearly; but although this would be valuable in view of the evil use made of her name in connection with her kindness to my father, it would take me too far from the definite purpose of my work. In her preface to the volume, written in 1834, she thus defends her union with Richard Carlile:—

"There are those who reproach my marriage. They are scarcely worth notice; but this I have to say for myself, that nothing could have been more pure in morals, more free from venality. It was not only a marriage of two bodies, but a marriage of two congenial spirits; or two minds reasoned into the same knowledge of true principles, each seeking an object on which virtuous affection might rest, and grow, and strengthen. And though we passed over a legal obstacle, it was only because it could not be removed, and was not in a spirit of violation of the law, nor of intended offence or injury to any one. A marriage more pure and moral was never formed and continued in England. It was what marriage should be, though not perhaps altogether what marriage is in the majority

of cases. They who are married equally moral, will not find fault with mine; but where marriage is merely of the law or for money, and not of the soul, there I look for abuse." *

Of course, all this happened long before Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with Mrs Carlile; when he knew her, sixteen or seventeen years later, she was a broken woman, who had had her ardour and enthusiasm cooled by suffering and poverty, a widow with three children, of whom Hypatia, the eldest, could not have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old at the most. I have been told by those who knew Mrs Carlile in those days that in spite of all this she still had a most noble presence, and looked and moved "like a queen." Her gifts, however, they said, with smiles, certainly did not lie in attending to the business of the coffee room —at that she was "no good." She was quiet and reserved, and although Christians have slandered her both during her lifetime and up till within this very year on account of her non-legalised union with Richard Carlile, she was looked up to and revered by those who knew her, and never was a whisper breathed against her fair fame.

Amongst the frequenters of the Warner Street Temperance Hall

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* In the *Gauntlet* for Sept. 22nd, 1833, Carlile, who had been formally separated from his wife nine months previously, says :—

"Many months did not elapse before we stood pledged to a moral marriage, and to a resolution to avow that marriage immediately after my liberation. I took the first opportunity of doing it, as I now take the first of explaining the introduction. As a public man, I will be associated with nothing that is to be concealed from the public. Many, I know, will carp upon my freedom as to divorce and marriage; and to such persons I say, if they are worth a word, that I do so because I hate hypocrisy, because I hate everything that is foul and indecent, because I will not deceive any one. I have led a miserable wedded life through twenty years, from disparity of mind and temper; and, for the next twenty, I have resolved to have a wife in whom I may find a companion and helpmate. . . . . I will make one woman happy, and I will not make any other woman unhappy. RICHARD CARLILE.

"*P.S.*—I would not have intruded this matter upon the public notice had it not been intended that the lady, as well as myself, will continue to lecture publicly. We are above deception. Our creed is truth, and our morals nothing but is morally and reasonably to be defended. Priestcraft hath no law for us; but every virtue, everything that is good and useful to human nature in society, has its binding law on us. We will practise every virtue and war with every vice. This is our moral marriage and our bond of union. Who shall show against it any just cause or impediment?"

I find the names of Messrs Harvey, Colin Campbell, the brothers Savage,* the brothers Barralet, Tobias Taylor, Edward Cooke, and others, of whom most Freethinkers have heard something. They seem to have been rather wild, compared with the sober dignity of the John Street Institution, especially in the way of lecture bills with startling announcements, reminding one somewhat of the modern Salvation Army posters. The neighbourhood looked with no favourable eye upon the little hall, and I am told that one night, when a baby was screaming violently next door, a rumour got about that the "infidels" were sacrificing a baby, and the place was stormed by an angry populace, who were with difficulty appeased.

It was to this little group of earnest men that the youth Charles Bradlaugh was introduced in 1848, as one eager to debate, and enthusiastically determined to convert them all to the "true religion" in which he had been brought up. He discussed with Colin Campbell, a smart and fluent debater; he argued with James Savage, a man of considerable learning, a cool and calm reasoner, and a deliberate speaker, whose speech on occasion was full of biting sarcasms; and after a discussion with the latter upon "The Inspiration of the Bible," my father admitted that he was convinced by the superior logic of his antagonist, and owning himself beaten, felt obliged to abandon his defence of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, he did not suddenly leap into Atheism: his views were for a little time inclined to Deism; but once started on the road of doubt, his careful study and—despite his youth—judicial temper, gradually brought him to the Atheistic position. With the Freethinkers of Warner Place he became a teetotaller, which was an additional offence in the eyes of the orthodox; and while still in a state of indecision on certain theological points, he submitted

* There were three of these brothers, all remarkable for their courage, pertinacity, or ability. One of them, John Savage, refused to pay taxes in 1833. The best of his goods were seized and, in spite of Mr Savage's protests, carried away in a van. There was so much feeling about the taxes at the time that no sooner did the people living in the neighbourhood (Circus Street, Marylebone) hear of the seizure than they collected in great numbers. The van was followed, taken possession of, and brought back to Circus Street. The goods were removed, the horse taken out of the shafts, and the van demolished. After the news spread throughout the metropolis the excitement became so great that the Horse Guards at the Regent's Park Barracks were put under arms. They had lively times sixty years ago.

Robert Taylor's "Diegesis" to his spiritual director, the Rev. J. G. Packer.

During all this time Mr Packer had not been idle. He obtained a foothold in my father's family, insisted on the younger children regularly attending Church and Sunday School, rocked the baby's cradle, and talked over the father and mother to such purpose that they consented to hang all round the walls of the sitting-room great square cards, furnished by him, bearing texts which he considered appropriate to the moment. One, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," was hung up in the most prominent place over the fireplace, and just opposite the place where the victim sat to take his meals. Such stupid and tactless conduct would be apt to irritate a patient person, and goad even the most feeble-spirited into some kind of rebellion; and I cannot pretend that my father was either one or the other. He glowered angrily at the texts, and was glad enough to put the house door between himself and the continuous insult put upon him at the instigation of Mr Packer. In 1860, the rev. gentleman wrote a letter described later by my father as "mendacious," in which he sought to explain away his conduct, and to make out that he had tried to restrain Mr Bradlaugh, senior. In illustration thereof, he related the following incident:—

"The father, returning home one evening, saw a board hanging at the Infidels' door announcing some discussion by Bradlaugh, in which my name was mentioned not very respectfully, which announcement so enraged the father that he took the board down and carried it home with him, the Infidels calling after him, and threatening him with a prosecution if he did not restore the placard immediately.

"When Mr Bradlaugh, senior, got home, and had had a little time for reflection, he sent for me and asked my advice, and I urged him successfully immediately to send [back] the said placard."

That little story, like certain other little stories, is extremely interesting, but unfortunately it has not the merit of accuracy. The facts of the case have been told me by my father's sister (Mrs Norman), who was less than two years younger than her brother Charles, and who, like him, is gifted with an excellent, almost unerring memory. Her story is this. One autumn night (the end of October or beginning of November) Mr Packer came to the house to see her father. He had not yet come home from his office, so Mr Packer sat down and rocked the cradle, which contained a few-

days-old baby girl. After some little time, during which Mr Packer kept to his post as self-constituted nurse, Mr Bradlaugh, sen., returned home. The two men were closeted together for a few minutes, and then went out together. It was a wild and stormy night, and Mr Bradlaugh wore one of those large cloaks that are I think called "Inverness" capes. After some time he came home, carrying under his cape two boards which he had taken away from the Warner Place Hall. He behaved like a madman, raving and stamping about, until the monthly nurse, who had long known the family, came downstairs to know what was the matter. He showed her the boards, and told her he was going to burn them. Mrs Bailey, the nurse, begged him not to do so, talked to him and coaxed him, and reminded him that he might have an action brought against him for stealing, and at length tried to induce him to let her take them back. By this time the stress of his rage was over, and she, taking his consent for granted, put on her shawl, and hiding the boards beneath it, went out into the rain and storm to replace them outside the Hall. The inference Mrs Norman drew from these proceedings was that Mr Packer had urged on her father to do what he dared not do himself. It is worthy of note that when Mrs Norman told me the story neither she nor I had read Mr Packer's version, and did not even know that he had written one.

When Mr Packer received the "Diegesis" he seems to have looked upon the sending of it as an insult, and, exercising all the influence he had been diligently acquiring over the mind of Mr Bradlaugh, sen., induced him to notify Messrs Green & Co., the coal merchants and employers of his son, that he would withdraw his security if within the space of three days his son did not alter his views. Thus Mr Packer was able to hold out to his rebellious pupil the threat that he had three days in which "to change his opinions or lose his situation."

Whether it was ever intended that this threat should be carried out it is now impossible to determine. Mr Bradlaugh, who seldom failed to find a word on behalf of those who tried to injure him—even for Mr Newdegate and Lord Randolph Churchill he could find excuses when any of us resented their bigoted or spiteful persecution—said in his "Autobiography," written in 1873, that he thought the menace was used to terrify him into submission, and that there was no real intention of enforcing it. Looking at

the whole circumstances, and from a practical point of view, this seems likely. One is reluctant to believe that a father would permit himself to be influenced by his clergyman to the extent of depriving his son of the means of earning his bread. His own earnings were so scanty that he could ill afford to throw away his son's salary, especially if he would have to keep him in addition. The one strong point in favour of the harsher view is that when the son took the threat exactly to the letter, the father never called him back or made a sign from which might be gathered that he had been misunderstood; and he suffered the boy to go without one word to show that the ultimatum had been taken too literally.

At the time, at any rate, my father had no doubt as to the full import of the threat. He took it in all its naked harshness—three days in which to change his opinions or lose his situation. To a high-spirited lad, to lose his situation under such circumstances meant of course to lose his home, for he could not eat the bread of idleness at such a cost, even had the father been willing to permit it. On the third day, therefore, he packed his scanty belongings, parted from his dear sister Elizabeth, with tears and kisses and a little parting gift, which she treasures to this hour, and thus left his home. From that day almost until his death his life was one long struggle against the bitterest animosity which religious bigotry could inspire. In the face of all this he pursued the path he had marked out for himself without once swerving, and although the cost was great, in the end he always triumphed in his undertakings—up to the very last, when the supreme triumph came as his life was ebbing away in payment for it, and when he was beyond caring for the good or evil opinion of any man.

It is now the fashion to make Mr Packer into a sort of scapegoat: his harsh reception of his pupil's questions and subsequent ill-advised methods of dealing with him are censured, and he is in a manner made responsible for my father's Atheism. If no other Christian had treated Mr Bradlaugh harshly; if every other clergyman had dealt with him in kindly fashion; if he had been met with kindness instead of slanders and stones, abuse and ill-usage, then these censors of Mr Packer might have some just grounds on which to reproach him for misusing his position; as it is, they should ask themselves which among them has the right

to cast the first stone. The notion that it was Mr Packer's treatment of him that drove my father into Atheism is, I am sure, absolutely baseless. Those who entertain this belief forget that Mr Bradlaugh had already begun to compare and criticise the various narratives in the four Gospels, and that it was on account of this (and therefore after it) that the Rev. J. G. Packer was so injudicious as to denounce him as an Atheist, and to suspend him from his Sunday duties. This harsh and blundering method of dealing with him no doubt hastened his progress towards Atheism, but it assuredly did not induce it. It set his mind in a state of opposition to the Church as represented by Mr Packer, a state which the rev. gentleman seems blindly to have fostered by every means in his power; and it gave him the opportunity of the Sunday's leisure to hear what Atheism really was, expounded by some of the cleverest speakers in the Freethought movement at that time. But in spite of all this, he was not driven pell-mell into Atheism; he joined in the religious controversy from the orthodox standpoint, and was introduced into the little Warner Place Hall as an eager champion on behalf of Christianity.

Those persons too who entertain this idea of Mr Packer's responsibility are ignorant of, or overlook, what manner of man Mr Bradlaugh was. He could not rest with his mind unsettled or undecided; he worked out and solved for himself every problem which presented itself to him. He moulded his ideas on no man's: he looked at the problem on all sides, studied the pros and cons, and decided the solution for himself. Therefore, having once started on the road to scepticism, kindlier treatment would no doubt have made him longer in reaching the standpoint of pure Rationalism, but in any case the end would have been the same.

CHAPTER III.

YOUTH.

DRIVEN from home because he refused to be a hypocrite, Charles Bradlaugh stood alone in the world at sixteen; cut off from kindred and former friends, with little or nothing in the way of money or clothes, and with the odium of Atheist attached to his name in lieu of character. To seek a situation seemed useless: what was to be done? To whom should he turn for help and sympathy if not to those for whose opinions he was now suffering? To these he went, and they, scarce richer than himself, welcomed him with open arms. An old Chartist and Freethinker, a Mr B. B. Jones, gave him hospitality for a week, while he cast about for means of earning a livelihood. Mr Jones was an old man of seventy; and in after years, when he had grown too feeble to do more than earn a most precarious livelihood by selling Freethought publications, Mr Bradlaugh had several times the happiness of being able to show his gratitude practically by lecturing and getting up a fund for his benefit. Having learned something about the coal trade whilst with Messrs Green, my father determined to try his fortune as a "coal merchant;" but unhappily he had no capital, and consequently required to be paid for the coals before he himself could get them to supply his customers. Under these circumstances it is hardly wonderful that his business was small. He, however, got together a few customers, and managed to earn a sufficient commission to keep him in bread and cheese. He had some cards printed, and in a boyish spirit of bravado pushed one under his father's door. Mr Headingley, in the "Biography of Mr Bradlaugh" that he wrote in 1880, gives the story of the "principal customer" in pretty much the very words in which he heard it, so I reproduce it here intact:—

"Bradlaugh's principal customer was the good-natured wife of a baker, whose shop was situated at the corner of Goldsmith's Road. As

she required several tons of coal per week to bake the bread, the commission on this transaction amounted to about ten shillings a week, and this constituted the principal source of Bradlaugh's income. The spirit of persecution, however, was abroad. Some kind friend considerately informed the baker's wife that Bradlaugh was in the habit of attending meetings of Secularists and Freethinkers, where he had been known to express very unorthodox opinions. This was a severe blow to the good lady. She had always felt great commiseration for Bradlaugh's forlorn condition, and a certain pride in herself for helping him in his distress. When, therefore, he called again for orders she exclaimed at once, but still with her wonted familiarity—

"'Charles, I hear you are an Infidel!'

"At that time Bradlaugh was not quite sure whether he was an Infidel or not; but he instinctively foresaw that the question addressed him might interfere with the smooth and even course of his business; he therefore deftly sought to avoid the difficulty by somewhat exaggerating the importance of the latest fluctuation in the coal market.

"The stratagem was of no avail. His kind but painfully orthodox customer again returned to the charge, and then Bradlaugh had to fall back upon the difficulty of defining the meaning of the word Infidel, in which line of argument he evidently failed to produce a favourable impression. Again and again he tried to revert to the more congenial subject of a reduction in the price of coals, and when, finally, he pressed hard for the usual order, the interview was brought to a close by the baker's wife. She declared in accents of firm conviction, which have never been forgotten, that she could not think of having any more coals from an Infidel.

"'I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone,' she added with a shudder."

It always strikes me as a little odd that orthodox people, who believe that the heretic will have to undergo an eternity of punishment—a punishment so awful that a single hour of it would amply suffice to avenge even a greater crime than the inability to believe—yet regard that as insufficient, and do what they can on earth to give the unbeliever a foretaste of the heavenly mercy to come. This little story of the kind-hearted woman turned from her kindness by some bigoted busybody is a mild case in point. Such people put a premium on hypocrisy, and make the honest avowal of opinion a crime.

In so limited a business the loss of the chief customer was naturally a serious matter; and although the young coal merchant struggled on for some time longer, he was at last obliged to seek

for other means of earning his bread. For a little while he tried selling buckskin braces on commission for Mr Thomas J. Barnes. Mr Barnes gave him a breakfast at starting in the morning, and a dinner on his return at night, but as he could only sell a limited quantity of the braces he grew ever poorer and poorer.

Early in my father's troubles, Mrs Carlile and her children seem to have taken a warm liking for him. He shared Julian Carlile's bed, and there was always a place at the family table—such as it was—whenever he wanted it. He read Hebrew with Mr James Savage, and in turn taught Hebrew and Greek to Mr Thomas Barralet, then a young man of his own age, his particular friend and companion at the time. With the Carlile children he had lessons in French from Mr Harvey, an old friend of Richard Carlile's. These "French" days, I can readily believe, were altogether red-letter days. Usually, from motives of economy, the *menu* was made up on a strictly vegetarian basis; but when Mr Harvey came he invariably invited himself to dinner, and having a little more money than most of the others, he always provided the joint. Mr Bradlaugh says in his "Autobiography" that while with the Carliles he picked up "a little Hebrew and an imperfect smattering of other tongues." Then and with subsequent study he acquired a good knowledge of Hebrew; French he could read and speak (although with a somewhat English accent) as easily as his own tongue; he knew a little Arabic and Greek; and he could make his way through Latin, Italian, or Spanish, though of German and its allied languages he knew nothing.

It was whilst under Mrs Carlile's roof my father fell in love with Hypatia, Mrs Carlile's eldest daughter; and this fleeting attachment of a boy and girl (or rather, I should say of a boy *for* a girl, for I know that Miss Carlile laughed at my father's pretensions, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that she felt anything more than a sisterly affection for him) would hardly be worth alluding to had not a whole scandal been built upon it. As far as I can trace, the vile and iniquitous statements that have been made as to the relations between my father and Hypatia Carlile—he between sixteen and seventeen, and she a year or two younger—originated with the Rev. J. G. Packer and the Rev. Brewin Grant; and since Mr Bradlaugh's death there have not been wanting worthy disciples of these gentlemen, who have

endeavoured to revive these unwarranted accusations. Mrs Carlile was also vaguely accused of making "a tool" of the lad, and involving him in money transactions!—— It is not easy to sympathise with the temper which makes people so unable to understand the generous heart of a woman who, herself desperately poor, could yet freely share the crumbs of her poverty with one whose need was even greater than her own, and give a home and family to the lad who had forfeited his own purely for conscience' sake.

As after my father left home he was chiefly sheltered by the Carliles at 1 Warner Place, I cannot imagine what Mr Headingley* means by saying that Mr Bradlaugh was saved the anxiety of pursuit by his parents. There was no necessity for pursuit; he was never at any time far from home, and for the most part was in the same street, only a few doors off. His parents knew where he was; he was often up and down their street; and his sister Elizabeth would watch to see him pass, or would loiter about near the Temperance Hall to catch a glimpse of her brother. She was peremptorily forbidden to exchange a word with him; and when they passed in the street, this loving brother and sister, who were little more than children in years, would look at each other, and not daring to speak, would both burst into tears. In spite of all this I never heard my father say an unkind or bitter, or even a merely reproachful word about either of his parents.

Having once begun to speak at the open-air meetings in Bonner's Fields, he continued speaking there or at Victoria Park, Sunday after Sunday, during the day, and in the evening at the Warner Place Temperance Hall, or at a small Temperance Hall in Philpot Street. I am also informed that he lectured on Temperance at the *Wheatsheaf* in Mile End Road. The *British Banner* for July 31st, 1850, contains a letter signed D. J. E., on "Victoria Park on the Lord's Day." The writer, after dwelling at length upon the sinfulness and general iniquity of the Sunday frequenters of the park, who, he affirmed, sauntered in "sinful idleness" . . . . "willing listeners to the harangues of the Chartist, the Socialist, the infidel and scoffer," goes on to say of my father:—

"The stump orator for the real scoffing party is an overgrown boy of seventeen, with such an uninformed mind, that it is really amusing to

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* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

see him sometimes stammering and spluttering on in his ignorant eloquence, making the most ludicrous mistakes, making all history to suit his private convenience, and often calling yea nay, and nay yea, when it will serve his purpose. He is styled by the frequenters of the park as the 'baby'; and I believe he is listened to very often m re from real curiosity to know what one so young will say, than from any love the working men have to his scoffings."

At the conclusion of a long letter, the writer says :—

"It gives me great delight to state that the working men have no real sympathy with Infidels and scoffers, but would far sooner listen to an exposition of the Word of God. To give you an instance. One Sunday I opposed the 'baby' of whom I have spoken, and instantly there was a space cleared for us, and an immense ring formed around us. The Infidel spoke first, and I replied; he spoke again, and was in the midst of uttering some dreadful blasphemy, copied from Paine's 'Age of Reason,' when the people could suppress their indignation no longer, but uttered one loud cry of disapprobation. When silence had been obtained, I addressed to them again a few serious kind words, and told them that if they wish me to read to them the Word of God, I would do so; that if they wished me to pray with them, I would do so. Upon my saying this, nearly all the company left the Infidel, and repaired to an adjoining tree, where I read and expounded the Word of God with them for about an hour."

In this first press notice of himself Mr Bradlaugh had an introductory specimen of the accuracy, justice, and generosity, of which he was later to receive so many striking examples from the English press generally, and the London and Christian press in particular.

In attending Freethought meetings Charles Bradlaugh became acquainted with Austin Holyoake, and a friendship sprang up between these two which ended only with the death of Mr Holyoake in 1874. By Austin Holyoake he was taken to the John Street Institution, and by him also he was introduced to his elder and more widely-known brother, Mr George Jacob Holyoake, who took the chair for him at a lecture on the "Past, Present, and Future of Theology" at the Temperance Hall, Commercial Road. Mr G. J. Holyoake, in a sketch of my father's life and career written in 1891, says :—

"It will interest many to see what was the beginning of his splendid career on the platform, to copy the only little handbill in existence Only a few weeks before his death, looking over an old diary, which

I had not opened for forty-one years, I found the bill, of which I enclose you the facsimile. It is Bradlaugh's first placard:—

LECTURE HALL,

PHILPOT ST., (3 DOORS FROM COMMERCIAL ROAD).

A LECTURE

WILL BE DELIVERED BY

CHARLES BRADLAUGH, JUN.,

On Friday, October the 10*th*, 1850,

SUBJECT:

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THEOLOGY.

MR GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE,

Editor of the "Reasoner,"

WILL TAKE THE CHAIR AT EIGHT O'CLOCK PRECISELY.

A Collection will be made after the Lecture for the Benefit of C. Bradlaugh, victim of the Rev. J. G. Packer, of St. Peter's, Hackney Road.

"Being his first public friend, I was asked to take the chair for him. Bradlaugh's subject was a pretty extensive one for the first lecture of a youth of seventeen, who looked more like fourteen as he stood up in a youth's round jacket; but he spoke with readiness, confidence, and promise."

In May 1850, "at the age of 16 years 7½ months," Mr Bradlaugh wrote an "Examination of the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with remarks on the life and death of the meek and lowly Jesus." This he "altered and amended" in June 1854, but it was never published. In the preface, written in 1850, he says, "I think I can prove that there did exist a man named Jesus χρηστος the good man," but in 1854 he no longer adheres to this position, and adds a note: "I would not defend the existence of Jesus as a man at all, although I have not sufficient evidence to deny it." Through the kindness of a friend I am in possession of the MS. volume containing this "Examination," which, apart from its value to me personally, is extremely interesting as showing how carefully my father went about his work, even at an age when

many lads are still at school. A month or so after writing this critical examination, "C. Bradlaugh, jun.," published his first pamphlet, entitled, "A Few Words on the Christian's Creed." To the Rev. J. G. Packer he dedicated his first printed attack upon orthodox Christianity, addressing him in the following words :—

"SIR,—Had the misfortunes which I owe to your officious interference been less than they are, and personal feeling left any place in my mind for deliberation or for inquiry in selecting a proper person to whom to dedicate these few remarks, I should have found myself directed, by many considerations, to the person of the Incumberer of St Peter's, Hackney Road. A life spent in division from part of your flock, and in crushing those whom you could not answer, may well entitle you to the respect of all true bigots.—Hoping that you will be honoured as you deserve, I am, Reverend Sir, yours truly, C. BRADLAUGH."

At the end of October in the same year he sent "a report of the closing season's campaign in Bonner's Fields, Victoria Park," to the *Reasoner*, from which I take an extract, not without interest for the light it throws upon the manners and methods then common at these out-door assemblies :—

"In May last, when I joined the fray, the state of affairs was as follows : In front of us, near the park gates, were stationed some two or three of the followers of the Victoria Park Mission, who managed to get a moderate attendance of hearers ; on our extreme left was the Rev. Henry Robinson, who mustered followers to the amount of three or four hundred ; on our right, and close to our place of meeting, was erected the tent of the Christian Instruction Society ; sometimes, also, in our midst we have had the Rev. Mr Worrall, V.D.M., who gives out in his chapel one Sunday that infidelity is increasing, and that there must be fresh subscriptions for more Sunday-school teachers (who are never paid), and the next Sunday announces in the Fields that infidelity is dying away. Besides these, we have had Dr Oxley, and some dozens of tract distributors, who seemed to have no end to their munificence —not forgetting Mr Harwood, and a few other irregular preachers, who told us how wicked they had been in their youth, and what a mercy it was the Lord had changed them.

"When I first came out I attracted a little extra attention on account of my having been a Sunday-school teacher, and therefore had more opposition than some of our other friends ; and as the Freethinking party did not muster quite so well as they do now, I met with some very unpleasant occurrences. One Monday evening in particular I was well stoned, and some friends both saw and heard several Christians

urging the boys to pelt me. As, however, the attendance of the Free-thinkers grew more regular, these minor difficulties vanished. But more serious ones rose in their place. George Offer, Esq., of Hackney, and Dr Oxley, intimated to the police that I ought not to be allowed to speak; and a Christian gentleman whose real name and address we could never get, but who passed by the name of Tucker, after pretending that he was my friend to Mrs Carlile, and learning all he could of me, appeared in the Park and made the most untrue charges. When he found he was being answered, he used to beckon the police and have me moved on. . . . . I happened to walk up to the Fields one evening, when I saw some of the bills announcing our lecture at Warner Place pulled down from the tree on which they had been placed. I immediately renewed them, and on the religious persons attempting to pull the bills down again I defended them; and one gentleman having broken a parasol over my arm in attempting to tear the bills, the congregation, of which Mr Robinson was the leader, became furious. The pencil of Cruikshank would have given an instructive and curious picture of the scene. They were crying out, men and women too, 'Down with him!' 'Have him down!' And here the scene would have been very painful to my feelings, for down they would have had me had not my own party gathered round, on which a treaty of peace was come to on the following terms, viz. that the man who tried to pull the bills down should guard them to keep them up as long as the religious people stayed there. Mr Robinson applied for a warrant against me, but the magistrate refused to grant it."

On another occasion, when some people whom he and Mr James Savage had been addressing in the Park had become unduly excited by a Scotch preacher, who politely informed them that they were "a generation of vipers," Mr Bradlaugh stepped forward in an attempt to pacify them, but much to his surprise was himself seized by police. Fortunately, several of the bystanders volunteered to go to the police station with him, and he was immediately released.

Nowadays the Parks and the Commons are the happy hunting-grounds for the outdoor speaker, where he inculcates almost any doctrine he chooses, unmolested by the police or the public.

But all his debating and writing, all his studying, did not fill my father's pockets; they, like their owner, grew leaner every day. With his increasing poverty he fell into debt: it was not much that he owed, only £4 15s., but small as the sum was, it was more than he could repay, or see any definite prospect of repaying, unless he could strike out some new path. My grandfather, Mr Hooper, who knew him then, not personally, but by seeing and hearing him, used to call him "the young enthusiast," and many a time in later years recalled his figure as he appeared in the winter of 1850, in words that have brought tears to my eyes. Tall, gaunt, white-faced and hollow cheeked, with arms too long for his sleeves, and trousers too short for his legs, he looked, what indeed he was, nearly starving. "He looked *hungry*, Hypatia," my grandfather would say with an expressive shudder; "he looked hungry." And others have told me the same tale. How *could* his parents bear to know that he had come to such a pass!

A subscription was offered him by some Freethinking friends, and deeply grateful as he was, it yet brought his poverty more alarmingly before him. One night in December, one of the brothers Barralet met him looking as I have said, and invited him into a coffee house close by to discuss some scheme or other. They went in and chatted for some minutes, but when the waiter had brought the food, it seemed suddenly to strike the guest that the "scheme" was merely an excuse to give him a supper, and with one look at his companion, he jumped up and fled out of the room.

On Sunday, the 15th of December, he was lecturing in Bonner's Fields, and went home with the sons of Mr Samuel Record to dinner. They tell that while at dinner he threw his arms up above his head and asked Mr Record in a jesting tone, "How do

you think I should look in regimentals?" The elder man replied, "My boy, you are too noble for that." Unfortunately, a noble character could not clothe his long limbs, or fill his empty stomach, nor could it pay that terrible debt of £4 15s.

With "soldiering" vaguely in his mind, but yet without a clearly defined intention of enlisting, he went out two days afterwards, determined upon doing something to put an end to his present position. He walked towards Charing Cross, and there saw a poster inviting smart young men to join the East India Company's Service, and holding out to recruits the tempting bait of a bounty of £6 10s. This bounty was an overpowering inducement to the poor lad; his debts amounted to £4 15s.; this £6 10s. would enable him to pay all he owed and stand free once more. As Mr John M. Robertson justly says in his Memoir,* this incident was typical: "All through his life he had to shape his course to the paying off of his debts, toil as he would." Mr Headingley † tells that

"With a firm step, resolutely and soberly, Bradlaugh went down some steps to a bar where the recruiting sergeants were in the habit of congregating. Here he discerned the very fat, beery, but honest sergeant, who was then enlisting for the East India Service, and at once volunteered. Bradlaugh little imagined, when he stepped out of the cellar and crossed Trafalgar Square once more—this time with the fatal shilling in his pocket—that after all he would never go to the East Indies, but remain in England to gather around him vast multitudes of enthusiastic partisans, who, on that very spot, would insist on his taking his seat in Parliament, as the member for Northampton; and this, too, in spite of those heterodox views which, as yet, had debarred him from earning even the most modest livelihood.

"It happened, however, that the sergeant of the East India Company had 'borrowed a man' from the sergeant of the 50th Foot, and he determined honestly to pay back his debt with the person of Bradlaugh; so that after some hocus-pocus transactions between the two sergeants, Bradlaugh was surprised to find that he had been duly enrolled in the 50th Foot, and was destined for home service. Such a trick might have been played with impunity on some ignorant country yokel; but Bradlaugh at once rebelled, and made matters very uncomfortable for all persons concerned.

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* Labour and Law, by Charles Bradlaugh. With Memoir by John M. Robertson.

† Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

"Among other persons to whom he explained all his grievances was the medical officer who examined him. This gentleman fortunately took considerable interest in the case, and had a long chat with Bradlaugh. He could not engage him for India, as he belonged to the home forces, but he invited him to look out of the window, where the sergeants were pacing about, and select the regiment he might prefer. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh was not particularly disappointed at being compelled to remain in England; he objected principally to the lack of respect implied in trifling with his professed intentions. He was, therefore, willing to accept the compromise suggested by the physician. So long as his right of choice was respected, it did not much matter to him in which regiment he served.

"After watching for a little while the soldiers pacing in front of the window, his choice fell on a very smart cavalry man, and, being of the necessary height, he determined to join his corps."

The regiment he elected to join proved to be the 7th (Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, and thus, through the kindly assistance of the doctor, at the age of "$17\frac{3}{12}$ years," he found himself a "full private" belonging to Her Majesty's forces.

After he enlisted he sent word, not to the father and mother who had treated him so coldly, but to the grandmother who loved him so dearly. She sent her daughter Mary to tell the parents of this new turn in their son's affairs, and the news seems to have been conveyed and received in a somewhat tragic manner. A day or so before Christmas Day she came with a face of gloomy solemnity to tell something so serious about Charles that the daughter Elizabeth, who happened to be there, was ordered out of the room. She remained weeping in the passage during the whole time of the family conclave, thinking that her brother must have done something very dreadful indeed.

Then the father went to see his son at Westminster, and obtained permission for the new recruit to spend the Christmas Day with his family. It is only natural to suppose that this semi-reconciliation must have afforded them all some sort of comfort, while I have a very strong personal conviction that the whole affair preyed upon the father's mind, and that the harshness he showed his son was really foreign to his general temper. Anyhow, his character underwent a great change after he let himself come under the influence of Mr Packer. He who before never went inside a church, now never missed a Sunday; he became concentrated and, to a certain extent, morose, and at length, on the 19th

August 1852, some twenty months after his son's enlistment, he was taken suddenly ill at his desk in Cloak Lane. He was brought home in a state of unconsciousness, from which he was only aroused to fall into violent delirium, and so continued without once recovering his senses until the hour of his death, which was reached on Tuesday the 24th. He was only forty-one years of age, and had always had good health previously, never ailing anything; and I feel quite convinced that the agony of mind which he must have endured from the time when his son was first denounced to him as an "Atheist" was mainly the cause of his early death.

The 7th Dragoon Guards was at that time quartered in Ireland, and Mr A. S. Headingley tells at length the tragic-comic adventures the new recruit met with at sea on the three days' journey from London to Dublin :—

"The recruits who were ordered to join their regiment were marched down to a ship lying in the Thames which was to sail all the way to Ireland. Bradlaugh was the only recruit who wore a black suit and a silk hat. The former was very threadbare, and the latter weak about the rim, but still to the other recruits he seemed absurdly attired ; and as he looked pale and thin and ill conditioned, it was not long before some one ventured to destroy the dignity of his appearance by bonneting him. The silk hat thus disposed of, much to the amusement of the recruits, who considered horse play the equivalent of wit, a raid was made upon Bradlaugh's baggage. His box was ruthlessly broken open, and when it was discovered that a Greek lexicon and an Arabic vocabulary were the principal objects he had thought fit to bring into the regiment, the scorn and derision of his fellow soldiers knew no bounds.

"A wild game of football was at once organized with the lexicon, and it came out of the scuffle torn and unmanageable. The Arabic vocabulary was a smaller volume, and it fared better. Ultimately, Bradlaugh recovered the book, and he keeps it still on his shelf, close to his desk, a cherished and useful relic of past struggles and endeavours.

. . . . . .

"His luggage broken open, his books scattered to the winds, his hat desecrated and ludicrously mis-shaped by the rough hands of his fellow recruits, Bradlaugh certainly did not present the picture of a future leader of men. Yet, even at this early stage of his military life, an opportunity soon occurred which turned the tables entirely in his favour.

"The weather had been looking ugly for some time, and now became more and more menacing, till at last a storm broke upon the ship with a violence so intense that the captain feared for her safety. It was

absolutely necessary to move the cargo, and his crew were not numerous enough to accomplish, unaided, so arduous a task. Their services also were urgently required to manœuvre the ship. The captain, therefore, summoned the recruits to help, and promised that if they removed the cargo as he indicated, he would give them £5 to share among themselves. He further encouraged them by expressing his hope that if the work were well and promptly done, the ship would pull through the storm.

"The proposition was greeted with cheers, and Bradlaugh, in spite of his sea-sickness, helped as far as he was able in moving the cargo. The ship now rode the waves more easily, and in due time the storm subsided; and, the danger over, the soldiers thought the hour of reckoning was at hand. The recruits began to inquire about the £5 which had been offered as the reward of their gallant services; but, with the disappearance of the danger, the captain's generosity had considerably subsided. He then hit on a mean stratagem to avoid the fulfilment of his promise. He singled out three or four of the leading men, the strongest recruits, and gave them two half-crowns each, calculating that if the strongest had a little more than their share, they would silence the clamours of the weaker, who were altogether deprived of their due.

"The captain had not, however, reckoned on the presence of Bradlaugh. The pale, awkward youth, who as yet had only been treated with jeers and contempt, was the only person who dared stand up and face him. To the unutterable surprise of every one, he delivered a fiery, menacing, unanswerable harangue, upbraiding the captain in no measured terms, exposing in lucid language the meanness of his action, and concluding with the appalling threat of a letter to the *Times*. To this day Bradlaugh remembers, with no small sense of self-satisfaction, the utter and speechless amazement of the captain at the sight of a person so miserable in appearance suddenly becoming so formidable in speech and menace.

"Awakened, therefore, to a consciousness of his own iniquity by Bradlaugh's eloquence, the captain distributed more money. The soldiers on their side at once formed a very different opinion of their companion, and, from being the butt, he became the hero of the troop. Every one was anxious to show him some sort of deference, and to make some acknowledgment for the services he had rendered."

While serving with his regiment Mr Bradlaugh was a most active advocate of temperance; he began, within a day or so of his arrival in Ireland, upon the quarter-master's daughters. He had been ordered to do some whitewashing for the quartermaster, and that officer's daughters saw him while he was at work, and took pity on him. I have told how he looked; and it is little

wonder that his appearance aroused compassion. They brought him a glass of port wine, but this my father majestically refused, and delivered to the amused girls a lecture upon the dangers of intemperance, emphasising his remarks by waves of the white-wash brush. He has often laughed at the queer figure he must have presented, tall and thin, with arms and legs protruding from his clothes, and raised up near to the ceiling on a board, above the two girls, who listened to the lecture, wineglass in hand. Later on, when he had gained a certain amount of popularity amongst his comrades, he used to be let out of the barrack-room windows when he could not get leave of absence, by means of blankets knotted together, in order to attend and speak at temperance meetings in Kildare. But the difficulty was not so much in getting out of barracks as in getting in again; and sometimes this last was not accomplished without paying the penalty of arrest. The men of his troop gave him the nickname of "Leaves," because of his predilection for tea and books; his soldier's knapsack contained a Greek lexicon, an Arabic vocabulary, and a Euclid, the beginnings of the library which at last numbered over 7000 volumes. Mr Bradlaugh remained a total abstainer for several years—until 1861. At that time he was in bad health, and was told by his physician that he was drinking too much tea; he drank tea in those days for breakfast, dinner, and tea, and whenever he felt thirsty in between. From that time until 1886 he took milk regularly for breakfast, and in 1886 he varied this regimen by adding a little coffee to his milk, with a little claret or hock for dinner or supper, and a cup of tea after dinner and at teatime. It has been said that he had a "passion for tea," but that is a mere absurdity. If he had been out, he would ask on coming in for a cup of tea, as another man would ask for a glass of beer or a brandy and soda, but he would take it as weak as you liked to give it him.

The stories of the energetic comment of the 300 dragoons upon the sermon of the Rev. Mr Halpin at Rathmines Church, and the assertion of a right of way by "Private Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.," have both been graphically told by Mr Headingley* and by Mrs Besant.†

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* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

† Review of Reviews, March 1891.

"On Sundays," relates Mr Headingley, "when it was fine, the regiment was marched to Rathmines Church, and here, on one occasion —it was Whit-Sunday—the Rev. Mr Halpin preached a sermon which he described as being beyond the understandings of the military portion of his congregation. This somewhat irritated the Dragoon Guards, and Bradlaugh, to their great delight, wrote a letter to the preacher, not only showing that he fully understood his sermon, but calling him to account for the inaccuracy of his facts and the illogical nature of his opinions.

"It was anticipated that an unpleasant answer might be made to this letter, and on the following Sunday the Dragoons determined to be fully prepared for the emergency. Accordingly, they listened carefully to the sermon. The Rev. Mr Halpin did not fail to allude to the letter he had received, but at the first sentence that was impertinent and contemptuous in its tone three hundred dragoons unhooked their swords as one man, and let the heavy weapons crash on the ground. Never had there been such a noise in a church, or a preacher so effectively silenced.

"An inquiry was immediately ordered to be held, Bradlaugh was summoned to appear, and serious consequences would have ensued; but, fortunately, the Duke of Cambridge came to Dublin on the next day, the review which was held in honour of his presence diverted attention, and so the matter dropped."

I give the right-of-way incident in Mrs Besant's words. While the regiment was at Ballincollig, she says—

"A curiously characteristic act made him the hero of the Inniscarra peasantry. A landowner had put up a gate across a right-of-way, closing it against soldiers and peasants, while letting the gentry pass through it. 'Leaves' looked up the question, and found the right-of-way was real; so he took with him some soldiers and some peasants, pulled down the gate, broke it up, and wrote on one of the bars, 'Pulled up by Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.' The landowner did not prosecute, and the gate did not reappear."

The landlord did not prosecute, because when he made his complaint to the officer commanding the regiment, the latter suggested that he should make quite certain that he had the law on his side, for Private Bradlaugh generally knew what he was about. The peasants, whose rights had been so boldly defended, did not confine their gratitude to words, but henceforth they kept their friend supplied with fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and such homely delicacies as they thought a private in a cavalry regiment would be likely to appreciate.

After speaking of the difficulties into which my father might have got over the Rathmines affair, Mrs Besant* tells of another occasion in which his position

"was even more critical. He was orderly room clerk, and a newly arrived young officer came into the room where he was sitting at work, and addressed to him some discourteous order. Private Bradlaugh took no notice. The order was repeated with an oath. Still no movement. Then it came again with some foul words added. The young soldier rose, drew himself to his full height, and, walking up to the officer, bade him leave the room, or he would throw him out. The officer went, but in a few minutes the grounding of muskets was heard outside, the door opened, and the Colonel walked in, accompanied by the officer. It was clear that the private soldier had committed an act for which he might be court-martialled, and as he said once, 'I felt myself in a tight place.' The officer made his accusation, and Private Bradlaugh was bidden to explain. He asked that the officer should state the exact words in which he had addressed him, and the officer who had, after all, a touch of honour in him, gave the offensive sentence word for word. Then Private Bradlaugh said, addressing his Colonel, that the officer's memory must surely be at fault in the whole matter, as he could not have used language so unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Colonel turned to the officer with the dry remark, 'I think Private Bradlaugh is right; there *must* be some mistake,' and he left the room."

Many are the stories that might be told of these his soldier's days. One incident that I have often heard him give, and which may well come in here, is referred to in Mr Robertson's interesting *Memoir* appended to my father's last book, "Labour and Law." This was an experience gained at Donnybrook Fair, the regiment being then quartered near "that historic village." "When Fair time came near the peasantry circulated a well-planned taunt to the effect that the men of the Seventh would be afraid to present themselves on the great day. The Seventh acted accordingly. Sixteen picked men got a day's leave—and shillelaghs. 'I was the shortest of the sixteen,'" said Mr Bradlaugh, as he related the episode, not without some humorous qualms, and *he* stood 6 feet 1½ inches. "The sixteen just 'fought through,' and their arms and legs were black for many weeks,

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* See Character Sketch *Charles Bradlaugh.*—Review of Reviews, March 1891.

though their heads, light as they clearly were, did not suffer seriously. But," he added, with a sigh, as he finished the story, "I *couldn't* do it now."

A further experience of a really tragic and terrible kind I will relate in my father's own words, for in these he most movingly describes a scene he himself witnessed, and a drama in which he took an unwilling part.

"Those of you who are Irishmen," he begins,* "will want no description of that beautiful valley of the Lee which winds between the hills from Cork, and in summer seems like a very Paradise, green grass growing to the water side, and burnished with gold in the morning, and ruddy to very crimson in the evening sunset. I went there on a November day. I was one of a troop to protect the law officers, who had come with the agent from Dublin to make an eviction a few miles from Inniscarra, where the river Bride joins the Lee. It was a miserable day—rain freezing into sleet as it fell—and the men beat down wretched dwelling after wretched dwelling, some thirty or forty perhaps. They did not take much beating down; there was no flooring to take up; the walls were more mud than aught else; and there was but little trouble in the levelling of them to the ground. We had got our work about three parts done, when out of one of them a woman ran, and flung herself on the ground, wet as it was, before the Captain of the troop, and she asked that her house might be spared—not for long, but for a little while. She said her husband had been born in it; he was ill of the fever, but could not live long, and she asked that he might be permitted to die in it in peace. Our Captain had no power; the law agent from Dublin wanted to get back to Dublin; his time was of importance, and he would not wait; and that man was carried out while we were there—in front of us, while the sleet was coming down—carried out on a wretched thing (you could not call it a bed), and he died there while we were there; and three nights afterwards, while I was sentry on the front gate at Ballincollig Barracks, we heard a cry, and when the guard was turned out, we found this

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* *National Reformer*, November 16, 1873. A speech on the Irish Question delivered in New York; reprinted from the *New York Tribune* of October 7th.

poor woman there a raving maniac, with one dead babe in one arm, and another in the other clinging to the cold nipple of her lifeless breast. And," asked my father, in righteous indignation, "if you had been brothers to such a woman, sons of such a woman, fathers of such a woman, would not rebellion have seemed the holiest gospel you could hear preached?"

CHAPTER V

ARMY LIFE CONCLUDED.

When his father died in 1852 Private Charles Bradlaugh came home on furlough to attend the funeral. He was by this time heartily sick of soldiering, and under the circumstances was specially anxious to get home to help in the support of his family. (This, one writer, without the slightest endeavour to be accurate even on the simplest matters, says is nonsense, because his family only numbered *two*, his mother and his brother!) His great-aunt, Elizabeth Trimby, promised to buy him out, and he went back to his regiment buoyed up by her promise. In September he was in hospital, ill with rheumatic fever, and after that he seems to have had more or less rheumatism during the remainder of his stay in Ireland; for in June 1853, in writing to his sister, apologising for having passed over her birthday without a letter, he says: "I was, unfortunately, on my bed from another attack of the rheumatism, which seized my right knee in a manner anything but pleasant, but it is a mere nothing to the dose I had last September, and I am now about again."

The letters I have by me of my father's, written home at this time, instead of teeming with fiery fury and magniloquent phrases as to shooting his officers,* are just a lad's letters; the sentences

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* Whether rightly or wrongly, my father thought he was treated with exceptional severity by his Captain during the first part of the time he was in the army; and this has been exaggerated into a story of how in his letters to his mother during the latter part of his army life he was "*constantly* informing her" that "unless she obtained his discharge he would put a bullet through this officer." The story, I need hardly say, is quite untrue, and to any one who knew my father must seem almost too absurd to need refutation. During Mr Bradlaugh's illness in 1889 Captain Walker, then General Sir Beauchamp Walker, called twice to inquire at Circus Road. My father was very dull and depressed one day as he lay in bed, and, thinking to cheer him,

for the most part a little formal and empty, with perhaps the most interesting item reserved for the postscript; now and again crude verses addressed to his sister, and winding up almost invariably with "write soon." After the father's death Mr Lepard, a member of the firm in which he had been confidential clerk for upwards of twenty-one years, used his influence to get the two youngest children, Robert and Harriet, into Orphan Asylums. While the matter was yet in abeyance Elizabeth seems to have written her brother asking if any of the officers could do anything to help in the matter, and on March 14th he answers her from Ballincollig:—

"I am very sorry to say that you have a great deal more to learn of the world yet, my dear Elizabeth, or you would not expect to find an officer of the army a subscriber to an Orphan Asylum. There may be a few, but the most part of them spend all the money they have in hunting, racing, boating, horses, dogs, gambling, and drinking, besides other follies of a graver kind, and have little to give to the poor, and less inclination to give it even than their means."

My father's great-aunt, Miss Elizabeth Trimby, died in June 1853, at the age of eighty-five. She died without having fulfilled her promise of buying her nephew's discharge; but as the little money she left, some £70, came to the Bradlaugh family, they had now the opportunity of themselves carrying out her intention, or, to be exact, her precise written wishes.*

The mother, in her heart, wanted her son home: she needed the comfort of his presence, and the help of his labour, to add to their scanty women's earnings; but she was a woman slow to forgive, and her son had set his parents' commands at defiance, and gone out into the world alone, rather than bow his neck to the yoke his elders wished to put upon him. She talked the matter over with her neighbours, and if it was a kindly, easy-going neighbour, who said, "Oh, I should have him home," then she

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I mentioned the names of persons who I knew he would like to hear had inquired; and when I read the name from the card, and said that General Walker had told the maid to "tell Mr Bradlaugh that his old Captain had called," he was delighted beyond measure, and was for the moment the boy private again, with the private's feelings for his superior officer. The visit gratified him almost as much as if it had been one from Mr Gladstone himself.

* *National Reformer*, Feb. 10, 1884.

allowed her real desires to warm her heart a little, and think that perhaps she would; if, on the other hand, her neighbour dilated upon the wickedness of her son, and the enormity of his offences, then she would harden herself against him. Her daughter Elizabeth wanted him home badly; and whilst her mother was away at Mitcham, attending the funeral, and doing other things in connection with the death of Miss Trimby, Elizabeth wrote to her brother, asking what it would cost to buy him out. He was instructed to write on a separate paper, as she was afraid of her mother's anger when she saw it, and wished to take the favourable opportunity of a soft moment to tell her. She was left in charge at home, and thinking her mother safe at Mitcham for a week, she had timed the answer to come in her absence. One day she had to leave the house to take home some work which she had been doing. On her return, much to her dismay, her mother met her at the door perfectly furious. The letter had come during the girl's short absence, and her mother had come home unexpectedly! "How dared she write her brother? How dared she ask such a question?" the mother demanded, and poor Elizabeth was in sad disgrace all that day, and for some time afterwards. This was the answer her brother sent, on June 22nd, from Cahir—

"As you wish, I send on this sheet what it would cost to buy me off; but I would not wish to rob you and mother like that.

For the Discharge	£30	0	0
Compensation for general clothing . .	0	17	6
Passage money home	1	16	0
	£32	13	6

or about £33.

"I could come home in regimentals, because clothes could be bought cheaper in London, and I would work like a slave; but do not think, my dear sister, I want to take the money from you and mother, though I would do anything to get from the army.

"We are under orders to march into the county of Clare to put down the rioters at Six Mile Bridge, in the coming election, and expect some fighting there."

The discharge was applied for in August, but I gather that Mr Lepard, who assisted my grandmother in the little legal matters arising out of Miss Trimby's death, was not very favourable to the

project, and seems to have required some guarantee as to my father's character,* before he would remit the money.

However, it was at length definitely arranged that the aunt's promise should be kept, and that her money should purchase the discharge according to her intentions. A thoroughly boyish letter gives expression to Private Bradlaugh's sentiments on hearing the good news. It is dated from "Cahir, 6th October 1853:—

"My Dear Mother,—When I opened your letter, before reading it I waved it three times round my head, and gave a loud 'hurra' from pure joy, for then I felt assured that all this was not a mere dream, but something very like reality. The £30 has not yet made its appearance on the scene. I shall be glad to see it, as I shall not feel settled till I get away. I am, however, rather damped to hear of your ill-health, but hope for something better. I have made inquiries about butter, but it is extremely dear, 1s. to 14d. per lb. in this county.

"When the £30 arrives I will write to let you know the day I shall be home. Till then, believe me, my dearest mother, your affectionate Son,

Charles Bradlaugh.

"Love to Elizabeth, Robert, and Harriet."

He did not have to wait long for the appearance of the £30 "on the scene," which speedily resulted in the following "parchment certificate:"—

"7th (Princess Royal's) Regiment of Dragoon Guards.

"These are to certify that Charles Bradlaugh, Private, born in the Parish of Hoxton, in or near the Town of London, in the County of

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* Amongst some letters my father gave me some long time ago is one which must have satisfied even Mr Lepard. It is as follows:—

"Cahir Barracks, September 23rd, 1853.

"Sir,—Having been informed by Private Charles Bradlaugh of the 7th Dragoon Guards, that you require some testimonials as to character, I beg to inform you that during the time this man has been in the regiment (since December 1850) his conduct has been extremely good, and I beg also to add that he is always considered to be a clever, well-informed, and steady young man. Should you require any further information, I shall be most happy to give [all] in my power.—I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

"E. T. Dowbiggin,

"J. Lepard, Esq. Lieut. and Adjutant, 7th Dragoon Guards.

"*P.S.*—I may observe that during the last eighteen months this man has been occupying rather a prominent situation in the regiment, being that of orderly room clerk, and has consequently been immediately under my notice."

Middlesex, was enlisted at Westminster for the 7th Dragoon Guards, on the 17th December 1850, at the age of $17\frac{5}{12}$ years. That he served in the Army for two years and 301 days. That he is discharged in consequence of his requesting the same, on payment of £30.

"C. F. AINSLIE, Hd. Commanding Officer.

"Dated at Cahir, 12th October 1853.

"Adjutant General's Office, Dublin.

"Discharge of Private Charles Bradlaugh confirmed.

"14th October 1853. J. EDEN,* 7th D. G.

"Character: Very Good.

"C. F. AINSLIE, 7th D. Guards."

The merely formal part of the discharge is made out in his own handwriting as orderly room clerk.

These three years of army life were of great value to my father. First of all physically: for a little time before he enlisted he had been half starved, and his health was being undermined by constant privation just at a time when his great and growing frame most needed nourishing. In the army he had food, which although it might be of a kind to be flouted by an epicure, was sufficiently abundant, and came at regular intervals. The obnoxious drill which he had to go through must have helped to broaden his chest (at his death he was forty-six-and-a-half inches round the chest) and harden his muscles, and so gave him the strength which served him so well in the later years of his life. He learned to fence and to ride, and both accomplishments proved useful in latter days. Fencing was always a favourite exercise with him and, in after days, when alone, he would also often exercise his muscles by going through a sort of sword drill with the old cavalry sabre, which is hanging on my wall to-day. Riding he at first abhorred, and probably any London East End lad would share his sentiments when first set upon a cavalry charger with a hard mouth; he was compelled to ride until the blood ran down his legs, and before these wounds had time to heal he had to be on horseback again. When he was orderly room clerk, and was not compelled to ride so often, then he took a liking for it, and then he really learned to sit and manage his horse. Often and often during the last years of his life he longed to be rich enough to keep a horse, so that he might ride to the House and wherever his

* This signature is almost illegible.

business might take him within easy distance, and thus get the exercise of which he stood so urgently in need.

It was, too, while with his regiment in Ireland that Mr Bradlaugh first became acquainted with James Thomson, an acquaintance which soon ripened into a friendship which lasted for five-and-twenty years. In the quiet nights, whilst the private was on sentry duty, he and the young schoolmaster would have long serious talks upon subjects a little unusual, perhaps, amongst the rank and file ; or in the evening, when Thomson's work was done, and Private Bradlaugh could get leave, they would go for a ramble together. They each became the confidant of the other's troubles and aspirations, and each was sure of a sympathetic listener.

That his regiment happened to be stationed in Ireland during the whole time he belonged to it was of immense importance to him. He learned the character and the needs of the Irish peasantry as he could have learned it in no other way. The sights he saw and the things he heard whilst he was in Ireland, as the story I cited a few pages back will show, produced in him such a profound feeling of tenderness and sympathy for the Irish people, that not all the personal enmity which was afterwards shown him by Irishmen could destroy or even weaken.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE.

Barely three short years away, yet how many changes in that short time. My father found, father, aunt, and grandmother dead; his little sister and brother—of five and eight years—in Orphan Asylums. Even his kind friend Mrs Carlile was dead, and her children scattered, gone to the other side of the Atlantic, to be lost sight of by him for many years. Of their fate he learned later that the two daughters were married, while Julian, his one time companion, was killed in the American War.

On his return my father's first endeavour was, of course, to seek for work, so that he might help to maintain his mother and sisters; but although he sought energetically, and at first had much faith in the charm of his "very good" character, no one seemed to want the tall trooper. After a little his mother, unhappily, began to taunt him with the legacy money having been used to buy his discharge; and although he thought, and always maintained, that the money was morally his, to be used for that purpose, since it was carrying out the intentions of his aunt expressed so short a time before her death, he nevertheless determined to, and in time did, pay every farthing back again to his mother, through whose hands the money had come to him. He was offered the post of timekeeper with a builder at Fulham, at a salary of 20s. a week; this Mrs Bradlaugh objected to, as taking him too far away from home.

One day he went, amongst other places, into the office of Mr Rogers, a solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, to inquire whether he wanted a clerk. Mr Rogers had no vacancy for a clerk, but mentioned casually that he wanted a lad for errands and office work. My father asked, "What wages?" "Ten shillings a week," replied Mr Rogers. "Then I'll take it," quickly decided my father, feeling rather in despair as to getting anything better, but bravely resolved to get something. Not that he was in reality very

long without work, for his discharge from the army was dated at Dublin, October 14th, 1853, and I have a letter written from "70 Fenchurch Street" on January 2nd, 1854, so that he could not have been idle for more than about two months at the most. There is no reference whatever in the letter to the newness of his situation, so that he had probably been with Mr Rogers some weeks prior to the 2nd January 1854. The solicitor soon found out that his "errand boy" had considerable legal knowledge and, what was even more important, a marvellous quickness in apprehension of legal points. At the end of each three months his salary was increased by five shillings, and after nine months he had intrusted to him the whole of the Common Law department. Very soon he was able to add a little to his income by acting as secretary to a Building Society at the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

As soon as my father found himself in regular employment he began to write and speak again; but even as the busy-bodies turned the kind-hearted baker's wife against him a few years before, so now again they tried to ruin his career with Mr Rogers. Anonymous and malicious letters were sent, but they did not find in him a weak though good-hearted creature, with a fearful apprehension that the smell usually associated with brimstone would permeate the legal documents; on the contrary, he was a shrewd man who knew the value of his clerk, and treated the anonymous letters with contempt, only asking of my father that he should "not let his propaganda become an injury to his business."

Thus it was he took the name of "Iconoclast," under the thin veil of which he did all his anti-theological work until he became candidate for Parliament in 1868; thenceforward he always spoke and wrote under his own name, whatever the subject he was dealing with. Any appearance of concealment or secrecy was dreadfully irksome to him, though in 1854 he had very little choice.

About Christmas 1853 my father made the acquaintance of a family named Hooper, all of whom were Radicals and Freethinkers except Mrs Hooper, who would have preferred to have belonged to Church people because they were so much more thought of. She had great regard for her neighbours' opinion, and for that reason objected to chess and cards on Sunday. Abraham Hooper,

her husband, must on such points as these have been a constant thorn in the dear old lady's side: he was an ardent Freethinker and Radical, a teetotaller, and a non-smoker. All his opinions he held aggressively; and no matter where was the place or who was the person, he rarely failed to make an opportunity to state his opinions. He was very honest and upright, a man whose word was literally his bond. He had often heard my father speak in Bonner's Fields, and had named him "the young enthusiast." He himself from his boyhood onward was always in the thick of popular movements; although a sturdy Republican, he was one of the crowd who cheered Queen Caroline; he was present at all the Chartist meetings at London; and he was a great admirer of William Lovett. On more than one occasion he was charged by the police whilst taking part in processions. He once unwittingly became mixed up with a secret society, but he speedily disentangled himself—there was nothing of the secret conspirator about him.

He was what might be called "a stiff customer," over six feet in height, and broad in proportion; and he would call his spade a spade. If you did not like it—well, it was so much the worse for you, if you could not give a plain straightforward reason why it should be called "a garden implement." "Verbosity" was lost upon him; he passed it over unnoticed, and came back to his facts as though you had not spoken. In his early old age he had rather a fine appearance, and I have several times been asked at meetings which he has attended with us, who is that "grand-looking old man." Although in politics and religion he was all on the side of liberty, in his own domestic circle he was a tyrant and a despot, exacting the most rigorous and minute obedience to his will.

His passionate affection for my father was a most beautiful thing to see. He had heard him speak, as a lad, many a time in Bonner's Fields, and from 1854 had him always under his eye. "The young enthusiast" became "my boy Charles," the pride and the joy of his life; and he loved him with a love which did but grow with his years. My father's friends were his friends, my father's enemies were his enemies; and although "Charles" might forgive a friend who had betrayed him and take him back to friendship again, *he* never did, and was always prepared for the next betrayal—which, alas! too often came. He outlived my

father by only five months: until a few years before his death he had never ailed anything, and did not know what headache or toothache meant; but when his "boy" was gone life had no further interest for him, and he willingly welcomed death.

And it was the eldest daughter of this single-hearted, if somewhat rigorous man, Susannah Lamb Hooper, whom my father loved and wedded. I knew that my mother had kept and cherished most of the letters written her by my father during their courtship, but I never opened the packet until I began this biography. These letters turn out to be more valuable than I had expected, for they entirely dispose of some few amongst the many fictions which have been more or less current concerning Mr Bradlaugh.

At the first glance one is struck with the quantity of verse amongst the letters. I say struck, because nearly, if not quite, all his critics, friendly and hostile, have asserted that Mr Bradlaugh was entirely devoid of poetic feeling or love of verse. With the unfriendly critics this assumed lack seems to indicate something very bad: a downright vice would be more tolerable in their eyes; and even the friendly critics appear to look upon it as a flaw in his character. I am, however, bound to confirm the assumption in so far as that, during later years at least, he looked for something more than music in verse; and mere words, however beautifully strung together, had little charm for him. His earliest favourites amongst poets seem to have been Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law rhymer, and, of course, Shelley. As late as 1870 he was lecturing upon Burns and Byron; later still he read Whittier with delight; and I have known him listen with great enjoyment to Marlowe, Spenser, Sydney, and others, although, curiously enough, for Swinburne he had almost an active distaste, caring neither to read his verse nor to hear it read. It is something to remember that it was my father, and he alone, who threw open his pages to James Thomson ("B. V.") at a time when he was ignored and unrecognised and could nowhere find a publisher to recognise the fire and genius of his grand and gloomy verse.

But to return to his own verses: he began early, and his Bonner's Fields speeches in 1849 and 1850 more often than not wound up with a peroration in rhyme; in verse, such as it was, he would sing the praises of Kossuth, Mazzini, Carlile, or whatever hero was the subject of his discourse. His verses to my mother

were written before and after marriage: the last I have is dated 1860. I am not going to quote any of these compositions, for my father died in the happy belief that all save two or three had perished; but there is one that he sent my mother which will, I think, bear quoting, and has an interest for its author's sake. Writing in July 1854, he says: "I trust you will excuse my boldness in forwarding the enclosed, but think you will like its pretty style. I begged it from my only literary acquaintance, a young schoolmaster, so can take no credit to myself"—

"Breathe onward, soft breeze, odour laden,
And gather new sweets on your way,
For a happy and lovely young maiden
Will inhale thy rich perfume this day.
And tell her, oh! breeze softly sighing,
When round her your soft pinions wreathe,
That my love-stricken soul with thee vieing
All its treasures to her would outbreathe.

"Flow onward, ye pure sparkling waters
In sunshine with ripple and spray,
For the fairest of earth's young daughters
Will be imaged within you this day.
And tell her, oh! murmuring river,
When past her your bright billows roll,
That thus, too, her fairest form ever
Is imaged with truth in my soul."

The "young schoolmaster" was, of course, James Thomson; and these verses express the thought which occurs again so delightfully in No. XII. of the "Sunday up the River."*

Another current fiction concerning my father is that he was coarse, rude, and ill-mannered in his young days. Now, to take one thing alone as a text: Can I believe that the love letters now before me that he wrote to my dear mother could have been penned by one of coarse speech and unrefined thought? The tender and respectful courtesy of some of them carries one back to a century or so ago, when a true lover was most choice in the expressions he used to his mistress. No! No one with a trace of coarseness in his nature could have written these letters.

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* The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems. By James Thomson ("B.V.").

Another and equally unfounded calumny, which has been most industriously circulated, concerns my father's own pecuniary position and his alleged neglect of his mother. I am able to quote passages from this correspondence which make very clear statements on these points; and the silent testimony of these letters, written in confidence to his future wife, is quite incontrovertible. In a letter written on the 17th November 1854, he says:—

"My present income at the office is £65, and at the Building Society £35, making about £100 a year, but I have not yet enjoyed this long enough to feel the full benefit of it. I am confident, if nothing fresh arises, of an increase at Christmas, but am also trying for a situation which if I can get would bring me in £150 per annum and upwards. Your father did not tell me when I saw him that I was extravagant, but he said that he thought I was not 'a very saving character,' so that you see, according to good authority, we are somewhat alike. . . . I do not blame you for expecting to hear from me, but I was, as the Americans say, in a fix. I did not like to write, lest your father might think I was virtually taking advantage of a consent not yet given.

"You will, of course, understand from my not being a very careful young man why I am not in a position of healthy pockets, purse plethora, plenum in the money-box, so necessary to one who wishes to entangle himself in the almost impenetrable mysteries of 'housekeeping.'

"I don't know whether you were ever sufficiently charmed with the subject to make any calculations on the £ s. d. questions of upholstery, etc. I have, and after knocking my head violently against gigantic 'four posters,' and tumbling over 'neat fender and fire-irons,' I have been most profoundly impressed with respect and admiration for every one who could coolly talk upon so awful a subject."

From the foregoing letter it would appear that Mr Hooper would not give a definite consent to the marriage; and a little later my father writes that he had again asked for the paternal approval, and draws a picture of "C. B." kneeling to the "krewel father." The consent asked for was apparently given this time, and plans and preparations for the marriage were made. On 20th March 1855 my father writes:—

"I also thought that it seemed a rather roundabout way of arriving at a good end, that I should take upon myself the bother of lodgers in one house, while mother at home intended to let the two upstairs

rooms to some one else. I also thought that supposing anything were to happen either to separate me from the Building Society or to stop its progress, I might be much embarrassed in a pecuniary point of view with the burden of two rents attached to me. It therefore struck me, and I suggested to mother and Lizzie, whether it would not be possible, and not only possible but preferable, that we should all live in the same house as separate and distinct as though we were strangers in one sense, and yet not so in another. Mother and Lizzie both fully agreed with me, but it is a question, my dearest Susan, which entirely rests with you, and you alone must decide the question. I have agreed to allow mother 10s. per week, and if we lived elsewhere, mother out of it would have to pay rent, whilst ours would be in no way reduced. Again, if you felt dull there would be company for you, and I might feel some degree of hesitation in leaving you to find companionship in persons utterly strangers to both of us. There are doubtless evils connected with my proposal, but I think they are preventible ones. Mother might wish to interfere with your mode of arrangements. This she has promised in no way whatever to do. I leave the matter to yourself—on the ground of economy much might be said—at any rate my own idea is that we could not hurt by trying the experiment for a time ; but do not let my ideas influence you in your decision : I will be governed by you : believe me, I only wish and endeavour to form a plan by which we may live happy and comfortably."

In April we have the first recorded lawsuit in which Mr Bradlaugh took part as one of the principals, though earlier than this, soon after quitting the army, he had shown much legal acumen and practical wisdom in a case that I cannot do better than quote here in his own words :—

"While I was away," he says, "a number of poor men had subscribed their funds together, and had erected a Working Man's Hall, in Goldsmith's Row, Hackney Road. Not having any legal advice, it turned out that they had been entrapped into erecting their building on freehold ground without any lease or conveyance from the freeholder, who asserted his legal right to the building. The men consulted me, and finding that under the Statute of Frauds they had no remedy, I recommended them to offer a penalty rent of £20 a year. This being refused, I constituted myself into a law court ; and without any riot or breach of the peace, I with the assistance of a hundred stout men took every brick of the building bodily away, and divided the materials, so far as was possible, amongst the proper owners. I think I can see now the disappointed rascal of a freeholder when he only had his bare soil left once

more. He did not escape unpunished; for, to encourage the others to contribute, he had invested some few pounds in the building. He had been too clever: he had relied on the letter of the law, and I beat him with a version of common-sense justice."

To return to my father's first suit in law. He brought an action for false imprisonment against a solicitor named Wyatt. It appeared that a person named Clements had assigned a wharf and certain book debts and books to Messrs. Carr, Lamb & Co., and Mr Rogers, their solicitor, sent Mr Bradlaugh, then his clerk, to Mr Wyatt's office, Gray's Inn, to fetch away the books. Mr Wyatt refused to give them up: Mr Bradlaugh seized them and carried them (an immense pile) to a cab he had waiting. Mr Wyatt appeared on the scene with a clerk, and endeavoured to regain possession of the books. After much resistance, in which my father's coat was torn and hands cut, Mr Wyatt, unable to get the books, called a policeman, and gave his adversary into custody on a charge of "stealing the books;" this he withdrew for another—"creating a disturbance and carrying off books." My father was locked up (whether for minutes or hours I know not) with a boy who had been apprehended whilst picking pockets. When he was brought before the magistrate he was discharged, because no one appeared to prosecute. He wrote a number of letters to Mr Wyatt demanding an apology, but received no answer, and at length brought an action against him for false imprisonment. The case came on before Mr Justice Crompton, and much to his delight, he won a verdict, with £30 damages.

The foregoing is, I think, the only case in Mr Bradlaugh's career in which he kept damages awarded him for his own personal use. In every other case the damages were given to some charity—in later years, always to the Masonic Boys' School. This time however the damages awarded him by the jury were used in a purely personal manner, for the money enabled him to hasten his marriage, and on June 5th, 1855, he and my mother were married at St. Philip's Church, in the Parish of Stepney, he barely 22 years of age, and she two years his senior.

They went to live at Warner Place, as was suggested in a letter I have quoted; and my mother, who had been in very poor health for some time previous to her marriage, seems to have gone with her sister-in-law to Reigate for a few days at the end of the following July. How very straitened their circumstances were,

the following extract from a letter of my father's to his wife will show:—

"Carr and Lamb have not settled with me, and I am much pinched for cash, in fact, so much so that, as mother seems to wish to come to Reigate, I have thought of letting her come on Sunday, and staying at home myself, as I cannot manage both. If you feel well enough, I would like you to come home about next Thursday or Friday, as I begin to feel rather topsy-turvy . . . . If I do not come, I will send you money to clear you through the week. Do not think me in the least degree unkind if I stay away, because I assure you it is a great source of discomfort to me; but the fact is, if you want to spend thirty shillings, and have only twenty, there arises a most unaccountable difficulty in getting your purse and programme to agree. Had Carr and L., as I anticipated, closed accounts with me on Monday, all would have gone on smoothly, but as it is I am cramped. I have also been disappointed in the receipt of two or three other small sums which, coupled with an increased expenditure, all help to draw me up short."

The newly-married couple did not stop very long at Warner Place. Mrs Bradlaugh senior and her daughter-in-law did not get on comfortably together, and so husband and wife removed to 4 West Street, Bethnal Green, where their first child, my sister Alice, was born on April 30, 1856. At the outset my parents were devotedly attached to one another, an attachment which was not in the least degree diminished on my mother's part until the hour of her death; and had they remained pinched by the same close grip of poverty as at first their union might have remained unbroken; who can say? My father was essentially a "home" man, and when not called away on business preferred his own fireside to that of any other man. People have taken it upon themselves to describe my mother's personal appearance, some by one adjective and some by another; but to my eyes, at least, she was comely to look upon. She was a brunette, with hair which was black and silky, and the finest I ever saw; she was nearly as tall as my father, and carried herself well, although in her later years she was much too stout. She was good-natured to a fault, generous to lavishness, and had an open ear and an open pocket for every tale of sorrow or distress. During my recollection our home was never without one or more needy visitors: my father's brother and youngest sister, her own brother and sister, Mr James Thomson, and others too numerous to mention, all partook of the open-hearted hospitality which was lavished upon them. She shone at

her best in entertaining my father's political friends, and her good-natured amiability made her a general favourite. She was passionately attached to her children, and was rewarded by her children's devotion, which endured through fair weather and foul; as, indeed, was only her just due, for in all points save one she was the best of mothers.

And it was this one point which, overbalancing all the rest, ruined our home, lost her my father's love and her friends' respect, and was the cause of her own sufferings, unhappiness, and early death. As soon as fortune and success began to shine ever so feebly on my father's labours, there did not lack the usual flatterers to his wife, and panderers to her unhappy weakness. In a terribly short time, by the aid of thoughtless, good-natured evil-doers and intentional malice, this weakness developed into absolute and confirmed intemperance, which it seemed as though nothing could check. With intemperance came the long train of grievous consequences; easy good nature became extravagant folly, and was soon followed by the alienation of real friends and a ruined home. My father was gentleness and forbearance itself, but his life was bitterly poisoned; he had his wife treated medically, and sent to a hydropathic establishment, but all to no purpose. When our home was finally broken up in 1870, and the closest retrenchment was necessary, my father decided that it was utterly impossible to do that with dignity as long as my mother remained in London; so she and we two girls—my brother was at school—went to board with my grandfather at Midhurst, Sussex. It was intended as a merely temporary arrangement, and had it proved beneficial to my mother we should, when better times came, have had a reunited home; but, alas! it was not to be. At first my father came fairly frequently to Midhurst, but there was no improvement, and so his visits became fewer and fewer; they brought him no pleasure, but merely renewed the acuteness of his suffering. At length he, always thoughtful for those about him and recognising the terrible strain upon us his daughters in the life we were then leading, arranged for us each to spend a month alternately with him at his London lodgings, but not continuously, as he was anxious not to separate us. Sometimes it was contrived for us both to be in London together, and these were indeed sunshiny days. We wrote letters for him, and did what we could, and he made us happy by persuading us that we were his secretaries

and really useful to him; we tried to be, but I fear our desires and his loving acceptance of our work went far beyond its real merits. With time my mother became a confirmed invalid, and in May 1877 she died very unexpectedly from heart disease engendered by alcoholism.

Malevolent people have made a jest of all this, but the tragedy was ours; others even more malevolent have endeavoured to make my father in some way blameworthy in the matter—they might just as well blame me! Any one who knows the story in all its details, with its years of silent martyrdom for him, will know that my father's behaviour was that of one man in a thousand. Some also have said that my mother was in an asylum. Perhaps the following quotation from a letter written by her from Midhurst, a few days before her death, to us who were in London getting my father's things straight in his new lodgings, will be the best answer, and will also show a little the kind of woman she was: —

"My chest is so bad. I really feel ill altogether; if either of you were with me, you could not do me any good. I shall be glad of a letter to know how Hypatia gets on.

"Do not neglect writing me, my darlings, for my heart is very sad. With great love to dear Papa, and also to your own dear selves.—Always believe me, your faithful mother, S. L. BRADLAUGH."

I have in this chapter said all I intend to say as to the relations between my father and my mother. I shall perhaps be pardoned —in my capacity as daughter, if not in that of biographer—for leaving the matter here, and not going into it more fully. It is a painful subject for one who loved her parents equally, and would fain have been equally proud of both. Honestly speaking, I think I should never have had the courage to touch upon it at all had I not felt that my duty to my father absolutely required it. He allowed himself to be maligned and slandered publicly and privately on the subject of his alleged separation from his wife, but he never once took up the pen to defend himself. Hence it becomes my unhappy duty to give the world for the first time some real idea of the truth.

CHAPTER VII.

HYDE PARK MEETINGS, 1855.

In the summer of 1855, Mr Bradlaugh for the first time took part in a great Hyde Park meeting. He went, like so many others, merely as a spectator, having no idea that the part he would be called upon to play would lead him into a position of prominence. In order to get a little into the spirit of that Hyde Park meeting, I must recall a few of the events which led up to it.

A Bill had been introduced into the House of Commons by Lord Robert Grosvenor which was called the New Sunday Bill or the Sunday Trading Bill, and had for its object the prevention of the whole of that small trading by poor vendors, with which we are familiar in certain parts of the metropolis to-day. Who has not seen or heard of the Sunday marketing in Petticoat Lane, Leather Lane, Golden Lane, Whitecross Street, and many such another place? This small trading is very useful, and in many cases absolutely necessary to the very poor, who, being at work all the week, would not otherwise have time for the purchase of the Sunday dinner—the one real dinner of the week—shoes, or such other articles of clothing as decency compels them to have even when their slender purses almost forbid the purchase. Lord Robert Grosvenor's Bill fell amongst these like a bombshell, causing the wildest excitement and indignation.*

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*The following handbill, which was circulated after the second reading of the Sunday Trading Bill, and put in evidence at the Royal Commission subsequently held, will give a good idea as to the extent of the proposed measure.

"Tyrannical attack upon the Liberty of the people. Proposed prohibition of Sunday trading. The New Bill brought in by Lord Robert Grosvenor, Lord Ebrington, and Mr M. Chambers proposes to prevent trading on Sundays within the Metropolitan Police District and city of London, and the liberties thereof. It enacts 'that all persons selling, offering, or exposing for sale, or causing to be sold or exposed for sale (on Sundays) any goods, chattels, effects, or things whatsoever, shall, on summary conviction thereof, be fined 5s., and on a second conviction, this fine may be increased to 40s.; and the fines will

Then it was that the excitement of the people needed to find some expression in action, and J. B. Leno, the working man poet, and others, turned the popular feeling to account by directing it into the form of an unmistakable protest against this class of legislation. Amongst the handbills put in circulation was the following, calling a meeting for June 24th :—

"New Sunday Bill to put down newspapers, shaving, smoking, eating and drinking of all kinds of food, or recreation for body or mind at present enjoyed by poor people. An open-air meeting of the artizans, mechanics, and lower orders of the metropolis will be held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon next, to see how religiously the aristocracy observe the Sabbath, and how careful they are not to work their servants or their cattle on that day (*vide* Lord Robert Grosvenor's speech). The meeting is summoned for three o'clockon the right bank of the Serpentine, looking towards Kensington Gardens. Come and bring your wives and families with you, that they may benefit by the example set them by their betters.—*A Ratepayer of Walworth.*"

The outcome of all this was that large numbers of people found their way into Hyde Park on Sunday, June 24th. They came

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be cumulative, and every separate act of selling will be a separate offence. The act will not apply to the sale of medicines or drugs, nor to the selling or crying of milk or cream before 9 a.m. or after 1 p.m., nor to the selling or offering of any newspaper or periodical before 10 a.m., nor to the sale of fruit, cooked victuals, or any unfermented beverage before 10 a.m. and after 1 p.m., nor to the sale of meat, poultry, fish, or game, before 9 a.m., from the 31st of May to the 1st of October in each year, nor to the exercise of the ordinary business of a licensed victualler or innkeeper. Butchers and others delivering meat, fish, or game, after 9 a.m. on Sundays, will be liable to the penalties above mentioned. Nor will that useful class of the community, the barbers and hairdressers, be exempted, if they presume to 'do business' after ten o'clock on Sunday mornings, in which case they may be fined 5s., and 20s. for a second offence. It appears, however, that the payment of one penalty will protect the offending barber from any further fine on the same day. Clause 6 saves servants from the operation of the Act, and visits their disobedience on their masters or mistresses. The police are required to enforce the provisions of the Act. Penalties and costs may be levied by distress, and imprisonment may be inflicted in default of payment for 14 days in the common gaol or house of correction. The penalties will be appropriated to the expenses of the police force. No informations are to be quashed for informality, or to be removed by *certiorari* into the Court of Queen's Bench. The Act (is) to commence (if passed) on the 1st day of November, or All Saints' Day, 1855. A more tyrannical measure was never attempted to be forced upon the people of this country, and if this 'Saints' Bill' is allowed to pass, a much more stringent Act will doubtless follow."

with the intention of holding a meeting of protest. A space was set aside for the meeting, and a Mr James Bligh called upon to preside. He began by addressing the people in very temperate language, but was soon interrupted by an Inspector of Police, who "politely told him he was authorised by the Commissioner of the Police to prevent any meeting being held in the Park; inasmuch as the Park was not public property, it would be illegal." The Inspector said that his orders were imperative, and if the speaker continued speaking he would be obliged to take him into custody. Sir Richard Mayne was present with a Superintendent of Police, and although the meeting was broken up, nevertheless many thousands remained in the Park. These lounged along the carriage ways and greeted the carriages with groans and hooting, or chaffing and good-humoured sarcasm, each according to his feelings. The aristocracy and wealthy commoners, who were taking their Sunday afternoon airing at their ease in the Park, did not at all approve of the attendance and attention of the multitude. The ladies and gentlemen reclining in their carriages were asked why they allowed their servants to work on Sunday, or were told to "go to Church," an order which some met by shaking their Church Services in the faces of the throng, or by sneers; whilst others, such as Lord and Lady Wilton, Lady Granville, and the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, were so frightened that they got out of their carriages at the demand of the crowd and trudged it on foot.

This little taste of the delights of showing the wealthy their power and of giving them a little bit of a fright only inflamed the people the more. During the week following the 24th the excitement continued to increase, and more handbills and placards were distributed. A very witty placard issued by the "Leave us alone Club," and some amusing lines, are quoted in Mr Headingley's Biography; while another which met with great success was in the following terms:—

"GO TO CHURCH!"

"Lord Robert Grosvenor wishes to drive us all to church! Let us go to church with Lord Grosvenor next Sunday morning! We can attend on his Lordship at Park Lane at half-past ten: 'go to church' with him, then go home to dinner, and be back in time to see 'our friends' in

Hyde Park. Come in your best clothes, as his lordship is very particular."

In the House, Lord Grosvenor fanned the flames of the popular excitement outside by an express refusal to withdraw the Bill, and by stating his fixed determination to press the measure. The signs of the increasing agitation amongst the people were so marked that Sir Richard Mayne, Commissioner of Police, became alarmed, especially as the police superintendents of various districts reported to him that large numbers of people were likely to attend the Park on the Sunday; and on June 29th he communicated with Sir George Grey, then Home Secretary, from whom, as he stated later on to the Commission, he received instructions to draft a document forbidding the meeting.

This notice was printed in one or two newspapers on the morning of Saturday the 30th, but not issued in the form of a handbill until the afternoon. It was then also posted throughout the metropolis, and on Sunday morning at the Park Gates.

In common with the rest of the London public, Mr Bradlaugh read this police notice, and directly he read it he felt convinced that the Commissioner of Police had no power to prevent a meeting in the Park. He therefore, after due consideration, resolved not to submit to this order, but to take part in the general concourse—one can hardly call it a meeting, since any attempt to form in a mass and listen to speeches had been prevented on the previous Sunday—in the Park, and if necessary to resist in his own person any active interference on the part of the police.

The 1st of July arrived, and people from every district of London and all round about flocked to the Park, crowding particularly towards the north side of the Serpentine. Although showing every disposition to be in the main quiet and orderly, the temper of the crowd was much less good-humoured than on the previous Sunday; the police placards had acted as a very successful irritant, and this feeling of irritation was kept up and augmented by the sight of the wealthy ones parading up and down in their carriages. As on the former Sunday, they were greeted with groans and hooting, and so much vigour was thrown into the groans that in two or three cases the high-spirited horses

took fright, and serious accidents appeared probable. At this point the police charged the people, and naturally enough rioting (so-called) was the result. Many persons were hurt, and seventy were taken prisoners. The police accommodation at the Marlborough Street Police Station proved totally inadequate for so large a number of prisoners, and the condition of the cells was compared with that of the Black Hole in Calcutta. My father was in the Park with my grandfather, Mr A. Hooper, and what he did there may be learned a little later on from his own words.

This demonstration in Hyde Park produced such an impression that on the following day, the 2nd of July, Lord Robert Grosvenor, in answer to a question put to him in the House of Commons, said he was in "rather an awkward predicament," a statement which we can readily believe. His Bill, the Honourable Member insisted, was in reality intended to increase the amount of holiday possible to "the overtaxed thousands of the metropolis. But," he went on, "considering this is one of those measures which are peculiarly liable to misrepresentation and ridicule; considering also the late period of the session, and the formidable opposition I am threatened with, I think it would not be right to keep up the irritation that at the present moment exists for the bare chance of passing this measure during the present session."

This abandonment of his Sunday Bill in a fright by "Saint" Grosvenor, as he was nicknamed, was a tremendous triumph to all those whom it affected, a triumph happily not marred by any punishment being inflicted on the men arrested on various charges connected with the demonstration, for when these were brought into court on the Monday they were all discharged. At the John Street Institution a meeting was held to protest against the action of the police, to express sympathy with the injured, and to collect subscriptions on their behalf.*

* Probably the re-formation of the National Sunday League on its present basis in the autumn of 1855 was in great degree owing to the attempted Sunday legislation of the summer; and it will perhaps be news to most of the Sunday Leaguers of to-day that in the March of 1856 Mr Bradlaugh was actively engaged in trying to form a branch of the League in the East End, of which he was the Secretary *pro. tem.*, and which was to hold its meetings in the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

A Royal Commission was appointed "to inquire into the alleged disturbances of the public peace in Hyde Park, Sunday, July 1st, 1855; and the conduct of the metropolitan police in connection with the same." This Commission sat continuously day by day from Tuesday, July 17th, to Thursday, August 2nd. The sittings were held in the Court of Exchequer, and the Commission heard eighty-six witnesses on the part of the complainants, and ninety-three for the police. Amongst the eighty-six witnesses was my father, who was examined on the 20th July. I quote the questions, with their often extremely characteristic answers, from the Parliamentary Blue Book.*

"Mr C. BRADLAUGH examined by Mr Mitchell :—

"Where do you reside?—At No. 13 Warner Street South, Hackney Road.

"You are a solicitor's clerk?—I am.

"Were you in Hyde Park on the 1st of July?—I was.

"At what time?—From about half-past three to half-past six.

"Where did you walk during that time? I walked completely over the park, round by the carriage drive, and all round during that time.

"Did you see a man in a cab with several policemen?—Yes. I saw a man being driven along in a cab with three policemen in the cab, a man with no shirt on; he was without his shirt, he was trying to look out, and I saw a policeman strike him over the temple with his truncheon.

"There were three policemen in the cab?—Yes.

"Mr Stuart Wortley: A man without a shirt?—Yes.

"Mr Mitchell: Did you see anybody attacked?—Yes, I saw a rush made out on to the greensward. I went forward, and I saw four or five policemen striking a short man: his hat was knocked with a truncheon, and he held up his hands and said, 'For God's sake, do not hit me—take me!'

"Did they continue to hit him?—Yes; I ran forward, and put one truncheon back with my gloved hand, and I said, 'The next man that strikes I will knock him down!'

"What did they do then?—Then they left off striking him, and they put him between two policemen, and I suppose he was taken away in custody.

"They found that you were rather a strongish man?—They would

"Were you attacked by the police?—I was standing on the grass

* Vol. XXIII. 1856, pp. 146, 147.

just after that, and they made another sortie out from the roadway, and ordered the people to move on, and they moved as fast as they could. One of them came up to me, and began to push me with his truncheon, upon which I said to him : 'Do not do that, friend ; you have no right to do it, and I am stronger than you are.' He then beckoned to two others, who came up, and I took hold of two of the truncheons, one in each hand, and I said to the centre one : 'If you attempt to touch me, I will take one of those truncheons, and knock you down with it.' I took the two truncheons, and I wrested them, and I showed them that I could do it.

"Did they then leave you alone?—Yes ; the people that came behind me picked me up and carried me up about 100 yards back, cheering me.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Did they take you off your legs?—Yes, and I thought it was the police behind for a moment.

"Mr Mitchell.—You were in the Park for three hours?—Yes.

"How were the people behaving?—I never saw a large assemblage of people behaving so well.

"You were with your father-in-law, were you not?—Yes, I was.

"What time in the day was this particular occurrence?—About half-an-hour before I left.

"Mr Henderson.—The people gathered round you?—Yes. I did not want to be a self-constituted leader, and immediately I could I got away from the press and came away. I left about half-past six, a few minutes after or a few minutes before.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Had the excitement in the Park increased a good deal at that time?—Yes ; I felt excited by seeing men, unable to defend themselves, knocked about.

"Mr Mitchell.—Did you see any other rush of the police at the people?—I saw several rushes. I could not understand the reason for them at all, except on one occasion ; I saw one mounted superintendent stretch out his arm, and I saw a rush immediately in the direction that his arm went.

"What sort of a horse had he?—I could not see ; I was on the sward. I only noticed a mounted man.

"You would not know him if you saw him again?—Yes ; I think so : I should certainly know him if I saw him mounted.

"Can you say whether he had whiskers or not?—Yes ; I think he had, but that is more an impression than anything else.

"Did you see them strike any woman?—I saw in the rush, in one of them, a man and two women thrown down, and I saw the police run over them. They did not strike them, but they ran right over them. I made a remark to my father-in-law : 'It is lucky they are no sisters of mine, or else they would stop to pick them up.'

"You did not go into the Park to resist the police?—Decidedly not.

I went in consequence of seeing the notice of Sir Richard Mayne forbidding it, and to see what took place there.

"Out of curiosity?—Not exactly. I had heard it said that they were rabble, and I did not believe it, and I went to see for myself.

"Your indignation was not excited till you got there?—Not till some time after I had been there. At first I should have come away. The police were doing nothing, and at first everything seemed to be very quiet. There was no kind of meeting, except that there had been a large concourse of people. I should have come away but for those rushes of the police amongst the people.

"They were not a disorderly crowd?—No.

"Cross-examined by Mr Ellis:—

"You spoke of Sir Richard Mayne's proclamation as forbidding this meeting. Did you read it?—Yes.

"Does it forbid it?—The tenor of it seemed to me to be forbidding the assemblage, and I had not heard then, and have not heard now, that Sir Richard Mayne has any power to forbid my going into the Park; therefore I went.

"I think that the language of this proclamation is, that all well-disposed persons are requested to abstain. You do not call that forbidding?—When those police notices are put up I remember one place where I was requested to abstain from going to, some few years ago; and when I went there I found that the request to abstain was enforced in a precisely similar way, by striking the people with truncheons who went there. That was at Bonner's Fields.

Were any persons struck with truncheons there?—Yes.

"Surely the police were armed with cutlasses?—I think I remember two being drawn as well; but I know some of them were struck with truncheons. I was struck with a truncheon myself, so that I am perfectly capable of remembering it.

"You were at Bonner's Fields?—I was.

"Mr Stuart Wortley.—Is there anything else that you wish to add?—Nothing.

"The witness withdrew."

In his "Autobiography"* Mr Bradlaugh says: "I was very proud that day at Westminster, when, at the conclusion of my testimony, the Commissioner publicly thanked me, and the people who crowded the Court of the Exchequer cheered me. . . .

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* The Autobiography of Charles Bradlaugh. A page from his life, written in 1873 for the *National Reformer*.

This was a first step in a course in which I have never flinched or wavered."

Before dismissing this Sunday Trading question altogether, I may as well notice here that in the succeeding year my father made a short humorous compilation of some of the more striking "English Sunday laws" for the *Reasoner*. I am ignorant how many of these are still in force, but I repeat part of the article here: as a trifle from my father's pen, it will be welcome to some, and in others it may, perhaps, provoke inquiry as to how many of these restrictions are binding (in law) upon us to-day.

"Travelling in a stage or mail coach on a Sunday is lawful, and the driver is lawfully employed. Contracts to carry passengers in a stage coach on a Sunday are therefore binding, but the driver of a van travelling to and from distant towns, such as London and York, is unlawfully employed, and may be prosecuted and fined 20s. for each offence; and presuming that the laws of God and England are in unison, the driver of the van will be damned for Sabbath breaking, and the driver of the coach will go to heaven for the same offence.

"Mackerel may be sold on Sunday either before or after Divine service.

"There is no offence against the common law of England in trading or working on a Sunday; therefore the statutes must be strictly construed. If a butcher should shave on a Sunday, he would commit no offence, because it would not be following his ordinary calling.

"Persons exercising their calling on a Sunday are only subject to one penalty, for the whole is but one offence, or one act of exercising, although continued the whole day. A baker, a pastrycook, or confectioner, is liable to be prosecuted if selling bread or pastry before nine or half-past one o'clock on the Sunday.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's cook, groom, footman, butler, and all other his men servants and maid servants do not each of them attend church every Sunday, they may be prosecuted and fined.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's coachman drive his master to church on Sunday, if his footmen stand behind his carriage, these being their ordinary callings and not works of charity or necessity, they may be prosecuted and fined 5s. each.

"Tobacconists may be prosecuted for selling tobacco and cigars on a Sunday.

"Railway officials may be punished for working on a Sunday; certainly on excursion trains.

"The stokers and men employed on the steamboats plying to Gravesend, etc., are also liable to prosecution, although a few watermen enjoy the privilege of Sabbath-breaking by Act of Parliament.

"Civil contracts made on a Sunday are void with some few exceptions, viz. a soldier may be enlisted on a Sunday. A labourer may be hired on a Sunday. A guarantee may be given for the faithful services of a person about to be employed. A bill of exchange may be drawn on a Sunday.

"Civil process must not be served on a Sunday, but an ecclesiastical

citation may; therefore the Church reserves to itself the right of Sabbath breaking on all occasions.

"A cookshop may be open on a Sunday for the sale of victuals.

"Every person who should go to Hyde Park, or any of the other parks, to hear the band play, if out of his own parish, is liable to be fined 3s. 4d.

"If two or three go from out of their smoky city residences to the sea to fish, or to the green fields to play cricket, they may each be fined 3s. 4d. if out of the parish in which they reside."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORSINI ATTEMPT.

THE first allusion which I can find to any lecture delivered by my father after his return from Ireland appears in the *Reasoner*, and is the briefest possible notice, in which no comment is made, either upon the speaker or upon his name, although I find the *nom de guerre* of "Iconoclast" and the subject (Sunday Trading and Sunday Praying) given. We may, therefore, conclude that by this time * he had become a tolerably familiar figure on the London Freethought platform. The next reference I come across relates to his first lecture, given on 24th August 1855, on behalf of Mr B. B. Jones, the aged Freethinker who sheltered him on his first leaving home, and for whose benefit he afterwards lectured every year during the remainder of the kindly old veteran's life.

In the latter part of 1856 my father's lectures are referred to in the reports of meetings with tolerable regularity, and I gather that even at that time he was lecturing four or five times a month. He lectured at a little hall in Philpot Street, Commercial Road; Finsbury Hall, Bunhill Row; at a hall in St George's Road, near the "Elephant and Castle," afterwards given up by the Freethinkers who were accustomed to hire it on Sundays, because they did not approve of the uses to which it was put during the week; at the Hoxton Secular Class Rooms, 101 High Street; and the John Street Institution, Fitzroy Square.

Amongst his many and varied occupations he yet contrived to make time for study, for in the same year he was lecturing on Strauss' "Life of Jesus," and Mahomet and the Koran, in addition to the more general questions of the Existence of God, Materialism, etc. And here I may cite a little instance showing that my father's power of repartee was a very early development. He happened to be lecturing upon "The God of the Bible," and in

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* July 1855.

the discussion which ensued "a Christian gentleman, Mr Dunn, ... informed his auditory that it was only by God's mercy they existed at all, as all men had been tried and condemned before their birth, and were now prisoners at large." My father in his reply promptly took "objection to this phrase, as implying that society was nothing more than a collection of 'divine ticket-of-leave men.'"

In 1856, too, Mr Bradlaugh once more ventured into print. His first essay in the publishing way, it may be remembered, was the little pamphlet on the "Christian's Creed," which he dedicated to the Rev. Mr Packer. This time he issued, in conjunction with John Watts and "Anthony Collins," a little publication called "Half-hours with Freethinkers," which came out in fortnightly numbers, and opened on October 1st with a paper on Descartes from the pen of "Iconoclast." Two series were ultimately issued, each of twenty-four numbers, but some time elapsed between the two; in fact, the second did not come out until 1864, and was edited by my father and Mr John Watts. These stories "of the lives and doctrines of those who have stood foremost in the ranks of Freethought in all countries and in all ages" met with a hearty welcome, and are in demand even to this day; several were at the time reprinted in America by the *Boston Investigator*.

The new year of 1857 opened with a promise of growing activity by an address from "Iconoclast" to a party of Secular friends who had assembled in the hall at Philpot Street, to watch the New Year in, and by a course of ten (or twelve) lectures in criticism of the Bible, which he commenced on the following day. On the 12th of February, also, was held his first discussion, or at least the first I can find recorded, if we except the youthful encounters of Warner Place. The discussion between "Mr Douglas and Iconoclast" took place at the little Philpot Street Hall; but who Mr Douglas was I know not, for the report is limited to a mention of an allusion by the Christian advocate to Atheists as "monsters, brutes, and fools," which was—as we may well believe—"severely commented on by 'Iconoclast.'"

Another and more important work, however, was begun in the early spring of 1857. This was "The Bible: what it is: Being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelation." This work, advertised by my father as "intended to relieve the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge from the labour of retranslating the

Bible, by proving that it is not worth the trouble and expense," it was arranged should be issued in fortnightly numbers by Holyoake & Co., whose "Fleet Street House," situate at 147 Fleet Street, was to a considerable extent maintained by the Freethought party. After the third number, Mr G. J. Holyoake declined to publish, on the ground that Mr Bradlaugh would probably go too far in his mode of criticism, and that by publishing the book he would be identified with it. This seemed an inadequate reason, since Mr Holyoake published Spiritualistic works, a "Criminal History of the Clergy," and other books, with which he was most certainly not identified. Later Mr Holyoake based his refusal to publish on the ground that a short passage in the third number referring to the suggestion that the third chapter of Genesis was intended as an allegorical representation of the union of the sexes, was obscene. Mr Bradlaugh was both surprised and indignant, as well he might be, and wrote a letter to the *Investigator*,* explaining his position fully. He was obliged henceforward to publish his work himself; Mr Edward Truelove, who then had a bookseller's business at 240 Strand, generously rendering every assistance in his power.

By this time also he had become a regular contributor to the *Investigator*, and his first articles were upon the "Lives of Bible Heroes"—Abraham, Moses, David, and Cain, each following in turn.

On the 22nd of February 1858 Mr Truelove was arrested by Government warrant for the publication of a pamphlet written by Mr W. E. Adams, "Is Tyrannicide Justifiable?" in which was discussed the attempt made by Orsini upon the life of the French Emperor.

Referring to this, my father wrote some notable words in his Autobiography of 1873. "I became," said he, "Honorary Secretary to the Defence, and was at the same time associated with the conduct of the defence of Simon Bernard, who was arrested at the instigation of the French Government for alleged complicity in the Orsini tragedy. It was at this period I gained the friendship of poor Bernard, which, without diminution, I retained until he died; and also the valued friendship of Thomas Allsop, which I still preserve. My associations were thenceforward such as to encourage in me a strong and bitter feeling

* The *Investigator*. A Journal of Secularism, edited by Robert Cooper.

against the late Emperor Napoleon. Whilst he was in power I hated him, and never lost an opportunity of working against him until the *déchéance* came. I am not sure now that I always judged him fairly; but nothing, I think, could have tempted me either to write or speak of him with friendliness or kindliness during his life. *Le sang de mes amis etait sur son âme.* Now that the tomb covers his remains, my hatred has ceased; but no other feeling has arisen in its place. Should any of his family seek to resume the Imperial purple, I should remain true to my political declarations of sixteen years since, and should exert myself to the uttermost to prevent France falling under another Empire. I write this with much sadness, as the years 1870 to 1873 have dispelled some of my illusions, held firmly during the fifteen years which preceded. I had believed in such men as Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, Victor Hugo, as possible statesmen for France. I was mistaken. They were writers, talkers, and poets; good men to ride on the stream, or to drown in honest protest, but lacking force to swim against, or turn back, the tide by the might of their will. I had believed too in a Republican France, which is yet only in the womb of time, to be born after many pangs and sore travailing."

When Mr Bradlaugh acted as Secretary for the Defence, his duties were performed in no merely formal way, but with the utmost energy and enthusiasm. In order to give more time to this work, he suspended the publication of his Commentary on the Bible, and in issuing the "Appeal" for the Defence fund wrote in earnest entreaty for his staunch and fearless friend, saying truly enough, "It would be a stain on us for years if we left poor Truelove to fight the battle of the press alone."

But my father's sympathies were all his life long on the side of the weak and oppressed, and in this particular instance he came in personal contact with the friends and associates of Orsini, if not with Orsini himself (which, indeed, I am under the impression was the case), so that the whole tone of his surroundings was anti-Napoleonic. Felice Orsini must have been personally known to many of the advanced thinkers in England, for I notice that in the winter of 1856 he was lecturing at Woolwich (and probably elsewhere) on "Austrian and Papal Tyranny in Italy." Those who knew him, even those who could not approve his deed, yet honoured and revered him as a hero and a martyr

My father spoke of him as "the noble, the brave, the true-hearted Orsini." In 1859, writing of him: "One year since and his blood was scarce dry! Bernard was a prisoner; Allsop a fugitive. Now Orsini lives: the spirit of his greatness passed into a hundred others, and the dead hero lives. Priests in their masses say, 'Pray for the memory of the dead;' we say, 'Work for the memory of the dead!' Orsini needs a monument o'er his grave. He is buried in the hearts of the freemen of Europe, and his monument should be indestructible Republicanism throughout France, Italy, Hungary, and Poland." Alas! for my father's dreams of a Republic for those striving and oppressed nations. Poland still lies at the feet of Russia, Hungary is held in the iron grasp of Imperial Austria, and but a year or so ago Republican France and Monarchical Italy were ready to fly at one another's throats.

The result of the prosecution of Mr Truelove, which is told more fully at the end of this chapter by an abler pen than mine, was the abandonment by the Government of all proceedings on certain conditions; and although Mr Truelove, as well as his friends, would have preferred a trial and acquittal to a withdrawal on the conditions accepted by his counsel, nevertheless it was an undoubted triumph for the principle of the liberty of the press and free discussion. When at length the struggle ended it was proposed to raise a sum of money to compensate Mr Truelove for the loss he must have sustained in his business, but this Mr Truelove, with true public spirit, chivalrously refused.

Dr Bernard, in the conduct of whose defence Mr Bradlaugh was also associated, seems to have been personally a most lovable man. I do not think that I myself recollect him, but he was so often spoken of in our family, and always with affection and regret, and his photograph so proudly kept, that he seems a familiar figure in my early memories; there was a tradition, of which as a child I was immensely proud (as though I had played a conscious and important part in the matter!) that the evening on which I was born, the 31st of March, my father was delivering an oration upon Orsini in some Hall in London; at the conclusion he was followed home by the police, and, being aware of the fact, he led his pursuers a pretty chase. The notes of this address were afterwards written out on thin paper and ironed, by an expert laundress attached to my father and mother,

into the folds of Dr Bernard's shirt and conveyed to him in prison. In a notice which he wrote of a meeting of the Political Reform League in the October of the same year, Mr Bradlaugh alludes to the presence of "Simon Bernard, who with his frank and good-humoured bearing seems quite unlike a conspirator." He not infrequently took the chair at Dr Bernard's meetings at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, and elsewhere, returning home on one occasion with sundry rents in his coat, the result of Catholic objections to Dr Bernard's strictures on the Pope, aided by the rancour of persons friendly to Louis Napoleon.

Mr Headingley* says that when Dr Bernard was tried, great anxiety was felt as to the verdict; and when it was known that one of the jurymen was a friend, he was sent into the jury box with his pocket full of sandwiches, so that he should not yield for want of food. But this proved a needless precaution, for the jury returned with a verdict of *Not guilty* after a consultation of less than an hour-and-a-half. Amongst other exciting incidents of the time, which he learned from my father's own lips, Mr Headingley relates that—

"Before the trial, and while Bernard lay in prison awaiting his fate, considerable fear was entertained lest he should be surreptitiously given up to the French authorities. A watch was therefore instituted over the prison; communications, in spite of all regulations to the contrary, were established with the prisoner; and the Defence Committee kept informed as to everything that happened within the walls. Had Bernard been removed, there were friends ever close at hand, both night and day, ready to give the alarm. A riot would very probably have ensued, and an attempt made to rescue Bernard in the confusion."

He goes on to say that "the organization of all these precautionary measures involved a great deal of labour, and required much tact. The presence of French police spies was supplemented by the interference of English spies; and against these it was necessary for Bernard's friends to be on the alert. On one occasion some mounted police followed Bradlaugh to his home in Cassland Road, Hackney. At another time he entered a restaurant near Leicester Square with Dr Bernard and Mr Sparkhall, an old and trusty friend, who subsequently joined and helped to organize the English legion that fought so well for Garibaldi. While they were discussing a French spy came in, and sitting down in the next compartment, soon pretended to be asleep. Bradlaugh, recognising the individual, leaned over the compartment, took a long spill, as if to light a cigar, and held the burning paper under the spy's nose.

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

As the man was only pretending to be asleep, this treatment did not fail to awake him most promptly. Further, this manner of dealing with him left no room for doubt as to his having been recognised, and he therefore simply rose and quietly left the restaurant, without even protesting against the burn inflicted on his most prominent feature. So numerous were the foreign spies in London at that time, that popular irritation was excited, and once Bernard himself was mistaken by a mob in the Park, and attacked as a French spy. His friends had great difficulty in shielding him and in persuading his aggressors that they were mistaken."

Thomas Allsop,* mentioned by Mr Bradlaugh in the same sentence with Bernard, was also present at the Reform League meeting, and he is described by my father as "a straightforward old gentleman, carrying his years well, and apparently untroubled by the late harassing events; his head gives you an idea of power and dogged determination—it is worth more than £200." These last words refer, I believe, to a reward of £200 which was offered for the apprehension of Mr Allsop in connection with the Orsini matter. Apart from the striking personality it represents, the name of Thomas Allsop will always bear a peculiar interest to admirers of Charles Bradlaugh, for it was he who bestowed upon the, even then, "strong man and strenuous fighter" the motto "Thorough," which his after life so amply justified, and of which he was so proud, saying, "When my work is over, and the stone covers the spot wherein I lie, may I be entitled to have the word 'Thorough' carven upon its face."

It was during these years of political excitement that my father became acquainted with Mazzini, Crispi, de Boni, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, and W. J. Linton.

The author of the "Tyrannicide" pamphlet has been so good as to write for me his "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh;" and as the references to this period are very interesting, I cannot do better than incorporate them here just as he sent them to me :—

"It was in 1858," Mr W. E. Adams tells us, "that I first made the personal acquaintance of Charles Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh was at that time known only as 'Iconoclast,' the general public

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* Mr Allsop will be known to the English public as the author of the "Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." He died a few years before my father, and he lies near his friend at Brookwood.

having, I think, a very indistinct idea what his real name was. I had heard him as 'Iconoclast' at the old John Street Institution, where many another dead and gone controversialist had won plaudits from the listening crowd: Dr Mill, Henry Tyrrell, Samuel Kydd, Robert Cooper. There, too, the veteran Thomas Cooper had recited 'Paradise Lost,' or told the eloquent story of the cause of the Commonwealth. Iconoclast, then a tall, slender, yet powerful young man, with a face stern enough for an adjutant, and a carriage equal to that of an Elizabethan hero, was beginning to claim admission to the ranks of the leaders of advanced thought.

"The year 1858 was the year of Felice Orsini's attempt on the life of Louis Napoleon. I was at that time, and had been for some years previously, a member of a Republican association, which was formed to propagate the principles of Mazzini. When the press, from one end of the country to the other, joined in a chorus of condemnation of Orsini, I put down on paper some of the arguments and considerations which I thought told on Orsini's side. The essay thus produced was read at a meeting of one of our branches, the members attending which earnestly urged me to get the piece printed. It occurred to me also that the publication might be of service, if only to show that there were two sides to the question 'Tyrannicide.' So I went to Mr G. J. Holyoake, then carrying on business as a publisher of advanced literature in Fleet Street. Mr Holyoake not being on the premises, his brother Austin asked me to leave my manuscript and call again. When I called again Mr Holyoake returned me the paper, giving among other reasons for declining to publish it that he was already in negotiation with Mazzini for a pamphlet on the same subject. 'Very well,' said I, 'all I want is that something should be said on Orsini's side. If Mazzini does this, I shall be quite content to throw my production into the fire.' A few days later, not hearing anything of the Mazzini pamphlet, I left the manuscript with Mr Edward Truelove, with whom I have ever since maintained a close and unbroken friendship. Mr Truelove seemed pleased with the paper, offered to publish it, and proposed to get it printed. The essay, as I had written it, was entitled 'Tyrannicide, a Justification.' Mr Truelove, however, suggested that it should be called 'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable?' Then there was no name to the production, which, I need not say, bore many marks of the immaturity of the author. Mr Truelove said it would be as well

to adopt a *nom de plume*. But if any name was to appear to the pamphlet, I said I was disposed to think that it should be my own. And so it came to pass that the pamphlet appeared with the title—'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable? by W. E. Adams. Published by Edward Truelove, 240 Strand, London.' Two or three days after the announcement of the publication, when only a few hundred copies had been sold, Mr Truelove was arrested, brought before the Bow Street magistrate, and held to bail for publishing a seditious libel on Louis Napoleon. As a matter of course, nobody knew the author. It was suspected indeed that the name attached to the pamphlet was a fiction, and that the essay was the production of a French exile.

"The arrest of Mr Truelove was regarded as an attack upon the liberty of the press—an attempt to restrict the right of public discussion. So regarding it, a number of gentlemen, prominently identified with advanced opinions, formed what was called a 'Truelove Defence Fund.' Mr Bradlaugh, who was among the first to volunteer assistance, was appointed secretary of the committee; the late James Watson accepted the office of treasurer; and contributions and other help were received from John Stuart Mill, W. Cunningham, M.P., Dr Epps, Arthur Trevelyan, Professor F. W. Newman, W. J. Fox, M.P., Jos. Cowen, junr., Abel Heywood, P. A. Taylor, Harriet Martineau, etc. Six months after Mr Truelove had been arrested, the whole affair came to a most 'lame and impotent' conclusion. It was at the instance of Sir Richard Bethel, Attorney-General under Lord Palmerston, and probably at the instigation of the Government of Louis Napoleon, whom the pamphlet was alleged to have libelled, that the prosecution was commenced. The case was withdrawn by Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Attorney-General under the Government of Lord Derby, on the understanding that Mr Truelove would sell no more of the pamphlets. Down to the evening preceding the day fixed for the trial, Mr Truelove, though he had doubts as to the result, fully expected that the matter would be fought out. On that evening, however, when it was too late to instruct other counsel, Mr Truelove was informed that the counsel already retained for the defence announced that the affair would have to be compromised. So it came to pass that Chief Justice Campbell, six months after the prosecution had been instituted, dismissed Mr Truelove with many words of caution. It need not be said that Mr Bradlaugh was as

much disgusted with this termination of the case as Mr Truelove himself. The secret of the collapse, I think, was this:—Edwin James, who was retained for the defence, and who had political ambitions which were never fully realised on account of misdeeds which compelled him to retire from public life and from his own country, practically sold his client in order that the Government might be relieved from a distasteful and unpleasant position."

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY LECTURES AND DEBATES.

I DO not know at what date or at what place my father delivered his first provincial lectures, but the earliest of which I can find any record occurred in January 1858, when on the 10th of that month he delivered two lectures at Manchester, a town in which, as we shall see later on, he was not altogether unknown, although in a totally different capacity. In reading the little there is to read about these early lecturing days I have been impressed with the fact that while in London his lectures were favourably received, and he was evidently gaining goodwill as he went from one hall to another, in the country he seems to have touched the hearts and the feelings of his audiences for or against him wherever he went. At these first Manchester lectures the reporter writes: "His manly, earnest, and fearless style of advocacy were much admired, and evidently produced a deep impression. Everybody who heard him wished to hear him again." In the April following he lectured in Sheffield, and from that time forward his visits to the provinces were very frequent. Sheffield almost adopted him, and he went there again and again; in 1858 and 1859 he went also to Newcastle, Sunderland, Bradford, Northampton, Doncaster, Accrington, Blackburn, Halifax, Bolton, and other towns, leaving a trail of excitement in his wake wherever he went. The descriptions of his personal appearance and the comments on his lectures at this time are more or less amusing. The first I will note here shall be one from his own pen, written to Mr Alfred Jackson in 1858, on the occasion of his earliest visit to Sheffield. He says: "You ask me to tell you how you may know me. I am 6 ft. 1 in. in height, about twenty-five years of age, dress in dark clothing, am of fair complexion, with only the ghost of a prospective whisker."

In a brief account of his Sheffield lectures that year my father

says that when he reached the Temperance Hall a copy of the *Sheffield Independent* was put into his hands, in which the Rev. Brewin Grant announced his intention to take no notice of him. But Mr Grant proved to be of a rather fickle temper, for on the morning following this first lecture "a small bill was printed and industriously circulated, entitled 'Iconoclast clasted,' being a challenge to myself from this very Brewin Grant who had previously determined not to notice me." On the first night Mr Bradlaugh had "a perfect crowd of opponents;" on the second he found that fresh troops had been levied against him. These "were led to the fray by the Rev. Eustace Giles (a stout Dissenting minister with a huge black bag). After the lecture this gentleman rose to reply, and commenced by extracting from his bag three huge volumes of Van der Hooght's Hebrew Bible, which he declared was the original Word of God, and which he requested me to read aloud to the audience. I complied by reading and translating a verse, to each word of which Mr Giles and his coadjutors nodded approval."

Going to Newcastle in September, my father found that the description of his personal appearance had so preceded him that the gentleman who met him, Mr Mills, came "straight to me on the platform as though we were old acquaintances instead of meeting for the first time." In Newcastle he lectured twice in the Nelson Street Lecture Hall (which has quite recently, I believe, been turned into a market), and was fairly, if briefly, reported by the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. While in the town he took the opportunity of listening to a lecture delivered by "J. Cowen, jun.," as Mr Joseph Cowen was then styled.

From Newcastle he went to Sunderland, where a person who came from the Rev. Mr Rees, a clergyman of that place, brought him a parody of the Church service entitled "The Secularist's Catechism," which was intended as some far-reaching and scathing sarcasm on the Secularist's "creed," but which is really as pretty a piece of blasphemy as ever issued from the pen of a Christian minister. Mr Bradlaugh tells how the person who brought it "gave it to me in a fearful manner, keeping as far away from me as possible, and evidently regarding me as a dangerous animal; he backed towards the room door after putting the paper in my hand, and seemed relieved in mind that I had not in some manner personally assaulted him."

On his next visit to Sheffield, where he was announced to

deliver three lectures on three successive evenings, the walls were covered with bills advising the people to keep away, and the clergy in church and chapel publicly warned their congregations against attending the lectures. In spite of all these precautions (or was it because of them?) the lectures were a decided success, the audiences increasing with each evening, until on the last evening "the large Temperance Hall was full in every part, the applause was unanimous, and not one opponent appeared." The visit of "Iconoclast" to Bradford produced a great flutter in the clerical society of that town; and after he left we hear that "almost every missionary and clerical speaker opened fire upon him," and one sensitive gentleman wrote to the *Bradford Observer* expressing his grief that the Teetotal Hall should be "prostituted" by being let to the Freethought lecturer.

In his *Autobiography* my father himself puts the date of his first lecturing visit to Northampton as the year 1857, and this year is again given in the little book issued as a *souvenir* of the unveiling of the statue of their late member by the Northampton Radical Association in June 1894; but I am inclined to think that this is a mistake, that my father's memory misled him a little, and that he put the date a few months too early. In any case, although I have made diligent inquiry, the first lectures of which I can find any note took place on Sunday and Monday, January 30th and 31st, 1859, in the large room of the Woolpack Inn, Kingswell Street. On the Monday evening the chair was taken by the late Mr Joseph Gurney, J.P., who, in company with his old friend Mr Shipman, had already heard Mr Bradlaugh lecture at the John Street Institution in London, and had been much impressed by the ability and earnest eloquence of the young speaker. The people crowded the street outside the Woolpack Inn for some time before the doors of the lecture-room were open, and the room was packed in a few moments. I wonder how many times after that did Mr Gurney preside at densely packed meetings for Mr Bradlaugh! Mr Gurney himself subsequently attained all the municipal honours Northampton could bestow upon her deserving townsman, nominated Charles Bradlaugh seven out of eight times that he contested the borough, and only did not nominate him on the eighth occasion because his position as chief magistrate prevented him.

In the following March it was arranged that my father should lecture in the Guildhall, at Doncaster. Doncaster, with its

reputation as a race town, was also in those days the abode of the "unco' guid." Some of the inhabitants appear to have been much put out at the proposed lecture, and certain "Friends of Religion," as they called themselves, issued a "Caution to the public, especially the religious portion," in which they, the "People of Doncaster," are entreated to give "Iconoclast the extacy (*sic*) of gazing on the unpeopled interior of the Guildhall." The "Friends of Religion" prefaced their entreaty by announcing that "the juvenile destroyer of images" had been engaged as a "grand speculation!" Presumably this "Caution" resulted in a famous advertisement, for the *Doncaster Herald* says that the Guildhall was "crowded to excess," and in writing his account of the lecture, which he says was a "frantic panegyric in honour of hell and a blasphemous denunciation of heaven," the reporter to this journal seems to have worked himself up into a fine frenzy. One can almost see him with his tossed-back hair, his rolling eyes and gnashing teeth, as he hurled these dynamitic words at the readers of the *Herald*:—

"There boldly, defiantly, recklessly—with the air of the dreadnought bravo or the Alpine bandit—stood the creator's work [elsewhere styled 'clayformed ingrate'] toiling, sweating, labouring strenuously, to heap slander upon his creator, and to convert into odious lies the book by which that creator has made himself known to the world! . . . Need we go further to express our more than disgust—our horror—at the fact of a young and accomplished man standing forth in crowded halls, and, while the beauteous moon marches aloft in the vast and indefinable firmament, and the myriad of silvery stars shoot their refulgent rays upon the desecrated lecture-room, actually telling the people that no God lives! no Supreme hand fretted the brave o'erhanging firmament with golden fire—no Jehovah made the wide carpet of fair nature bespangled with laughing flowers—no God made roaring seas and mighty rivers—no God revealed the Bible—no God made man!"

One really needs to draw breath after all that: the lecture-room lighted by star rays, the firmament fretted with golden fire, the laughing flowers and roaring seas, must surely have carried conviction. The *Doncaster Chronicle*, if more prosaic, is not the less hostile. Its report thus describes the lecturer:—

"He is a tall, beardless, whiskerless young man, with a pale face, and has rather a harmless and prepossessing appearance"—[compare the *Herald's* 'Alpine bandit!']—"certainly not the fierce individual we had previously imagined him to be from the elements of destruction

indicated in his name—'the image breaker!' He is a person possessing great fluency of speech, of ready wit, and the declamatory style of his oratory is well calculated to excite and carry away a popular audience."

And the *Chronicle*, in a vain endeavour to outvie its colleague in choice epithets, winds up by styling the arguments of Atheists as "the miserable sophistry of these 'filthy dreamers,'" the delicate wording of which phrase would be hard for even a "coarse" Atheist to match, and urges that "for the sake of the youth of our town, the municipal authorities will not again lend the Guildhall for such an object." In Sheffield Mr Bradlaugh was rapidly growing in popularity; lecturing there again immediately after his Doncaster lecture, he had an audience of 2000 persons to hear his address on "Has Man a Soul?"

Later in the year he was again in Doncaster, and this time the "Friends of Religion" had succeeded so far in their endeavours that the Granby Music Hall was refused, and it was rumoured that the lectures would not be permitted. A temporary platform was however erected under the roof of the Corn Market, and, in lieu of the electric light of to-day, the lecturer was made dimly visible to his audience by means of a lamp raised upon a pole. The audience was said to number about 4000, "the hollow and partly arched roof of the Corn Market served as a sounding board, and the tones of Iconoclast, whilst speaking, were distinctly heard through the surrounding streets. Although the town was in a state of considerable excitement, the meeting was on the whole very orderly." It was a beautiful evening; and when the lecture was over several hundred persons escorted "Iconoclast in a sort of triumphant procession" to his lodgings. As this was not exactly in accordance with the anticipations of the "Friends of Religion," my father was informed by the Mayor that several magistrates had protested against the use of the Corporate property (the Corn Market), which they had occupied without the express permission of the Corporation, and in consequence the lectures must be given elsewhere. Accordingly, a large open yard near the market was obtained for that night; and although no fresh announcement was made, the news rapidly spread throughout the town. At half-past seven Mr Bradlaugh began to speak from a waggon. The subject was that of the "History and Teaching of Jesus Christ," and the audience, which increased every moment until it spread into the grounds of the adjoining Corn Market, ultimately numbering between 7000

and 8000 persons, was very quiet and attentive. Missiles were thrown from a neighbouring house, and fireworks also were thrown into the midst of the assemblage; they were soon put out, but "one cracker was kept by the lecturer and placed among other Christian evidences." On returning from the meeting to his lodgings, "a large stone was thrown, which partially stunned Iconoclast, and cut his head slightly."

In April he should have lectured at Accrington, but the proprietor of the hall was a publican, and the clergy and magistrates of the town had so worked upon his fears by threatening to refuse his license at the next Sessions that he drew back from his agreement. No other room was to be obtained; and as numbers of people had come from long distances to hear my father, he got leave to address them from a showman's waggon; but when the showman—notorious for his intemperance all over the district—"found that Iconoclast approached spiritual subjects less freely than himself," he, too, retracted his permission. Not to waste his time altogether, however, Mr Bradlaugh attended a meeting of the Accrington Mutual Improvement Society, at which, as it happened, the subject of the essay for the evening was "Jesus Christ." At Bolton the Concert Hall was engaged for his lectures on the 20th and 21st September; but when Mr Bradlaugh came from London to deliver the lectures, he found the walls placarded with the announcement that the lectures would not be permitted to take place. He brought an action against the Bolton Concert Hall Company for £7 damages for breach of contract, the £7 representing the expense to which he had been put. The jury, however, after being absent a considerable time, gave a verdict for the defendants. Needless to say that the closing of the Concert Hall did not prevent Mr Bradlaugh from lecturing in Bolton. Shortly afterwards the Unitarian Chapel, Moore Lane, was obtained, and he delivered three lectures on successive evenings, instead of two, as formerly announced.

At Halifax, in this year, his lectures produced the usual excitement. The town missionary rushed into verse upon the subject of "Iconoclast and the Devil," and issued his polite reflections in the form of a handbill. The lectures also resulted in a set debate between "Iconoclast" and the Rev. Mr. Matthias, which I shall notice later on. The story goes that at one of my father's lectures Mr Matthias was present, and wished to offer

some opposition at the conclusion. His friends sought to dissuade him, and even to hold him in his seat, but the reverend gentleman was so much in earnest, and was so excited, that he shook off the restraining hands, crying, "Unhand me, gentlemen. By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me."

In Glasgow, that autumn, Mr Bradlaugh was threatened with prosecution for blasphemy, with the result that his lectures at the Eclectic Institute were better attended than they had been before. A little later the Procurator Fiscal informed him that the prosecution was in his hands, and that "in the course of law" he would have to answer for his offence in Glasgow "against the Holy Christian religion." I cannot find that the matter was carried beyond this, however, so I suppose the Glasgow pietists contented themselves with empty threats.

Although thus actively engaged in the provinces during 1858 and 1859, my father by no means neglected work in London. He lectured at various halls on theological and political subjects, and took part in more general public work. In the spring of 1858 he was elected President of the London Secular Society in the place of Mr G. J. Holyoake, and those who know anything of his unremitting labours as President of the National Secular Society will comprehend that he was no mere figure-head, or President in name only. Amongst other things, he immediately set about issuing a series of tracts for distribution, of which he himself wrote the first.

On May 16th Mr Bradlaugh spoke at the John Street Institution at the celebration of Robert Owen's 88th and last birthday, and a little thing happened then which he was always proud to recall. It was Mr Robert Cooper's custom to read Mr Owen's papers to the public for him; but on this particular evening he was himself in ill-health, and had already exhausted his strength in addressing the meeting. Mr Owen had prepared a discourse on the "Origin of Evil," which Mr Cooper commenced to read as usual; but he being unable to continue, it fell to my father's lot to take up the reading. This was the last paper of Mr Owen's read in public, and almost the last public appearance of the aged reformer, who died on the 17th of the following November.

In the provinces there was often considerable difficulty in the matter of hiring halls or in keeping the proprietor to his contract after the hall had been hired, but in London there was either less

intolerance or more indifference, and the trouble arose less frequently. On one occasion, however, in March 1859, when Mr Bradlaugh was to have lectured in the Saint Martin's Hall on "Louis Napoleon," he recalls in his *Autobiography* that "the Government — on a remonstrance by Count Walewski as to language used at a previous meeting, at which I had presided for Dr Bernard—interfered; the hall was garrisoned by police, and the lecture prevented. Mr Hullah, the then proprietor, being indemnified by the authorities, paid damages for his breach of contract, to avoid a suit which I at once commenced against him."

In the winter of 1858 my father became editor of the *Investigator*, originally edited by Robert Cooper, and he was full of enthusiasm and belief in his ability to make the little paper a success. It had at that time a circulation of 1250, and he estimated that it needed twice that number to enable it to pay its printing and publishing expenses.

He commenced his conduct of the paper by a statement of his policy, and by a trenchant letter to Louis Napoleon. From the former I take the opening and concluding words as giving his first editorial utterance :*—

"We are investigators, and our policy is to ascertain facts and present them to our readers in clear and distinct language. If we find a mind bound round with Creeds and Bibles, we will select a sharp knife to cut the bonds; if we find men prostrating themselves, without inquiry, before idols, our policy is iconoclastic—we will destroy those idols. If we find a rock in our path, we will break it; but we will not quarrel with our brother who deems his proper work to be that of polishing the fragments. We believe all the religions of the world are founded on error, in the ignorance of natural causes and material conditions, and we deem it our duty to endeavour to expose their falsity. Our policy is therefore aggressive. We are, at present, of opinion that there is much to do in the mere clod-crushing sphere, in uprooting upas trees, hewing down creed-erected barriers between man and man, and generally in negating the influence of the priest. Our policy is of a humble character; we are content to be axebearers and pioneers, cutting down this obstacle and clearing away that. We respect the

* *Investigator*, November 1st, 1858, p. 124.

sower who delights in the positive work of scattering seed on the ground, but we fear that the weeds destroy much of the fruit of his labours. . . . .

"There is no middle ground between Theism and Atheism. The genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures are questions relevant to Secularism. It is as necessary for the Secularist to destroy Bible influence as for the farmer to endeavour to eradicate the chickweed from his clover field. We appeal to those who think our work fairly done to aid us in our labours; to those who will not work with us we simply say, do not hinder us.

"Our only wish and purpose is to make man happy, and this because in so doing we increase our own happiness. The secret of true happiness and wisdom lies in the consciousness that you are working to the fullest of your ability to make your fellows happy and wise. Man can never be happy until he is free; free in body and in mind; free in thought and in utterance; free from crowns and creeds, from priest, from king; free from the cramping customs created by the influences surrounding him, and which have taught him to bow to a lord and frown upon a beggar. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! That true liberty, which infringes not the freedom of my brother; that equality, which recognises no noblemen but the men of noble thoughts and noble deeds; that fraternity which links the weak arm-in-arm with the strong, and, teaching humankind that union is strength, compels them to fraternise, and links them together in that true brotherhood for which we strive."

The second number of the *Investigator* under his editorship is interesting to-day, as containing his earliest printed views upon "Oath-taking;" the third is also notable for its paper on "Emerson," the first article from the pen of "B. V." (James Thomson); and in the fourth Mr W. E. Adams commenced his contributions. It is evident that my father spared no effort to make the paper "undoubtedly useful," as he put it; but in spite of all his energy and his able contributors the *Investigator* did not pay its way. In April, too, he fell ill from a very severe attack of rheumatic fever, and was laid up for many weeks; so that at length, "being unable to sustain any longer the severe pecuniary burden cast upon him, and not wishing to fill his pages with appeals for charitable assistance," the journal was, with much regret, discontinued in August 1859. In the final number he pens a few "last words,"

which are worth the reading, and in which he says that his reason for the discontinuance is very simple—"I am poor"—and in a rarely despondent mood he bids his readers "farewell," as he may perchance never address them again.

Delivering Freethought lectures and editing a Freethought journal undoubtedly absorbed much of Mr Bradlaugh's time, but these occupations engrossing as they were did not make him unmindful of his duties as a good citizen, and he was always taking some part or other in the political movements going on around him. At a meeting held in the Cowper Street School-room in November 1858, to advocate the principles of the Political Reform League, at which the League was represented by Mr Passmore Edwards and Mr Swan, and the Chartists by Ernest Jones, Mr Bradlaugh is reported as seconding a resolution in an "earnest, lucid, and eloquent manner," and as having "enforced the duty of every man to preserve the public rights, by unitedly demanding and steadfastly, peaceably, and determinedly persevering to obtain that position of equality in the State to which they were as men entitled;" now, as always hereafter, urging the *peaceful* demand of constitutional rights: a point I am anxious to lay stress upon, as this is the time when some of my father's later critics assert that he was rude, coarse, and, above all, violent.

The chairman of the meeting, who was also the churchwarden of Shoreditch, and a man apparently much respected, at the close quaintly said "he had not met that young man (Mr Bradlaugh) before that night, but he was most highly pleased to find in him such an able advocate of principle; he hoped he would be as good and faithful an advocate when he became old."

On the first Sunday in March 1859, the working men of London held a great meeting in Hyde Park to protest against the Government Reform Bill. They were very much in earnest, and although the time for the speaking was fixed for three o'clock in the afternoon, long before that hour the Park was thronged with people. About half-past two a man was hoisted on the shoulders of two others, and was greatly cheered by the crowd, who thought this was the opening of the proceedings. When, however, the person so elevated proclaimed to his listening auditors that "those who dared to take part in a political meeting on the Sabbath would be grossly offending the Almighty," the cheering was changed to

uproar and confusion, which only the advent of the real chairman sufficed to calm. The *Times* says that after the meeting had been duly opened, "Mr Bradlaugh, a young man well known in democratic circles, came forward and addressed the meeting." The report which follows is probably the first vouchsafed to Charles Bradlaugh by the great daily; and, judging from the number of "Cheers" and "Hear, hears," and even "Loud cheers" that the reporter managed to include in his score of lines of report, it was much more generous to him in '59 than at any later period. This meeting, like so many of its kind, and like the great majority of those with which my father was concerned, was remarkable for its orderliness; there was no police interference at any of the groups (several meetings were held simultaneously), and there was hardly a constable visible. On the Friday following, the 11th, a meeting was held at the Guildhall "to consider the measure of Parliamentary Reform introduced by the Ministry." The chair was taken by the Lord Mayor, and the speakers included Baron Rothschild, one of the three members for the City, Samuel Morley, P. A. Taylor, and Serjeant Parry. Ernest Jones, who rose to move an amendment, was refused a hearing—under a misapprehension, it is said. When Baron Rothschild began to speak he was considerably interrupted. "Loud calls," said the *Times* on the following day (when it was a trifle less polite than on the previous Monday), "were also raised for 'Bradlaugh'—a youthful orator who seemed a great favourite with the noisier Democrats." The poor Lord Mayor vainly tried to restore order, but louder grew the tumult and "more deafening" the calls for "Bradlaugh." Baron Rothschild was at length obliged to limit his speech to "I beg to second the motion;" and even these few words were only audible to those within two or three yards of him. When the meeting was drawing to a close, and the usual vote of thanks to the chair had been proposed—

"The Lord Mayor acknowledged the compliment, at the same time expressing his deep regret that persons should have come to the hall bent on creating a disturbance. At this juncture a young man, with fair hair and thin but intelligent features, was seen gesticulating vehemently at the extreme end of the platform, to which he had worked his way unobserved amid the general confusion. His name, it appeared, is Bradlaugh, and his object evidently was to gratify his admirers by delivering an harangue. His words were, however,

drowned by the conflicting clamour from the body of the hall. The Lord Mayor seemed to beckon him to the rostrum, as though his claim to speak were to be allowed; but a minute or two of indescribable confusion intervening, his Lordship came forward and then declared the meeting to be dissolved. This announcement had hardly been made when Mr Bradlaugh reached the part of the platform for which he had been struggling. His triumph was, however, very short lived. In an instant the Lord Mayor, though having one of his arms in a sling, was upon the refractory Chartist leader, and collared him with the energy and resolution of a Sir William Walworth. Two of the city officers promptly seconding his Lordship's assertion of his authority, Mr Bradlaugh was dragged forcibly to the back of the platform, and fell in the scuffle. All this was but the work of a moment, yet the uproar which it provoked continued after every occupant of the platform had retired. The undaunted orator found his way to the body of the hall unhurt, where he addressed such portions of the crowd as had not dispersed in frantic and excited eloquence. A considerable time elapsed before the building was cleared, during which Anarchy and Bradlaugh had undisputed possession of the scene."

How much of fact and how much of fiction there is in this lively account the *Times* only knoweth. The idea that a "Sir William Walworth" with one arm in a sling could "collar" a man of my father's herculean strength is sufficiently ridiculous. I myself saw him as late as 1877 at a stormy meeting take two unruly medical students in one hand and one in the other, and force them down the hall to the door, where he cast them out. His resistance to his fourteen assailants on August 3rd, 1881, is historic. It is hardly probable that a man who could do these things when he had passed the fulness of his strength would, when in the height of his vigour, have tamely submitted to be "collared" by a one-armed man and then dragged back and thrown to the ground by two "city officers;" and all "the work of a moment!"

Gatherings opposing the Government Reform Bill were held in different parts of London and the country; and Mr Joseph Cowen, himself President of the Northern Reform Union, writing to a friend in reference to them, on the 16th March, says incidentally: "Bradlaugh is a clever young fellow—full of vigour and daring—and is altogether a likely man to go ahead if he has any backing."

Considering the limited time at his disposal, there is really a

tremendous record of public work for these two years, 1858 and 1859; for in addition to that which I have already mentioned, my father held several debates, some of them continuing for three or four nights in succession. He had his first formal encounter in June 1858. Prior to this, he had gained a little practice in discussing with the numerous opponents who used to rise after his lectures; then there was the more extended, but apparently informal, debate with Mr Douglas, to which I referred some time ago; and also, in the early part of 1858, Mr Bradlaugh seems to have arranged to speak at considerable length in opposition to the lectures given by Thomas Cooper in the Hall of Science, City Road; but the brief notices of these which appeared do not enable one to form any opinion, beyond remarking a decided irritability on the part of Mr Cooper, who permitted himself to use distinctly unparliamentary language. The first formally arranged debate in which he took part was a four nights' discussion with the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., then a dissenting minister at Sheffield, and was held in that town on the 7th, 8th, 14th, and 15th June. In 1873 my father, writing of this occasion, said: "Mr Grant was then a man of some ability, and, if he could have forgotten his aptitudes as a circus jester, would have been a redoubtable antagonist." The audiences were very large; the numbers of persons present on the different nights ranged from eleven to sixteen hundred; and, considering the heat of the weather and the still greater heat of the discussion, my father's testimony is that they "behaved bravely." Writing shortly afterwards, he says: "The chairmen (both chosen by Mr Grant) behaved most courteously to me, and, in fact, the only disputed point of order was decided in my favour." He seems to have been particularly impressed by Alderman H. Hoole, the Chairman for the first two nights, who by an act of kindly courtesy quite outside the debate, showed that the gibes and sneers in which Mr Grant so freely indulged had little weight even with his own friends.

A friend in Sheffield has lent me the report of the discussion, printed at the time by Mr Leader of the *Sheffield Independent*, and which both disputants agreed was a very fair representation of what was said. According to the arranged terms, Mr Bradlaugh led the first night, and the Rev. Brewin Grant on each succeeding evening. The proposition to be affirmed by "Iconoclast" on the first evening was: "The God of the Bible, revengeful, inconstant,

unmerciful, and unjust. His attributes proven to be contradicted by the book which is professed to reveal them." His opening speech was made in clear, concise language, was directly to the point, and was listened to with the utmost attention. He drew the picture of the Deity who, reviewing his creation, pronounced everything that he had made "very good" (Gen. i. 31); "yet in a short period the same Deity looks round and declares that man is so bad that he repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart [Gen. vi. 6]; and in consequence God, to relieve himself from this source of grief, determined to destroy every living thing, and he did destroy them by deluge, for it repented him that he had made them, because man was so very wicked." He dwelt upon this at some length; then passed on to the selection of Noah and his family, "part of the old stock of mankind having personal acquaintance with all pre-existing evil," to re-people the earth; and concluded his first half-hour by asking where was the love, where the justice towards the Amalek, against whom "the Lord hath sworn" to have war "from generation to generation"? It was now the turn of the Rev. Brewin Grant to reply to this terrible indictment against the Deity whose professed servant he was; and it is interesting to mark the manner in which he set about his task. He commenced by unburdening himself of a few minor personalities against my father, and when a few of these petty sneers—the only possible object of which could be to provoke ill feeling—were off his mind, he indulged his overwhelming passion for raising a laugh. For this he made an opportunity in dealing with the causes which led to "the Flood," asking whether "Iconoclast imagines that, because God knew of these sins before they were committed, he should have drowned men before they were created." This, of course, provoked the desired merriment, and, temporarily satisfied, Mr Grant proceeded to his argument with acuteness and ability. Unfortunately, his peculiar temperament would not allow him to keep this up for very long; and while still in his first half-hour speech he drew a comparison of God's repentance with that of a merchant who repents him of engaging a certain clerk, and made the merchant say, "Wherein can you find fault? Am I a Secularist that I should lie, or an infidel committee-man that I should violate a ratified agreement?" "Iconoclast" is once more taunted with blindness and ignorance; and "infidels" with amusing "auditors in holes of

progress;" and so the reverend (never was a title more meaningless) gentleman's speech came to a conclusion. It would have been small wonder if a young, hotly enthusiastic man as my father then was, had been roused to angry retaliation, and so turned aside from the real points in dispute; but he did not so soon lose the coolness with which he had started. He made a few short answers to the personalities, and proceeded at once to deal with the arguments urged by Mr Grant; and, these disposed of, continued to build up his own position. The greater part of Brewin Grant's next speech was argumentative, but not all; he made an opportunity to tell his antagonist that his strength lay "not in his logic, but in his lungs;" that one of his objections was "too foolish," but he (Grant) "condescended to notice it;" and further, that "no class of men with which I am acquainted has had all honesty so thoroughly eaten out by trickery and falsehood as the infidel class." The next quarter of an hour fell to my father, who hardly noticed Mr Grant's gibes; but when the latter made his speech, the final one of the evening, he still interlarded it with innuendoes against the "infidel." The propositions affirmed by Mr Grant on the succeeding nights were shortly as follows: The Creation story consistent with itself and with science; the Deluge story consistent with itself and physically possible; and finally, "Iconoclast" as a commentator on the Bible, "deficient in learning, logic, and fairness." But the story of the first night was merely repeated on the later evenings; as feeling grew a little warmer, or there was something more than usually offensive in Mr Grant's personalities, Mr Bradlaugh was once or twice evidently roused to anger; but after reading the debate I only wonder that he had the patience to carry it through to the end.

I have dwelt upon this debate much longer, as I am well aware, than it really deserves; but I have done so for two reasons: (1) That being the first set debate, formally arranged and fairly reported, it should have a special interest, inasmuch as we should expect it to show to a certain extent the measure of Mr Bradlaugh's debating powers at the age of twenty-six; and (2) because the idea has been so diligently spread abroad, and possibly received with credence by those who were not personally acquainted with either disputant, that Mr Bradlaugh found in the Rev. Brewin Grant a powerful opponent. By my father's testimony, Mr Grant was a man of ability; by his own—as shown by quotations I have

here given—he was an unscrupulous slanderer. He had a power, it is true, and that power consisted in his willingness to weary and disgust his antagonist and his audience (friends as well as foes) by low jests and scandalous personalities. In the course of this debate he scornfully told his audience that he was not speaking to them but to the thousands outside: by those thousands, if perchance he has so many readers, will he be judged and condemned.

In March 1859 a debate between Mr Bradlaugh and Mr John Bowes was arranged at Northampton. My father describes Mr Bowes as "a rather heavy but well-meaning old gentleman, utterly unfitted for platform controversy." The *Northampton Herald*, which professed to give an "outline" of this debate, announced that the "mighty champion" of the Secularists was "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh, who endeavoured to impose upon the credulity of the multitude by arrogating to himself the high-sounding title of 'Iconoclast.'" Mr John Bowes the *Herald* put forward as a "gentleman well known for his contests with the Socialists and the Mormonites." The *Herald's* outline-report was reprinted in the *Investigator*, with a few additions in parentheses; but a note is appended that it is very imperfect, and my father having by this time fallen ill with rheumatic fever, he was unable to revise it. There is just one passage in Mr Bradlaugh's opening speech which is given fairly fully, and which it is desirable to repeat here, for in it he lays down his position as an Atheist, a position to which he adhered until his last hour.

"He did not deny that there was 'a God,' because to deny that which was unknown was as absurd as to affirm it. As an Atheist he denied the God of the Bible, of the Koran, of the Vedas, but he could not deny that of which he had no knowledge."

This statement Mr Bradlaugh made, in varying words, over and over again, and yet over and over again religious writers and speakers have described, and probably they always will describe, the Atheist as "one who denies God."

In the years 1859 and 1860, despite the fact that in the former year he lay for many weeks very seriously ill, discussions, as he himself says, grew on him "thick and fast." "At Sheffield I debated with a Reverend Dr Mensor, who styled himself a Jewish Rabbi. He was then in the process of gaining admission to the Church of England, and had been put forward to show my want of scholarship. We both scrawled Hebrew characters for four

nights on a black board, to the delight and mystification of the audience, who gave me credit for erudition because I chalked the square letter characters with tolerable rapidity and clearness. At Glasgow I debated with a Mr Court, representing the Glasgow Protestant Association, a glib-tongued missionary, who has since gone to the bad; at Paisley with a Mr Smart, a very gentlemanly antagonist; and at Halifax with the Rev. T. D. Matthias, a Welsh Baptist minister, unquestionably very sincere."

I have not been able to get a report of the debate with Dr Mensor, and indeed I do not think one was ever printed. The discussion with the Rev. T. D. Matthias was for many years on sale with other Freethought publications, and has doubtless been read by many. The subject of the debate was "The Credibility and Morality of the Four Gospels," and it was continued for five successive nights—October 31st, November 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 1859. It grew, as we have already seen, out of lectures delivered in Halifax by Mr Bradlaugh, and was with one or two exceptions conducted with such calmness, courtesy, and good feeling, that at the conclusion each gentleman expressed his appreciation of the other. The Court debate was not held until 1860, and was a four nights' debate, terminating on March 20. The use of the City Hall was refused on the ground "that such meetings tend to riot and disorder," and the discussions were therefore held in the Trades' Hall, which on each evening was crowded to the door. The chair was taken by the late Alexander Campbell, whom Mr Bradlaugh speaks of as "a generous, kindly-hearted old Socialist missionary, who, at a time when others were hostile, spoke encouragingly to me, and afterwards worked with me for a long time on the *National Reformer*." Mr Campbell edited the *Glasgow Sentinel*, and in the issue of March 17, 1860, there is an allusion to the debate then being carried on between "Iconoclast" and Mr Court, of "The Protestant Layman's Association." Says the *Sentinel*, "Few Scottish clergymen are fit for the platform. The pulpit, indeed, unfits for logical debate, but theProtestant community ought to feel well pleased that in Mr Court . . . they have a skillful and redoubtable champion of Christianity." The *Glasgow Daily Bulletin*, giving a few words to the final night, says that "the speaking during the evening was excellent and occasionally excited, but the conduct of the audience was orderly in the extreme. Mr Bradlaugh was animated and forcible, and exhibited many of

the traits of a great speaker. Mr Court's university career is evidently polishing and improving him." The audience passed a resolution of censure upon the authorities who refused the City Hall, regarding it as involving a slander upon the community of Glasgow. A friend, after much searching, came across and sent to me a fragment of the published debate; but as it contains only one complete speech from each disputant and parts of two others, one cannot say much about it. Mr Court seems to have been unusually smart, and the *Daily Bulletin's* reference to his "university career" accounts for the numerous literary quotations which adorned his speech.

The *Paisley Journal* gives a short notice of the debate with Mr John Smart of the Neilson Institute, which was held for two successive nights in the Paisley Exchange Rooms in March 1860. Speaking of the first night's audience, it says it "was the largest we ever saw in the Exchange Rooms, the whole area, gallery, and passages being crowded;" on the second night the audience was estimated at between 1100 and 1200. The discussion for the first night was upon the four Gospels; and the editor remarks: "Of course, there will be differences of opinion as to which of the debaters had the best of the argument; but those who could clear their minds of partisanship will perhaps be of opinion that Mr Bradlaugh's speeches displayed boldness and vigour, with great information on the subjects at issue; that Mr Smart showed himself as an accomplished scholar, with a mass of knowledge ever ready to bring up in illustration of his views; and that each had a foeman worthy of his steel." The subject for the second night was a consideration of the teachings of Christ. The *Journal* thought that "both speakers brought their best arguments and greatest powers of intellect into the subject." Mr Bradlaugh enforced his objections "in powerful voice and vigorous language, and with telling effect. In his own quiet scholarly way—closely, tersely, and clearly, Mr Smart took up most of the objections and discussed them *seriatim*." It will be seen that the *Paisley Journal*, at least, tried to clear its mind of "partisanship," and to hold the scales evenly.

CHAPTER X.

HARD TIMES.

THE question will probably have presented itself to many minds, If Mr Bradlaugh was giving up so much time to public work, to lecturing, reform meetings, debating, etc., how was he living the while? what was his home life, and in what way was he earning his bread? It will be remembered that, after leaving the army in 1853, he was before the year was out in the employ of Mr Rogers, solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, first as "errand boy" at 10s. a week, and then as clerk at a slowly increasing salary. After a few months at Warner Place, he and my mother went to live in a little four-roomed house at No. 4 West Street, Cambridge Heath, where my sister Alice was born. In the previous January my father had had a very troublesome piece of litigation to conduct for his firm at Manchester. Often and often has he told us the story of it, and he used to work us up into a state of excitement by his graphic account of his capture of two men at night from a common lodging house in one of the low parts of Manchester; of his interview at the Albion Hotel with Mr Holland, a surgeon implicated in the case, who, when my father rose to ring the bell for some lemonade, mistaking the intent, rose in alarm, and cried, "For God's sake, don't!" These and other episodes in the case remained clearly enough in my memory, but when I wished to retell the story in a connected form, I found myself altogether at a loss. First of all, I could not remember that my father ever mentioned the date of these legal adventures, and without the date I could do little in the way of searching for press reports. However, I found a clue to this in the following letter, which was amongst those papers of my mother's which, as I have said, I looked through quite recently for the first time:—

"North Camp, Aldershot,
"29th January 1856.

"Madam,—Mr Bradlaugh has been kind enough to send me, during

the last few days, some Manchester newspapers containing reports relative to the case of suspected poisoning. Not knowing where to address him now, I take the liberty of writing to you. Will you be so kind as to convey to him my thanks for the papers, and my hearty congratulations on his having obtained the management of the prosecution; it is an opportunity of distinguished service. With his wonderful acuteness and energy (Mr Bradlaugh and myself are such old and close friends that we do not mince words in speaking of or to each other) he will surely distinguish himself, and thus, as I suppose and hope, be in a fair way for promotion, as we phrase it. Watching the case with great interest, I thought his cross-examination of Mr Holland, the surgeon, extremely good and well conducted; but as this is merely an unprofessional opinion, he will not care much for it, although so favourable.

"Trusting that yourself and the other members of the family are enjoying good health, I have the honour to be, Madam, yours most respectfully, JAS. THOMSON, Schoolmaster.

"Depôt, 1st Rifles.

"Mrs C. Bradlaugh."

Apart from the subject, this letter has in itself a special interest to personal admirers of "B.V.": the handwriting—the earliest specimen in my possession—is singularly unlike Mr Thomson's writing of later years, so unlike that it was not until I had looked at the signature that I realised who was the writer, although I am so familiar with his writing that I should not have thought it possible that I could hesitate in recognising it.

The poisoning case must have aroused considerable attention in Manchester at the time. It arose in this way:—An insurance company called The Diadem Life Insurance Company had reason to believe that frauds were being practised upon them in Manchester through their agent, and consequently instructed their solicitor to investigate one case which they deemed unusually suspicious. The solicitor happened to be Mr Rogers, and he sent his clerk, Mr Bradlaugh, to Manchester to conduct the proceedings there. A man named John Monahan, a waterproof worker, had become insured in the Diadem Office for £300; and after paying the premiums he died, leaving a will securing the £300 to his son James Monahan. Certain facts had been kept back from the Insurance Company at the time of taking out the policy, and the man's age had also been wrongly given. Investigations led, first, to the belief that the will had not been written until three weeks after the testator's death—and this was subsequently sworn to by witnesses, one of

whom wrote out the will—and finally, to the possibility that the old man, John Monahan, had been poisoned. Two men implicated in the matter Mr Bradlaugh himself captured and handed over to the police in the middle of the night, and, in consequence of the evidence sworn to, an order was made for the exhumation of the body of Monahan. As there was no record of the place of burial, the details of the exhumation were revolting in the extreme. For four days a gang of men were employed in digging up bodies in an almost haphazard manner under the vague directions, first, of the sexton and next of a niece of the deceased. Mr Bradlaugh, after consulting with the coroner, contracted with a Mr Sturges to undertake the work with more system. Sixty or more bodies were dug up, and at length one of these was identified as that of Monahan. Under the circumstances one cannot believe that the identification was very precise; the body had been lying in a common grave for between five and six months, and no one's memory seems to have been clear enough even to point out the spot where the old man was buried. Mr Bradlaugh was always of opinion that they did not get the right body after all, although in the body found there were traces of poison. These traces the medical evidence did not judge sufficient to justify a charge of poisoning, and this count therefore fell to the ground. The counsel engaged on behalf of the accused son, James Monahan, was very indignant that my father should be allowed to conduct the prosecution; he protested that heretofore the rule in that court was that no one should be allowed to practise in that court unless an attorney, or solicitor, or barrister. On the last occasion, the counsel went on, as the prisoners had been apprehended only the night before, and therefore, as there was not perhaps time to instruct a professional man, Mr Bradlaugh had been allowed to appear. Other clerks had been refused to appear, and he could not see why a different rule should be adopted in this case. To expedite the business, he suggested that the case should, according to ordinary practice, be conducted by a solicitor or barrister. Mr Bradlaugh said he had appeared to conduct cases for his employer in London police courts, and this was a matter entirely within the discretion of the Court. He urged that he alone was in possession of all the facts of the case, and that he could not communicate his knowledge to any other person. Mr Maude (the magistrate) remarked that it had been the general rule in that court that parties should be represented either by counsel

or solicitor, but there was no rule without an exception, and looking at the peculiarity of this case, he thought it would be very inconvenient now not to allow Mr Bradlaugh to elicit the facts.

At a later stage of the proceedings a Mr Bent, who was watching the case on behalf of another of the prisoners, objected, on the part of the solicitors practising in the court, to Mr Bradlaugh, an attorney's clerk, being allowed to appear, but the Bench overruled his objection. In consequence of the medical evidence as to the condition of the exhumed body, the charge of poisoning had, of course, to be entirely abandoned, but in the March following James Monahan and two others were charged with having, on 3rd August 1855, "feloniously forged a will purporting to be the last will and testament of John Monahan, and with having uttered the same, knowing it to be forged," and another was charged with having feloniously been an accessory after the fact. The jury found Monahan guilty, but acquitted the others. Keefe, the fourth man, was then charged with having taken a false oath, and to this he pleaded guilty.

In September 1857 my father moved from West Street to 3 Hedgers Terrace, Cassland Road, Hackney, where I was born in the March of the following year. He now began to think it was quite time to take some definite steps towards the advancement of his position in life, and with that object in view he wrote the following letter to Mr Rogers:—

"Dear Sir,—I have been in your employ above four years, and am now twenty-five years of age. I have a wife and child, beside mother and sisters, looking to me for support; under these circumstances it is absolutely necessary that I should make the best position I can for myself. My object in now addressing you is to ascertain if there is any probability of my obtaining my articles from you, and if so, at what period? You must not be offended with me for this, because we are in the position of two traders. I have my brains for sale, you buy them. I naturally try to get the best price—you perhaps may think I sell too high. I have already this year refused three situations offered to me. The first (although it was £160 a year) I refused because it came just after my last increase of salary; the second because it did not involve the articles; and the third because it was made to me immediately prior to the death of Mr Rogers, and I thought it would be indelicate then to trouble you. My question to you now is, Do you feel willing to give me my articles? Of course, I need not say that I have not the means to pay for the stamp, and the matter therefore involves the question of an

advance of £80. I would, however, gladly serve you for the five years at the salary I now receive, and I would enter into any bond, however stringent, to prevent loss of practice to you in the future. If you feel inclined to do this, name your own time within six months: if, on the contrary, you think I set too high a value on my capabilities, or have determined not to give articles to any clerk, I shall be obliged by an early reply.

"Whatever may be the result of this application, I trust you will believe that I am grateful for the many past kindnesses you have shown me, and that the good feeling at present existing may not be lessened between us. I have my way in life to make—yours to a great extent is smooth and easy; but as you have struggled yourself, I am willing to hope you will not blame me for trying hard to make a step in life.—Yours very respectfully,

"(Signed) CHAS. BRADLAUGH.

"Thos. Rogers, Esq."

This letter is undated and without address; and it will be noted as a curious point of interest, in one so very business-like and practical, that Mr Bradlaugh rarely did put his address or date on the letters he wrote with his own hand. If the address happened to be stamped on the paper, well and good, if not, he rarely wrote it; and his nearest approach to dating his letters was to put upon them the day of the week. I do not, of course, say that he never went through the customary form of putting the date or address, but that he more often than not omitted it. This habit, contracted early in life, he retained until his death, and in fact the very last letter entirely written with his own hand was merely dated with the day of the week.

The precise reply to this appeal I do not know; that it must have been in the negative, and that my father had to seek for some one else who would give him his articles on the terms indicated in his letter is clear. This person he thought he had found in Mr Thomas Harvey, solicitor, of 36 Moorgate Street, and he quitted Mr Rogers in order to be articled to him. The draft of the articles of agreement found amongst my father's papers bears the date November 16th, 1858. This connection proved to be a most unfortunate one for my father; for Mr Harvey shortly afterwards fell into money difficulties, in which Mr Bradlaugh also became involved. My father's troubles—as troubles ever seem to do—came, not singly, but in battalions; he was now not only without regular employment and in serious pecuniary difficulties, but

rheumatic fever seized upon him, and laid him for many weeks in the spring and early summer of 1859 on his couch in his little room at Cassland Road. In August, still weak, poor, and full of care, he was, as I have said, obliged to stop the *Investigator*, and give up for the time his cherished project of editing a Freethought journal.

When poor people are ill, necessity compels them to curtail the period of convalescence, so before my father was able to go out he strove to do writing work at home, although the rheumatism lingering in his right hand rendered the use of the pen painful and difficult. As soon as he could get about again he began once more lecturing and debating (as we have seen) with renewed energy. Anyhow the stories are legion of the fortunes he made upon the platform and through his publications, though a few small incidents will show the amount of truth there is in these oft-repeated tales.

Just before the birth of my brother Charles, on the 14th September 1859, we moved from Hackney to a little house at Park, near Tottenham, called Elysium Villa; and while we lived here, when my father had to make a journey to the North he was obliged to start from Wood Green station, a distance of about three and a half miles from our house. The only way to get there was to walk—omnibuses there were none, and a cab was out of the question on the score of expense. Mr Bradlaugh had no portmanteau in those days; his books and his clothes were packed in a square tin box, which to the "curious observer"—to use a phrase much favoured by novelists—would have given a hint of his profession, inasmuch as it was uncommonly like a deed box. The maid Kate, assisted by some one else, carried this box from home to the station at Wood Green over night, and my father would get up early in the morning and walk the three and a-half miles to catch the first train to the North. It must be borne in mind that my father did not, like many young men, like walking for walking's sake, and the long walk, followed by a still longer train ride in one of the old comfortless third-class compartments in a slow train, finishing up with a lecture or debate, made a fairly heavy day's work.

Before going farther I must stay to say a word about Kate, because I want to give some idea of the devotion my father inspired at home as well as in the hearts of men who could only judge him by his public acts. Kate came to us from the country,

a girl of sixteen, when I was but a few months old; she stayed with us until our home was broken up and my brother died, in 1870. Many a time her wages were perforce in arrears; and in 1870 she would, as she had done before, have patiently waited for better times and shared with us, had we not been compelled to do without her. Her loyalty was absolute. When we three children were babies she cheerfully bore poverty with us; and well do I remember—as a picture it stands out in my mind, one of my earliest recollections—the carpetless floor and scantily furnished room. In the days when there was arrest for debt she kept the door against the sheriff's officer: when one of Mr Thomson's sad periods of intemperance overwhelmed him, she, with my mother, searched the purlieus of London for him, found him in some poor den, and brought him home to be nursed and cared for. Kate lives to-day, and with unabated loyalty never allows an opportunity to pass of saying a word in praise, or in defence, of her dead but much-loved master.

A letter to my mother (undated, but certainly written early in the sixties) giving some description of one of my father's journeys to Yarmouth, reminds us that the old-fashioned windowless third-class carriage left many things to be desired, and in these days of luxurious travelling such hardships would be thought unendurable:—

"I am safely landed here* with sevenpence in my pocket. It has snowed nearly all the journey, and if it continues I expect all the bloaters will be turned into whitings. The ride was a cold one, for the E. C. R.† parliamentary carriage combined the advantage of ventilation with that of a travelling bath, wind, rain, and snow gaining admission and accompanying us without payment—which was not fair.

"You asked me to write, and I will therefore describe the incidents of the journey. Park to Broxbourne: carriage full, darkness prevailed; Broxbourne: spent 1d. on *Daily Telegraph*, which read to myself lying on the broad of my back, the carriage being more empty; the view was mist in the clouds of snow. Cambridge: bought 3d. of biscuits and a [*Morning*] *Star*, ate one and read the other till I arrived at Ely, with an occasional glance at Buckle on Civilisation. Ely to Norwich: cold, and discontented with my lot in life; Norwich: met Adams and Roberts, talked sweet things about confectionery for ten minutes, then straight on here, where I fulfil my promise of writing you."

* The letter is headed, "Yarmouth, Thursday."

† "Eastern Counties," now "Great Eastern" Railway.

The letter is ornamented with several drawings of himself under the different circumstances indicated in his letter.

The story he also relates in his "Autobiography," "for the encouragement of young propagandists," is a forcible example of the little profit his lectures often brought, and the difficulties his poverty sometimes forced upon him.

"I had," he says, "lectured in Edinburgh in mid-winter; the audience was small, the profits microscopical. After paying my bill at the Temperance Hotel, where I then stayed, I had only a few shillings more than my Parliamentary fare to Bolton, where I was next to lecture. I was out of bed at five on a freezing morning, and could have no breakfast, as the people were not up. I carried my luggage (a big tin box, corded round, which then held books and clothes, and a small black bag), for I could not spare any of my scanty cash for a conveyance or porter. The train from Edinburgh being delayed by a severe snowstorm, the corresponding Parliamentary had left Carlisle long before our arrival. In order to reach Bolton in time for my lecture, I had to book by a quick train, starting in about three-quarters of an hour, but could only book to Preston, as the increased fare took all my money except 4½d. With this small sum I could get no refreshment in the station, but in a little shop in a street outside I got a mug of hot tea and a little hot meat pie. From Preston I got with great difficulty on to Bolton, handing my black bag to the station-master there, as security for my fare from Preston, until the morning. I arrived in Bolton about a quarter to eight; the lecture commenced at eight, and I, having barely time to run to my lodgings, and wash and change, went on to the platform cold and hungry. I shall never forget that lecture; it was in an old Unitarian Chapel. We had no gas, the building seemed full of a foggy mist, and was imperfectly lit with candles. Everything appeared cold, cheerless, and gloomy. The most amusing feature was that an opponent, endowed with extra piety and forbearance, chose that evening to specially attack me for the money-making and easy life I was leading."

Writing in April 1860, he also gives some idea of his profits as an editor and a publisher:—"When," he writes, "I relinquished the editorship of the *Investigator*, I was burdened with a printing debt of nearly £60; this has been reduced a little more than half by contributions, leaving about £26 still due. I have, in addition,

paid out of my own pocket, for Freethought printing, during two years, more than £100, for which I have yet no return. During the last eight months I have been actively engaged in lecturing. . . . . When you learn that at some places I took nothing away, and paid my own expenses, and that at nearly every place I only received the actual profit of my lectures; and when, in addition, you allow a few days for visits to my wife and family, which have been few and far between; and also reckon for more than a week of enforced idleness through ill health, you will perceive that I am not amassing a fortune."

In 1861 he again wrote: "During the past twelve months I have addressed 276 different meetings, four of which each numbered over 5000 persons; eighty of these lectures have involved considerable loss in travelling, hotel expenses, loss of time, etc. I have during the same time held five separate debates, two of these also without remuneration."

It is very likely that even in these early years my father cherished the hope of being able to earn enough by his tongue and his pen to devote himself entirely to that Freethought and political work which he had so much at heart; but as his own words show us, the day for that was not yet come, and the fortune he was accused of amassing existed then, as always, only in the heated imagination of his detractors.

CHAPTER XI.

A CLERICAL LIBELLER.

Some lawsuits in which Mr Bradlaugh was interested brought him into contact with a solicitor named Montague R. Leverson, who had indeed been engaged in the defence of Dr Bernard. The acquaintance thus begun resulted in an arrangement between them in January 1862 that Mr Leverson should give my father his articles. It was agreed that Mr Leverson should pay the £80 stamp duty and all expenses in connection with the articles, and that my father should serve him as clerk for five years at a salary of £150 per annum for the first three years and £200 for the final two. The articles were drawn up and duly stamped on 25th June of the same year. For the convenience of business, my father gave up his house at Park, and went to live at 12 St Helen's Place, Bishopsgate. This connection, which opened so favourably, and gave my father the opportunity, as he thought, of making a settled position in life, lasted only for two years or less. Mr Leverson got into difficulties, and the business was broken up. Vague accusations had been brought against my father for the manner in which he is supposed to have treated Mr Leverson. Nothing definite is stated, but the slanderous "know-all's," who really know nothing, try to make out a case by means of hint and innuendo. With a view of disposing of even such paltry slanders as these, I quote the following letter written in reference to Mr Montague R. Leverson :—

"Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London, W.
"7th January 1867.

"My Dear Sir,—As written words remain when those spoken may be forgotten, I desire to place on record my sense of the kindly interest and alacrity you have recently displayed in your endeavours to serve a person with whom, despite anterior intimate relations, you had a short time previously been on antagonistic terms.

"Your earnest and energetic zeal on a former occasion had commanded

my respect and that of my wife, who witnessed some of your untiring efforts, and I regret that your friendly services have not met their full and due appreciation.

"I feel sure, nevertheless, that should an opportunity occur where your good offices would be required, you would not withhold them.—I remain dear Sir, yours most truly, GEORGE R. LEVERSON.

"Chas. Bradlaugh, Esq."

When Mr Bradlaugh quitted Mr Leverson he also quitted St Helen's Place, and went back to Tottenham to live, where, indeed, my sister and I had remained at a school kept by two maiden ladies during the greater part of the intervening time. He took the house, Sunderland Villa, next door to the one we had previously occupied, and for business purposes he rented an office in the city first at 23 Great St Helen's, and later at 15 and 16 Palmerston Buildings, Old Broad Street. A company was formed called the "Naples Colour Company," of which he was the nominal principal, and in which he was very active. This enterprise arose out of the discovery that iron and platinum were to be found in the sand of the beach at Castellamare, a little place on the coast not far from Naples. From this sand, steel of the finest quality was manufactured, and paint peculiarly suitable for the painting of iron ships, inasmuch as it would not rust. I have a razor in my possession manufactured from this steel, and I remember that while we were at Midhurst my grandfather still had some of this paint, with which he loyally painted hen-coops, troughs, sheds, and every article in his posssession that could be reasonably expected to stand a coat of paint. Everything in connection with the company was done in my father's name: the Italian Government granted the concession in his name; some stock in the Grand Book of Italy, at one time held in his name, was in connection with this company; Foundry, warehouses, and other buildings were raised; there were factories at Granili, Naples, and Hatcham New Town, London; steel and paint, especially the latter, were duly turned out, and were pronounced first-class; but somehow the business was a failure—perhaps partly because those engaged in it may not have been sufficiently versed in the "colour" trade (I do not know that this was so, but think it very probable), and also certainly because of my father's name. I well recollect his telling us how on one occasion a large order came for paint; the paint was duly taken down to the wharf to be shipped, when

at the last moment came a telegram, followed by a letter countermanding the order. In the interval the intending purchaser had learned that the Bradlaugh of the "Naples Colour Company" was also Bradlaugh the Atheist, so, of course, he could not think of doing business with him.

In the city my father also fell into business connection with gentlemen who were concerned in the conduct of financial operations, and he himself took part in negotiating municipal loans, etc. I only remember two incidents in connection with these undertakings: one the loan to the city of Pisa, told by Mr John M. Robertson in his Memoir,* and the other a negotiation he was conducting to supply the Portuguese Government with horses. His business was nearly concluded to his satisfaction when he was recalled by telegram to London. Overend, Gurney & Co. had failed, and "Black Friday" had come; Mr Bradlaugh lost his contract; there was the terrible financial panic, and a fatal blow was struck to my father's business career. Mr Robertson quotes him saying, "I have great faculties for making money, and great faculties for losing it;" and these words were very true.

While at Sunderland Villa Mr Bradlaugh made many friends in the neighbourhood, and interested himself in local affairs. Going to the city every day, he made personal acquaintance with men who travelled daily in the same way, and won their liking and esteem. We children had a large circle of small friends, so that although there was a certain amount of hostility on account of my father's opinions † this did not greatly trouble us; we had

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* "Once, as a financier, he was intrusted with the negotiation of a loan for the city of Pisa, with some of whose authorities he had become acquainted in some of his various journeys to Italy. His percentage, small in name, was to be considerable in total, on a loan of £750,000. He duly arranged matters with a certain London financier, who thereupon sent off a clerk to Pisa to offer the money at a fraction less than Bradlaugh was to get, provided he got the whole commission. Bradlaugh, however, had been secured in the conduct of the transaction up to a given date. He instantly went to Rothschilds, who allowed no commission, and put the loan in their hands. The other financier thus got nothing; but so did Bradlaugh."—John M. Robertson, "Memoir," pp. xxxvi. xxxvii.

† For example, a lady gave the mistress of the school which we attended the option of sending us away or of losing her daughters. We were not sent away, so the lady withdrew her children rather than have them contaminated by contact with the children of the Atheist.

ample local popularity to counterbalance that. In any case our house would have been sufficient unto itself, for during these years we nearly always had one or two resident guests, besides a constant flow of visitors of all nationalities. Many of our neighbours attended the Church of St Paul's in Park Lane, of which the Rev. Hugh M'Sorley was the vicar; and I am bound to say that Mr M'Sorley at least did not err on the side of "loving his neighbour." He felt the bitterest animosity towards Mr Bradlaugh, which occasionally found some vent in sharp passages at vestry committees,* where, of course, they were almost always in opposition.

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* An instance of Mr Bradlaugh's interest in local matters may be found in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Advertiser* for March 1, 1865, which gives a notice of a vestry meeting held on February 20, at which he was present. He is reported as asking for a more detailed account of "Mrs Overend's charity," and the increased value of the land forming part of the property. Several members of the "Waste Land Commission" asked that an inquiry should be made. The Chairman (the vicar) refused to allow the subject to be discussed; but when the report was entered in the minutes, Mr Bradlaugh gave notice that he should move that an inquiry be made.

The next business was to receive a report of the committee appointed by the parishioners in the November before on the matter of the water supply. Mr Delano, chairman of this committee, read the report, which consisted of questions put by the local Board of Health, with correspondence thereon. After criticising the discourtesy of the Board of Health, the chairman agreed that nothing further could be done.

Mr Bradlaugh, however, "said it would not be right to let the subject drop without taking some further notice of it. He thought the Board was bound to act at least courteously towards any of the parishioners having complaints to make of the insufficiency of the water supply. The Board acknowledged this insufficiency, and showed they could give a better supply when a stir was made about the subject. He complained of the unfairness of the Board in refusing all explanation. Not only did they do this, but they added impertinence in characterising him as a new member of the parish. He could not tell who was to blame, but the Board confessed that the supply was irregular, and showed that it was capable of being remedied. In his opinion the Board deserved a vote of censure from the Vestry; they were bound to do their best for those who elected them, and as far as lay in his power he would teach them their duty. He then moved: 'That in the opinion of this meeting the conduct of the Local Board of Health, in refusing to answer the questions of the Committee, is deserving of censure.'" This was seconded by Mr Noble, and there was some discussion, a Mr Kirby rising to defend the action of the Board, to which Mr Bradlaugh replied "in a most caustic speech;" and the motion being put by the chairman, was carried: "twenty six voting for, and two against it."

The Rev. Mr M'Sorley's animosity at length culminated in an outrageous libel. An article had appeared in *All the Year Round* entitled "Our Suburban Residence," in the nature of a "skit" dealing with Tottenham, in which Mr M'Sorley was alluded to under a very thin disguise. This article was reprinted in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, and Mr M'Sorley, taking it into his wise head that Mr Bradlaugh was the author, wrote the following "appendix" to the reprint, which appeared in the issue for April 28, 1866 :—

"You will have seen that a serious omission has been made in a sketch which appeared in a recent number of *All the Year Round*, edited by C. Dickens, Esq. I crave your indulgence while I endeavour to supply the omission. It would be a crying injustice to posterity if the historian of our little suburban district were to omit one of the celebrities of the place. No doubt he is not much thought of or respected, but that shows his talent is overlooked. He is a great man this : why, our good-natured, genial, and humane vicar must hide his diminished head, when put in the scales and weighed against Swear'em Charley ! and as for the 'bould' Irishman, the Rev. M'Snorter, why, he could not hold a candle to this genius ; and as for the Rev. Chasuble —well, no matter, the least said about him the better, poor man !

"It was stated in the sketch that this parish had its representatives of all sorts of religions, from the Quaker to the Papist, the disciples of George Fox, who bends to no authority, and the disciples of the Pope, who makes all authority bend to him. We had a capital sketch of Churchism, High, Low, and Broad. But the sketcher forgot to add another to his list. Ay, truly, if we have those who are of the High Church, and the Low Church, and the Broad Church, we have some who are of 'No Church.' Why, we have got in our midst the very Coryphæus of infidelity, a compeer of Holyoake, a man who thinks no more of the Bible than if it were an old ballad—Colenso is a babe to him ! This is a mighty man of valour, I assure you—a very Goliath in his way. He used to go 'starring' it in the provinces, itinerating as a tuppenny lecturer on Tom Paine. He has occasionally appeared in our Lecture Hall. He, too, as well as other conjurers, has thrown dust in our eyes, and has made the platform reel beneath the superincumbent weight of his balderdash and blasphemy. He is as fierce against our common Christianity as the Reverend M'Snorter is against Popery—indeed, I think the fiercer of the two. The house he lives in is a sort of 'Voltaire Villa.' The man and his 'squaw' occupy it, united by a bond unblessed by priest or parson. But that has an advantage ; it will enable him to turn his squaw out to grass, like his friend Charles Dickens, when he feels tired of her, unawed by either the ghost or the

successor of Sir Creswell Creswell. Not having any peculiar scruples of conscience about the Lord's Day, the gentleman worships the God of nature in his own way. He thinks 'ratting' on a Sunday with a good Scotch terrier is better than the 'ranting' of a good Scotch divine—for the Presbyterian element has latterly made its appearance among us. Like the homœopathic doctor described in the sketch, this gentleman combines a variety of professions 'rolled into one.' In the provinces he is a star of the first magnitude, known by the name of Moses Scoffer; in the city a myth known to his pals as Swear 'em Charley; and in our neighbourhood he is a cypher—*incog.*, but perfectly understood. He contrives to eke out a tolerable livelihood: I should say that his provincial blasphemies and his City practice bring him in a clear £500 a year at the least. But is it not the wages of iniquity? He has a few followers here, but only a few. He has recently done a very silly act; for he has, all at once, converted 'Voltaire Villa' into a glass house, and the whole neighbourhood can now see into the premises—'the wigwam,' I should say, where he dwells in true Red Indian fashion with his 'squaw.' This is the sketch of one particular character in our suburban residence, which has been omitted. But it is worth all the others noticed in Dickens' paper, and I have no doubt we shall all feel gratified at your allowing it room in your paper."

The article was, of course, unsigned, but it did not take Mr Bradlaugh very long to discover who was the author of this "Appendix:" surely one of the most dastardly libels to which a professed "gentleman" ever put his pen. The immediate steps taken by Mr Bradlaugh to show his appreciation of the Rev. Mr M'Sorley's attentions resulted in the appearance of apologies from both editor and contributor in the issue of the *Herald* for the following week, May 5th. Having given the text of the libel, I now give the retracting words, which are as strong and complete as the falsehoods which preceded them.

"OUR SUBURBAN RESIDENCE AND ITS 'APPENDIX.'
"MR AND MRS BRADLAUGH.
NO. 1.

"The Editor and Proprietor of this newspaper desires to express his extreme pain that the columns of a journal which has never before been made the vehicle for reflections on private character, should, partly by inadvertence, and partly by a too unhesitating reliance on the authority and good faith of its contributor, have contained last week, in the form of an 'Appendix' to a recent article from *All the Year Round*, a mischievous and unfounded libel upon Mr Charles Bradlaugh.

"That Mr Bradlaugh holds, and fearlessly expounds, theological opinions entirely opposed to those of the editor and the majority of our readers, is undoubtedly true, and Mr Bradlaugh cannot and does not complain that his name is associated with Colenso, Holyoake, or Paine; but that he has offensively intruded those opinions in our lecture hall is NOT TRUE. That his ordinary language on the platform is 'balderdash and blasphemy' is NOT TRUE. That he makes a practice of openly desecrating the Sunday is NOT TRUE. That he is known by the names of 'Moses Scoffer,' or 'Swear 'em Charley,' is NOT TRUE. Nor is there any foundation for the sneer as to his 'City practice,' or for the insinuations made against his conduct or character as a scholar and a gentleman.

"While making this atonement to Mr Bradlaugh, the Editor must express his unfeigned sorrow that the name of Mrs Bradlaugh should have been introduced into the article in question, accompanied by a suggestion calculated to wound her in the most vital part, conveying as it does a reflection upon her honour and fair fame as a lady and a wife. Mrs Bradlaugh is too well known and too much respected to suffer by such a calumny; but for the pain so heedlessly given to a sensitive and delicate nature the Editor offers this expression of his profound and sincere regret.

"No. 2.

"The author of the 'Appendix' complained of, who is NOT the Editor or Proprietor, or in any way connected with the *Tottenham Herald*, unreservedly adopts the foregoing apology, and desires to incorporate it with his own.

"It is for him bitterly to lament that, stung by allusions in the article from *All the Year Round*, which he erroneously attributed to the pen of Mr Bradlaugh, he allowed his better judgment to give way, and wrote of that gentleman in language which he cannot at all justify, and which he now entirely retracts.

"To Mrs Bradlaugh he respectfully tenders such an apology as becomes a gentleman to offer to a lady he has so greatly wronged. He trusts that the exquisite pain she must have suffered from a harsh allusion will be somewhat mitigated by the public avowal of its absolute injustice. As a wife united to her husband in holy wedlock by the solemn forms of the Church, as a mother of a young family, to whom she sets the proper example of an English lady, she is entitled to reparation from one whose only excuse is that he wrote of her in ignorance and haste, while writing of her husband under irritation and excitement.

"The writer of the libel has only to add that he has addressed to Mr Bradlaugh a private letter bearing his proper signature, and avowing, while he laments, the authorship of the offending article; and he

begs to offer his thanks to Mr Bradlaugh for the generous forbearance which declines to exact the publication of the writer's name, from considerations which will be patent to most of the readers of this journal."

These apologies were accepted in a few generous words by Mr Bradlaugh :—

"On my own behalf, and that of my wife, I am content with these apologies. To have accepted less would have shown my disregard of her honour and my own. To have required more would have been to punish with too great severity those whose own frank avowals show that they acted rather with precipitancy than with 'malice prepense.'

"(Signed) CHARLES BRADLAUGH."

If I could believe that Mr M'Sorley *had* frankly—to repeat Mr Bradlaugh's word—repented in fact, as well as in appearance, I should pass this libel now with but slight allusion, and have considered myself bound by my father's promise not to make the writer's name public.* In the immediate locality it was impossible that the authorship of such an astounding concoction should long remain secret, and for long afterwards Mr M'Sorley's name was bandied about with small jests amongst the irreverent youngsters of the neighbourhood. The apology was made under considerable pressure: members of the congregation threatened to leave the Church, a lawsuit loomed in the distance, and a horsewhipping in the near future.† "This fellow," said Mr Bradlaugh,‡ speaking thirteen years later, and still withholding the name, "I compelled to retract every word he had uttered, and to pay £100, which, after deducting costs, was divided amongst various charitable institutions. The reverend libeller wrote me an abject letter begging me not to ruin his prospects in the Church by publishing his name. I consented, and he has since repaid my mercy by

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* In 1872 Mr Bradlaugh had occasion to address a letter in the *National Reformer* to the Rev. Mr M'Sorley, dealing with a sermon of his published in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Advertiser*, but he did not make the slightest allusion to the clergyman's former conduct. Mr M'Sorley died in 1892.

† I remember that some one, I know not whom, put the horsewhip in the hall in readiness, and this impressed upon the minds of us children the dreadful depths of Mr M'Sorley's depravity! Our father never said a harsh word or raised his hand in anger to one of us, and we knew that the person must be very bad indeed if the possibility of a whipping could be even contemplated!

‡ *The Weekly Dispatch*, November 16, 1879.

losing no opportunity of being offensive. He is a prominent contributor to the *Rock*, and a fierce ultra-Protestant."

So much for the bitter lament and frank avowal of an ordained minister of the Church of England!

It is an open question which was the worse of the two—the Rev. John Graham Packer or the Rev. Hugh M'Sorley. I am inclined to think that the latter carried off the palm, although his malignancy recoiled upon himself, whilst Mr Packer's took such terrible effect. In any case a perusal of Mr M'Sorley's "Appendix" will convince the reader, if indeed any need convincing, that Mr Packer was not—as has lately been the fashion to assume—the only clergyman who has striven to injure my father's character.

CHAPTER XII.

TOTTENHAM.

Our house at Sunderland Villa was what I suppose would be called an eight-roomed house. It comprised four bedrooms, two sitting-rooms, and a little room built out over the kitchen, which was Mr Bradlaugh's "den" or study. There was a garden in the rear communicating by a private way with "The Grove," a road running at right angles to Northumberland Park, in which our house was situated; and at the bottom of this garden, when things looked very prosperous indeed, some stables were built. There was to be stalled the longed-for horse which was to take my father to the City every day; but before the stables were quite completed Black Friday came, and with it vanished all these entrancing dreams. The building indeed remained, but merely as a playhouse for us children, or to afford an occasional lodging for a friend (the coachman's quarters being well and snugly built), and also, I fear, as a "good joke" to the neighbourhood.

We usually had one or more dogs, belonging to the various members of the family, for we were all fond of animals, and any big ones were kept in the paved forecourt of the stables. At one time there were three dwellers in the court, but these ultimately thinned down to one, the dog Bruin, my father's special favourite. Bruin was part retriever and part St Bernard, a fine dog to look at, and wonderfully clever. Mr Bradlaugh was never weary of relating anecdotes of his intelligence and sagacity. From his kennel in the court Bruin's chain-range covered the garden gate, and with him there no bolt or lock was necessary, for while with friends he was the mildest and gentlest of dogs, with strangers or suspicious persons he was truly formidable. He made no unnecessary show of what he could do; he quietly watched the person until he was well within his reach, and then hurled himself at his throat. This I once saw. He was devoted to my father, and with him almost perfectly docile and obedient. And when, in 1870, Mr Bradlaugh

had to part with him, losing Bruin was by no means the smallest grief at a time when there was little else but sadness and sorrow.

At St. Helen's Place Mr James Thomson (B. V.) had shared our home, and he again lived with us for some years at Sunderland Villa. The acquaintance which sprang up between them during Mr Bradlaugh's army experiences in Ireland had soon ripened into warm friendship.

When my father quitted the service they kept up a close correspondence, and many a time have I heard my mother lament that Mr Thomson's "beautiful letters" had been destroyed. When Mr Thomson also left the army and came to London at the end of 1862, he came to my father, who at once held out a helping hand to him. In 1863 Mr Bradlaugh obtained for him the appointment of Secretary to the Polish Committee, but his inherited curse of intemperance seized upon him, and at a crucial moment he disappeared.* On May 29th Mr W. J. Linton wrote from Ambleside:—

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* Mr W. E. Adams speaks of this matter in his recollections of my father, from which I have already quoted on page 68. "I think it has been said," he remarks, "that Mr Bradlaugh did not do the best he could for James Thomson, the author of 'The City of Dreadful Night.' My own testimony on this subject may not be of much account, but I happen to know that Mr Bradlaugh for many years maintained Thomson as a member of his own family; sometimes finding him employment in his own office, at other times getting him situations elsewhere. When the Polish Revolution of 1862 broke out, a committee was formed in London to assist the insurgents. I was appointed secretary of that committee. But in 1863 it became necessary that I should resign in order to accept an appointment in Newcastle. Mr Bradlaugh asked me to do what I could to obtain for Thomson the succession to the office. It was mainly on Mr Bradlaugh's strong and urgent recommendation that the committee selected him. I transferred to him all the books, documents, correspondence, etc., much of it of a very interesting and valuable character. Although I endeavoured, both in Manchester and in Newcastle, where I visited some of the leading politicians, to form branches of the central committee in London, I ceased all active participation in the movement. It was naturally expected, of course, that Thomson would do all that had been hitherto done by me, and indeed, from his superior qualifications, a great deal more. A few weeks after I had been located in Newcastle, however, a letter was placed in my hands from the late Peter Alfred Taylor, who was chairman of the Polish Committee, asking whether I could tell him where James Thomson could be found, since he had not been at the office for many days, and had left the affairs of the committee in a disordered condition. Poor Thomson, as it turned out, had been overtaken by one of those periodical attacks of

"DEAR BRADLAUGH,—The enclosed from Taylor. I send it to you knowing no other way of getting at Thomson, and wishful not to throw over any one spoken kindly of by you. But for myself I would not stand a second utter neglect of this kind. However, it rests with Taylor.

"After some trouble about Thomson, he might at least have written to me in the first instance, or to Taylor now, to account even for 'illness'—which I begin to doubt.

"*I* only asked him for a daily paper, which would have satisfied me of his daily attention. I have had *three* since I left. Row him, please! —Yours ever, very hard worked, W. J. LINTON."

ENCLOSURE.

"House of Commons, May 28, 1863.

"DEAR LINTON,—Do you know Thomson's address or how to get at it? He has not been at S. Street this week, and everything is going to the D——l.—Yours ever, P. A. TAYLOR."

These fits of intemperance, comparatively rare at first, unhappily became more and more frequent. While Mr Thomson lived with us when he came back after one of these attacks—or was brought back, for indeed it usually happened that some friend searched for him and brought him home despite himself—he was nursed and cared for until he was quite himself again, for it often happened

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dipsomania which ultimately resulted in his death. It may readily be imagined how much this collapse must have disturbed and distressed Mr Bradlaugh. But it does not appear that it made any difference whatever in his helpful friendship for the unfortunate poet; for some years afterwards I still found Thomson a member of Mr Bradlaugh's family and the occupant of an important post in the business which Mr Bradlaugh was then conducting. These are matters of personal knowledge. I may add that Mr Bradlaugh, whenever Thomson was the subject of conversation between us, always spoke of him in the tenderest and most affectionate terms. Even when, as I understand, he had been compelled to part company with his unfortunate friend, no word of censure or complaint ever passed Mr Bradlaugh's lips in my hearing.

"The kindness which Mr Bradlaugh had shown to poor Thomson was shown in a modified degree to me too. I should regard myself as one of the most ungrateful creatures living if I ever forgot the kindly help and sympathy I received from him in a most trying period of my life. For many months during this period, when I was begging some brother man to give me leave to toil, I breakfasted at his house nearly every morning (and a breakfast was a matter of some consequence to me then), in order to learn what had come of inquiries which he was day by day making on my behalf, inquiries which eventually resulted in a service of the highest value."

that he was bruised and wounded, and unfit to go out for some days.

Although he failed so miserably in his secretary's work, Mr Bradlaugh gave him a post in his own office, and encouraged him to write for the *National Reformer*. He had already written a few scattered articles, first for the *Investigator* in 1859, and then for the *National Reformer*. In the latter his writings ultimately extended over a period of fifteen years, commencing in 1860, and ending in the summer of 1875. His contributions range from the smallest review notice of some pamphlets written by Frederic Harrison, to his great and remarkable poem of "The City of Dreadful Night." Those who think most highly of this wonderful work admit that there was no other publisher in London who would have published it, but at the same time they give no credit to my father for discerning genius to which every one else was then blind; on the contrary, they join in the suggestion that Mr Thomson was in some way ill-used by Mr Bradlaugh, although *how* they do not deign to tell. Most of "B.V.'s" writings to the *National Reformer* were done in the years 1865, 1866, 1867, the first half of 1868, and second half of 1869, 1870, 1871, 1874, and the early months of 1875. In the other years his contributions were more scattered, but no year is entirely without.

While he lived with us at Sunderland Villa, Mr Thomson was just one of the family, sharing our home life in every particular. He was a favourite with us all; my father loved him with a love that had to bear many a strain, and we children simply adored him. Sometimes in the evenings he, with my mother for a partner, my father with Miss Lacey (a frequent inmate of our house), would form a jovial quartet at whist; and many were the jokes and great the fun on these whist evenings. On Sundays, if my father were at home, he and Mr Thomson would take us children and Bruin for a walk over the Tottenham Marshes to give Bruin a swim in the Lea; or if my father were away lecturing, as was too frequently the case, then Mr Thomson would take us for a long ramble to Edmonton to see Charles Lamb's grave, or maybe across the fields to Chingford. In the winter time, when the exigencies of the weather kept us indoors, he would devote his Sunday afternoons to us, and tell us the most enchanting fairy tales it was ever the lot of children to listen to. One snowy night my father and he came to fetch my sister and me home from a Christmas party. They

had to carry us, for the snow was deep. They took us out of the house with due regard to propriety; but they had not got far before they were all too conscious of the weight of their respective burdens, so they set us down in a fairly clear spot, and then re-adjusted us "pick-a-back." There was much joking over our weight, and we heartily joined in the laugh and enjoyed the jests at our expense, and over and above all the notion of being aided and abetted by our elders in doing something so shocking as a "pick-a-back" ride through the streets. These were delightful, happy times to us at least, and, in spite of all his cares, not unhappy for my father. He had youth and health and hope and courage, a friend he loved, and children he was ever good to. I feel indeed as though my pen must linger over these small trifles, over these merry moods and happy moments, and I am loth to put them aside for sadder, weightier matters.

Or the two would sit in my father's little "den" or study, and smoke. Mr Bradlaugh smoked a great deal at this time, and "B.V." was an inveterate smoker; the one had his cigar, and the other his pipe; and while the smoke slowly mounted up and by degrees so filled the room that they could scarce see each other's faces across the table, they would talk philosophy, politics, or literature. I can see them now, in some ways a strangely assorted pair, as they sat in that little room lined with books; at the far side of the table the poet and dreamer, with his head thrown back and with the stem of his pipe never far from his lips, his face almost lost in the blue clouds gently and lazily curling upwards; and here, near the fireplace, my father, essentially a man to whom to think, to plan, was to *do*, sitting in careless comfort in his big uncushioned oaken chair, now taking frequent strong draws at his cigar, transforming the dull ash into a vigorous point of light, and again laying it aside to die into dull ash once more, whilst he argued a point or drew himself up to write. How often and how vividly that once familiar scene rises before my closed eyes! Of course, whilst with us, Mr Thomson had the use of my father's little library as his own, and many of the books still bear the traces of his reading in the pencilled notes.

During the Carlist War, in 1873, Mr Bradlaugh obtained for his friend an appointment to go to Spain as special correspondent to a New York paper; but alas! he was taken "ill" whilst about his duties, wrote irregularly and infrequently, and as a climax

wrote three lines describing an important event when three columns were expected. He was consequently recalled, and when he got back my father found, to his additional vexation, that he (Mr Thomson) had lost the Colt's revolver which he had lent him. It was an old friend to Mr Bradlaugh; he had had it for many years, and it had served him well.

My father's anger was, as usual, short lived; and in the next year he published "B. V.'s" "City of Dreadful Night," and thenceforward gave him regular work on the *National Reformer*. But he was unhappily one not to be relied upon; and on a special occasion when he was left with the responsibility of the paper he disappeared and left it, as far as he was concerned, to come out as best it could. At length, in 1875, in spite of all my father's forbearance and affection, Mr Thomson for some reason felt injured; but whatever might have been his grievances, they were in fact utterly baseless. Mr Thomson resented his supposed injury by an open insult, and from that moment the friendship between these two was dead. On Mr Thomson's side it seemed turned to hatred and bitter animosity, and he said against my father some of the most bitter things possible for a man to say. The memory of all past love and kindness seemed washed out and drowned in a whirl of evil passions. My father was deeply wounded, and at first, for some year or two, never voluntarily mentioned his old friend's name; but when the first soreness had passed he spoke of him, seldom, it is true, but with a certain tenderness, and always as "poor Thomson." We found amongst things long put away a silver cup won by Mr Thomson and inscribed with his name; we asked my father what we should do with it. "Send it to him, my daughters; I dare say he needs it, poor fellow." And indeed we heard afterwards that it soon found its way to the pawnshop. It was characteristic of my father that he said nothing to us, his daughters, of his quarrel with one to whom he knew we were greatly attached; we heard of it from others not too friendly to my father. We, naturally and without a word, although not without great grief, ranged ourselves on our father's side, and met Mr Thomson as a stranger; we felt that he was grateful for our sacrifice, but he neither uttered a syllable of approval or comment, nor did he ever attempt to sway us by sign or word.

Although our home was small, the doors were made to open very

wide. Relations and friends, all who stood in need of kindness and hospitality, seemed to find their way here. My father's youngest sister Harriet, after leaving the Orphan Asylum in which she had been placed at her father's death, lived with us for a long time. She was a brilliant, handsome girl, yet bearing a strong resemblance to my father. I can always picture her as she stood one 30th of April, awaiting the child guests who were to come to make merry over my sister's birthday. Standing against the wall I can see her tall, well-proportioned figure, robed in one of the sprigged muslin gowns of those days, the short sleeves and low neck of the time showing her fine arms and shoulders. I see her face with its fair complexion, alive with vivacity and the warm glow of health, her light brown hair, her laughing mouth and eyes—eyes which were certainly not of the "angel" order, but whose fire and flash gave some warning of the unrestrained temper within. Poor Harriet! this same temper was her own undoing. Driven by it she married badly, in every sense of the word, dragged through a few years of miserable existence, and eventually died in the Fulham Hospital, of smallpox, when it fell to my father to discharge the funeral expenses—such was the poverty of her own home. I have heard that stories have been told and even preached from a public platform of her "deathbed conversion," but this is only one of the common pious frauds. Her illness was quite unexpected, and lasted only a few days, none of her family, except her husband, knowing of it until after she was dead. Apart from that point and the nature of her illness, which would somewhat stand in the way of much visiting, I am not aware that she ever called herself anything but a Christian. She was brought up in that religion, and she was not interfered with whilst with us.

Here, also, Mr Bradlaugh's younger brother found a resting place and tendance after illness; but as I shall have occasion to speak of him later, I will for the moment pass him with a mere mention.

Others, too, more than I can count, found their way to that small house in Northumberland Park. Some were nursed there, some did their courtship there, and some were even married from there. In the meantime, who can tell how many were the visitors to that little study at the back, over the kitchen? Alas! I can only remember the names of a few. There were Frenchmen like Talandier, Le Blanc, Elisée Reclus, Alphonse Esquiros; Italians and Englishmen working for Mazzini and Garibaldi; Irish politicals

like General Cluseret and Kelly; and there was Alexander Herzen, for whom my father had a great admiration, and whom he always counted as a friend. These, whose names are sometimes joined to faces, and others, faces without names, lie indistinctly in the dim far-back memory of my childhood.

I was here about to break off and take up again the thread of the story of Mr Bradlaugh's public work, but it occurs to me that I have said little about my father's treatment of us, his children, and of our early education. There is so little to say, and certainly so little of importance to linger over, that I should have passed on to other matters were it not for the imaginings of those who make it their business to spread false statements concerning Mr Bradlaugh, even on such a purely personal matter as his children's education.

My father was away from home so much that ordinarily we saw him very little, and my earliest recollection of him is at St. Helen's Place. One evening in particular seems to stand out in my memory. The room was alight and warm with gas and fire; and at one end of the table, covered with papers, sat my father. I suppose that we were romping and noisy, and interfered with his work, for he turned towards us and said in grave tones, which I can always hear, "Is it not time you little lassies went to bed?" A trifling incident, but it shows that at that time he was obliged to do his thinking and writing in the common room in the midst of his family, and the term "little lassies" was a characteristic one with him. When we were quite little, if he had anything serious to say to us, it was his "little lassies" he talked to; as we grew older it was "my daughters," and what he had to say always seemed to have an additional emphasis by the use of the special, yet tender term, almost entirely reserved for serious occasions. In the morning, when he left home, we three children always assembled for the "goodbye" kiss; after that we seldom saw him until the next day. If, however, he was home in the evenings while we were still up, we used to sit by his elbow while he played whist or chess, and after the game was over he would so carefully explain his own moves, and perhaps the faults of his partner or his opponents, that before I was twelve years old I could play whist as well as I can to-day, and chess a great deal better, merely through watching his play, and paying attention to his comments.

Broxbourne was then his favourite place for fishing; it was easily reached from Northumberland Park, and there were in those days good fish in the Lea. He and the proprietor of the fishing-right were very good friends; and sometimes when it grew too dark to fish, he would wind up his day with a pleasant game at billiards before taking the train home. He generally took us children with him if the day was fine, and these were indeed red-letter days for us. We were on our honour not to get into any mischief, and, with the one restriction that we were not to make a noise close to the water, we were allowed a perfect, glorious liberty. Sometimes we too would fish, and my father would give us little lines and floats and hooks, and with an impromptu rod stolen from the nearest willow or ash tree we would do our best to imitate our superior. But my brother was the only one who showed great perseverance in this respect; my sister and I soon tired of watching the placid float on the sparkling water, and sought other amusements. At Carthagena Weir my father would "make it right" with old Brimsden the lock-keeper, and he would rig us up a rope swing on which he would make a seat of a most wonderful sheep-skin; or there were a score of ways in which we amused ourselves, for there was no one to say, "Don't do this" or "Don't do that." We could roll in the grass and get our white muslin dresses grass-green, jump in the ditch and fill our shoes with mud, anything so long as we enjoyed ourselves and did no harm. Whether it was the feeling of freedom and the being made our own judges of right or wrong, I do not know, but I do not remember one occasion on which we were rebuked either by the lenient guardian with us or by the stricter one when we got home again—for, of course, as is mostly the way with women, my mother was much more particular about the "proprieties" than my father; and had he brought us home in a *very* tumbled, muddy condition, our fishing expeditions would have been less frequent.

As to our early education, our father did the best he could for us; but his means were small, and the opportunities for schooling twenty-five and thirty years ago were not such as they are to-day. My sister and I, first alone and then with my brother, were sent to a little school taught by two maiden ladies; the boys being taught upstairs, and the girls in a room below. At this school, as always, although the contrary has been stated, we were withdrawn from religious instruction, but the Misses Burnell did not always obey

this injunction: if a bogie was wanted to frighten us with, then "God" was trotted out. I remember on one occasion, when I suppose I had been naughty, Miss Burnell, pointing to the sky, told me that God was watching me from above and could see all I did. Childlike, I took this literally, though I suppose with the proverbial "grain of salt," for I leaned out of the window and gazed up into the sky to see for myself this "God" who was always watching my actions. It was just dusk, and it happened to be a time when some comet was visible. When I looked out and saw this brilliant body lighting up the darkness all about it, I was convinced that *this* was the "eye of God" of which Miss Burnell had been talking, and hastily drew in my head again to get out of his sight! But as at home we had no mysterious Being either to fear (because that seems the first impression generally made upon sensitive children) or to love, this awful Eye blazing away overhead merely left a vague feeling of uneasiness behind, which time and healthier thought effaced. My little brother was soon taken from this school and sent to a boarding-school, where he remained only a few months, as it was unsatisfactory; he was also over-walked, which resulted in laming him for a time. The master who took the boys out for walking exercise could not have been of an exactly cheerful disposition, for at the time of the dreadful ice accident in 1867, when forty persons were drowned, he marched the boys to Regent's Park to see the dead bodies taken out of the water. It was a terrible sight for little boys to see; and as my little brother was only just over seven years old, the remembrance of these rows of dead bodies made an indelible impression upon his mind. He was then sent to some good friends at Plymouth, Mr and Mrs John Williamson, and while he grew well and strong in the sea breezes, he went to school with their son. On coming home again, he was sent to Mr John Grant, schoolmaster in the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards—then a friend of Mr Thomson's, and so of my father's—who took him as a private pupil. My sister and I learned French of different French refugees who frequented our house, and I must do them the justice to say that our French was both a great deal better taught and learned than our English. My father used to hold sudden examinations at unstated times of our progress in the French language, especially if he happened to come across a *franc* piece, reminiscent of his journeys to the Continent. This *franc* was to

be the reward of the one who answered best; but somehow I was so stupid and desperately nervous that I never once won the prize: my sister always carried it off in triumph.

Never during the whole of our childhood did my father once raise his hand against us, never once did he speak a harsh word. We *were* whipped, for my mother held the old-fashioned, mistaken notion that to "spare the rod" was to "spoil the child;" but when scolding or whipping failed to bring obedience, the culprit was taken to that little study; there a grave look and a grave word brought instant submission. But it seldom went beyond the threat of being taken there, for we loved him so that we could not bear him even to know when we were naughty.

I feel that much of this may well seem very trivial to those who read my book, but my excuse for dwelling so long on such details is that even the most ordinary incidents in my father's history have been misstated and distorted. I take my opportunity whilst I may, for many lie cold in the grave, and mine is now almost the only hand which can nail down the wretched calumnies which strike at such small personal matters as these.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER."

THOSE who have travelled with me thus far will have noticed that the story of Mr Bradlaugh's public work is carried down to 1860, just prior to the inauguration of the *National Reformer*. This I thought would be a good point at which to break off and look at what his private life and home surroundings had been during that time; and the account of this I have brought down to about the year 1870. I will now retrace my steps a little and go back to 1860 to take up again the narrative of my father's public work, and to tell of the starting, carrying on, and vicissitudes of the *National Reformer*, of the stormy lecturing times when Mr Bradlaugh delivered twenty-three or more lectures in one month, travelling between Yarmouth and Dumfries to do it and home again with perhaps less money in his pocket than when he started. Italy, Ireland, the Lancashire Cotton Famine, the Reform League, the General Election of 1868, these and other matters of more or less importance will bring us again to the year 1870. That year brought with it such important events touching both the private and public life of Mr Bradlaugh that it made, as it were, a break in his life, and marked a new era in his career.

The Sheffield Freethinkers, as I said a few pages back, almost adopted the young "Iconoclast" as their own. In him they found a bold, able, and untiring advocate of the opinions they cherished; in them he, in return, found full appreciation of his efforts, kind friends and enthusiastic co-workers. This union had not existed long before it resolved itself into a practical form —the promulgation of the *National Reformer*. The initiation of the idea came from Mr Bradlaugh, who naturally sighed after his lost *Investigator;* but as neither he nor any one of these Yorkshire friends was sufficiently wealthy to take the sole risk of starting and running a newspaper, a committee of Sheffield, Bradford, and Halifax men formed a Company and issued a prospectus, which

was inserted in the *Reasoner* of February 12, 1860.* This original Prospectus is very interesting, and a perusal of it will show how closely, except on one or two matters of detail which

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* The Prospectus of the *Reformer*, as it appeared in the *Reasoner*, was as follows :—

"REFORMER NEWSPAPER COMPANY, Limited. Capital, £1000, in 2000 shares of 10s. each. This Company is to be formed for the purpose of issuing a weekly newspaper, price twopence, to be entitled the *Reformer*, of the size of the *Manchester Guardian*, folded so as to form eight pages. It will advocate advanced Liberal opinions, on Social, Political, Theological, and Scientific questions, and will permit free discussion on every statement made, or opinion advanced in its columns, or upon any question of general importance. The present platform of political views will be mainly that advocated by the Northern Reform Union, but every phase of the political question shall have free and unreserved treatment, and the most partial Tory will be allowed to answer the views of the Editor, as well as the most extreme Republican, the promoters being of opinion that no one man holds the whole truth, but that it permeates from one extreme to another, and can only be found by a complete ventilation and examination of each man's views. On social science, the promoters intend specially to watch the conduct of the Social Science League, reviewing the course taken by its leading men, and illustrating the general views enunciated at its meetings. The newspaper will contain full reports of co-operative news, meetings and proceedings of trade societies, and co-operative progress throughout the country. It will also contain articles illustrating the connection between physiological and psychological phenomena, and illustrating new scientific discoveries, examining and explaining the various theories in connection with animal magnetism, phrenology, etc., treating fully on the important ground recognised under the title of Political Economy. The present platform, of theological advocacy, will be that of antagonism to every known religious system, and especially to the various phases of Christianity taught and preached in Britain ; but every one—Churchman, Dissenter, or anti-theologian—shall have full space to illustrate his own views. The paper will also contain all the important news of the week, summary of Parliamentary debates, reviews of books, etc. etc. ; special law and police intelligence ; original poetry, etc. The Company will be conducted by a committee of management, appointed annually by the general body of shareholders. The committee will have the whole financial control of the paper, and will have the appointment of the Editor. The Editor for the first six months will be 'Iconoclast,' who will be continued in that office if satisfaction be given to the committee of management. A number of well-known writers have already associated themselves with that gentleman in order to make the pages of the *Reformer* worthy of general approbation."

It will be noted that here the paper is called the *Reformer* simply, but in the first advertisement which appeared after the publication of its policy, it was announced as the *National Reformer*.

have necessarily altered with the times, the programme of the latter day *National Reformer* adhered to that issued thirty-four years ago. A careful comparison of the policy embodied in this Prospectus with the policy of the paper up to January 1891 will entirely disprove the various assertions of modifications airily made by many persons; by some carelessly, these never having troubled to make themselves acquainted with the facts; by others wilfully, regardless of the truth within their knowledge.

The arrangements for the paper were completed, and announcements concerning it made, when Mr Joseph Barker returned to England from America. His coming was heralded by a flourish of trumpets—literary trumpets, that is—receptions were arranged to welcome him, and there was evidently a widespread notion that Joseph Barker was a very great man indeed. It is difficult for us to-day, having before us his whole public career, with its kaleidoscopic changes of front, to realise the enthusiasm which his name provoked in 1860. But be that as it may, it is quite evident that at that time his reputation stood high amongst English Freethinkers; and, in an evil hour, Mr Bradlaugh, thinking that the co-operation of such a man would be of great advantage to the cause he had at heart, suggested to the Sheffield committee that Mr Barker should be invited to become co-editor with himself. The suggestion was readily adopted, and all future announcements concerning the *National Reformer* contained the two names, Joseph Barker and "Iconoclast," as "editors for the first six months."

The issue of the first number was promised for April 8th (1860), but apparently there was some little difficulty in getting it under weigh, and it was not until the following Saturday,* April 14th, that the new venture was fairly launched. According to the arrangements made between the committee of management and the editors, Mr Joseph Barker edited the first half (four pages), "Iconoclast" the second; and in this last half were put all the parliamentary, co-operative, and society reports, announcement of lectures, and advertisements. I conclude that after a few numbers, Mr Bradlaugh found all these reports greatly curtailed the space available for original articles by himself or his contributors, for very soon the Parliamentary reports were abandoned, and criticism of measures before the Legislature, written either by himself

* The paper was at first dated on the Saturday.

or by "Caractacus," were substituted. The "original" poetry, I remark, was mainly confined to Mr Barker's side (I use the word "original" because it appeared in the Prospectus); and even there the poetic seed seems to have taken some time to germinate, for until the tenth number only two or three stray shoots appeared; with "No. 10," however, it suddenly blossomed into upwards of a column of verses. These verses are from the pens of Charles Mackay, John G. Saxe, Longfellow, and Richard Howitt, and it is a heavy demand upon us to believe that they made their first appearance under the auspices of Mr Barker in the *National Reformer*. After this number there was seldom an issue without some verse—"original" or otherwise. There is one small matter which has amused me immensely in connection with the *National Reformer* (and also with the *Reasoner*), that is, the enthusiastic advocacy of the Turkish Bath. A casual observer, say a Hindu or a Confucian, coming to these papers with an entirely unbiassed mind, might well imagine that the Turkish Bath was a mainstay of Secularism, such is the ardour with which its merits are put forward. At each town visited by the different editors, wherever there was a Turkish Bath, the bath is also visited, reported upon, and if possible, commended in their respective papers. Thus, in the first number of the *National Reformer*, Mr Barker winds up an account of "My lecturing tour" by a detailed description of the bath at Keighley, and refers more briefly to those he revelled in at Sheffield, Huddersfield, Rochdale, Stockport, and Bradford. He seems to have been a new convert, and on that ground perhaps may be excused the eagerness which carried him to such flights in his description as to record the momentous fact that the drying sheet was "fringed with red." While Mr Barker thus describes in his half of the paper, "Iconoclast" in the four pages under his charge devotes two-thirds of a column to an article on "Cleanliness," in which he also extols the Turkish Bath, but with the calmness and matter-of-fact manner of an old frequenter. Mr Jagger of Rochdale and Mr Maxfield of Huddersfield are especially and discriminatingly praised for the comfort and cleanliness of their arrangements. We are all tolerably familiar with the proverb "Cleanliness comes next to Godliness," but any one reading the Freethought papers of thirty odd years ago would be compelled to admit that it took a very front place in the principles of Secularism then.

As a matter of course, Mr Bradlaugh addressed some "First words" to his readers; from this I will detach two sentences, and two only; and these because they embody, in forcible language, truths as sound to-day as at the moment when they were written. Let us unite against the clergy, he urges upon his Freethinking readers, for "the Bible is the great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be more free to appreciate facts instead of faiths." Then in praising the efforts at Co-operation at Rochdale, he adds: "I would say to the men of other towns, do not strike against your masters, ye who are servants, but combine to serve one another in co-operative associations, which will enable you to employ and elevate yourselves, and in time will strike the words 'master and servant' out of our vocabulary."

The second number of the *National Reformer* did not appear until a month later, the third came out on June 2nd, and with that commenced the weekly issue. With the exception of a few letters and occasional extracts, the whole of which rarely filled more than two or three columns, Mr Joseph Barker's half was entirely written by himself, and the initials "J. B." dotted all over the four pages become so monotonous that the sight of another signature gives quite a relief to the eye. The most prominent contributors to Iconoclast's section were "Caractacus," "G. R.," and Mr John Watts. When the paper was nothing more than a project, Mr Bradlaugh spoke of it to his friend Mr W. E. Adams, who was then living at Manchester. He asked the author of the "Tyrannicide" pamphlet to write articles for the new paper, but Mr Adams had so modest an opinion of his own abilities that he hesitated to consent. But consent he at length did; an article from his pen upon "Reform" appeared in the first number, and once having made the plunge, he became a regular weekly contributor. The first contribution was signed "W. E. A.," but after that Mr Adams wrote under the signature of "Caractacus," and the eloquence of his articles impeaching the oppressor, or pleading the cause of the oppressed, quicker the blood in one's veins to-day, although the men and causes which inspired his pen are now more than half forgotten. G. R.'s first article on the population doctrines appeared in the fourth number, and after that he wrote fairly frequently for the *National Reformer*. In number sixteen, the printer transferred nine "make-up" paragraphs—sent by Mr Bradlaugh to fill up

any vacant corners in his section—to Mr Barker's half. The paragraphs were sufficiently interesting in their way, but, after the manner of such paragraphs, contained no very startling doctrines, nor expressed any very extraordinary sentiment. The first read "Kindness to animals promotes humanity;" the second gave some tonnage statistics; the third was upon persecutions, urging "that he who kills for a faith must be weak, that he who dies for a faith must be strong;" the other paragraphs were quotations from Thackeray, Wendell Phillips, Senior, Mansell's Bampton Lectures, Theodore Parker and Ruskin. Such was the effect of these harmless looking extracts upon Mr Barker, however, that he thought it necessary to specially address his readers on September 8th (in No. 17), publicly repudiating the sentiments as "foolish or false," and specially selecting for condemnation the maxim on kindness to animals! This is the first intimation the public have of the "rift within the lute," and one is immediately driven to the conclusion that a man who could publicly repudiate, in the brusque language used by Mr Barker, such a trifling matter as this, must have been very anxious to pick a quarrel with his colleague, no matter how slight the grounds. As a matter of course, Mr Bradlaugh was obliged in the next number to explain that the paragraphs had been used by the printer to fill up what would otherwise have been a blank space in Mr Barker's half. "It was done," he said, "without my knowledge, but I can hardly say against my wish," and then, naturally enough, he proceeded to defend or explain the sentiments expressed in them. This matter, small in itself, makes it fairly evident that Mr Barker was a man exceedingly difficult to deal with; and his entire lack of self-restraint is shown in his eagerness to display to the public the smallest of his grievances, even as against his co-editor, with whom one would have imagined it would have been to his interest to at least appear on friendly terms, since it directly involved the welfare of the paper.

For some time after this, things went on quietly between the two editors, each pursuing the even tenor of his way. But this seeming tranquillity did not extend far below the surface. Mr Barker expressed to certain persons his regret at having associated himself with Mr Bradlaugh, and his determination not to continue long as co-editor. Of course, all this was reported to Mr Bradlaugh, although he allowed it to pass quite unnoticed,

There were for the moment no more outbursts of repudiation in the *National Reformer*, still the paper was very curious reading, and it grew more and more curious each week. As Mr Bradlaugh himself wrote at a later stage: "The points of difference between myself and Mr Barker are many. He professes now to be a Theist. For eight years, at least, I have been an Atheist. I am for the Manhood Suffrage. Mr Barker is against it. I hold the doctrines of John Stuart Mill on Political Economy. Mr Barker thinks the advocacy of such opinions vile and immoral. Mr Barker thinks Louis Napoleon a good and useful man. I believe the Emperor of the French to be the most clever and unscrupulous rascal in the world." These were a few of the more prominent points of difference, and they seemed to increase and magnify week by week, although my father's Malthusian advocacy and his hatred of Louis Napoleon were made the principal grounds of friction. All Mr Bradlaugh's contributors were apparently obnoxious to Mr Barker. He fell foul of "Caractacus" on the subjects of the American War, Garibaldi, and the Emperor of the French; "G. R." was attacked for his economical doctrines in the most unreserved language; and Mr John Watts he opposed on private grounds. These differences of opinion broke out once more into open hostility in Mr Barker's half. In No. 47, "Caractacus," in an article on the dangers to the rights of free speech, called upon "all honest and liberal men" to stand by Iconoclast and Mr Barker in their efforts "to maintain the very greatest of our public rights." In the same number, and on the opposite page, Mr Joseph Barker protested against the reference to himself. He had seen the article before it went to press, and had he mentioned his objection, the words would have been erased; but apparently that was too ordinary a method for Mr Barker. In No. 48 he inserted a ridiculous statement that Luther made it a rule to translate a verse of the Bible every day, which rapid rate of working "soon brought him to the conclusion of his labours." A few weeks later he wrote of this as though it had appeared in "Iconoclast's" section; in the same issue of the paper he also took occasion to insert a notice disclaiming all responsibility for anything that might appear in the last four pages, and this notice he continued week by week. All this to an infant paper was about as bad as a course of whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever to a child; that the *National Reformer*

survived it proves that it had an exceptionally strong constitution. Mr Bradlaugh naturally became much alarmed about its future, for it was noticeably falling away and losing strength. Feeling that a little more of such treatment would kill it outright, he addressed himself to those who, with himself, were responsible for its existence.

He sent a short letter to the shareholders of the *National Reformer* Company, in which he said :—

"Eighteen months since I, with the special aid of my Sheffield friends, initiated the present Company. The paper belonging to the Company was to have been edited by myself, but feeling that two men do more work than one—if such work be done unitedly—I offered to share such editorship with Mr Joseph Barker. The experience of the past twelve months has taught me that the paper can only be efficiently conducted under one editor."

After recounting the differences and difficulties, he ends by suggesting that both should tender their resignations, and that some one gentleman be elected as the sole conductor. If this course should be adopted, he says, he would offer himself as a candidate for the office.

An extraordinary meeting of the shareholders was called for August 26th (1861), and Mr Bradlaugh was elected as editor, with a salary of £5 per week, by 41 votes against 18 for Mr Barker, and with the next number this gentleman's connection with the paper came to an end.

Before dismissing Mr Barker's name altogether from these pages, I am anxious to record a little discovery that I have made since I have been at work upon this biography. If those who own a copy of the "Biography of Charles Bradlaugh," by A. S. Headingley, which for the most part gives a very fair account of the life of Mr Bradlaugh up to 1880, will turn to pages 78 to 82, they will find a story given there of rioting at Dumfries and Burnley during Mr Bradlaugh's visits to those towns. At Dumfries, so the story goes, there was so much violence exhibited that "Bradlaugh," whom the mob had threatened to kill, thought he had better wait until the excitement was over; he waited until midnight, when some one took him down into a cellar and so out into the street; once outside he feared to go to his hotel, but waited in the shadow by the river-side. At length he ventured to move a little, but was recognised by some persons, who rushed off

to raise the hue and cry. "Bradlaugh then turned down a dark side street and got back to the friendly river," where after a time he saw a policeman and then took courage "to walk by his side." He was soon met by friends, for the town was being scoured for him, and conducted to his hotel in safety. The story of what happened at Burnley is somewhat similar. I must confess that the account of these riots always annoyed and disappointed me. It was so unlike my father to wait about for fear of the mob, get out through the cellar and loiter by the river-side till he happened to meet a policeman under whose sheltering wing he at last ventured to go towards his lodgings. But Mr Bradlaugh having seen the book, having caused it to be revised in one or two points, it never occurred to me to doubt the *general* accuracy of the statements made in it. Lately, in searching for some account of these riots, I find that Mr Headingley is quite trustworthy, except on one point, and that is the *name of the lecturer* at Dumfries and Burnley. Those who own copies of this work are requested to substitute "Barker" for "Bradlaugh" wherever the latter name occurs on the pages specified, beginning with the paragraph at the bottom of page 78. No injustice will be done to Mr Barker's memory, for his own account * has been faithfully followed by Mr Headingley.

From the issue of September 7th (1861), then Mr Bradlaugh was sole editor of the *National Reformer*, and in the following number he made a declaration of his policy and objects as advocate of the Secular Body. In concluding this statement of his views he says:—

"Our party is the 'party of action,' youthful, hopeful effort; we recognise no impassable barriers between ourselves and *the right;* we see no irremovable obstacles in our course to *the true.* We will strive for it, we will live for it, and, if it be necessary, die for it. And even then, in our death we should not recognise defeat, but rather see another step in the upward path of martyrdom . . . . it is our most enduring hope that . . . . we may find a grave which, in the yet far-off future, better men than ourselves may honour in their memories; forgetting our many faults, alone remembered now, and remembering our few useful deeds, at present by our hostile critics persistently overlooked."

A month later appears one of his earliest letters to the clergy,

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* *National Reformer*, March 23, 1861.

though not *the* earliest, for some five or six short letters, scattered over several months, had previously appeared; most of these were brief challenges based upon the public statements of some cleric, or repudiation of certain views attributed to Freethinkers, or condemnation of some intolerant utterance. The letter to the Rev. J. Clarke, of Cleckheaton, is, I think, about the first of those controversial letters of which he subsequently wrote so many, and which were so popular and effective. In November we find notification of another change to take place in the *National Reformer*. In future Mr George Jacob Holyoake is to "rank as chief contributor," while Mr John Watts is definitely charged with the duties of sub-editor. A week later, a letter signed "G. J. Holyoake," and headed "One Paper and One Party," informed "the Secularists of Great Britain" that Mr Holyoake had arranged to become special contributor. With the beginning of the year 1862 he was to contribute three pages of matter either from his own pen or from the pens of others for whom he was responsible. The *Reasoner*, edited since 1842 by Mr Holyoake, came to an end in the June of 1861; after that he was connected with the *Counsellor*, and was proposing to bring out a new paper called the *Secular World*. This latter title he liked so well that although he abandoned for the time the bringing out of his new paper in favour of special contributions to the *National Reformer*, he reserved to himself "a copyright in that idea." It will be remembered that the Company agreed to pay their editor £5 per week in full discharge of his duties. Of this Mr Holyoake was to receive £2 per week, leaving £3 to my father to pay other contributors, his sub-editor, and himself. An effort was made to sell 10,000 copies of the first issue of the paper under the new arrangement; about 8000 were sold, and the sale would have exceeded the 10,000, if the orders had not arrived too late to supply them.

In consequence of the diversity of opinion which had been expressed in the columns of the *National Reformer* at various times, a correspondent wrote in February 1862 asking what were the political and religious views really advocated by this journal; and from the answer made to this gentleman by Mr Bradlaugh, we can judge to what extent he went back upon the position of his earlier years, as it was for the last few years of his life the fashion to assert. He says:—

"Editorially the *National Reformer*, as to religious questions, is, and always has been, as far as we are concerned, the advocate of Atheism; it teaches that all the religions of the world are based upon error; that humanity is higher than theology; that knowledge is far preferable to faith; that action is more effective than prayer; and that the best worship men can offer is honest work, in order to make one another wiser and happier than heretofore. In politics, we are Radicals of a very extreme kind; we are advocates of manhood * suffrage; we desire shorter Parliaments; laws which will be more equal in their application to master and servant; protection from the present state of the laws which make pheasants more valuable than peasants; we desire the repeal of the laws against blasphemy, and the enactment of some measure which will make all persons competent as witnesses whatever may be their opinions on religion; we advocate the separation of Church and State, and join with the financial reformers in their efforts to reduce our enormous and extravagant national expenditure."

Those who have read the literature in connection with the Freethought movement for the five or six years prior to 1862 will be in no way unprepared to find that the journalistic union between Mr Holyoake and Mr Bradlaugh was very shortlived. In March my father, feeling unable to continue to work under existing arrangements, sent his resignation into the *National Reformer* Company; however, at the Special General Meeting held on the 23rd, it was decided not to elect any editor "in the place of Iconoclast." Mr Bradlaugh therefore continued to act as editor, and Mr Holyoake ceased to be special contributor to the paper. My father was anxious there should be no quarrel—there had been enough of

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* "Manhood," Mr Bradlaugh explained later in answer to a letter from Mrs Law, he used "not in a sexual sense, but rather as asserting the right of every citizen to the franchise," with, of course, limitations as to insanity, etc. My father put his position in most unmistakable language in March 1884 in the *National Reformer*, in answer to a suggestion made by a correspondent that if there had been women-voters in Northampton he would not have been elected. "If the women-electors," he said, "thought fit to reject Mr Bradlaugh, and they made the majority, it would be their right. If Mr Bradlaugh were in the House of Commons he would vote for woman suffrage, even if he were sure he would in future be excluded by women's votes." And again in the December of the following year he urged: "Even if it were unfortunately true that every woman would always vote Tory, it would be the duty of Radicals to try and obtain the suffrage for them."

that with Mr Barker—and proposed to Mr Holyoake that he should contribute two columns of original matter each week, for which he should receive the same amount as he had received before for the three pages. The *Secular World* was re-announced, and it had my father's best wishes. "We believe that its advent will benefit the Freethought party," he writes. However, the matter was not to be so soon or so easily settled. Mr Holyoake claimed from my father the sum of £81, 18s., urging that the agreement to act as special contributor was for twelve months; although he had only filled the post for three months, he yet claimed his salary for the remaining nine. The matter was placed before legally appointed arbitrators—Mr W. J. Linton, chosen by my father, and Mr J. G. Crawford by Mr Holyoake. These gentlemen did not agree, Mr Linton being strongly in favour of Mr Bradlaugh, and Mr Crawford as strongly, I presume, on the other side. They therefore chose an umpire, Mr Shaen—who, by the way, had, I gather, previously acted as solicitor to Mr Holyoake, and who many years later showed a decided personal hostility towards Mr Bradlaugh. After many delays Mr Shaen at length made his award in August 1863 in favour of Mr Holyoake, and my father writing to a friend at the time says rather grimly: "The only good stroke of luck lately is that I am ordered by Shaen to pay G. J. H. £81, 18s. Linton will tell you the particulars."

In May 1862 Messrs W. H. Smith & Son first officially refused to supply their agents with the *National Reformer*. They then occupied the chief railway station bookstalls in England, but were not quite the monopolists they are to-day, and Mr Bradlaugh could for a little while at least get his paper sold at all the stations, numbering some sixty or seventy, on the North Eastern and Newcastle and Carlisle railways, at which book agencies were held by a Mr Franklin. It is wonderful, indeed, how this journal managed to live through more than thirty years in spite of this powerful boycott, extending as it afterwards did to every part of the kingdom. Mr Bradlaugh called upon his friends to use every effort to keep up the sale. "We will do our part," he wrote, "and we call upon our friends, east, west, north, and south, to do their duty also." During the last year of his life Mr Bradlaugh was given to understand that the boycott would be raised, and that Messrs W. H. Smith & Son would be willing to take the *National Reformer*

on to the railway bookstalls, but the first expenses would have been so great that he was unwilling to enter into the further financial liabilities which the new departure would have involved.

The *National Reformer* was not only from its earliest years refused by the most powerful booksellers in England, but it was maligned in a quarter where indeed it might have looked for fair play and a little justice—I mean by the Unitarians.* The cynical reflection that those who have themselves broken away from the conventional thought of the times always damn those who go a little further than themselves, carries a germ of truth within its bitter shell. The Unitarian body always seem to treat Freethinkers with an acrimony special to themselves and us. Individual Unitarians whom I have known personally have been kind, pleasant, liberal-minded people, but Unitarians as a body or as represented by their organ seldom enough have turned a kindly side towards atheists.

With every man's hand against it, with financial difficulties to cripple it, both the editor and the company of the unfortunate paper felt compelled to review the situation, and put matters on a somewhat different footing. Hence at a duly convened meeting held in September the company was wound up, and Mr Bradlaugh "appointed liquidator according to the terms of the Joint Stock Company's Act, 1856." From this time the sole responsibility, financial and otherwise, rested upon my father. Unfortunately, a few months later his health broke down, and at the urgent entreaty of his friends he "most reluctantly resolved to determine his connection as Editor, and to retire entirely from the conduct and responsibilities of the paper."

He begged therefore the support of all friends to Mr John Watts, who had consented to take up the onerous burden of editorship. Mr John Watts, in an address published the following week, wished it to be understood that he was taking up the editorship at the "express wish" of Iconoclast. On quitting the editor's chair with the issue of No. 146 (Feb. 28), Mr Bradlaugh gave expression to his wishes in regard to the conduct of the paper.

"I should wish," he says, "that the *National Reformer* may continue to advocate the fullest liberty of thought and utterance, conceding to others that which it claims for itself. That it should

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* See *Inquirer*, May 31, 1862.

be plain and honest in its attacks on shams. That it should spare no falsehood merely because uttered by a great man, show no mercy to royal treachery simply from reverence for royalty, and have no pardon for crowned wrong while ragged wrong shall suffer . . . . ."

To Freethinkers and Radicals he says, with a bitter prescience of his own future fate indicated in some of his words: "Your duty lies not in petty personal strife, but in the diffusion of the great and mighty truths for which our predecessors have risked stake and dungeon. Your duty is not to take part in disputes whether John or Thomas is the better leader, but rather so to live as to need no leaders. A public man's life is composed of strange phases. If successful, he wins his success with hard struggling. As he struggles the little great ones before him, who envy his hope, block up his path. His ignorance is exposed, his incapability made manifest; and then when he has won the victory, and made a place for standing, each envious cowardly caviller, who dares not meet him face to face, stabs him with base innuendo in the back. I do not envy any statesman's character in the hands of his political antagonists, still less do I envy when I hear him dissected behind his back by his pseudo-friends."

In concluding his article he gives special praise to Mr John Watts and Mr Austin Holyoake for their help on the paper, taking the blame for all its past shortcomings on his own shoulders.

From February 1863 until April 1866 Mr John Watts edited the *National Reformer;* but unless my father happened to be abroad, as he frequently was during the early part of the sixties, traces of him were to be found somewhere or other in the paper, either in an article from his pen, a letter, or answers to correspondents on legal points. During these three years he contributed several notable articles, such as "Notes on Genesis and Exodus," "The Oath Question," "Real Representation of the People," "A Plea for Atheism," "Universality of Heresy," "The Atonement," "Antiquity and Unity of the Origin of the Human Race," "The Twelve Apostles," "Why do Men Starve?" and "Labour's Prayer," and many of which have been from time to time revised or rewritten, and published and republished in pamphlet form.

He also gave the paper considerable financial assistance, amounting in the three years to upwards of £250.

On the 22nd of April 1866, a notice appeared in the *National*

Reformer to the effect that Mr Bradlaugh would resume his editorial duties on the paper, of which he had never relinquished the copyright. The occasion for this announcement was a very sad one. Just as in 1863 Mr Bradlaugh, overtaken by illness, was obliged to lay aside his burden of editorship, so in 1866 Mr John Watts also became too ill to continue his work. But the illness of Mr John Watts was unhappily more serious than Mr Bradlaugh's; it was the forerunner of his death. In the November of the same year a career of some promise was cut short at its opening, and Mr John Watts died of consumption at the early age of thirty-two.

When he learned of his friend's illness my father readily consented to resume his former task as editor, and appointed as sub-editor Mr Charles Watts, who spoke of the satisfaction it had been to his brother to have so willing and able a friend take charge of the paper once more. A little later Mr Austin Holyoake was associated in the sub-editing with Mr Charles Watts.

Thus in 1866 the journal was once more under the full control of Mr Bradlaugh, and although he subsequently, for a time, associated another editor with himself, he thought for it and fought for it, wrote for it and cared for it, from that time until within a fortnight of his death, when from his dying bed he dictated a few words for me to write. He had to fight for it in press and law court.

In 1867 the high-priced and refined *Saturday Review* started the story, so often repeated since, that Mr Bradlaugh had compared God with a monkey with three tails; and further declared, with that delicacy of language which one expects to meet in such aristocratic company, that "such filthy ribaldry as we have, from a sense of duty, picked off Bradlaugh's dunghill, is simply revolting, odious, and nauseating to the natural sense of shame possessed by a savage." Needless to say, the "savage" feelings of the *Saturday Review* were much too delicate to admit any reply from the editor of the journal attacked. Mr Bradlaugh, of course, replied in his own paper, and "B. V." took up the cudgels also on behalf of his friend. He wrote at some length, and the following quotation truly and amusingly pictures the *National Reformer* at least:—

"This poor *N. R.!* Let us freely admit that it has many imperfections, many faults; its poverty secures for it a constant supply of poor writers, while securing for us, the poor writers, an opportunity of

publishing what we could hardly get published elsewhere. But I fear not to affirm that, by its essential character, it is quite incomparably superior to such a paper as the *S. R.* It has clear principles, which it honestly believes will immensely benefit the world; the *S. R.* is governed by hand-to-mouth expediency for the sole benefit of itself. The former is devoted to certain ideas; the latter has neither devotion nor ideas, but has a cool preference for opinions of good fashion and of loose and easy fit. The former is written throughout honestly, each writer stating with the utmost sincerity and candour what he thinks and feels; the latter—why, the latter would doubtless be ashamed to resemble in anything its poor contemporary. The former, though not always choice and accurate in its language, is generally written in plain clear English (and I really account this of importance, and even of vital importance, in an *English* publication); the latter is not written in any language at all, for a mixed jargon of the schools, the bar, the pulpit, and the clubs is certainly not a language."

Amongst the papers which copied the *Saturday Review* article was the *Printers' Journal;* and this paper, determined not to fall behind its aristocratic colleague, added a little slander on its own account, that the *National Reformer* was improperly printed by underpaid compositors—although had the editor cared to inquire, he would have found that the men were paid according to the regulations of the Printers' Society.

In January and June of 1867 there appeared in the *National Reformer* some noteworthy letters from the Rev. Charles Voysey. They are specially remarkable when contrasted with his public utterances of 1880. These letters arose out of a sermon preached at Healaugh on October 21st, 1866, in which Mr Voysey said that if it were urged

'that a belief in the Articles of the Christian Creed without morality is better than morality without belief,* I frankly own that, though I am a Churchman, I would rather see them put aside and torn up as rubbish, than see the cause of morality, which is true religion, for a moment imperilled. I would honestly prefer a morality without any religious belief—nay, even without any religious hopes and religious consolations—to the most comforting, satisfying creed without morality. . . . . Inexpressibly sad as it is to us, who rejoice in our Maker, and whose hearts pant for the Living God, yet there are some who cannot believe in him at all. Some of these are kept steadfast in duty,

* A dignitary of the Church was reported to have said that it was better "to have a religion without morality than morality without religion."

pure and upright in their lives, models of good fathers and mothers, good husbands and wives, and fulfilling God's own law of love, which in mercy he has not made dependent on Creed, but has engraven on our very hearts. They are living evidences of morality without religion; and if I had to choose between the lot of a righteous man who could not believe in a God, and the man of unlimited credulity, who cared not to be righteous so much as to be a believer, I would infinitely sooner be the righteous Atheist."

Mr Bradlaugh made a short comment upon this, to which Mr Voysey replied, and one or two further letters appeared. In a letter dated January 13th he writes:—

"But I leave these minor matters to express my heartfelt sympathy for what you call the 'Infidel party' under the civil disabilities which have hitherto oppressed them. I think with sorrow and shame of the stupid, as well as cruel contempt, with which some of my brother-clergymen have treated you; and I cannot but deplore the want of respect towards you as shown in the attitude of society, and in the continuance of those nearly obsolete laws which our less enlightened forefathers passed in the vain hope of checking the movements of the human mind. . . . *I can do but very little, but that little I will do with all my heart to remove the stigma which attaches to my order through its blind and senseless bigotry.*"

The italics here are mine, as I wish to draw special attention to the sentiments of the Rev. Charles Voysey in 1867. In June of the same year he wrote other somewhat lengthy letters, in which he expressed his great respect for Mr Bradlaugh's "candour and honesty," and his thanks for the "invariable courtesy" shown him. That is the Mr Voysey of 1867. In 1880 the Rev. Charles Voysey proved the value of his unsought promise to work to remove the stigma from his order, by going out of his way to preach a sermon at the Langham Hall upon the "Bradlaugh Case," in which he explained that he felt "ashamed and disgraced by the people of Northampton for electing him [Charles Bradlaugh] to represent them;" he said that "most of the speeches in the Bradlaugh case, in favour of his exclusion, strike me as singularly good, wholesome, and creditable," and he felt thankful to the speakers for not mincing the matter. Mr Bradlaugh, making an exceedingly brief commentary on Mr Voysey's sermon, said:—

"We presume that this commendation included the various phrases invented for Mr Bradlaugh by 'hon.' members, but never used by him. Mr Voysey's belief in God seems to include approval

of the use of lies on God's behalf. Mr Voysey says: 'It is more than probable that if Mr Bradlaugh had claimed to affirm without giving reasons for it the Speaker would have at once permitted him to affirm.' Here Mr Voysey writes in absolute and inexcusable ignorance of what actually took place. For eightpence Mr Voysey can buy the Report of the Select Parliamentary Committee, which, while unfavourable to me, gives the exact facts, and this at least he ought to do before he preaches another sermon full of inaccuracies as to fact, and replete with unworthy insinuation."

"The whole affair," says Mr Voysey, "has been a perfect jubilee to the martyr and his friends." And in the end it was—such a jubilee as is never likely to fall to the lot of Mr Voysey. True, it was paid for in years of care and terrific mental anxieties; true, it was heralded with insult and actual personal ill-usage; true, it cost a life impossible to replace; but the "jubilee" came when over the "martyr's" very deathbed the House of Commons itself vindicated his honour; when even a Tory statesman could be found to uphold my father's conduct in the House, and a Tory gentleman to proclaim that he was "a man who had endeavoured to do his duty." It was a jubilee of the triumph of consistent courage and honesty over "blind and senseless bigotry" and unprincipled malice.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NATIONAL REFORMER" AND ITS GOVERNMENT PROSECUTIONS.

On the third of May 1868 the *National Reformer* appeared in a new character. A startling announcement at the head of the Editorial Notices sets forth that "the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Inland Revenue having commenced proceedings to suppress the *National Reformer*, a special fund is opened, to be entitled 'The *National Reformer* Defence Fund,' to which subscriptions are invited." Above the editorial leaders was the legend, "Published in Defiance of Her Majesty's Government, and of the 60 Geo. III. cap. 9."

Beyond these two statements no further information was given until the following week, when Mr Bradlaugh explained in answer to numerous inquirers that the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue had, under 60 Geo. III., cap. 69, required him to give sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in his columns; that they had sent officially to purchase a copy; and that they claimed £20 for each separate copy of the *National Reformer* published. Another communication came from W. H. Melvill, Esq., Solicitor to the Inland Revenue Office, insisting upon his compliance with the requirements of the statute. Mr Bradlaugh replied intimating his refusal, and stating that he was prepared to contest the matter. He also addressed a short public letter to the Commissioners:—

"You have," he writes, "taken the pains to officially remind me of an Act of Parliament, passed in 1819, avowedly for the suppression of cheap Democratic and Freethought literature, and you require me to comply with its provisions, such provisions being absolutely prohibitory to the further appearance of this journal. With all humility, I am obliged to bid you defiance; you may kill the *National Reformer*, but it will not commit suicide. Before you destroy the paper we shall have to fight the question as far as my means will permit me."

The Government showed itself in so little hurry to notice Mr Bradlaugh's defiance that he announced the suspension of the "defence fund" in the hope that the Government had "reconsidered its hasty intimations." My father's warlike spirit appears to have made him half regretful that all these preliminary threatenings seemed about to result in nothing more serious, for he believed he "should have made a good fight for the liberty of the press;" although, on the other hand, he was, of course, "delighted to be let alone," as he could not afford "to go to jail," and "jail" would have been the natural termination to his defeat and the Government triumph. The hopes and fears of his suspense were, however, at length brought to an end, and the next issue of the *National Reformer* (May 24) appeared with the words "Prosecuted by Her Majesty's Government" printed in large black type on the front page; and this announcement was so continued until the end of the proceedings, giving to the journal—despised and rejected by its contemporaries as it was—quite a distinguished appearance.

In fact, the public could hardly have read his words as to the possibility of a reconsideration by the Government, when he received an ominously worded writ * from the Solicitor's Department, Somerset House, for the recovery of two penalties of £50 and £20 attaching to the publication and sale of the paper; and it may be remarked that the claim of these sums of £50 and £20 meant considerably more than would appear to the eye of the uninitiated, for it meant £50 "for each and every day" since publication, and £20 "for each and every copy" published, so that the amount of the penalties really claimed was something tremendous. On these two numbers alone, at the very lowest estimate, it must have reached somewhere about a quarter of a million of money. "The Defence Fund" was of course re-opened; for, as we shall see later on, Mr Bradlaugh had by this time gained plenty of personal experience as to the cost of litigation, and opposing the Government law

* "This writ is issued against you for the recovery of two penalties of £50 and £20 incurred by you in respect of the publication and sale of '*The National Reformer*, Secular Advocate and Freethought Journal' newspaper of 3rd May 1868, without making the Declaration and Recognisances, required respectively by the Statutes 6 and 7 Wm. iv. cap. 76, and 1st Wm. iv. cap. 73; and also for two other like penalties in respect of the publication and sale of the newspaper of 18th May 1868."

officers promised largely in the way of expense. Hosts of small subscribers sent their small sums to swell the funds for the defence of the persecuted and prosecuted paper. Meetings were held, and a petition for the repeal of the Statutes of William and George was immediately got up. One of the first to be presented was one from Mr Bradlaugh himself, which was laid before the House on May 25th by Mr John Stuart Mill; on the same day Mr Crawford presented one from Mr Austin Holyoake; and later on people in various parts of the country, sent in petitions through their respective members. These petitions and the general agitation soon began to have their effect, and resulted in a meeting of members being convened to be held in one of the Committee Rooms of the House, to consider the proper action to be taken. Men like James Watson, who had suffered imprisonment for his defence of the liberty of the press; Richard Moore, whose name was well known in those days for his efforts to promote political freedom; and Mr C. D. Collet, who had worked untiringly for political reforms: such men as these came forward with help and advice, as well as many others who, like Edward Truelove and Austin Holyoake, were intimately associated with my father. On the 28th May he received an "information" from the law officers of the Crown, but, curiously enough, it was undated. No one who knows anything of Mr Bradlaugh will need to be told that this slip did not pass unnoticed, and on the following day, with the view of gaining a slight extension of the time to plead, he applied to Mr Baron Bramwell to order the withdrawal of the information. Baron Bramwell made the order applied for, and the solicitor to the Inland Revenue amended his document the same day.

From this "information," with its customary confusion of legal jargon retailed to clients at so much per folio, we may extricate three essential points, which I will put plainly in as many lines, viz., that Mr Bradlaugh was being proceeded against for (1) publishing the *National Reformer;* for (2) being the proprietor of it; and for (3) selling the paper so published and owned "at a less price than sixpence, to wit, at the price of twopence."

These last words were pregnant with meaning, for, as my father wrote at the time, "If the price was sixpence I should not be prosecutable; it is only cheap blasphemy and sedition which is liable to be suppressed." The rich might read the covert blas-

phemies of an affectedly pious and unaffectedly sixpenny weekly journal, or dally over expensive and erudite treatises which were openly heretical; but ignorance and religion were necessary to the masses to keep them in proper subjection, and woe betide those rash men who ventured to throw open to these the door of the Chamber of Knowledge! Has not this been the law of England, and is it not in fact the sentiment of certain Englishmen even to-day?

As the particulars conveyed in this formidable "information" differed somewhat from those furnished in the earlier *subpœna ad respondum*, Mr Bradlaugh applied to the Courts to compel further and better particulars concerning the penalties for which judgment was prayed. This application was heard on the 30th May, in the Court of Exchequer, before Mr Justice Montague Smith, and was opposed by counsel (of whom there was quite an array) on behalf of the Crown. After a "lengthy and rather sharp passage of arms" the Judge decided in favour of the application, and ordered the solicitor to the Inland Revenue to "deliver to the defendant a further and better account in writing of the particulars of the statutes referred to in the 3rd and 6th counts." * This victory over the law officers of the Crown was of trifling consequence, except as giving a little additional time for pleading, and as showing his opponents that they had to deal with a man ready to see and ready to use every advantage given him. This second victory, small perhaps as bearing on the final issues, was of vast moral importance, for it forced the Crown to state that they relied on the obnoxious statute of George III. for the enforcement of the 3rd and 6th counts. The assistant-solicitor, Stephen Dowell, Esq., made this admission in the briefest possible language, abandoning the "to wits" and other ornamental phraseology of the original wordy information. On the 1st June Mr Bradlaugh entered four pleas in his defence; but it was now the turn of the law officers of the Crown to interpose, and they objected that a defendant might only plead one plea, and referred their opponent to the 21 James I., cap. iv. sec. 4, as bearing on the case. The letter conveying this objection was put into my father's hands at Euston Station just as he was leaving by the 2.45 train for Northampton, the suffrages of which

* The 4th, 5th, and 6th counts were identical with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, except that they referred to a different issue of the paper.

town he was then seeking to win for the first time. That very day was the last for giving notice for the next sittings, and half-past three was the latest time available on that day. Mr Bradlaugh felt himself in a position of considerable embarrassment. There was no time for consideration; he doubted the accuracy of the Government, but he was not acquainted with the wording of the statute of James; his train was on the point of leaving for Northampton, and some decision must be come to immediately. He despatched a clerk to Somerset House with authority to modify his plea according to the terms of the solicitor's letter, but reserving his right to inquire into the matter, and take such course upon it as the law permitted.

On his return from Northampton, he went at once to Messrs Spottiswoode, the Queen's Printers, and there he learned that the statute of James was "not only out of print, but had not been asked for within the memory of the oldest employee in the Queen's Printing Office." On referring to the Statute Book, he arrived at the opinion that Mr Melvill was once more in error, and therefore went himself to Somerset House, where, to his "great surprise," he found that the Government lawyers were no better informed than himself, and merely sheltered themselves under an opinion of the counsel to the Treasury that he had no right to plead more than one plea. Upon hearing this, Mr Bradlaugh immediately wrote Mr Melvill that unless he at once pointed out the authority under which his right of pleading was limited to "Not Guilty," he should apply to a judge at chambers to have his pleas reinstated. Mr Melvill replied on the same day repeating his declaration, but without giving his authority. The next day (Friday, June 5th) Mr Bradlaugh was served with a rule that the case should be tried by a special jury, and that the jury should be nominated on the Tuesday following. On Saturday the application to reinstate the pleas was heard before Mr Justice Willes. After a great deal of discussion, the judge at length endorsed the summons with a delaration giving Mr Bradlaugh liberty to raise upon the trial all the issues involved in his pleas.

The trial came on in the Court of Exchequer on Saturday, June 13th, before Mr Baron Martin. The Court was filled with Mr Bradlaugh's friends, to witness this great forensic contest between himself, on behalf of a free, unshackled press on the one hand, and on the other, Her Majesty's Attorney-General. Sir John Karslake,

Kt., aided and assisted by the Solicitor-General and an inferior legal gentleman "in stuff," on behalf of the Government and the oppressive press laws of George and William. When the jury was called only ten gentlemen answered to their names; thereupon the Associate asked the Attorney-General, "Do you pray a tales?" The Attorney-General answered, "We do not pray a tales." The Associate then asked Mr Bradlaugh the same question, to which he also replied in the negative. Upon this the jury was discharged, and the great press prosecution entered into by the moribund Tory Government of 1868 came to an abortive end.

"It is not in mortals—least of all, in mortals mean as these—to command success. I make no doubt that the man who has the courage to defy them will at least do more—deserve it." So wrote "Caractacus" before this nominal trial came on, and assuredly whatever measure of success there was in it was surely on my father's side. Mr Bradlaugh did not "pray a tales," because by so doing he would have forfeited certain rights; but by not praying a tales, and by not asking for fines to be imposed upon the absent jurymen, the law officers of the Crown most clearly showed their eagerness to seize upon any excuse to abandon the proceedings upon which they had so rashly embarked. To do the Government justice, I think they had been rather driven into the matter by their bigoted followers. As far back as 1866 we find the English Church Union urging the prosecution of an "infidel newspaper, reputed to possess a considerable circulation." The matter had actually been brought before the Attorney-General, with a view to legal proceedings, and he, "whilst suggesting the necessity of mature consideration as to the desirability of procuring prominence for a comparatively obscure publication by means of a public prosecution, promised that the question should be very carefully considered." In 1867 the *Saturday Review* tried week by week to inflame the mind of the public against the *National Reformer* and Mr Bradlaugh, and other Tory journals followed the example so worthily set them. Judging from all this, one can hardly be assuming too much in supposing the action of the Government was not altogether spontaneous.

At the meeting of members of Parliament and others interested in the matter to which I have already referred, Messrs Ayrton, M.P., Milner Gibson, M.P., J. S. Mill, M.P., R. Moore, C. D. Collet, E. Truelove, and A. Holyoake were present, and after some

talk it was decided to raise the question the next evening (June 12) in the House on going into Supply. Accordingly, on the following evening Mr Ayrton, in a speech of considerable length, called attention to the state of the law regarding registration and security in respect of certain publications, but the Attorney-General politely characterised his statements as "utterly at variance with the facts." Mr Milner Gibson, in an able speech, demonstrated some of the absurdities of the press laws. John Stuart Mill asked for the repeal of the Act, and pending that the suspension of all prosecutions under it, and Mr Crawford "pleaded in tones of eloquence and fire for a free and untaxed literature for the working classes."

It will probably occur to every one, as it occurred to me, that it would be interesting to know what were the comments of the press upon this debate, and the abortive trial held upon the following day. I have looked through several London journals of that particular date, but have failed to find any comments whatever; the press was apparently in profound ignorance concerning this important matter, which so vitally affected its interests.* I did, however, find something in my search; I found that in the *Times* report of the parliamentary debate upon the registration of newspapers which I have just alluded to, the name of the *National Reformer* was actually omitted from Mr Ayrton's speech, although the suit against it was deemed of such importance as to require the services of the Attorney and the Solicitor-General, and a third counsel. I turned over the pages of the *Times* and other papers, vainly seeking for some report of the proceedings in the Court of Exchequer—but there was not one line: to such pettiness did the leading journals of the day condescend.

In concluding the account of this, the first prosecution of the *National Reformer*, I cannot pass over without notice the conduct of the Rev. John Page Hopps, who, with those other gentlemen whose names have already been mentioned, set up a brilliant exception to the usual manner in which Mr Bradlaugh was treated

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* A few provincial papers condemned the prosecution, and later on the *Daily Telegraph* announced a possible repeal of the Press Laws, and that in the meantime "the Government had resolved not to press the objectionable clauses."

by the publicists of the day. He wrote to my father a hearty letter, saying that while of course differing from him in certain opinions, he thought the prosecution "both cowardly and mean," and wishing him "success and support," promised him whatever aid he could give.

In the year 1868 Mr Bradlaugh ceased to use that name under which he had carried on his public career from the time of his return from the army. The disguise had always been a very transparent one, and the smallest Christian taunt at his *nom de guerre* made him cast caution to the winds and declare his real name. At the time of his first candidature for a seat in Parliament in 1868 he determined to throw aside even this semblance of concealment, and all announcements were henceforward made in the name of "Charles Bradlaugh," although the repute of "Iconoclast" had been so great that the name clung to him for many years; in some of the Yorkshire and Lancashire districts it was proudly remembered until the last. The *National Reformer* was issued for the first time on November 15th, 1868, as "edited by Charles Bradlaugh," instead of "edited by Iconoclast" as heretofore. The winter of this year was a very stormy one politically; the general election of December resulted in turning out the Tories and bringing the Liberals into power under the leadership of Mr Gladstone. Mr Gladstone and his colleagues had not been in office many weeks before they took up the press prosecution abandoned by their Tory predecessors, and as early as January 16th, 1869, Mr Bradlaugh received formal notice that the Government intended to proceed to trial. Mr Bradlaugh confessed that this move came quite unexpectedly to him, but he would "fight to the last," whether against Tory or against Liberal. He regarded it, however, as "a most infamous shame that a private individual should have been put to the expense of one abortive trial, and should now have another costly ordeal to go through on the same account."

On Tuesday morning, February 2nd, the case again came on in the Court of Exchequer, this time before Mr Baron Bramwell. The Attorney-General, Sir Robert Collier, the Solicitor-General, Sir J. D. Coleridge, and Mr Crompton Hutton were there to plead on behalf of the odious Security Laws, and enforce them against one man and one paper selected out of "hundreds, nay thousands, of publications liable under the same Acts of Parliament, which do not comply with their provisions, and which are yet allowed to

go on unprosecuted." Just as had happened in the previous year, so, curiously enough, on this occasion also only ten special jurymen answered to their names; but this time a tales was prayed by the Crown, and the absent jurymen were fined £10 each. Sir Robert Collier appears to have done his work as little offensively to my father as possible, and at the end of his opening speech said:—

"Mr Bradlaugh knows perfectly well that if at any time he had intimated his readiness to comply with the provisions of the Act, the prosecution would not have been proceeded with. The prosecution is not for the purpose of punishing and fining him, but to ensure compliance with this Act, as long as it remains the law; and if Mr Bradlaugh sees his mistake, as I think he will, and will comply with the Act, no penalties will be enforced against him."

For a Republican and Freethought paper to give sureties against technical sedition and blasphemy, "even if we could find friends insane enough to enter into recognisances," would be like announcing Hamlet at the Lyceum with the part of the Prince of Denmark cut out. So in spite of Sir Robert Collier's grace and politeness, Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to persist, and the prosecution thereupon proceeded with the examination of witnesses as to the purchase of the paper, etc.

The Crown obtained a verdict; but there were seven points reserved on my father's behalf for discussion and decision. "At present," wrote my father, "we are not beaten, and we will persevere to the end; but we must deplore that the present advisers of the Crown should think it right to try to ruin an individual with a litigation of such an enormously costly character."

There were some rather amusing incidents in connection with this trial. When Baron Bramwell pronounced his verdict for the Crown, Mr Crompton Hutton rose in his place, and said with a grand air of generosity that as the first and second counts were the same, "it would not be right for the Crown to take two penalties," therefore a verdict might be for the defendant upon the second and fifth counts. As though when penalties had reached well into seven figures, a million or two less was of much consequence! Mr Austin Holyoake, in a descriptive article upon the prosecution, which he found it difficult to class as either tragedy or farce, since "it resembles very much a melodrama in two gasps and

a tableau," says in regard to the suggested non-enforcement of full fines :—

"This relieved my mind very much ; for as the penalties have accumulated since May last to between three and four millions had we been suddenly called upon to pay, I feel sure the sum I had with me would have fallen short by at least two millions of the amount forfeited to 'our sovereign lady the Queen.' The Chancellor of the Exchequer is very busy devising schemes to create a surplus for his next budget. Perhaps this is one of them."

The learned Attorney-General, Sir Robert Collier, in the course of his opening speech, read the statute of the 60 Geo. III. chap. 9, sec. 8, which laid down regulations as to the publication of any paper, etc., which "shall not exceed two sheets, or which shall be published at a less price than sixpence." In reading this statute, Sir Robert Collier remarked that the provision as to pamphlets had been repealed. When it came to Mr Bradlaugh's turn to speak in his defence, he pointed out the error of this. The Attorney-General "has read to you the statute of the 60 Geo. III. chap. 9, and he himself, the representative of the Crown here to-day, knows so little of the statute that he . . . . states that the part as to pamphlets is a part which has been repealed. The fact is that the whole of this Act of Parliament is a living Act."

Having put the Attorney-General right in the matter of law, it was now Mr Bradlaugh's turn to inform the officials at Somerset House of what went on in their own department. At the trial Mr Edward Tilsley, a clerk in the office of the Solicitor of Inland Revenue, had sworn, accurately sworn, under the cross-examination of the defendant, that the *Sporting Times* was not registered. On the 4th of February all the morning papers contained a letter from Mr Tilsley announcing that he had made a search, and that the *Sporting Times* was registered, and he asked for publicity of this fact "in justice to the proprietors of that paper." The proprietors must have been considerably astonished. Mr Bradlaugh was ; and to such an extent did his amazement carry him, that he immediately went to Somerset House, where he also searched the register. The result of his search appeared in the following letter, published in the papers of the 5th :—

"SIR —With reference to Mr Tilsley's letter in your issue of to-day, permit me to state that I have this morning searched the registers at

Somerset House in the presence of that gentleman, and that his evidence in court seems to have been more correct than his correction. The *Sporting Times* is not registered. Mr Tilsley's error, when writing to you, arose from the fact that another paper with the same name was once registered, but this was before the popular journal of Dr Shorthouse came into existence. I believe Dr Shorthouse would contend, as I contended at the trial, that his publication does not come under the statutory definition of a newspaper."

As the days flew by Mr Bradlaugh grew more and more confident that he had a good case to go before the judges in asking for his rule, and he notes that "a feeling in favour of my ultimate success seems gaining ground in many competent quarters, although the utmost surprise is felt that a Liberal Government should persist in such a prosecution." A petition was drawn up setting forth the chief points in the prosecution, and praying that all such enactments as create differences between high and low priced publications to the detriment of the latter might be repealed. Mr Bradlaugh sent his petition to Viscount Enfield, Member for Middlesex, who duly presented it. For thus doing his bare duty to one of his constituents, Viscount Enfield was most virulently attacked by the *Blue Budget*. Lord Enfield and Mr Bradlaugh were unknown to each other, and the former had merely fulfilled the obligation of his Parliamentary membership; for this he was accused of being the apologist for Mr Bradlaugh, for whom he did "not object to risk his reputation."

On Thursday, April 15th, Lord Chief Baron Kelly, Baron Bramwell, and Baron Cleasby, sitting in the Exchequer Court, heard the motion for a new rule. The three judges listened to Mr Bradlaugh with the greatest attention, and took the utmost care to fully comprehend the bearing of every argument he put forward, although their continuous interruptions were rather embarrassing to him. Having heard what he had to urge, a rule *nisi* was granted him on three points; if he succeeded in maintaining his rule on either of two points, the prosecution was at an end; if he failed in these, but succeeded in the third, then there would have to be a new trial. It is hardly wonderful that, having gained so much, he began to feel fairly sanguine of success; nor is it less wonderful that, with all the worry and all the work, he should be feeling rather bitter against the Government, which had actually brought in a Bill on April 8th to repeal those enactments

which they were at that very moment trying to enforce against him.

"If the Gladstone Cabinet had been a generous one," he wrote, "it would have abandoned a prosecution which, when carried on by the late Government, some of the members of the present Cabinet had already emphatically condemned. If the Gladstone Government had been just and consistent, it should at least, when bringing in a Bill to repeal the very laws under which we are prosecuted, have delayed the legal proceedings in this case until after the debate in the House upon this Bill, which has now actually passed its second reading."

The rule of court granted by the judges was served upon the solicitor to the Inland Revenue on the 16th of April. Upon the 23rd that gentleman wrote Mr Bradlaugh that as it was proposed to repeal the enactments under which the proceedings had been instituted, "the Law Officers of the Crown will agree to a *stet processus* being entered," and asked if he would consent to this course. To this Mr Bradlaugh made answer:—

"Sir,—I will consent to a *stet processus* being entered, not because of the Bill now before the House of Commons, but because I am sick of a litigation involving loss of time, anxiety, and expense; and I consent only with the distinct declaration on my part, that I am not liable under the statutes under which I am prosecuted, and protesting that a Liberal Government ought never to have carried on such a prosecution. If the Law Officers of the Crown had proposed a *stet processus* when the new Government came into office, the act would have been graceful; now, after twelve months of harassing litigation, the staying further proceedings, when a rule has been granted in my favour, is a matter for which I owe no thanks.

"If any more formal consent is necessary, I will give it. I never courted the contest, nor have I ever shrunk from it; but I have no inclination to carry it on; fighting the Crown is a luxury only to be indulged in by the rich as a voluntary occupation. I have fought from necessity, and have the sad consciousness that I retire victor at a loss I am ill able to bear."

In the *National Reformer* for the following week my father announced the total monies subscribed for the defence of the *National Reformer* at £256, 10s.; these were mainly from the hard earnings of poor friends, although a few had helped out of their fuller purses. He gave also a detailed account of the money

he had actually paid away during this litigation; it amounted to £300, but of course this did not include the value of the time lost both directly and indirectly * in the course of these proceedings. To be £50 out of pocket is but a trifle to a rich man, but when it forms one item amongst many to a poor man it is a very serious matter. John Stuart Mill wrote him from Avignon: "You have gained a very honourable success in obtaining a repeal of the mischievous Act by your persevering resistance." But he did not think there was any hope of getting the Government to refund my father's expenses, although, as he said, a "really important victory" had been obtained. The "poor friends," however, continued to subscribe their pence and their shillings until the deficiency was in great part, if not wholly, made up.

The repealing Bill introduced into the House by Mr Ayrton and the Chancellor of the Exchequer passed through its three stages without debate, and was then sent up to the House of Lords in charge of the Marquis of Lansdowne, who introduced it to his brother peers on Monday, May 31st. Lord Lansdowne explained that the Act of Geo. III. was passed at a time of much agitation,

"when it was thought necessary to subject the Press to every conceivable restriction and coercion. In repealing these Acts their lordships need not apprehend that there would be no security against an abuse by the Press of the power which it enjoyed, for it would remain amenable to the Libel and other Acts, and the distinction between newspapers and books being one not of kind but of degree, there was no reason why the former should be treated in an exceptional way. Generally speaking, moreover, these Acts had not of late years been enforced, though their retention on the Statute Book enabled persons to take advantage of them with the view of gratifying personal feeling."

Lord Cairns, the Lord Chancellor, and the Duke of Somerset, spoke, but upon points of the Bill other than that referring to newspapers. That the "debate" was not lengthy will be fully realised from the fact that upon this occasion the Lord Chancellor took his seat on the woolsack at five o'clock, and "their lordships adjourned at five minutes before six." The Bill passed its second and third reading (this last on June 21st) without a further word of discussion. Thus, almost in complete silence, were the Security

* He was at one period quite ill and under Dr Ramskill's care through the overwork and mental worry of this lawsuit.

Laws swept from the Statute Book, and cheap prints and dear prints made to stand technically equal in the eye of the law.

What were the comments of the Press on this great triumph so hardly won for them? After the trial of February 2nd, the *Morning Star* printed a splendid article against the prosecution, but all the other daily papers of the metropolis persevered in their silence. "To struggle with the Treasury officials would be no mean task," said my father, "even if we had words of encouragement and more efficient aid from those, many of whom stand like ourselves, liable to be attacked as infringers of an oppressive law. As it is, we fight alone, and only one of the London journals has spoken out on our behalf." The *Manchester Courier* wondered why the law had not been put in force against the *National Reformer* before. The *Blue Budget* reviled Lord Enfield for merely presenting a petition. The *Times* report of the lengthy proceedings before the three judges on April 15th occupies only twenty-five lines. The only London papers which printed Mr Melvill's offer of a *stet processus* and Mr Bradlaugh's rejoinder were the *Times*, *Star*, *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and *Queen's Messenger*. "Not one paper said a word in our favour or congratulated us on the battle we have had to fight." Finally, the repealing Bill passed through all its stages and became law without notice or remark. The bigotry of the leading journals of the day was so great that although they themselves reaped an easy harvest from the toil and suffering of their Freethought contemporary, they had not the grace to utter a word of good fellowship or rejoicing.

But the Government had not even yet done with Mr Bradlaugh and the *National Reformer*. After allowing him some years' respite, an attack was directed against him from another quarter. In the autumn of 1872 the Postmaster-General, Mr Monsell, gave my father notice that the *National Reformer* was to be deprived of the privilege of registration, notwithstanding that for the past nine years it had been registered for foreign transmission as a newspaper, and had been within the last five years prosecuted by both Tory and Whig Attorney-General as a newspaper.

This notice was quite unexpected, and, as might be imagined, my father did not take it very kindly.

Quite an unusual number of papers took up the cudgels in his defence. Most, of course, professed either a profound dislike of his personality, or ignorance of the contents of his journal, but they

were thoroughly alarmed at the prospects opened up by this novel method of press censorship.

By the end of October, however, Mr Bradlaugh received an intimation that the Postmaster-General had withdrawn his objection. The Government seemed determined to advertise the paper, and although they did not gain anything themselves, the processes they employed were very worrying to its poor proprietor. He wrote a special word of thanks to the numerous journals who had asked for fair play towards him, and in doing so also tendered his sympathy "to the one or two bigoted editors who prematurely rejoiced" over the suppression of the Freethought organ.

CHAPTER XV.

ITALY.

FULL of sympathy for Italy, my father spoke much on behalf of Garibaldi and Italian emancipation. When Garibaldi made his "famous Marsala effort," money was collected from all parts of the United Kingdom and sent to his assistance, mainly through the agency of W. H. Ashhurst, Esq. And men went as well as money. "Excursionists" was the name given to these volunteers, amongst whom not a few Freethinkers were numbered. It was always my father's pride to remember that in 1860 he sent Garibaldi 100 guineas. For if he had an empty purse, he had a full heart and an eloquent tongue, and with these he minted the gold to send to Garibaldi and Italy. I have tried, as a matter of interest, to collect together a list of the towns where these Garibaldi lectures were given, but I have not traced more than about half. At Sheffield he earned £20, and Oldham, Holmfirth, Halifax, Nottingham, Rochdale, Northampton, Mexbro', also furnished funds, each town according to its rate of prejudice against the speaker or its ardour for the cause he advocated. In some towns the enthusiasm was so great that hall proprietor and bill printer refused payment in order that their fees should swell the funds; in other places piety and prejudice was so strong that the audiences were not large enough to furnish the actual expenses. On receiving the money Garibaldi wrote my father a letter with his own hand, thanking him for the services he was then rendering to Italy. I am, unfortunately, not able to give the text of this letter, which my father received on July 20th, 1861, for although I have a distinct recollection of having seen it, it has either passed into other hands or become accidentally destroyed.

Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with Mazzini about 1858, when he was living at Onslow Terrace, Brompton, under the name of Signor Ernesti. From the first he won my father's heart, and to the end—although on certain matters their opinions became widely divergent—he placed him high above most men,

reverencing in him his single-mindedness, his purity of purpose, his steadfastness and courage. After Mazzini's death Mr Bradlaugh wrote of him :* "He was one of the few men who impress you first and always with the thorough truthfulness and incorruptibility of their natures. Simple in his manners, with only one luxury, his cigar, he had that fulness of faith in his cause which is so contagious, and by the sheer force of personal contact he made believers in the possibility of Italian unity even amongst those who were utter strangers to his thought and hope."

A framed portrait of Mazzini always hung in my father's room. At Sunderland Villa it hung in his little study; but at Circus Road, where the crowding books rapidly usurped almost every inch of available space, the picture hung in his bedroom. Subscriptions received for the emancipation of Italy were acknowledged on the back of signed photographs of Mazzini, or on specially engraved forms dated from Caprera, but bearing Mazzini's characteristic signature. There are doubtless many people who still retain such acknowledgments received through Mr Bradlaugh, and just before his death, Mr Joseph Gurney, of Northampton, very kindly gave me two that he had received in this way.

At the conclusion of his Autobiography Mr Bradlaugh wrote: "In penning the foregoing sketch I had purposely to omit many facts connected with branches of Italian, Irish, and French politics," because "there are secrets which are not my own alone, and which may not bear telling for many years to come." My father died with these secrets still untold. For all three countries he risked his life or liberty; but, beyond knowing this and a few anecdotes—told by him at the supper table at the end of a day's lecturing—I know very little that is definite. I have two letters of Mazzini's to my father without date or address; but although they suggest many possibilities, they tell nothing :—

"My Dear Sir,—I do not think you can do anything for me in the three places you mention. Of course, I shall always be glad to see you.—Yours faithfully,

Jos. Mazzini.

"Friday."

"My dear Mr Bradlaugh,

"Can you? Will you?

"Ever faithfully yours,

"Thursday.

Jos. Mazzini."

* "Five Dead Men Whom I Knew When Living," by Charles Bradlaugh.

Mr Bradlaugh first visited Naples in November 1861, and some of his impressions as to Naples and Rome were recorded in the *National Reformer* at the time, and more than twenty years later he wrote a description of Ischia for *Our Corner*. I have the passport issued to him by "John, Earl Russell," on the 11th November 1861, lying before me now; it is stamped and marked all over till there is scarcely a clear space anywhere on it, back or front. Naples 1861, France 1861, Germany 1863, Geneva 1866, Rome 1866, France 1871, Germany (?) 1871, Spain 1873, Portugal 1873, and other places, the stamps of which are now quite illegible. There is hardly a stamp on it that does not suggest the possibility, nay, the certainty, of some story we would give much to know. Naples—Rome—these bring up the thoughts of the struggle for Italian freedom, linked with the names of Garibaldi and Mazzini; France—the War, the Commune, and the Republic; Spain—the War, the Republic and Castelar, the failure. Looking at this passport with its covering of names and dates legible and illegible, I realise to the full how little I know, and how feebly I am able to portray the great events of my father's life; to say that I do my best seems almost a mockery when we know that this "best" is so poor and so fragmentary.

While he was at Naples in 1861, Mr Bradlaugh was diligently watched by the police, and his bedroom at the hotel was frequently overhauled. For instance, an English book he was reading, and marking with his pencil as he read, disappeared for a day or so, and on its return bore traces—to the keen eye of its owner at least—of having been carefully examined.

A story, which I have slightly amended from Mr Headingley's biography,* will give some idea as to how closely he was observed and what risks he ran.

The police, as I have said, were soon put on the alert when Mr Bradlaugh arrived in Italy, and evidently kept a keen watch over his every movement. Thus it was ascertained that while at Naples, a few days after Bomba's fall, he had received a packet of political letters. It has been said that walls have ears. In this case they evidently possessed eyes.

He was in the room of his hotel, alone, and, as he thought, safe from all observation. A friend then entered, and without any

* Biography of Charles Bradlaugh, by A. S. Headingley, p. 62.

conversation of a nature that could be overheard, gave him the packet which he had volunteered to take over to England with him. Though as a rule not devoid of prudence, he so little suspected any danger on this occasion that he took no special precaution. He left Naples in a steamboat sailing under the flag of the two Sicilies, and all went smoothly, excepting the ship, till they reached Civitâ Vecchia. Here, to the surprise, if not to the alarm, of the passengers, a boat-load of Papal gendarmes came on board. Even at this moment Mr Bradlaugh was not yet on his guard, and had the gendarmes at once made for his portmanteau, they might possibly have seized the despatches.

The sub-officer preferred, however, resorting to what he doubtless considered a very clever stratagem. He politely inquired for Mr Bradlaugh, whom he discovered with so little difficulty that it is probable he knew perfectly well the principal characteristics of his general appearance. With much politeness, this officer informed him that the British Consul wished to see him on shore. This at once put my father on his guard. If he went on shore he would be on Roman soil, subject to the Papal laws, and there was no guarantee for his safety. On the other hand, he did not know the English Consul, and had no business with him. Evidently this was but a mere trap, so Mr Bradlaugh, with equal politeness, refused to land.

The officer, joined by the full force of the Papal gendarmes, proceeded this time with less ceremony. They ordered him to show his luggage, and evidently knew that it contained the secret dispatches. My father now understood that he had been betrayed. Yet no one at Naples could have seen him when he received the letters, and the walls alone could have seen the transactions, unless a hole had been made through them, and a watch kept on all his actions. This, in fact, is the only explanation that can be given of the circumstance.

In answer to the demand for his luggage, Mr Bradlaugh at once produced his English passport, and assumed that this would suffice to shield him from further annoyance. The document was, however, treated with the profoundest contempt, and the Papal police now prepared to break open the portmanteau. In vain Mr Bradlaugh protested that he was under the flag of the two Sicilies, that he was not under nor subject to the Papal laws; the Papal gendarmes were undeterred by any such arguments. The position

was becoming desperate, and Mr Bradlaugh found himself terribly outnumbered; but he had learned the value of coolness, determination, and audacity.

Without any more argument, he set himself against his portmanteau, drew a heavy six-chambered naval revolver from his coat pocket, cocked, and aimed at the nearest Papal gendarme. He then simply and quietly promised to blow out the brains of the first individual who attempted to touch his luggage. In spite of this threat matters might have gone badly with him, for he was surrounded by foes, and there was the danger of an attack from behind. But at this juncture an American, who had been watching the whole incident with considerable interest, was so delighted at the "Britisher's pluck" that he suddenly snatched up a chair, and springing forward, took up a firm stand back to back with the Englishman, crying, while waving the chair about with fearful energy: "I guess I'll see fair play. You look after those in front, I'll attend to those behind!"

This turn of events somewhat disconcerted the Papal gendarmes. They did not like the look of Mr Bradlaugh's formidable weapon, and the American had destroyed all chance of seizing him by surprise from behind. They hesitated for some time how to proceed. At last they resolved to put the responsibility on others, and go on shore for further instructions. The moment they had left the ship Mr Bradlaugh employed this reprieve in bringing all the pressure possible to bear upon the captain, who was, after some trouble, persuaded to put on steam and sail out to sea before the gendarmes had time to return. A few days later my father reached London in safety, and had the satisfaction of delivering the letters.

Another story told in Mr Headingley's book* is very amusing; and although it has no bearing upon Mr Bradlaugh's political work, yet shows his resourcefulness and coolness in emergency.

"His experience with the Papal gendarmes had taught him the advantage of carrying a revolver when travelling in Italy, though this, it appears, was strictly against the Italian law, and on one occasion nearly resulted in serious consequences. The diligence in which Bradlaugh was travelling [between, as he often said with a wry face, two fat priests smelling strongly of garlic] from Nunzia-

* Page 103.

tella to Civitâ Vecchia had been entirely cleared out on the previous evening by a band of brigands. Bradlaugh consequently put his revolver in the pocket of the diligence door, where he thought it would be more readily accessible in case of attack. When, however, they stopped at Montalbo for the examination of the luggage and passports, the police discovered the revolver and were about to confiscate it. Bradlaugh at once tried to snatch the weapon back, and got hold of it by the barrel, while the policeman held tight to the butt—by far the safest side. In this position a fierce discussion ensued, Bradlaugh expostulating that so long as the Government were unable to protect travellers from brigands they should not object to persons who sought to defend themselves. This argument only drew reinforcements to the policeman's assistance, and Bradlaugh was seized and held tightly on all sides. Finally, Bradlaugh urged that it was his duty to the Life Assurance Company where he had insured himself to carry weapons, and protect his life by every possible means. This novel argument produced an unexpected and profound impression, particularly when he informed them that he was connected with the Sovereign and Midland Assurance Companies. The police respectfully and with minute care noted these names down. What they thought they meant Bradlaugh has never been able to explain; but they at once let him loose, and he triumphantly walked away, carrying with him his cherished revolver."

CHAPTER XVI.

PLATFORM WORK, 1860–1861.

On the third Monday in May 1860 Mr Bradlaugh commenced his second debate with the Rev. Brewin Grant, which was to be continued over four successive Mondays. The St George's Hall, Bradford, capable of holding 4000 persons, was taken for the discussion, and people attended from all the surrounding districts, and some even came in from the adjoining county of Lancashire. So much has been said as to the relative bearing and ability of these unlike men, to the disparagement of Mr Bradlaugh, that it will come as a surprise to many to learn that Mr Grant's language and conduct during this debate were condemned in the most unqualified terms by persons altogether unfriendly to his antagonist.*

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* The *Leeds Times*, in a very unfriendly notice of the second night's debate at Bradford, said: "Mr Grant had declared there would be such fun, and . . . . he should exhibit the characters of some notorious infidels such as Paine, Carlile, Southwell, and others down to the last 'mushroom,' 'Iconoclast' himself, and prove from them that infidelity is the fruitful source of immorality and crime. All this he did in his opening half-hour's address, but where could anything like 'fun' be found in it all? . . . . Mr Grant in foisting such matter upon his audience was shirking the great points of the discussion. . . . . Mr Grant is anything but a calm and dispassionate disputant, and his indulgence in sarcasm even when unprovoked is ill calculated to check a tendency to personalities on the part of opponents, or to lead to the impartial investigation of the truth."

The *Bradford Review* had a short article on the four nights' discussion, and, speaking of the use of personalities, said: "Here we must say, justice obliges us to say that Mr Grant was the first and by far the greater offender in this direction. The language would not have been tolerated in any society. It was an outrage upon the ordinary proprieties and decencies of life."

The *Bradford Advertiser* was expressly hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, but in reviewing the four nights' debate also remarked: "We feel bound to concede that 'Iconoclast' acted with a dignity which contrasted very favourably as compared with Mr Grant. . . . . We are glad the course is at an end: we

In the fourth night of the debate, Mr Grant, harping on the alleged immoralities of Paine and Carlile, twitted his antagonist with calling him "my friend." When the time came for my father to reply, he rose, evidently in a white heat of anger, to defend these two great dead men from their living calumniator. His speech produced such an effect, not only upon the audience, but upon Mr Grant, that the latter grew quite uneasy under his words and under his gaze; he asked "Iconoclast" to look at the audience and not at him. Mr Bradlaugh replied: "I will take it that you are, as indeed you ought to be, ashamed to look an earnest man in the face, and I will look at you no more. Mr Grant complains that I have called him 'my friend.' It is true, in debate I have accustomed myself to wish all men my friends, and to greet them as friends if possible. The habit, like a garment, fits me, and I have in this discussion used the phrase 'my friend;' but, believe me, I did not mean it. Friendship with you would be a sore disgrace and little honour."

A verbatim report was taken of this debate; but when the MS. of his speeches was sent the Rev. Brewin Grant for approval, he refused to return it, and thus the debate was never published.

Another person who came forward to champion Christianity against "Infidels" generally, and Mr Bradlaugh in particular, was the Rev. Dr Brindley. This gentleman, well known as a confirmed drunkard and a bankrupt, was yet announced as the "Champion of Christianity, the well-known controversialist against Mr Robert Owen, and the Socialists, the Mormons, and the Secularists." A four nights' debate was arranged to take place at Oldham in June in the Working Men's Hall.

The meagre reports show nothing of any interest beyond the fact that on each evening there were enormous audiences. Mr Bradlaugh had another four nights' debate with Dr Brindley at

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never attended a discussion where so little gentlemanly conduct was exhibited, or so much said that was vile and unworthy, especially from one professing to be a preacher and a practiser of Christ's teachings."

A letter in my possession, written to a friend by one of the audience immediately after the second night, gives a private view of the debate. He writes: "The debate was very hot last night; the excitement was great. Mr Grant's friends were disgusted with his conduct. At one time, when Mr Bradlaugh was speaking, Mr Grant put out his tongue at Mr Bradlaugh, and the audience cried 'Shame' to Mr Grant for his conduct."

Norwich a few months later, but this did not appear to be worth reporting at all. Dr Brindley was not by any means so clever as Mr Grant, nor did he use quite such scandalous language upon the public platform and to his adversary's face, although, if rumour did not belie him, he was more unrestrained both as to matter and manner when relieved of his antagonist's presence.* One thing at least he and Mr Grant had in common—an overwhelming antagonism to Mr Bradlaugh. This feeling led each man into continuous hostile acts, overt or covert, each according to his temperament and opportunity. Dr Brindley's rage amounted to fever heat when Mr Bradlaugh became candidate for Northampton, and in that town he frantically used every endeavour to hinder his return. When Mr Bradlaugh determined to go to America in 1873, Dr Brindley's feelings quite overpowered him, and he rushed after his enemy to New York, with, I suppose, some sort of idea of hunting down the wicked Atheist, though really, looking back on the past, it is difficult to see that the poor creature could have had any clear ideas as to what he was going to do to Mr Bradlaugh when he reached America. He must have been carried away by some sort of wild frenzy, which amounted to insanity. My father's first lecture upon the Republican Movement in England, at the Steinway Hall, New York, proved to be an immense success, and at its close Dr Brindley offered some opposition. By his language he aroused such a storm of hisses and uproar, that Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to interpose on his behalf, which he did by appealing to the audience "to let the gentleman who represents the aristocracy and the Church of England go on." This convulsed the assembly, who—in laughter and amusement—consented to hear the rev. gentleman out. Four days later Dr Brindley publicly answered Mr Bradlaugh at the Cooper Institute, and the *Germantown Chronicle* (Philadelphia) gives the following amusing account of the proceedings:—

"Brindley's purpose in life is to go for Bradlaugh hammer and tongs, and he has actually paid his way out here, cabin passage, to hunt up and show up and finally shut up the six foot leader of the English Radicals. He is determined to keep on after Bradlaugh hot foot, and wherever that eminent individual leaves a trace of his presence, there will the indefatigable Brindley be, with his orthodox whitewash brush, to wipe

* This, I gather, did not apply to his attitude to Mr Bradlaugh only.

out the name and memory of his Freethinking countryman. Dr Brindley is an interesting orator, and the most simple-minded Briton that has presented himself at the Cooper Institute for some time. His voice is as funny as a Punch and Judy's, and when the audience of last night roared with laughter, it was impossible to tell whether it was at what Brindley had said, or Brindley's method and voice in saying it. Some of the audience were beery, and disposed to ask beery questions. The speaker said England was full of wealth, and that labour was never so well paid. Everybody was happy, and Bradlaugh was an incendiary, a story-teller, a nuisance, who would make a rumpus and make everybody miserable, even in the Garden of Eden. 'Were you ever in a casual ward?' asked a smudgy fellow in the back of the hall. 'No,' answered the bold Brindley, 'but if you were there now it would save the police trouble.' And so he replied to other impertinent questions, until he made the impression that he was not quite such a fool as he looked. He said Bradlaugh was an Atheist, whose belief is that 'brain power is the only soul in man,' and that as he was played out in England he had come over here to air his theories, and pick up pennies. 'You know where Cheshire is?' said Brindley, 'Cheshire, where the cheese is made,' and Brindley was about to tell a story on this head, when a donkey at the back end of the hall cried out, 'There ain't no cheese made there now. It's all done in Duchess county.' No telling what a good thing this fellow spoiled by his remark. Bradlaugh, anyhow, was scalped and vivisected, and Brindley took his tomahawk and himself away soon after."

But the farce was to end in a tragedy. Overcome by chagrin and mortification, Dr Brindley died within a month of his appearance on the Steinway Hall platform. He died in New York in poverty and neglect, and was buried in a pauper's grave. The *Chicago Times*, alluding to the terms of Mr Bradlaugh's appeal to the New York audience to give Dr Brindley a hearing, said that the rev. gentleman was "slain by satire." "Since Keats, according to Byron, was snuffed out by a single article, there has been no parallel except this of a human creature snuffed out by a single sentence."

Following quickly upon the heels of the debate at Oldham with Dr Brindley came one with the Rev. Joseph Baylee, D.D., Principal of St Aidan's College, Birkenhead. Dr Baylee himself proposed the conditions on which alone he would consent to discuss. These conditions threw the entire trouble and expense of the three nights' discussion upon Mr Bradlaugh's committee. They provided that Dr Baylee and his friends might open and conclude

the proceedings with prayer, and they also provided that the debate should consist of questions and categorical answers with no speeches whatever on either side. Those who recall Mr Bradlaugh's marvellous rapidity of thought, and the way in which he could instantly grasp and reason out a position, will see that this condition would certainly be no disadvantage to my father. The audiences, as usual, crowded the hall, and listened to both speakers with the utmost attention. This discussion, which was reported at length and published in pamphlet form,* has had a very wide circulation. It is in many respects a remarkable debate; but as it is easily obtainable, I will leave it to speak for itself, more especially as, from its peculiar form of question and answer, it does not lend itself conveniently to quotation.

Were it possible it would be tedious to follow Mr Bradlaugh through the hundreds of lectures which he delivered during these ten years, but it will be interesting, and will give us a clearer idea of the turmoil and work of his life, to note some of the difficulties he had to meet thirty or so years ago. Nowadays, as soon as Parliament rises nearly every member of the House of Commons thinks himself called upon to go and air his views throughout the length and breadth of the country; then, public speaking was much more uncommon, and Freethought lectures in especial were few and far between. To-day, almost every town of any size has its own Freethought speakers, and speakers come to it with more or less frequency from adjoining districts and from London. Little difficulties create great stir and excitement now: then, great difficulties came almost as a matter of course. But even when difficulties were frequent and not altogether unexpected, that did not make them the easier to endure. A brick-bat which reaches its aim hurts just as much whether it is one out of many thrown or just one thrown by itself.

At Wigan, in October 1860, my father went to deliver two lectures in the Commercial Hall. The conduct of the people in this town was so disgraceful, that he said in bitter jest that if he did much more of this "extended propaganda" he should require to be insured against accident to life and limb.

"I may be wrong," he wrote,† "but I shall never be convinced

* God, Man, and the Bible. Three nights' discussion with the Rev. Dr Baylee.

† *National Reformer*, October 20. 1860.

of my error by a mob of true believers yelling at my heels like mad dogs, under the leadership of a pious rector's trusty subordinate, or hammering at the door of my lecture room under the direction of an infuriated Church parson. I object that in the nineteenth century it is hardly to be tolerated that a bigot priest shall use his influence with the proprietor of the hotel where I am staying, in order to 'get that devil kicked out into the street' after half-past ten at night. I do not admit the right of a rich Church dignitary's secretary to avoid the payment of his threepence at the door by jumping through a window, especially when I or my friends have to pay for the broken glass and sash frame. True, all these things and worse happened at Wigan."

There had been no Freethought lectures in Wigan for upwards of twenty years; the clergy had had it all their own way there undisturbed. They determined to oppose the wicked Iconoclast in every way, and began by engaging the largest hall available and advertising the same subjects as those announced for the Freethought platform. Had they contented themselves with this form of opposition, all would have been well, but their zeal outran discretion, carrying with it their manners and all appearance of decency and decorum. My father, continuing his account of this affair, said—

"Being unknown in Wigan, except by hearsay, I expected therefore but a moderate audience. I was in this respect agreeably disappointed. The hall was inconveniently crowded, and many remained outside in the square, unable to obtain admittance. No friend was known to me who could or would officiate as chairman, and I therefore appealed to the meeting to elect their own president. No response being made to this, I intimated my intention of proceeding without one. This the Christians did not seem to relish, and therefore elected a gentleman named [the Rev. T.] Dalton to the chair, who was very tolerable, except that he had eccentric views of a chairman's duty, and slightly shortened my time, while he also took a few minutes every now and then for himself to refute my objections to the Bible."

With the exception of the excitable and somewhat unmannerly behaviour of some of the clergymen present, this meeting passed off without any serious disturbance, and was not unfairly reported by the *Wigan Observer*, which described "Mr Iconoclast" as "a well-made and healthy looking man, apparently not more than

thirty years of age. He possesses great fluency of speech, and is evidently well posted up in the subject of his addresses. Of assurance he has no lack; and we scarcely think it would be possible to put a question to him to which he had not an answer ready—good, bad, or indifferent."

By the following evening the temper of the Wiganites had become—what shall I say? More Christian? Mr Bradlaugh, when he arrived at the hall, "found it crowded to excess, and in addition many hundreds outside unable to gain admittance. My name," he says, "was the subject of loud and hostile comment, several pious Christians in choice Billingsgate intimating that they would teach me a lesson. As on the previous evening, I requested the religious body to elect a chairman, and Mr Thomas Stuart was voted to the chair. Of this gentleman I must say that he was courteous, generous, and manly, and by his kindly conduct compelled my respect and admiration. Previous to my lecture the majority of those present hooted and yelled with a vigour which, if it betokened healthy lungs, did not vouch so well for a healthy brain; and I commenced my address amidst a terrific din. Each window was besieged, and panes of glass were dashed out in mere reckless wantonness, while at the same time a constant hammering was kept up at the main door. As this showed no prospect of cessation, I went myself to the door, and, to my disgust, found that the disturbance was being fostered and encouraged by a clergyman * of the Church of England, who wished to gain admittance. I told him loss of life might follow any attempt to enter the room in its present overcrowded state. His answer was that he knew there was plenty of room, and would come in. To prevent worse strife I admitted him, and by dint of main strength and liberal use of my right arm repelled the others, closed the doors, and returned to the platform. I had, however, at the doors received one blow in the ribs, which, coupled with the extraordinary exertions required to keep the meeting in check, fairly tired me out in about an hour. Several times, when any crash betokened a new breach in either door or window, the whole of the audience toward the end of the room jumped up, and I had literally to keep them down by dint of energetic lung power. Towards the conclusion of the lecture, the secretary of the rector forced his

* The Rev. W. T. Whitehead.

way bodily through a window, and I confess I felt a strong inclination to go to that end of the room and pitch him back through the same aperture. If he had intended a riot, he could not have acted more riotously. Some limestone was thrown in at another window, and a little water was poured through the ventilators by some persons who had gained possession of the roof. This caused some merriment, which turned to alarm when an arm and hand waving a dirty rag appeared through a little hole in the centre of the ceiling. One man in a wideawake then jumped upon one of the forms, and excitedly shouted to me, 'See, the devil has come for you!' After the lecture, I received in the confusion several blows, but none of importance. When I quitted the building one well-dressed man asked me, 'Do you not expect God to strike you dead, and don't you deserve that the people should serve you out for your blasphemy?' Two spat in my face."

Being concerned for the fate of the hotel if he carried back with him the excited crowds which dogged his heels, Mr Bradlaugh's first impulse was to avoid it; but remembering that he had left all his money there, he contrived to escape his pursuers, and reached the hotel unaccompanied, except by one friend. Notwithstanding that there was not "the slightest disturbance at the hotel, the landlady wished me at once to leave the house. I appealed to her hospitality in vain. I next stood on my legal rights, went to my bedroom, locked the door, retired to bed, and tried to dream that Wigan was a model Agapemone."

Before the dispersal of the meeting, and while the Rev. W. T. Whitehead was asking the audience to teach Mr Bradlaugh a lesson which should prevent him coming again, whether intentionally or not, the gas was turned off, so that the hundreds of persons in the room, already in confusion, were placed in great danger of losing their lives. Fortunately, the gas was relighted before any serious consequences had resulted.

About a month later Mr Bradlaugh was again speaking at Wigan. The Mayor had threatened to lock him up, but, as might be expected, the threat was an empty one. The *Wigan Examiner* entreated the public not to attend the lectures, but without result. On the first evening a form was set aside for the accommodation of the clergy, but it remained vacant. After the meeting (which had been a fairly orderly one) Mr Bradlaugh relates how he was followed to

his lodgings "by a mob who had not been present at the lecture, and who yelled and shouted in real collier fashion. The *Examiner* says they intended to 'purr' me.* An invitation on my part to any two of them to settle the matter with me in approved pugilistic fashion produced a temporary lull, under cover of which shelter was gained from the storm of hooting and howling which soon broke out anew with redoubled vigour. On the second evening the Christian mob outside were even more discourteous." Some friends † who had offered Mr Bradlaugh the hospitality of their roof, so that he might not again suffer the treatment he had received at the Victoria Hotel on the former occasion, were threatened and annoyed in a most disgraceful manner, besides being hissed and hooted on entering the lecture hall. Stones were thrown at Mr Bradlaugh and Mr John Watts as they went in, but during the lecture all was orderly. At the end, however, Mr Hutchings, a Nonconformist and the sub-editor of the *Examiner*, amidst considerable noise and confusion, entered with the Rev. J. Davis and other friends, to contradict what Mr Bradlaugh had said on the previous night. After some animated discussion, it was arranged that a set two nights' debate should be held between them. Mr Bradlaugh then left the hall, and was immediately surrounded by a noisy crew.

"I walked slowly home," said my father. "At last, in a narrow court, one fellow kicked me in the back part of my thigh. I turned quickly round, and invited an attempt at repetition, promising prepayment in a good knock-down for the kicker; and the whole pack of yelping religionists turned tail. Men and women turned out of their houses half-dressed, and when the name 'Iconoclast' passed from one to the other, the adjectives attached to it sufficiently proved that humanising influences were sorely needed to soften the conversational exuberance of the natives of Wigan."

Those who were not sufficiently brave to come near enough to give a kick at Mr Bradlaugh's back hurled bricks at him, but cowardice unnerved them and prevented them from taking a good aim, so that although his hat was damaged, he himself was unhurt. Mr and Mrs Johnson courageously insisted upon walking

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* C. Bradlaugh in the *National Reformer* for December 1st, 1860.

† Mr and Mrs Johnson of Wigan.

by his side, and the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus thought it no shame to throw stones at a woman: here, their victim being weaker, their courage was accordingly greater and their aim straighter. But if the people acted so merely from ignorance and narrowness, it is not so easy to explain the malevolent attitude of certain local journals to my father. Week after week, the *Wigan Examiner* persisted in the attack, being especially virulent in its onslaught upon his personal character. It reprinted Mr Packer's mendacious letter to Brewin Grant, and the following extract prefacing the letter will serve to show how great was the desire of the editor to keep the commandments of his Deity, and not to bear false witness :—

"Born in the classic region of Bethnal Green, he [Mr Bradlaugh] devoted his juvenile faculties to the advocacy of teetotalism, but finding that this theme did not afford sufficient scope for his genius, he formed (*sic*) himself to a select band of reformers who met in an upper room or garret in the neighbourhood. Being a fluent speaker, he was soon exalted to the dignity of an apostle in his new vocation, and finding the work in every respect much more congenial to his mind than weaving, he broke loose from all restraint, and went into the new business with energy."

The debate between Mr Hutchings and Mr Bradlaugh was finally arranged for the 4th and 5th February (1861). On his way to the hall on the first evening, my father received "one evidence of Christianity in the shape of a bag of flour;" this was, of course, intended to soil his clothes, but "fortunately it was flung with too great violence, and after crushing the side of another new hat from Mr Hipwell,* covered the pavement instead of myself. I shall need a special fund for hats," wrote Mr Bradlaugh, "if I visit Wigan often." On his return from the debate, although he was followed by a large crowd of men and boys, all hooting was quickly suppressed, and was, in fact, attempted only by a very few. On his first visit to Wigan he had "retired to rest, not only without friends to bid me good-night, but with many a score of loud-tongued, rough lads and men bidding me, in phraseology startling and effective, everything but so kindly a farewell;" † but during the three months which

* A Freethinking hatter of Bradford.

† C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, February 16, 1861.

had elapsed since Mr Bradlaugh's earliest visit to this Lancashire mining town public feeling had considerably changed and modified; and in the evening, the house where he was staying "was crowded out," he tells us, "with rough but honest earnest men and women, who insisted, one and all, in gripping my hand in friendliness, and wishing me good speed in my work. The change was so great that a tear mounted to my eye despite myself." His was always the same sensitive nature; he was ever moved to the heart by a sign of true sympathy or real affection. Persecution found him stern and unflinching, hypocrisy found him severe and unforgiving, but kindness or affection instantly touched the fountain of his gratitude and his tenderness.

Out of this debate, which contains nothing particularly noteworthy,* arose a lawsuit. The reporter, a person named Stephenson M. Struthers, after having sold "the transcript" to Mr Bradlaugh at 8d. per folio, sold a second copy of his notes to Mr William Heaton, on behalf of Mr Hutchings' Committee, for 3 guineas. This my father did not discover until he had used some of the copy, and paid Struthers £5 on account. He then refused to pay the balance (£11, 16s.), and for this the shorthand-writer sued him. Mr Bradlaugh expressed his willingness to pay for the labour involved in making a copy; but he objected to pay for the *sole* copy when he had not received that for which he had contracted. The suit came on in the Wigan County Court, before J. S. T. Greene, Esq., on April 11th (1861). After the case for the plaintiff was closed, Mr Bradlaugh entered the witness-box to be sworn—at that time the only form under which he could give evidence. Mr Mayhew (for the plaintiff), after some preamble as to not desiring to be offensive, asked "with regret" if Mr Bradlaugh believed "in the religious obligations of an oath?"

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* The following short passage from this debate may serve as an example of the incisive eloquence of which my father was capable at the age of eight-and-twenty:—

"Men say, 'I believe. Believe in what? 'I believe' is the prostration of the intellect before the unknown—not an exertion of the intellect to grasp the knowable. Men who have taught in Sunday Schools, and children who have been taught there, men worshipping in our churches—men following men in this way have their ideas made for them, fitted on to them like their clothes; and, like the parrot in its gilded cage, they say 'I believe,' because they have been taught to say it, and not because they have a vital faith when they do say it."

Mr Bradlaugh objected to answer any question until he was sworn. The Judge would not allow the objection; and after a considerable interchange of opinion and question and answer between the Judge and Mr Bradlaugh, in which the latter explicitly stated his readiness to be sworn, he asked to be allowed to affirm. This the Judge refused to permit. And this is how the episode ended:—

The JUDGE: Only give me a direct answer.

Mr BRADLAUGH: I am not answering your question at all. I have objected on two grounds, both of which your Honour has overruled, that I am not bound to answer the question.

The JUDGE: If you put it in that way, I should be sorry to exercise any power that I believe I possess according to law. You won't answer the question?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that I am not bound to answer any question that will criminate myself.

The JUDGE: You will not answer my question. Do you believe in the existence of a supreme God?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that the answer, if in the negative, would subject me to a criminal prosecution.

The JUDGE: Do you believe in a state of future rewards and punishments?

Mr BRADLAUGH: I object that—

The JUDGE: Then I shall not permit you to give evidence at all; and I think you escape very well in not being sent to gaol.

The Judge, having thus taken advantage of his magisterial position to insult a defenceless man as well as to refuse his evidence, proceeded with consummate injustice to sum it up as an "undefended case," and gave a verdict for the plaintiff for the full amount. After the case was over, Mr William Heaton wrote to Mr Bradlaugh denying a material point in Mr Struthers' sworn evidence as to what had occurred between them. Thus did the laws of Christian England treat an Atheist as outlaw, and in the name of justice deal out injustice in favour of a man who, as his fellow Christian stated, had spoken falsely under his oath in the witness-box.

Mr Hutchings himself felt the disgrace of this so keenly that he wrote expressing his desire to co-operate in a public movement in Wigan in favour of Sir John Trelawny's Affirmation Bill. "I do feel strongly," he said, "that you were most wrongfully and iniquitously deprived of the opportunity of defending your

cause, and this I feel the more strongly that it was done in strict conformity with English law."

Two other polemical encounters arose directly out of the Wigan lectures; these were both held with the Rev. Woodville Woodman, a Swedenborgian divine. The first, at Wigan, upon the "Existence of God," continued over four nights; the second, upon the "Divine Revelation of the Bible," also a four nights' debate, was held at Ashton in the autumn of the same year.

Mr Bradlaugh held quite a number of theological discussions about this time. In addition to those I have already mentioned with the Rev. Brewin Grant, Dr Brindley, Dr Baylee, Mr Hutchings, and the Rev. Woodville Woodman, a controversial correspondence between himself and the Rev. Thomas Lawson, a Baptist minister of Bacup, arose out of some lectures delivered by Mr Bradlaugh in Newchurch in October 1860. It was originally intended to hold a set debate upon the subject "Has Man a Soul?" but no hall could be obtained in Bacup for the purposes of the discussion. The correspondence was therefore published in the *National Reformer* during the spring of the following year. Then a debate upon the credibility of the Gospels was arranged between Mr Bradlaugh and the Rev. J. H. Rutherford, and was held in Liverpool in October 1860; another upon "What does the Bible teach about God?" was held with Mr Mackie in Warrington in April 1861; and a few months later my father also debated for two nights at Birmingham with Mr Robert Mahalm, a representative of the Irish Church Mission in that town.

In the middle of July (1860) he was lecturing for the first time in Norwich. St Andrew's Hall was taken, and the proceeds of the lecture were to go to Garibaldi; but this was one of the places where religious prejudice was strong, and where therefore the receipts did not equal the expenditure. On the second evening Mr Bradlaugh delivered an open-air address at Chapel Field, when "yells, hisses, abuse, a little mud, and a few stones formed the chorus and finale of the entertainment." Nothing daunted, in September he went to Norwich again, and the orderly behaviour of his audience formed a marked contrast to their previous conduct. By November, when he once more visited Norwich, the Freethinkers there had found themselves strong enough to hire a commodious chapel for the winter months, substituting a piano for the communion table. From Norwich his steps turned

naturally to Yarmouth, where he was much amused by hearing the town crier follow up his "Oyez! Oyez!" by the announcement that "the cel-e-bra-ted I-con-o-clast" had arrived.

Only a few weeks elapsed before Mr Bradlaugh again went to Norwich and Yarmouth. He went the week immediately before Christmas, and had an eight hours' journey to get there, with the driving snow coming through "the Eastern Counties Railway Company's patent [3rd class] ventilating carriages," which seemed constructed with the express object of making "perfectly clear to the unfortunate passengers the criminality of their poverty." This, his fourth visit to Norwich, was a great success, and the lectures at Yarmouth were also more favourably listened to. By January he found his audiences increasing at Norwich, and the interest perceptibly growing, but at Yarmouth he received a check. There had been much commotion in the local official circles at the repeated visits of the Atheist lecturer, and pressure was used on all sides, so that only a small sale room in a back street could be hired for the lectures. The room was soon overcrowded; Mr Bradlaugh had to be his own chairman, and on going home walked to the music of yells and hootings. This display of intolerance roused up some of the more thoughtful inhabitants, and the theatre was obtained for the following night, when, despite the necessarily brief notice, a large audience—including many ladies—assembled to hear the lecture. A Mr Fletcher was elected to the chair, the proceedings were orderly throughout, and Mr Bradlaugh walked home unmolested.

The matter, however, was not to end here. Both the Yarmouth clergy (or at least *one* Yarmouth clergyman, the Rev. E. Neville) and magistrates expressed their determination that the lectures must be put down, and so Mr Bradlaugh received information that proceedings were to be taken against him for blasphemy. The *Norfolk News* and *Yarmouth Independent* for March 23rd reported a meeting of magistrates at which the subject of "Iconoclast's" visits was under discussion, the letting of the theatre to him was severely commented upon, and the persons responsible for the letting held up to public odium. Not one of the nine or ten magistrates present could be found to say a word on behalf of the Atheist; and the speeches of the Mayor, Mr S. Nightingale, and one other of the magistrates, Mr Hammond, from which I quote, are typical of the attitude of the rest:—

"He [the Mayor] had attended the bench that morning (Tuesday, March 19) because he had observed bills circulated in the town setting forth that 'that wretched man calling himself "Iconoclast"'* intended to give lectures again at the theatre. He really thought 'Iconoclast' was doing a great deal of mischief in the minds of the younger part of the community, and he thought they ought to take some steps to prevent it. He some time ago called the attention of their clerk to the subject, who had proceeded to look into the law of the case. It seemed monstrous to him that a man should be allowed to utter blasphemy as 'Iconoclast' was doing and for them not to interfere. . . . . He wished the magistrates to take some steps for putting a stop to these lectures."

The Mayor found an ardent supporter in Mr Hammond, who

"thought the thanks of the town were due to His Worship for bringing the subject before the notice of the bench. He had thought of it yesterday himself, and spoken to one or two of the magistrates on the matter, and he also intended to call on the Mayor about it, had he not gone into it. It was evident that Mr Sidney [the lessee of the theatre]—at least he (Mr Hammond) thought—could not know what he was letting the theatre for. He (Mr Hammond) was part proprietor of the theatre himself; but rather than take any part of the profits arising out of such a purpose, he would sooner see it shut up for twenty years. If no other magistrate would do it, he would move that Mr Sidney be refused his licence next year, should these diabolical practices be allowed at the theatre. He perceived from the large bill issued that the front boxes were to be 6d., the upper boxes 4d., the pit 3d., and the gallery 2d.; and it must be evident to the magistrates that the thing must be disreputable indeed to have a place like the theatre let in that way—to have the public mind poisoned by a repetition of these lectures, perhaps by-and-by at 2d. each, as an inducement to lead the young away that they might hear the Holy Scriptures set at nought. He felt very sensitive on the point, and so far as his humble assistance went, he would give it to put a stop to these nefarious practices. He felt personally obliged to the Mayor for bringing forward the subject that morning, and he hoped every magistrate on the bench would lend a helping hand towards putting a stop to the nuisance. (Applause.)"

At the conclusion of the proceedings, Mr Nightingale (the Mayor) observed "that he felt determined to put a stop to these exhibitions."†

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* The Mayor's exact words.

† The *Norfolk News* prefaces its account by saying: "For some months past considerable excitement has been caused amongst the religious community of the town by the delivery of lectures tending to subvert the fundamental principles of Christianity by a Freethinker under the *soubriquet* of 'Iconoclast.' We have attended none of these lectures ourselves, but,

In a leaderette the local journal commented strongly on the course proposed by the wise and learned Dogberries; and when Mr Bradlaugh placarded Yarmouth with an address to the magistrates accepting the gauntlet thus thrown down, and expressing his resolve to lecture within their jurisdiction, it spoke of the "spirited reply" which he had addressed to his would-be persecutors. The upshot of all this was that my father immediately determined to devote a special week to East Anglia, commencing with two nights at Yarmouth.

"On my arrival at Yarmouth," he wrote, "I found myself literally hunted from room to room. The theatre being closed against me, the Masonic Hall was taken, but the mayor personally waited upon the proprietor, and the 'screw' being put on I was also deprived of this room. I was determined not to be beaten, and therefore hired a large bleaching-ground in which to deliver an open-air address." There were present about 1000 persons, "including at least one magistrate and several police officers," and it may be noted as most significant that the action of the magistrates did not meet with popular favour, that the meeting concluded with cheers for Mr Bradlaugh and for the owner of the ground. On the following evening the audience was largely increased, and numbered at least 5000 persons, who were orderly and attentive throughout. Outside the meeting there was stone-throwing, principally by boys. One of the stones struck my mother, who, identifying the lad who threw it, threatened to give him into custody. At which the lad answered, "Oh, please, mum, you cannot; the police have told us to make all the noise, and throw as many stones as we can." This, we will hope, was a liberal interpretation of the police instructions, but at least it shows very strongly that the lads had reason to expect the police to look very leniently upon their escapades. The magisterial bluster ended in bluster, and the only result to Yarmouth from a Christian standpoint was a pamphlet against "Infidelity" written by a Charles Houchen, and whether that can be set down to the credit of

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judging from what we have heard, we should think that 'Iconoclast' was a gifted man so far as regards his elocutionary powers. He has been combated on his own platform, denounced from various pulpits in the town, and at length a determined effort seems to have been made to shut him out from all the places in the town in which a public meeting could be held."

Christianity we must leave it to the followers of that creed to judge. Mr Houchen said—

"It has been asked what is the real object of Iconoclast going from place to place, and coming to Yarmouth from time to time, and the answer has been money, money. Now, I ask the reader what think you, whoever you be, suppose Iconoclast himself was guaranteed to be better paid than he now is for travelling from place to place, do you not think he would turn round?"

To this my father rejoined that "the whole amount of Iconoclast's receipts from Yarmouth has not equalled his payments for board, lodging, and printing in that eastern seaport; that he has journeyed to and fro at his own cost; and that if his object 'has been money, money,' he has suffered grievous disappointment, and this not because the audiences have been small, but because of that 'rarity of Christian charity' which shut him out of theatre aud lecture-hall after each had been duly hired, and prompted policemen to connive at stone-throwing when directed against an Infidel lecturer."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DEVONPORT CASE, 1861.

In the early sixties the Freethinkers of Plymouth were a fairly active body; their hall, the "Free Institute," in Buckland Street, they owed to the liberality of one of their members, Mr Johns, and there were some tolerably energetic spirits to carry on the work. At that time Mr George J. Holyoake was a great favourite in the Western towns, and Mr Bradlaugh was fast winning his way. He was gaining public popularity and private friendships on all sides, when an incident occurred which brought out some of his most striking characteristics and rivetted some of these friendships with links of steel.

He had arranged to lecture at Plymouth for five days during the first week in December 1860. The first three and the last of these lectures were given in the Free Institute; but that for the Thursday was announced to be given in Devonport Park. At the appointed time a considerable number of people had assembled, and Mr Bradlaugh was just about to address them when he was accosted by the Superintendent of the Devonport Police, who stated that he was authorised by the Town Council to prevent such lectures, and "all such proceedings in a place created alone for the recreation of the public." Mr Bradlaugh pointed out that the Temperance advocates used the Park; why should not he? Mr Edwards, the Police Superintendent, not only refused to argue the matter, but said further that if Mr Bradlaugh persisted in his lecture he should use measures to eject him from the Park. There was a little more talk, during which Mr Bradlaugh reflected that he was by no means certain as to what were his rights in the Park; and in the end he decided not to lecture there that evening. To use his own words, he "submitted, but with a determination to do better at some future time." Mr John Williamson (now in Colorado), writing at the time, says: "On Monday, the 3rd, Icono-

clast arrived by the 5 p.m. train, very much fatigued, and looking ill; he had to go to bed for a couple of hours before lecturing . . . . during his stay he suffered much from neuralgia, which interfered with his rest by night." These few words as to the state of my father's health will give us some idea of the strain upon him in all these stormy scenes, added to the anxiety of earning his living. A comparison of dates will show that many of these episodes ran concurrently, although I am obliged to tell them separately for the sake of clearness. I take these incidents in order of their origin; but while one was passing through its different stages others began and ended. In addition to these more important struggles, there was also many a small matter which as yet I have left untouched. All this must be borne in mind by readers of these pages who wish to get a clear idea of Mr Bradlaugh's life. My pen, unfortunately, can only set down one thing at a time, though careful reading can fill in the picture.

The prohibition at Devonport Park was merely a sort of prologue; the real drama was to come, and the first act was played exactly three months later. Mr Bradlaugh had, as he said, determined "to do better at some future time;" with this end in view he set aside a fortnight early in March, to be devoted to the conquest of Plymouth, and the campaign opened on Sunday the 3rd.

A field known as the "Parson's Field," or "Parsonage Field," adjoining Devonport Park, was hired in February for "two lectures by a representative of the Plymouth and Devonport Secular Society," for the first two Sundays in March. Accordingly, about half-past two on the afternoon of Sunday the 3rd, Mr Bradlaugh went thither accompanied by two friends, Mr Steed and Mr John Williamson. He took his place upon a gravel heap, and was just about to speak, when he was informed that the police were coming into the field, and on looking round he saw Mr Edwards (the Superintendent), Mr Inspector Bryant, and several constables. Mr Edwards forbade him to proceed with his lecture, saying that he had authority to remove him from the field. Mr Bradlaugh answered that he had given way in Devonport Park because he was then uncertain as to his rights; now the Superintendent had no right to interfere; he had an agreement with the owner of the field; he was the tenant, and there he should remain unless he was removed by force. He thereupon turned to

the audience and commenced his lecture with these words: "Friends, I am about to address you on the Bible——." His speech was here brought to an abrupt conclusion, for, acting under the orders of the Superintendent, he was seized by six policemen,* of whom he said:—

"Two attended to each arm, the remaining two devoting themselves to the rear of my person. One, D. 19, I should think had served an apprenticeship at garrotting, by the peculiar manner in which he handled my neck. Our friends around were naturally indignant, so that I had the threefold task to perform of pacifying my friends to prevent a breach of the peace, of keeping my own temper, and yet of exerting my own physical strength sufficiently to show the police that I would not permit a continuance of excessive violence. In fact, I was obliged to explain that I possessed the will to knock one or two of them down, and the ability to enforce that will, before I could get anything like reasonable treatment."

D. 19 in particular made himself very objectionable; twice Mr Bradlaugh asked him to remove his hand from the inside of his collar, but D. 19 would not, so at length he had to shake him off. When the six policemen, aided by their Superintendent and Inspector, succeeded in getting Mr Bradlaugh out of the field, Inspector Bryant told him to go about his business. He replied, "My business here to-day is to lecture; if you let me go, I shall go back to the field." The Superintendent said that in that case he would take him to the Station-house. Mr Bradlaugh, who was all this time bareheaded in the keen air of early March, asked for his hat. Mr Williamson stepped forward to hand it to him, but was pushed roughly aside by the police, and Mr Bradlaugh did not get his hat till later.

At the Police Station he was detained for some time whilst the question of bail was under discussion. This was twice refused, once on the ground that there was no power to accept bail on a Sunday; and after being subjected to the indignity of being searched, Mr Bradlaugh was taken into an underground

* It is not without interest to note the number of police that were always employed when there was any question of forcibly removing Mr Bradlaugh. The Devonport superintendent contented himself with six. Twenty years later the House of Commons employed fourteen—at least, I am told that it was eleven policemen and three messengers.

stone cell, without fire, light, chair, or stool. In the cell there was "a straw palliasse, with a strange looking rug and one sheet." This cell, it afterwards transpired, had not been used for two years. In this dungeon-like place he was kept for four and a-half hours, from half-past four until nine o'clock on an evening in the beginning of March. At this hour the Superintendent allowed him the luxury of a stone corridor in which there was a fire; he was placed here in charge of a policemen, and also allowed the company of Mr Steer, a Freethinker, who had attended the meeting and had been taken into custody on a charge of assaulting Mr Edwards while "in the execution of his duty." Mr Bradlaugh was at the outset charged with inciting to a breach of the peace, but on Monday was also further charged with an assault upon Mr Edwards. In the morning he and Mr Steer were brought up, like felons, through a trap-door into the prisoner's dock. Their appearance in court was greeted with a hearty burst of cheering, which the magistrates (of whom there were not less than nine upon the bench) tried in vain to suppress. The Court was very full, and such a great crowd had assembled outside the Guildhall, previous to the opening of the doors, that the Mayor (J. W. W. Ryder, Esq.) decided that the Court ordinarily used for police business was too small, and that the case should be heard in the large hall. The case was opened by Mr Little, of the firm of Messrs Little and Woolcombe, on behalf of the plaintiff, Mr Superintendent Edwards. After he had recited the charges, he said he was instructed by the magnanimous Edwards that he had no desire "to press strongly against the parties, if they would make a promise not again to make an attack upon public morals." Once or twice during the progress of the case, Mr Bradlaugh came into collision with Mr Bone, the magistrate's clerk, but on the whole he carried his points fairly easily. The case lasted the whole day right into the evening, and was adjourned to Friday the 8th to give Mr Bradlaugh time to procure evidence. He and Mr Steer were bound over in their own recognizances of £20 each.

The Court was again crowded on Friday, every part of the building being crammed, and the spectators included several dissenting ministers of various denominations. When Mr Bradlaugh made his appearance in the dock he was, as before, greeted with tremendous and repeated cheering. The magistrate's clerk got

quite excited, and called out again and again, "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves." The Mayor commanded the police to keep their eyes on the persons guilty of such manifestations, and to take them into custody if necessary. During the course of the proceedings he gave this order several times in one form or another, and succeeded in provoking a considerable burst of laughter, as occasionally nearly every person in Court was cheering or hissing according to his sentiments, and the Superintendent could hardly have afforded six constables to capture each disturber. However, at my father's request, his friends ceased to cheer. The charge against Mr Bradlaugh was dismissed without hearing the whole of the evidence for the defence.* The magistrates found Mr Steer guilty, but said that they did not consider the assault to have been of a severe character, and therefore fined him only 5s. and costs, not to include attorney's costs. Of course, the question of religious belief was

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* The descriptions of Mr Bradlaugh which appeared in some of the Devonshire papers, and the opinions expressed in them, are rather amusing to read now, so many years after they were written. The *Devonport Telegraph* said that Mr Bradlaugh was twenty-eight years of age, and his cross-examinations were such "as would have done credit to an able barrister."

The *Western Morning News* said that he was "apparently about thirty-four years of age, and 5 ft. 10 ins. in height, is stoutly built, of a sallow complexion, and his countenance is adorned with neither whiskers nor moustache. He possesses intelligent features, and a commanding forehead, and he wears his hair brushed behind his ears. . . . . His examination of the witnesses was conducted with facility and with much regularity. . . . . He sustained his equanimity of temper in an admirable manner."

The *Devonport Independent*, referring to the presence in Court of the various dissenting ministers and others, said "they could not help admiring his [Mr Bradlaugh's] remarkable precision, his calm and collected demeanour, and the ability with which he 'conducted his own case' as well as that of his friend. . . . . He is about twenty-eight years of age, slight, and of a fair complexion, above the ordinary height, and bearing the impress of an intelligent countenance."

The *Plymouth Mail* thought "the infidel lecturer Bradlaugh and his friend Steer got off easily."

The *Western Daily Mercury* gave very full reports of the trial, and under the heading "Scandala Magnata" wrote a condemnation of the prosecution. It also inserted a number of letters on both sides: one, from "an old subscriber," who described himself as "the father of a family and lover of the truths of Scripture," wished that the inhabitants had "routed the wicked man Bradlaugh out of the neighbourhood," and expressed a desire that the Government should punish the dockyard men who co-operated with Bradlaugh.

raised on the swearing of the witnesses for the defence, but the only two who were questioned happened to be religious persons—one, indeed, was an "Independent Nonconformist," who was on his way to chapel, and was attracted to the field by the crowd and the presence of the police. On the following day (March 9th) notices were served by the authorities, representing the War Department in Devonport, on the Plymouth Freethinkers and others concerned, forbidding the use of the Park for the purpose of lectures; Mr Bradlaugh therefore lectured on Sunday* in the Free Institute, while he turned over in his mind a plan for the following Sunday (17th). He announced to his audience that he intended to lecture "very near the Park," but the precise spot would not be made known until it was too late for the police to interfere.

Bills were posted to the following effect:—

"In consequence of advice received, 'Iconoclast' will deliver an open-air address on Sunday forenoon, and will be present near the Devonport Park Lodge about half-past ten in order to vindicate the right of free speech."

Considerable excitement prevailed in Plymouth. Some thought that, in spite of the notice from the War Office representatives, the lecture was to be given in the Park itself; others thought a certain three-cornered field had been hired. All were wrong; private ground could not be had for love or money, the owners and renters of all such having joined the police and the clergy; vacant land belonging to the borough was also out of the question, because my father felt that to have lectured on such ground must have resulted in a collision with the police, and might have ended disastrously for some of his friends. Mr Bradlaugh, Mr Williamson, and Captain Trenaman consulted together, and—who originated the idea I do not know—after ascertaining that all the water was under the jurisdiction of the Saltash Corporation, it was resolved to give the lecture from a boat in such a way that while the audience were in the borough of Devonport, the speaker, only a few yards distant from his hearers, should be outside the Devonport jurisdiction.

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* Meanwhile the Park was occupied by the military and the police in readiness to clear away the "infidels" should they appear.

"On Sunday morning, unfortunately, it rained in torrents and blew great gales," lamented Mr Bradlaugh, in a brief description of the day's adventures. "We, however, determined to persevere, and on arriving near the Devonport Park Lodge I soon found myself at the head of a considerable number, who, despite the rain and the wind, followed me to Stonehouse Creek, a small tributary of the river Tamar, where I embarked on board the boat previously hired, and on which we erected a sort of platform from which I delivered a short address, the union jack being hoisted at the head of the boat. Directly after I had commenced to speak, Mr Superintendent Edwards made his appearance, and certainly looked most disconsolate when he found the plan I had adopted to avoid his vigilance. As it was still raining very hard, I made my address a very brief one, telling the people that I was very glad of the opportunity of asserting the right of free speech, and promising to assert it again when I next visited Devonport. I was cheered several times notwithstanding the still descending torrent. Mr Edwards, who had nearly captured the cab containing my wife, had under his command no less than twenty-eight policemen besides Inspector Bryant, and the Mayor was prepared with the Riot Act; but all their precautions were set at naught, and the right of open-air propaganda was victoriously asserted. Mr Superintendent Edwards, with scarcely bottled up ire and indignation, endeavoured to find a victim in the licensed waterman, but even here he was defeated, as Captain Trenaman had taken his own crew."

Mr Bradlaugh concluded his account by thanking the friends who had helped him "and the bold Trenamans, father and son, who commanded under me my first marine endeavour at Freethought propaganda." Immediately after the conclusion of the police proceedings Mr Bradlaugh wrote a letter to Superintendent Edwards demanding that he should publish an apology in certain papers and pay £10 to the Devon and Cornwall Hospital, £10 to the Stoke Female Orphan Asylum, and his (Mr Bradlaugh's) witnesses' expenses; but the messenger who delivered the letter was informed by Edwards that he would take no notice of the communication, but would consign it to the wastepaper basket. In fact, all the written reply that Edwards did make was of the shortest and curtest; it consisted merely of these words: "I beg

to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this morning." After such a letter, my father put the matter into the hands of his solicitor, who laid it before counsel for advice, with the result that legal proceedings were commenced against Mr Edwards for assault and false imprisonment.

A little later at a meeting of the Devonport Town Council the Watch Committee reported that they had instructed the Town Clerk to take measures for Mr Edwards' defence, and asked the Council's approval of what they had done. After considerable discussion twenty-eight persons voted for the adoption of the report and two against. The names of those voting were formally taken down, and it is rather curious to find that at least four members of the Council who voted that the Town of Devonport should undertake the expense and conduct of the defence of the Police Superintendent, had sat upon the Bench and decided against him without troubling my father to go through the whole of his case. In their capacity as magistrates they were compelled by the evidence to find him wrong: as Town Councillors they allowed their prejudices full scope, and voted that the borough of Devonport should find money to support the Superintendent in his defence of what they themselves had agreed were wrongful acts.

The case against Mr Superintendent Edwards came on at the Devon Lammas Assizes at Exeter, before Mr Baron Channell, on Monday, July 29th. The reports * say that

"the Court was crowded, great interest being excited in the case. Many ladies were present, and nearly the whole of the briefless barristers on the circuit seemed roused from their ordinary drowsy dulness into something like life and activity. The case lasted from ten in the forenoon until nine in the evening, and was tried before a special jury."

Unfortunately, Mr Bradlaugh made one great and irreparable blunder. Instead of conducting the case himself, he allowed himself to be persuaded into briefing counsel, Mr Robert Collier, Q.C., M.P., and Mr Cole. The nature of this blunder, and its importance before a special jury in a cathedral city, may be realised by reading a few words of comment from a hostile leader on the case which appeared in the *Western Morning News* for July 31st.

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* *National Reformer*, the *Western Morning News*, and *Western Daily Mercury*.

This journal, which was so unfriendly towards my father's cause as to aver that the devout Christian looked "to the State to keep the Queen's highway free from Atheist lecturers and infidel propagandists," nevertheless stated in the most distinct fashion that "the counsel for the plaintiff was far more anxious to assert his own orthodoxy than his client's rights." And with this opinion I think most people will agree who read the Counsel's speech for the defence; not, however, that I intend to give the whole of Mr Collier's speech, because it is at once too long, and it goes over ground with which we are already familiar; still, I will quote a few of his expressions to prove that I am not judging him too hardly. Almost in the opening words of his speech Mr Collier said: "I am informed that Mr Bradlaugh desired to deliver a lecture or a sermon—I hardly know which." This was pure prevarication, as the utmost pains had been taken to give Mr Collier the whole facts of the case. A little later he stated:—

"Mr Bradlaugh belonged to a Society called the 'Secular Society.' Now I have never heard of the Society until this, nor did I ever hear of 'Iconoclast' before. . . . . I really don't know what their [the Secularists'] tenets are, but I believe they are connected in some way with the Unitarians."

This assertion was so monstrous that it immediately brough forth a letter of repudiation from the Rev. Henry Knott, Unitarian Minister of Plymouth; although, to do this gentleman justice, he said he believed that the Secularists were themselves "much too honest to wish to identify themselves with a body of Christians who have frequently opposed them in fair and open controversy." Mr Collier then wrote a letter to the Rev. Henry Knott in reply, regretting that he had misrepresented the Unitarians, and saying further:—

"As to the 'Secularists,' I had never heard of them until I had received the brief in 'Bradlaugh *v.* Edwards.' I have since ascertained, however, that they are a considerable sect; so much so, that I wonder that I had not heard of them. *I was informed that a portion of them was connected with the Unitarians*, and therefore supposed that a portion of them acknowledged the Divine origin of Christianity; *if I was mis informed*, I am very sorry for it."

The italics are mine; and if Mr Collier meant to imply that he received this information from his client or his attorney—the only

persons from whom he should have received information bearing on the conduct of this case—he still further dishonoured himself, because the utmost candour was shown him in laying the facts before him, and most assuredly no such statement as that quoted could have been made to him by sane men who knew the facts.

But to return to Mr Collier's speech. I will give just two more quotations, and then leave it:—

"I should be extremely sorry," he said, "if I were understood, as the advocate of Mr Bradlaugh or anybody else, as for one moment defending any circulation, either by printing or by word of mouth, of anything libellous, seditious, or blasphemous. . . . . If Mr Bradlaugh had been permitted to preach, and if he had preached anything improper, blasphemous, or seditious, I should not have complained of the superintendent; on the contrary, I should praise him if he had taken the proper measures for bringing him before a court of justice."

"I will conclude," he further said, "with this remark, that I cannot help thinking that if the doctrines of this Secular Society, or any other Society, are preached, which you and I and all of us may think pernicious, by far the best thing is to let them alone. 'Truth is great and will prevail,' and we need not fear that the foundation of our religion will be shaken by a thousand Bradlaughs; and I cannot think of anything so pernicious and likely to prevent that very object we seek to accomplish, and to elevate persons such as these from obscurity into fame, as by making them unjustly martyrs. I cannot help thinking that the superintendent of the police, although acting from the very best motives, was acting with very great haste and indiscretion."

If Mr Collier had been briefed by the other side also, he could hardly have made a more equivocal speech; and it will be easily understood how much it was likely to prejudice both the judge and jury against a man whose opinions were so well known, and who had made no pretence of concealing them. The defence made every effort to avail themselves of the *odium theologicum* when it came to Mr Bradlaugh's turn to take his place in the witness-box. Mr Montagu Smith, Q.C., counsel for the defence, wished to cross-examine Mr Bradlaugh on some former lectures in which he expressed his disbelief in the Bible; Mr Collier objected; Mr Smith persisted; Baron Channell then allowed the question, taking note of Mr Collier's objection; Mr Smith again put his question, and my father replied: "I object to answer that question on the ground that if I answer it in the affirmative it will subject me to a criminal prosecution." Then came a little scene, which will strike

those who have been in the law courts with Mr Bradlaugh as by no means unfamiliar:—

"His Lordship then asked for the Act of Parliament, and

"The Plaintiff immediately replied: It is the 53rd William III. Archbold recites the statute.

"His Lordship and the learned counsel were then engaged in finding it; and after having spent some time in vain, the plaintiff asked for a book, and on its being presented to him, he immediately found the statute in question, which he handed to his lordship. The learned judge then read it to the counsel, and said, this statute only applies to those educated in or making profession of Christianity. In answer to his question,

"The Plaintiff said: I was educated according to the Church of England.

"His Lordship: I allow the objection, witness claims exemption, and he is entitled to it."

Six times Mr Montagu Smith put similar questions to Mr Bradlaugh, and six times Mr Bradlaugh answered him in the same words. In his summing-up the judge, Mr Baron Channell, seemed determined not to be outdone by Mr Collier in evoking the religious prejudices of the jury. From Mr Smith, for the defence, such conduct was in some degree pardonable, even if not altogether in accordance with ordinary un-Christian notions of strict honour; but in Mr Collier, counsel for the plaintiff, and Mr Baron Channell, presiding over what was supposed to be a Court of Justice, it was unpardonable. His Lordship regretted "that the constitution of the plaintiff's mind was such as to render him unable to believe in those great truths which afforded so much comfort and satisfaction to others; the notion of going about and delivering lectures on those views he considered fraught with mischief and calculated to produce the greatest possible evil," while he further enlarged upon the "wickedness of disseminating such opinions."

After the summing-up of this just judge the jury gave a verdict for the plaintiff, with one farthing damages. The evidence was so strong, and some of the witnesses for the defence were so extravagant and unsatisfactory, that in spite of their prejudices the jury could not do other than decide in Mr Bradlaugh's favour; but they did it as grudgingly as they could, and recorded their animus in the "damages" they awarded. On the following morning Mr

Baron Channell carried this a step further, and when Mr Collier made the formal application for the plaintiff's costs he refused to certify.

In spite of all the prejudice roused against him, Mr Bradlaugh met with considerable sympathy from the press, from foes* as well as friends.

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* The *Western Times* (Exeter, August 3rd), *a hostile paper*, said: "The plaintiff certainly established his case, and the verdict was on the face of it ridiculous." "The religious feelings of the jury neutralized the spirit of the law by the ridiculous 'damages' which they awarded for his wrongs."

The *Morning Star* (August 2nd) had a most indignant article, condemning such a verdict "as a flagrant denial and mockery of justice." The *Bradford Review* was courageously outspoken, and urged that a new trial should be moved for.

In a leaderette the *Weekly Dispatch* (August 4th) thought that this Devonshire dealing was altogether a scene for Spain rather than for England, and condemned Mr Collier's conduct of the case. In the following issue *Publicola* had a long article on the proceedings, in which he deplored "that such an institution as that of trial by jury, to which we are indebted for magnificent assertions of political right and freedom, which, generally speaking, is a safeguard against social injury, should, by the conduct described, become a portion of the machinery of persecution."

Punch (August 10th) joined in its voice, and published a flippant article on "A Short Way with Secularists," in which it tells the story of the seizure of "that fellow Bradlaugh, who calls himself Iconoclast," and hailed with mock delight the advent of the "orthodox reaction." Said *Punch*, "The magistrates becoming judges of controversy, and the policemen forcing their decrees, the office of justice of the peace will become a holy office indeed, and the constabulary will rise into familiars of a British Inquisition."

Not the least remarkable article appeared in the Catholic *Tablet* for August 3rd. It speaks of the arrest and imprisonment of Mr Bradlaugh as "frightful persecution," and says: "His legal rights have been violated by the police, and a jury of British Protestants have refused him redress, because his interpretation of the Scriptures is different from theirs. Either that is religious persecution or there is no such thing."

In 1861 the English Roman Catholics regarded Mr Bradlaugh as a weak and (to them) harmless unit, and they affected to espouse his cause as a weapon against their deadly enemies, the Protestants. What a change in less than twenty years to the time when "Henry Edward, Cardinal-Archbishop," and Prince of the Church of Rome, thought it necessary, with his own powerful hand, to write protest after protest in the *Nineteenth Century*, against Mr Bradlaugh being allowed to take his seat in the Commons House at Westminster! What a change from 1861 to 1882, when this same great prelate thought it necessary to pay a formal visit in solemn state to the town of Northampton itself to use his mighty influence to turn the electors against "this poor Secular Iconoclast," as the *Tablet* once called him.

Mr Bradlaugh was not the man to remain content with such an unsatisfactory verdict, and accordingly he moved for a new trial. The motion was heard in the Court of Common Pleas, Westminster, on November 4th and 5th of the same year, before the Lord Chief Justice, Sir William Erle, and the Justices Williams, Byles, and Keating. Mr Bradlaugh asked for a new trial on the grounds of misdirection, improper rejection of evidence tendered by the plaintiff, improper reception of evidence tendered by the defendant; and that the verdict was a perverse one and against evidence. After reciting the course of the trial at Exeter, he pointed out that in that trial he "laboured under a double disadvantage, not only in having all the jury selected from the county [of Devon], where there was great feeling existing in the matter, but that they were selected from among men who had to pay the costs in the action,* and who would have to pay further damages and costs if in my favour, which a verdict of the jury would have given me."

After a lengthy discussion, in which all the judges took active part, the Lord Chief Justice said that they would consult "brother Channell" before they gave their answer.

Judgment was given the following day. The rule was refused, and the plaintiff insulted. Said Lord Chief Justice Erle—

"I know not in the least what are the opinions of the plaintiff that he was bent upon publishing; all that I am certain of is that there are opinions which are most pernicious. There are opinions which are in law a crime, and which every man ought—that is, every man of sound sense and generally esteemed of sound sense, would generally consider to be wrong. I do not know what these opinions are, but there are such opinions. If the plaintiff wanted to use his liberty for the purpose of disseminating opinions which were in reality of that pernicious description, and the defendant prevented him from doing that which might be a very pernicious act to those who heard him, and if the estimate I have mentioned be the true one, might be a matter he might afterwards deeply regret, it might be that the jury thought the act of imprisonment of the plaintiff under such circumstances was in reality not an injury for which a large money compensation ought to be paid, but on the contrary was an act which in its real substantial result was beneficial to the plaintiff, and so the nominal wrong would be abundantly compensated by the small sum given." †

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* This refers to the decision of the Devonport Town Council.

† Shorthand report.

The other judges concurred with their leader, Mr Justice Keating making a yet further addition to the remarkable record of intolerant utterances in this case.

"I think," said he, "that questions should be put within a certain limit to the witness as to his opinion and belief, and that it is right the jury should have an opportunity of judging either from his answer or from his refusal to answer—should have an opportunity to form their own sentiment of the credibility to be attached to it [the evidence]."

This judgment, and even more the bigotry apparent throughout the judgment, was a great blow to Mr Bradlaugh, and he appealed against the decision. The appeal came on before the very same four judges on the following Friday (November 8). In spite of his most eloquent pleading—in which he was repeatedly interrupted by the Lord Chief Justice—the rule was refused; the Lord Chief Justice kept religiously (I use the word advisedly) to his already expressed opinion that a witness "is by implication discredited by his refusal to answer;" and that he could see no "intentional violation of right;" he further clinched the matter by saying that "in the present instance there is nothing which could induce me to interfere."

These proceedings did their work in helping to form public opinion in favour of free speech, but they cost my father several hundreds of pounds, and burdened him with a debt which took long to clear off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"KILL THE INFIDEL."

In the month of January, 1861, Mr Stephen Bendall was charged by Mr Nicholas Le Mesurier, a constable of St Peter Port, Guernsey, with having upon several occasions in the month before distributed printed papers calculated to bring the Christian religion into contempt and ridicule. The Court sentenced Mr Bendall to give bail in the sum of £20 not to distribute any such tracts during the space of twelve months, or in default to be imprisoned for a fortnight. That the sentence took so lenient a form was doubtless in some measure due to the enlightened remarks of one of the jurats, a Mr Tupper, who warned his colleagues that they should be "very careful not to countenance persecution on the ground of religion, for if we entered upon that course we could not tell where we should stop." Whether he did not feel himself altogether strong enough to oppose the prevailing temper of the bench, or from whatever reason, Mr Tupper did not propose an acquittal, but suggested the above bail, which the Court after some consultation accepted, with the alternative of a fortnight's imprisonment. The Queen's Procureur had asked that Mr Bendall should be imprisoned for a fortnight, "three days in each week solitary and on bread and water, and afterwards to give security in the sum of £50 not to distribute any of the tracts during the next twelve months, or quit the island."

This being the state of affairs in the island of Guernsey as to the freedom of opinion, and, moreover, as some of the tracts distributed appear to have been written by Mr Bradlaugh himself, it is not surprising to find the following notice amongst my father's lecture engagements in the next issue of the *National Reformer* :—

'February 26th, 27th, 28th—Guernsey. Specially to settle the question, Will the authorities put in force the laws against blasphemy?"

An advertisement was sent to the *Guernsey Mail*, but that paper

not only ostentatiously declined to insert it, but thought fit to make a public declaration of its own virtue. The subject of the proposed "Infidel lectures" was to be an endeavour to prove that the Bible is not a revelation from an all-perfect Deity; and this the editor of the *Guernsey Mail* chose to construe as the admission of the existence of a God; and upon this glaringly false premise he built quite a series of astonishingly childish arguments in proof of the wickedness of Mr Bradlaugh and Atheists generally. Then, apparently quite satisfied as to the effect of what he had written, he took it "for granted that, if the Assembly Rooms are really to be applied to Infidel purposes, no decent person, rich or poor, old or young, will give his countenance or notice their intention save to dissuade the unwary from lending an ear."

On the Sunday Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in Sheffield, but he left for London by the night train, and arrived at Guernsey on Tuesday morning about half-past eight. On the pier Mr Bendall was awaiting him with some anxiety.

"His anxiety," Mr Bradlaugh relates, "was partly occasioned by the knowledge that some preparations had been made to welcome me with a royal salute of rotten eggs. One Christian lady, I was credibly informed, had subscribed for the purpose of providing me with this savoury donation." In spite, however, of all rumours to the contrary, "the landing was effected without opposition, and I walked into Guernsey without even a word. Many eyes were directed towards me, and greater curiosity could scarcely have been evinced had I been a red-buttoned mandarin or a tritailed Pasha." *

My father had already thrown down the gauntlet by the circulation of a handbill addressed to the Procureur, to the clergy (especially of the Methodist New Connection, who had been particularly prominent in the proceedings against Mr Bendall), and to the Guernsey public. In this handbill he stated his intention to lecture on the Bible in the Assembly Rooms, which had been engaged for the 27th and 28th for that purpose, and invited free and fair discussion upon his lecture. To this declaration of defiance he signed his name and gave his address in full. Mr Bradlaugh's first visit was to the Assembly Rooms, for the proprietors had yielded to the virtuous displeasure of the *Guernsey*

* *National Reformer*, March 9, 1861.

Mail and the bigoted section of the community, and had withdrawn from their contract without giving any reason. On Mr Bradlaugh's application he was informed that the proprietors did not intend to give any reason. No printer would print bills, and no crier would make announcement of the tabooed lectures. These were small difficulties, however, for which my father was not altogether unprepared, and he had therefore with him bills already printed; he had the bills, it is true, but now came another difficulty—no bill poster would post them! "Under these circumstances," he tells us, "Mr Bendall and myself sallied forth, armed with a pastepot, brush, and ladder, and by the aid of the moon succeeded in affixing our notices to the wall in a manner which would have done credit to a professional bill-poster." He then addressed letters to the prosecutors in Mr Bendall's case; these included a Methodist minister, a local preacher, a missionary, and the Harbour Master, Captain Le Mesurier. He also sent letters to the Bailiff and the ten jurats of the island; and to these last he further sent three of his pamphlets.

What happened on the following days I am fortunately able to tell in Mr Bradlaugh's own words, for he gave a vivid description of his adventures in the *National Reformer*. He wrote: "During the Wednesday the excitement increased. On the walls some one had chalked 'Down with the Infidles,' 'Away with the Infidles;' perhaps the writer thought that I was a species of musical instrument, or it may be a Guernsey fashion to spell infidel differently from ourselves. Two immense boards, on which we had affixed a prominent notice of the meeting, were carried off from the doors of the Hotel de l'Europe, and recaptured with some difficulty. Near the hour of the lecture the whole of the street was crowded with people, but the room was only about half full, the multitude being apparently afraid to enter. . . . Directly I began to speak the room filled, and was soon crowded to excess, as were the bottom of the stairs and the passage. Many had to retire unable to gain admittance. At the same time that I commenced my lecture a terrific uproar was initiated in the streets; yells, hootings, groanings were raised which would do credit even to ignorant Wigan Orangemen, and at last a battering was commenced against the window shutters; so terrible was the din that, after speaking for twenty minutes, I determined to endeavour to put an end to it, and asked the persons present to kindly keep their places in the

room while I quelled the riot outside. Many entreated me not to go, assuring me that my personal safety would be endangered; but I thought it best to go, and I went out alone, and found to my disgust that a huge mob, many of whom were respectably dressed, were encouraging some lads to break in the shutters with stones. I walked deliberately forward, and the lads ran away from their work. One stone was thrown which passed near my forehead, and the whole mass of men, women, and children set up a tremendous cry, part groan, part shriek, part yell, which must have lasted at least three minutes without the slightest lull. Half deafened by the clamour, I respectfully bowed, and mentally calculated the effect of sea air in strengthening the lungs of these cowards, who actually fell back step by step as I walked alone towards them." Desisting at length from what seemed a futile attempt to quiet the noisy multitude, Mr Bradlaugh returned to the lecture room and resumed his discourse. His attempt at securing peace without was not so wasted as it had at first seemed, for the noise grew less and less, until it ceased altogether. He lectured for an hour and a half, and then publicly distributed a hundred of the condemned tracts, challenging the island authorities to proceed against him. On going out he found the mob very threatening; they "followed me to my lodgings," he said, "hooting and yelling, and shouting 'Kill the Infidel!' 'Murder the Infidel!'"

By the next day the excitement had greatly increased; it was said that the quay porters had been incited to violence, and certainly several of them were found collected outside the Hotel de l'Europe well plied with drink. The narrow street in which the Hotel was situated was crowded by an infuriated mass of persons, and Mr Bradlaugh had great difficulty in making his way to the lecture room. His audience was large, and composed of respectable persons, who listened quietly and attentively to his discourse. They were, however, only allowed to remain in peace for about twenty minutes, for at the end of that time the outside mob "became ungovernable, and dashing in the plate glass doors, broke into the house, and for a few moments stopped the proceedings. "Several of those, who had been made drunk for the occasion," continued my father, "I had great difficulty in expelling from the room; and this difficulty was increased by the addition of half-a-dozen soldiers who, strange to say, had been provided with passes to enable them to take part in the disturbance. Notwith-

standing, I persevered in my lecture for about half-an-hour longer, although the exertion required on my part to control the riotous assemblage was of no ordinary character. The bulk of the respectable persons seemed highly indignant at the treatment to which I was subjected, and begged me not to risk my life amongst the excited multitude outside. An attempt was now made to turn out the gas, and considerable damage was done to the chairs and forms. I determined despite all to brave the riot, although shouts of 'Kill the Infidel,' 'Pitch the Infidel into the sea,' were heard on every side. My size aided me; the mob were as cowardly as they were noisy; and none liked to be the first in the projected assault. The soldiery now seemed inclined to co-operate in the endeavour to offer violence, and the consequence might have been serious to all concerned had it not been for the shrewdness of Madame Laval, the proprietress of the hotel, who, finding it useless to oppose my determination to face the mob, coolly pretended to show me a better way out of the hotel, and ushered me into a dark room, and locked me up for a couple of hours until the excitement had subsided. On Friday morning I quitted the island by the boat for Southampton; the pier was crowded, and on my appearance a few began to hiss, but ceased the moment I walked towards them. When the boat began to start, the cowardly fellows (knowing that I could not then return), headed by and instigated thereto by Captain Le Mesurier, the Harbour Master, an old gentleman whose appearance should have bespoken better conduct, hissed and yelled with a persistence which would have done credit to a nobler cause."

The local press endorsed the conduct of the "indignant population" in their treatment of Mr Bradlaugh by calling it "an act of natural justice," but the local authorities made no attempt at prosecution. In consequence of the damage done to the hall, the expenses were considerable, and receipts there were none; but as Mr Bradlaugh wrote later on, this was only one of thirty-two lectures given in the first six months of the year 1861 in which he incurred loss in "extending Freethought propaganda into new districts."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROVINCIAL ADVENTURES, 1860-1863.

In addition to the more serious opposition which Mr Bradlaugh encountered at such places as Wigan, Devonport, and Guernsey, there were countless smaller "incidents" constantly occurring, some unpleasant, others merely ludicrous. I have noted a few for these pages; of these, perhaps, the greater number may be thought of minor importance, but at least they will serve to show the kind of reception given to heretical opinions in the provinces five-and-thirty years ago.

At Altrincham, one Sunday, early in June 1860, my father had engaged to deliver two open-air addresses. Several highly religious persons openly indulged in the fond wish that it might rain hard on Hale Moss; and as if in direct response to their prayers, "the lightning flashed, thunder pealed, and the rain poured down in torrents." The lightning struck a public-house chimney and did considerable damage generally. The clergyman of St Margaret's, Altrincham, foolishly hoped that this would prove a warning to people to keep away from Infidel lectures. Mr Bradlaugh's comment on this was, that it was "a curious warning to strike a public-house with electricity to frighten people from hearing the address of a teetotal Infidel." In any case, the "warning" was not a very thoroughgoing one, for the storm cleared, and in the evening there was a large and attentive audience. A few months later, Mr Bradlaugh was again lecturing in Altrincham, and without the help of a single placard 1000 persons attended in the afternoon, and rather more in the evening. At the end of the evening lecture a police sergeant came forward and announced to my father that he was obstructing a thoroughfare, and must therefore "move on." "Legally he may be right," said Mr Bradlaugh afterwards, "but if it is a thoroughfare, grass grows upon it; it is almost impassable for horse and cart, and is a direct route to nowhere. My lecture, however, being over,

I bowed to the majesty of the law, as represented by Z 1, and only hope that the police will always wait, in like manner, till the conclusion of the proceedings before saying 'move on.'"

In August "Iconoclast" had arranged to visit the village of Shaw. The prospect created great excitement in the district, which was further worked up by the *Oldham Standard* inserting letters of attack but refusing reply; there was even a rumour that force would be used to prevent the lectures. No room could be obtained, and so the address had to be delivered in the open air. Mr Bradlaugh had scarcely commenced to speak when a Royton Police Sergeant called roughly to him to come down :—

ICONOCLAST: "Why?"

SERGEANT: "Never you mind why! Come down, or I will pull you down."

ICONOCLAST: "You may try if you like, and one of us may come down, but I do not think I shall be that one."

The police sergeant was sadly bothered; he tried again; but Iconoclast quoted legal authorities.

The poor policeman then consulted with those about him, and finding bullying of no avail, at length retired, leaving Iconoclast and his audience in possession of the field. It can hardly be called "undisturbed" possession however, for the Christians, having been unsuccessful in the matter of police interference, hired a drum and other noise-creating instruments, and posted them on some adjacent private ground; but even in this way they failed to break up the meeting, as they counted without Mr Bradlaugh's powerful voice and tenacity of purpose. He persisted to the end, and delivered his lecture to a most orderly audience of some 800 persons. He visited Shaw several times during the next twelve months; but although he was still unable to get a room to speak in, the manners of his Christian opponents improved on each occasion.

When Mr Bradlaugh was unknown, he often had difficulty in finding a chairman to preside at his meetings. Sometimes he would proceed without one, and sometimes one would be elected by the audience. A chairman so elected, however, would occasionally have comical ideas as to the duties of his position, and regard the chair merely as a privileged place, from which he might make hostile comments upon the methods and manner of the lecturer. In such a case the harmony of the meeting was better preserved without the assistance of a chairman.

But if it was difficult to get a chairman to preside over the meeting, it was even more difficult in many places to get a hall in which the meeting could be held. At Sunderland the hall was refused to Mr Bradlaugh because it could not be let for "such damnable doctrines." In Rochdale the Public Hall, although let for week-day lectures, was refused for Sunday discourses. The Rochdale Freethinkers therefore hired the theatre; but the police authorities, whose functions seemed to include "the cure of souls," intimated to the lessee that if he kept to his contract his licence would be in danger. When this was explained to Mr Bradlaugh, he gave way, and delivered his lectures in the open air; in the morning on the Butts to about 3000 persons, in the evening in a large field near Roebuck to a still larger audience. The only result, therefore, of this endeavour to shut him out of Rochdale on the Sunday, was really to procure for him larger and more interested audiences. In January 1861, Mr Bradlaugh went to Leigh, in Lancashire, where no Freethought speaker had been for twenty years. The thermometer was below freezing, and the roads like ice. A menagerie, with real wild beasts who roared and a real elephant who walked the streets, occupied the thoughts of the town. But worse than new place, icy weather, or wonderful menagerie, was the bellman of Leigh. This bellman, wrote my father sorrowfully, was not "a teetotaller, and had offered up considerable sacrifices to Bacchus. This course of conduct sadly interfered with the clearness of his articulation, and to fill the cup of my misery he had also to announce the loss of a donkey. The two announcements were so jumbled together that little was distinguishable except the donkey." *

From Leigh Mr Bradlaugh went in the freezing weather to Warrington, another place in which no Freethought speaker had raised his voice for a score or more of years, but where the editor of the *Warrington Guardian* had been trying to fan some warmth of hate into the townsfolk. In the issue for January 5th, the editor announced that there was to be "a most ribald, ignorant, and virulent attack upon the Holy Scriptures," adding further that Mr Bradlaugh had been lecturing in the neighbourhood

"in such a blasphemous manner that the local papers have been utterly unable to report his sayings. Surely Warrington has enough of

* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, Jan. 12, 1861.

temptations to ungodliness without any assistance from stipendiary peripatetics, or pickers up of a lazy living, who cover with their slime, like noxious reptiles, what they want sense or taste to admire."

It was by such attack upon an as yet unheard man that this Christian thought to serve the Omnipotent. From insulting Mr Bradlaugh he went on to abuse the lessee of the Warrington theatre, who had let the theatre for the lecture, and here his attack proved successful; for in consequence of the pressure put upon him, the "unfortunate lessee," as my father magnanimously called him, felt compelled to close the theatre. The *Guardian* triumphantly announced that the lectures would not be held, but this was somewhat premature. Mr Bradlaugh succeeded in getting a small room in a back street, and fresh placards were issued, although it was so late as the night before the lecture. After delivering two lectures to small but attentive audiences, he left Warrington between two and three a.m. for Dumfries, with the thermometer standing at eighteen degrees. There he remained three days, lecturing each evening, and had fair audiences and a pleasant time, notwithstanding that this was the first time within the memory of the "oldest inhabitant" that a Freethought speaker had been to Dumfries.*

When his adversaries could find nothing better to say, they would taunt him with earning money by his lectures, and this sneer was repeated in every variety of elegant language.†

No sort of insult was too gross for such people to condescend to for "the honour of our God." In November 1860,

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* Mr Barker's lecture (p. 121) was a month or two later.

† A correspondent to the *Oldham Standard* enjoined upon his fellow Christians that it was their duty "to root out of our establishments every one advocating his principles, for the safety of those committed to our care, and the honour of our God. Let us do this and 'Iconoclast,' will fall to the ground and never again rise. His object is to live upon the pence of his deluded hearers, and, after a time, when he has become old and infirm, to turn round, and by a recantation of his present teaching worm himself into comfortable bread as a reclaimed infidel."

The *North Cheshire Herald*, in alluding to some lectures delivered by Mr Bradlaugh at Hyde, in the summer of 1861, said:—

"In justice to 'Iconoclast,' we must say he possesses great oratorical powers, and he has, so far as the ignorant are concerned, a very pleasing way of practising on their gullibility. He is cunning to a degree, but his object may be seen through without the aid of spectacles. It is evident that

Mr Bradlaugh remarked * that "some one who signs himself 'Z' in the *Glossop Record*, but who is not a wise head, says I have come 'to raise the wind.' He is right. It will probably blow a severe gale in the Gospel vineyard in Glossop before we have done with it."

In the spring of 1861, Mr Bradlaugh spent two days at Burnley. As here again no hall could be obtained, his lectures had to be delivered in the open air, with the usual result, that instead of having an audience of a few hundred persons, thousands came to listen to his voice.

About the same time, the Market Hall at Chesterfield was hired for lectures, and afterwards closed against Mr Bradlaugh. The theatre was then taken, but even here Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to make his entrance by force. The audiences were, as usual, orderly and attentive, "notwithstanding the fact that at one lecture the authorities suddenly, and without any previous intimation, cut off the gas from the main and plunged the theatre into total darkness." † The editor of the *Derbyshire Times*, in referring to these lectures, exhibited some confusion of ideas; he thought too much fuss had already been made "in the matter of that blustering bigot 'Iconoclast,'" and then proceeded to devote considerable space to him; he thought the Mayor of Chesterfield was wrong in shutting him out of the theatre, but considered he himself was wise in "excluding an Infidel controversy" from the paper. "In my heart," he said, "I pity Iconoclast. One serious illness would make him a coward." This is a favourite piece of clap-trap with a certain class of Christians. It may deceive other Christians—and it is possibly said with that intent—for an Atheist it has no meaning. As for this, it is sufficient to say that more than once, more than twice, my father consciously found himself face to face with death, and on each occasion his mind was perfectly clear and his brain wonderfully acute. He was full of regrets and full of anxiety; but his regrets

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he means money; for when it is known that he received £5 for using such blasphemous language as would not be uttered by the very lowest of the 'fallen' class, the fact is indisputable. . . . . We sincerely hope that God will change his heart, and that when he is about quitting this sublunary world, he will not be heard exclaiming, as other infidels have done, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"

* In *National Reformer* of that date. † In *National Reformer*, June 1861.

were for his unfinished work; his anxieties were for those he loved no less than for those who loved him, or were dependent upon him. For himself, speaking of the near possibility of death with his doctors, he said, "Ah, well, I cannot grumble; I have lived the lives of three men; I have burned the candle at both ends, and the middle as well." He suffered great physical pain, but he never broke down, and not for a single instant did his courage waver.

At Worksop, at this period, not only could no lecture room be obtained, but the prejudice in the town was so great that no one had sufficient courage to go with Mr Bradlaugh to the place of meeting. It rained all day until close upon the lecture hour, and then he turned out rather disconsolately to find the appointed place. Under a lamp he found a bill announcing that that was the spot from which he was expected to speak, and by the bill there was the welcome sight of a Sheffield friend. To this audience of one he commenced his address, but after a few minutes—despite the counter-attractions heralded by the drums of a travelling showman—the audience grew in size and in attentive interest. At the close some questions were put, and there was some intelligent conversation upon the subject of the lecture. One Christian, however, who was, for some reason, told that his question would be answered upon the following evening, cried, "Answer it to-night; to-morrow you may be where you ought to be, in hell."

In August 1861 Mr Bradlaugh was in Lancashire, and on one showery Sunday he betook himself to a place known as Boardman's Edge, where it was arranged that he should lecture. He himself tells the story of this experience.

"On arriving at the place," he says, "I found a little opposition: three policemen and a stout gentleman in black, whose precise status I was unable to ascertain, but who was introduced to me as the 'Lord's Steward,' forbade the meeting. Their prohibition had little effect, and the meeting soon assembled in the field hired for the purpose, and numbered from 1500 to 2000 persons. . . . The [Royton] band prefaced the meeting with a march, and then Mr J. Biltcliffe, of Stalybridge, was elected chairman. Another attempt was now made; the constabulary had been reinforced, five were now present, and they came with the farmer from whom the field had been taken, to eject us *vi et armis*. The police began

to talk, but as their oratory is not very inspiring I ordered them to keep quiet until the farmer had spoken.

"FARMER: You must go away from here.

"ICONOCLAST: The field is mine. I decline to go.

"FARMER: It is true I have let you the field, but I find you must not have it.

"ICONOCLAST: As you have let the field, I am your tenant, and occupy it as such. I am sorry to give you trouble, but I decline to go.

"POLICE-OFFICER: Oh, we'll see about that.

"ICONOCLAST: Silence, sir; you and your companions, as policemen, have no right here on my ground, except by my permission. If you are disorderly, I shall have you removed." The police were suddenly subdued; from talkers they became listeners, and the meeting proceeded peacefully and satisfactorily.

An advertisement, stating that my father proposed to lecture in the Dewsbury Public Hall on February 9th, 1862, provoked an extraordinary burst of venom and spite from those who constituted themselves chief defenders of the faith in Dewsbury. The following is the text of a bill posted throughout the town, and is probably unrivalled as a form of attack:—

"Grand discovery! To be seen to-morrow, Sunday, not one hundred miles from the Public Hall, a fine specimen of the gorilla tribe, standing seven feet six inches in height, imported into England from Sheffield, the capital of the Hollyhock settlement, in the interior of Africa, and brought to this town for public exhibition by Mr Greenfield. This gorilla is said to be one of the finest of its tribe. It presents a bold front, is impudent in its demeanour, and growls fearfully at the approach of a debt-collector, magistrate, or any Government officer. Having been some time in England under an assumed name, it has acquired a smattering of the language, and will address visitors on the origin, progress, and future prospects of the gorilla tribe. As the animal will be properly secured, parties need be in no apprehension of danger."

Of course, the only effect of this ridiculous insult was to increase the size of the audience, people coming from Huddersfield, Leeds, and other places round.

A curious incident happened at Leeds, where Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in August 1862. The subject for the evening address was, "Were Adam and Eve our first parents?" and Mr Bradlaugh was opposed by a young man who had already offered some oppo-

sition at the afternoon lecture, and had then created a favourable impression by the pleasant ease and fluency with which he spoke. A question arose as to a passage in the works of Eusebius to which Mr Bradlaugh had referred. The passage, which he read at request, the young man, who turned out to be a paid preacher belonging to Kirkstall, near Leeds, said was not from Eusebius, but from some other book. On Mr Bradlaugh asking for the name of the book, the young preacher said he had so many books that he could not remember their names, but if Mr Bradlaugh would go home with him at the conclusion of the lecture he would show him the book. This audacious young man must have been somewhat dismayed when he found himself taken seriously, for after the lecture Mr Bradlaugh hired a cab and went home with him "accompanied by one Christian and one Infidel to see fair play." Arrived at Kirkstall, the preacher's "numerous library subsided into two modest rows of books on a little table, and after about half an hour's search [he] ended by begging my pardon, and admitting that *he had made a mistake.*" * The Christian who had gone "to see fair play" was so ashamed that he called upon Mr Bradlaugh on the following evening and reimbursed the cab-hire which the latter had paid. But the "mendacious parsonling" (as my father called him) knew no shame, for at Mr Bradlaugh's next lecture he again rose and tried to explain away his former conduct and misstatement; he further said that he had consulted with persons well read in Eusebius, but none had met with the passage quoted by Mr Bradlaugh, and to satisfy the audience he had procured the volume of Eusebius and brought it with him. "I rather too hastily abbreviated his triumph," said Mr Bradlaugh, "by turning to the book he brought . . . and by reading from his own volume the paragraph which he had so decidedly said was not there." The young Christian teacher did not seem to mind in the least being a second time exposed, for, quite unabashed, he rose again to speak on another subject.

There is one more story which I must tell before quite leaving the subject of these early provincial lecturing experiences, and I must tell it not merely because it presents what my father called "a rather novel feature," but because with a little addendum specially composed for the purpose it has been made to do duty as a sort of bulwark of the Christian faith.

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* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*.

On the second Sunday of December, in the year 1863, Mr Bradlaugh was giving three lectures in the Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield, and the subject for the evening was "Le Roi Voltaire." A "very voluble lady," said to be an enthusiast of the Weaver school, got up after the lecture to offer some opposition—if what she said could be dignified by that name! This lady told the audience what we may suppose to have been intended as an awe-inspiring story, but which must, in reality, have been provocative of much mirth. Her son, she said, had once purchased half a pound of butter, and brought it home wrapped up in a leaf of some work by Voltaire. "The leaf was thrown upon the fire ere fully read, but the effect was so remarkable," said my father, in recounting this incident at the time, "that the son dreamed he saw Voltaire, who appeared with a ball of fire for a head and another ball of fire for a heart. Voltaire, while thus blazing, informed the lady's son that he, the French infidel, was burning in hell, where all Voltairians were sure to join him and share his fate."

This story, albeit rather trifling, is harmless enough, and even amusing as it stands, but the unauthorised revised version concludes by saying that Mr Bradlaugh was quite discomfited by the old lady's tale, and went away unable to answer her. I have seen this used against my father even since his death. Such are the devices resorted to by the foolish to convince people of the truths of Christianity.

CHAPTER XX.

A FREEMASON.

As Mr Bradlaugh was very much tied to London after 1862 on account of his business first in a solicitor's office, and then in the city, he was unable for a few years to lecture so frequently in the country. Saturdays and Sundays were almost his only opportunities for provincial speaking, but these he utilised to the fullest extent that the claims of his London friends would permit. Quite a large proportion of his lectures were given for the pecuniary benefit of some person or cause in need of help. Very often, too, during this period his health gave way. City work for his livelihood, writing, lecturing, and debating for his opinions' sake, rushes to France, Italy, or Germany, and night travelling before the days when long railway journeys were made easy—were a heavy tax on even his strength. And in addition to this, which I might call the general routine of his life, he had the occasional duty of defending his rights in the Law Courts against both Government and private individuals, and the anxiety of a Parliamentary candidature.

Amongst those lectures given away was one in August 1862 on "Freemasonry," under the auspices of the Reformed Rite of Memphis, for the benefit of the family of a deceased brother Mason. In November of the same year he, as Orator of the Grand Lodge *des Philadelphes*, waited upon the Lord Mayor with two others as a deputation from their Lodge to present £14 5s. to the fund of the distressed operatives in Lancashire. Of this sum £9 was a donation made in the name of Garibaldi, and the further £5 5s. by the Lodge of which Garibaldi was a member, as they proudly put it. I have made a special note of these early appearances of Mr Bradlaugh in his Masonic capacity, because his having been a Freemason has often been called in question, although I have before me some documents which ought to convince even the most incredulous. The first informs "all whom it may concern . . . that our Brother

Charles Bradlaugh, born in Hackney (England), who has signed his name in the margin hereof, was regularly received into Freemasonry and admitted to the third degree in the Grand Lodge of the Philadelphs." This certificate is dated from London the 9th of March 1859, and is very much stamped and signed with eleven signatures (exclusive of Mr Bradlaugh's), with a seal attached to it by a blue ribbon. His sponsor for this initiation was his dear and venerated friend Simon Bernard.* The second document in my possession, also signed with a dozen or more signatures, is a "*diplôme de Maître*" (diploma of Master) granted by the Grand Orient of France upon the demand of the "R.·. L.·. La Persévérante Amitié or .·. de Paris." This diploma is dated the 15th May 1862. The third is a much later document, and is to the following effect:—

"Sur la demande presentée par la R. L. Union et Persévérance o.·. Paris l'effet d'obtenir un diplôme de Maître pour le F. Charles Bradlaugh né à Londres le 26 7bre, 1833, demeurant à Londres membre reçu d'honneur. Le Grand Orient a delivré au F. Charles Bradlaugh le présent diplôme de Maître.

"Donné a l'O .·. de Paris le 4 Novembre 1884 (E. V.)"

It is signed by M. Cousin, Président du Conseil de l'Ordre, the Secretary, officers of the R. L. Union et Persévérance, and others.

Mr Bradlaugh belonged also to an English lodge affiliated to the Grand Lodge of England. He was received at Tottenham at the special request of the Lodge in the early part of the sixties, I believe, but I possess none of the usual certificates: these he returned to

* Towards the end of November 1862 death claimed him who had been to my father "friend, tutor, brother." When the exile was buried, Mr Bradlaugh wrote that "the proscribed of all the Nationalities of Europe mustered round his coffin to do him honour. Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland, Hungary, and France were numerously represented; and long ranks of the best and bravest of banished men trod in sadness in the rear of the funeral hearse." By the open grave at Kilburn, "amongst the hundreds of intellectual looking men here might be seen most noticeable the bearded figure of that most omniscient of political writers, Alexander Herzen; here the stalwart frame of the escaped Bakunin; here the saddened features of an old Englishman [Thomas Allsop] who had borne part with him in his political struggles, and who had loved the dead man with the fullest friendliness of his most honest nature." At the grave side spoke M. Talandier; my father spoke, also Mr G. J. Holyoake, M. Gustave Jourdain, and then M. Felix Pyat, whose fiery sentences were followed by the dull and mournful echo of the earth falling upon the coffin lid.

his Lodge when the Prince of Wales was made Past Grand Master. When it was announced that the lodges of England were about to honour the Prince of Wales "with a dignity he had done nothing to earn," Mr Bradlaugh addressed to him "a letter from a French, Italian, and English Freemason." This letter was published in the *National Reformer*, and afterwards reissued in pamphlet form. It was read by his Mother Lodge, *La Loge des Philadelphes*, and gave such unqualified satisfaction that an address of approval was sent him from the Lodge. The pamphlet had a very extensive circulation, and went through several editions.

In March 1874 my father made a fine speech at the annual banquet at the *Loge des Philadelphes*. It fell to him to speak to the toast, the "loyal" toast of the Lodge, "To the Oppressed of all Nations." The oppressed of Italy, of Spain, of France, of England, of Germany, were each separately remembered, and then he carried the toast on "To the oppressed of all nations: to the women everywhere; to the mothers, who with freer brains would nurse less credulous sons; to the wives, who with fuller thoughts would be higher companions through life's journeyings; to the sisters and daughters, who with greater right might work out higher duty, and with fuller training do more useful work; to woman, our teacher as well as nurse: our guide as well as child-bearer; our counsellor as well as drudge. To the oppressed of all nations: to those who are oppressed the most in that they know it least; to the ignorant and contented under wrong, who make oppression possible by the passiveness, the inertness of their endurance. To the memories of the oppressed in the past, whose graves—if faggot and lime have left a body to bury—are without mark save on the monuments of memory, more enduring than marble, erected in such temples by truer toast-givers than myself. To these we drink, sadly and gratefully; to the oppressed of the present—to those that struggle that they may win; to those that yet are still, that they may struggle; to the future, that in it there may be no need to drink this toast."

At this time when English Freemasons chose to cast doubts upon the reality of Mr Bradlaugh's membership, Freemasons on the other side of the Atlantic welcomed him to their Lodges.

While visiting Boston, Mr Bradlaugh was by special invitation of the Columbian and Adelphi Lodges present at their Masonic festivals. The last occasion should almost be looked upon as

historic, as far as the annals of Freemasonry are concerned, since it was a special festival in honour of the installation of Joshua B. Smith as Junior Warden of the Adelphi Lodge, South Boston, the first coloured Freemason elected to hold office in any regular Lodge. Eight years before * the St Andrew's Lodge had made Mr Smith and six other coloured men Freemasons, with the idea that they should establish a coloured men's Lodge, but the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts would not issue the warrant. In the interval Joshua B. Smith, already a Justice of the Peace, was elected to the Senate, and joined the Adelphi Lodge, which now took this opportunity of showing him honour.

Mr Bradlaugh himself always liked to remember that he was a "Free and accepted mason," and the outward and visible sign of that is to be found in the fact that he almost invariably selected the Masonic Boys' School as the charity to be benefited by any money paid as damages for libelling his personal character.

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* This was in December 1874.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEBATES 1862–1866.

In September 1862 Mr Bradlaugh held a six nights' discussion with the Rev. W. Barker, a gentleman who had been lecturing against Atheism to a Christian Society in Clerkenwell. The debate was held in the Cowper Street School Rooms, City Road. The report I have by me was published by Ward & Co., and was taken from the notes of a shorthand writer, and approved by both disputants. The first two evenings were controlled by a chairman for each speaker, with Mr James Harvey for umpire; but Mr Harvey's impartial judgments gave so much satisfaction that the last four meetings were left entirely under his charge. The attendance—on some nights so great that people were turned away—averaged twelve hundred persons, and it was estimated that a thousand heard the whole of the debate. Some enthusiastic people journeyed long distances, such as from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Devonshire, and Norfolk, to be present. After all expenses were defrayed the surplus of £20 was sent to the Lord Mayor for the Lancashire Relief Fund. The subjects under discussion were:—

"I. Are the representations of Deity in the Bible irrational and derogatory?

"II. Is Secularism, which inculcates the practical sufficiency of morality, independent of Biblical religion, calculated to lead to the highest development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man?

"III. Is the doctrine of Original Sin, as taught in the Bible, theoretically unjust and practically pernicious?

"IV. Does Secularism, which admits the authority of nature alone, and which appeals to reason as the best means of arriving at truth, offer a surer basis for human conduct than Christianity, which rests its claims on a presumed Divine revelation?

"V. Is the plan of Salvation through the Atonement repulsive in its

details, immoral in its tendency, and unworthy of the acceptance of the human race?

"VI. Is the doctrine of personal existence after death, and of eternal happiness or misery for mankind, fraught with error and injurious to humanity?"

My father, writing during the progress of this debate, described Mr Barker as a speaker not calculated, so far as he had yet seen, to excite his audience. "He is," said he, "a robust, happy-looking man, slightly inclined to go to sleep during his speeches, and hardly lively enough in his sallies. He appears to wish to strike occasionally, but fears the result of his own blow. Perhaps as the debate proceeds he will be more vigorous in his replies, and more piquant in his affirmations."

Mr John Watts spoke of the reverend gentleman in much the same terms,* paying special tribute to Mr Barker's evident desire to fairly represent his opponent's views.

The report of this debate, carried on for six nights, and dealing with six separate questions in eighteen speeches a side, makes quite a formidable volume of more than two hundred pages. It has in it much that is interesting and much that is dull, a little that is witty, and more that is weak. It would weary the reader, and serve no useful purpose, were I to attempt a representation of the arguments used. I will only note that on the sixth and last evening Mr Bradlaugh opened with an impeachment of the morality of the doctrine of a future existence in happiness or in torment, the bribe and the penalty of the Christian religion; and in his final speech, after briefly reviewing the whole debate, he stated

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* Contrast the delicate words of personal description written by a Christian in the *Clerkenwell News*: "The manner and appearance of the minister and the Atheist were as much at variance as the Gospel of the one is with the 'reasoning' of the other. The one with a kind, affectionate air—a calm self-reliance, resulting from faith in a beneficent God and loving Redeemer—was a fit defender of love and mercy. On the other hand, the Atheist's looks stamped him as a low demagogue. He was throughout restless; now displaying his ring, after admiring it himself; now turning with an idiotic grin towards his followers, who certainly resembled Falstaff's recruits in appearance; and throughout conducting himself as a boastful, ill-bred man. His personal appearance did not aid him, for it partook of that animal which is said much to resemble some men. His voice, like the whine of a dog, was rendered more unpleasant by a spluttering lisp, occasioned by his inability to bring his lower jaw forward enough to meet his protruding upper lip."

his position. Mr Barker, he tells his listening audience, "comes as an exponent of God's will to man. I come as a student of rising thought, of the endeavour to know—as a student of the great problem of life. I have no revelation; I have no bitter excommunications—no anathemas to hurl upon you; but I have this to say: the wide book of humanity lies open before you. Turn its pages over. I can offer you no inducements to come here. I admit that to be a Freethinker is to be an outlaw, according to the laws of England. I admit that to profess your disbelief renders you liable at the present moment to fine and imprisonment and penal servitude. I admit that that is the statute law of England. I admit that if you are free enough to say you are an infidel, your evidence may in a court of justice be rejected, and that so you may be robbed.* I admit we have not wealth and power on our side—power which the Christian Church, through eighteen centuries of extortion, has managed to get together. But I tell you what we have. We have the pleasant consciousness that we make the public conscience and public opinion step by step with each thought we give out and each good deed we do. Our church is not a narrow church, nor narrow chapel, nor Bible sect, but the wide church of humanity, covered by no steeple, with texts preached from no pulpit, but with each man as his own priest, working out his own salvation, and that of his fellows too—not on his knees, but on his feet, with clenched hand and nervous brain, fighting wrong and asserting right, and striving to make humanity freer."

On Monday and Wednesday, the 1st and 3rd of February 1864, Mr Bradlaugh met Thomas Cooper, the sometime Freethinker, author of the "Purgatory of Suicides," and now "Lecturer on Christianity," in debate. This debate had been talked of for nearly eight years, but although Mr Bradlaugh was eager for the fray Mr Cooper was more reluctant; he affected to despise his junior for his lack of learning, and several times publicly derided his "ignorance"; he himself was reputed a scholar, and boasted a knowledge of fourteen languages. As it was, Mr Cooper himself worded the subjects to be discussed, and refused to meet my father under his *nom de guerre* of "Iconoclast." On the first evening Mr

* This was in 1862, before the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and Mr Bradlaugh's Oaths Act, 1888.

Cooper was to affirm "the Being of God as the Maker of the Universe," and on the second "the Being of God as the Moral Governor of the Universe." As the affirmer he had the advantage of leading the discussion each night.

The wording of the question put Mr Bradlaugh in a peculiar position: he was "to state the argument on the Negative side," and as any reasonable person will, I think, clearly see, he could only do this by showing the fallacy of the arguments used by the affirmer. He told his audience: "I do not stand here to prove that there is no God. If I should undertake to prove such a proposition I should deserve the ill words of the oft-quoted Psalmist applied to those who say there is no God. I do not say there is no God, but I am an Atheist without God. To me the word 'God' conveys no idea, and it is because the word 'God' to me never expressed a clear and definite conception . . . . that I am Atheist, ... The word 'God' does not, to my mind, express an eternal, infinite, omnipotent, intelligent, personal conscious being, but is a word without meaning and no effect other than it derives from the passions and prejudices of those who use it."

This debate should have been of more than ordinary interest; both disputants were lecturers and debaters of long standing, and as an exponent of the evidences of Christianity Mr Thomas Cooper's reputation was, I believe, considerable. And since he had himself once spoken from the Freethought standpoint, he, more than another, should have been prepared to grapple with the difficulties which lay between the Atheist and a belief in God the Creator and Moral Governor of the Universe. Having read his speeches, I am surprised at the poorness of his arguments, and am driven to the conclusion that his reputation has been considerably overstated—that is to say, his reputation as an expounder of Christian doctrines: his language was sometimes absolutely childish; of his merits as a poet I know nothing. "B. V." wrote some amusing verses* descriptive of Mr Cooper's position as laid down by him in his opening speech, and a writer in the *Christian Times* for February 3rd related the impression produced on him by Mr Bradlaugh on the first night:

"Let me do this gentleman justice. He was neither vulgar nor arrogantly egotistical. He has a loud, harsh voice. He is thoroughly

* See "Poems, Essays, and Fragments." (A. and H. B. Bonner).

earnest in address. His thoughts come to him with admirable orderliness. His logical faculty is strong, and his speaking faculty is something to be amazed at. He combines precision with volubility. He makes argument rhetorically climacteric. In retort, by-play, and insinuation, he evinces very considerable skill. He is an adept in the use of satire. His style is sharp, clear, incisive. In short, he is evidently a young man of somewhat remarkable abilities, who with his present opinions must do much mischief, but under a holier inspiration would do immense good. In saying this about him, I am but speaking honest truth. I have already said with what a prejudice against him I went to the hall. I am frank enough to confess that I found that prejudice to be to a great extent based on ignorance of the man. It has been the custom of many Christian organs to hold the teachers of Atheism up to scorn for ignorance, conceit, incapacity, and a wanton indulgence in gross and vulgar blasphemies. Often enough the representation has been only too faithful; but it would be simply an absurd and self-refuting falsehood to charge any of these things on Mr Bradlaugh, as far as his behaviour on Monday night would enable one to form an estimate of his character. He used sharp weapons, it is true, but he used them skilfully; he had a most repulsive task, granted, but he came up to it with a manly candour and went through it without resorting to a word, gesture, or glance that was indicative of the desire to be unnecessarily offensive."*

I have taken this somewhat lengthy extract from the article as giving a frank avowal of a prejudgment of my father, unwarranted by the real facts as realised by a Christian auditor. And yet it was in these early years that Mr Bradlaugh is said to have been so "unnecessarily offensive" by those who during the last few years of his life were compelled to own that he was not so bad after all. These persons, lacking the generous candour of the writer in the *Christian Times* of 1864, endeavour to excuse their earlier injustice by saying that, if not coarse and offensive now, he had been at one time, and his manners had much improved. This quotation may serve, to those who still need it, as a hostile contemporary witness in Mr Bradlaugh's favour.

On September 25th and 26th, 1865, Mr Bradlaugh had yet

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* Despite the sharpness—to use no harsher term—of Mr Cooper's words and manner towards him, my father bore no malice, and showed himself quite ready to forgive and forget. A few months later, hearing that Mr Cooper was in very straitened circumstances, he expressed his desire to be allowed to join in the scheme for assisting his old opponent, for he believed him "to have been a well-intentioned, warm-hearted man, and one who, as a politician, has done good work."

another debate with his Swedenborgian antagonist, the Rev. Woodville Woodman. The debate was held in the theatre at Northampton, which was crowded, numbers of people being unable to obtain admission on the first night. He had arranged for a three nights' discussion six weeks later at Keighley with the Rev. Mr Porteous of Glasgow. He was to lecture at Liverpool on Sunday, October 29th, and the debate was down for the following Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On the Saturday the express train in which he was travelling to Liverpool ran into some luggage vans between Woodhouse and Sheffield, and he was very severely shaken. How severely he did not at once realise, and with his usual disregard of himself he insisted upon fulfilling his engagement at Liverpool. After the exertion of delivering three lectures he felt so much worse that the journey to Keighley, followed by three nights' discussion, seemed out of the question. He communicated with Mr Porteous and came home; I have a distinct recollection of seeing my father come into the house, looking terribly ill. The Rev. Mr Porteous refused to postpone his engagement; in fact, he never answered Mr Bradlaugh's letter, but insisted on proceeding in his absence. For the first two nights he "debated" in solitary grandeur, but on the third night Mr Bradlaugh was represented by Mr John Watts, who, "at Iconoclast's request," went to Keighley to meet Mr Porteous on one night at least. The committee of the Rev. Mr Porteous paid their champion out of the proceeds, but "*he nevertheless afterwards claimed and received from Iconoclast the further sum of* £2 10s., *not for expenses, but to make up his 'fee.'*"* In June of the following year Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing at Keighley, and when he arrived there he found the walls of the town and neighbourhood placarded with a "Challenge to the Image Breaker" from Mr Porteous. This "challenge" rather prematurely assumed reluctance on Mr Bradlaugh's part; it was at once accepted, and the debate fixed for two or three days later, the 14th and 15th June. The subject for the discussion, which was held in the Temperance Hall, was "Is the Bible a divine revelation?" and people attended from Burnley, Leeds, Bradford, and outlying districts; but judging from a brief report which is all I have to guide me,

* *National Reformer*, June 24th, 1866.

I doubt whether it was much worth a journey to listen to. Mr Porteous angrily spoke of my father as

"one who, being a lawyer's clerk, had never been trusted with a brief; but who, in swollen rhetoric and with blatant voice, had indulged in misstatements and misrepresentations of the Bible which nothing could justify." *

It is rather curious to note, too, that during the evening the Rev. Mr Porteous, just as the Rev. Brewin Grant had done on a former occasion, strongly complained that Iconoclast looked at him whilst he was speaking." †

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* *National Reformer*, June 24th, 1866.

† "Look at me," said Bagheera, and Mowgli looked at him steadily between the eyes. The big panther turned his head away in half a minute.

"*That* is why," he said, shifting his paw on the leaves, "not even I can look thee between the eyes, and I was born among men, and I love thee, little brother. The others they hate thee, because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise; because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet; because thou art a man!"

Mowgli's Brothers, by RUDYARD KIPLING.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE WORLD IS MY COUNTRY, TO DO GOOD IS MY RELIGION."

A DEMONSTRATION was held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon, September 28th, 1862, for the purpose of expressing sympathy with Garibaldi, and protesting against the occupation of Rome by the French troops. The hour announced for the meeting was three o'clock, and by that time the *Morning Advertiser* estimated that there were between 12,000 and 15,000 persons present. The proceedings were, however, very badly managed; no steps whatever were taken for keeping order, and, indeed, by three o'clock none of the conveners of the meeting had put in an appearance, nor had any arrangements whatever been made for a platform for the speakers. Mr Bradlaugh had been asked to speak, and was, as a matter of course, punctually upon the scene. He found a ready-made platform in a great heap about fourteen yards by nine, and rising three feet from the ground. About this heap, upon which he and a few others had posted themselves, the crowd gathered, and at length Mr Bradlaugh, seeing no signs of the conveners, commenced to speak. He was soon stopped by interruptions of every kind, and to make things a little more regular, a chairman was appointed; but the chairman had hardly begun to address the people when he "was hurled with his friends from their seat of eminence by a movement which a few Irish roughs had organised in the rear of them, down amongst the crowd beneath. By remarkable dexterity, however, the chairman regained his place upon the mount." * His efforts to be heard were again unavailing, and the proceedings rapidly developed into a free fight.

"During one of the lulls in the fighting position of the affair," says the *Morning Advertiser*, "Mr Bradlaugh proposed a resolution to the effect that the meeting was of opinion that Garibaldi was faithfully

* *Morning Advertiser.*

doing his duty when he fell at Aspromonte, and desired to express its admiration of the heroic fortitude he displayed in his hour of trial."

The resolution was seconded and supported amid general uproar, "while it was confidently stated that in the course of the discussion of it, and during one of the encounters for the possession of the platform, an attempt was made to stab Mr Bradlaugh." *

Thus an assemblage which should have done honour to Garibaldi as well as to England, for, as the *Advertiser* says, "it was composed of the élite of the working classes and a large portion of the middle class," was turned by the Irish Catholics into a fight and a panic calling for the interference of the police. It is little to be wondered at that when Mr Bradlaugh was invited by the Working Men's Committee to attend and speak he hesitated to accept the invitation, feeling as he did that the conveners were not able to control the antagonism of the Irish Catholics which had already manifested itself at other meetings. "I have no wish," he afterwards said, "for immediate martyrdom, and considerably abbreviated my speech when I found that knives were used as arguments."

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* Mr Robert Forder, who was present at the Garibaldi meeting, sends me the following vivid account of what took place on that day:—

"That afternoon," he relates, "was the first time I had the honour and pleasure of speaking to your father. A few of us at Deptford, where I then resided, had had printed a quantity of handbills announcing the debate with the Rev. W. Barker, then appearing in the *National Reformer*. I gave your father one, for which he thanked me. I should like, with your permission, to add a few words as to what took place on that exciting afternoon. The Irish Catholics had been well whipped up for the occasion, and were there in force; most of them dock and bricklayers' labourers, and in the mass totally uneducated. There were three mounds of earth and stones intended to repair or make roads, each about four feet high, and, so far as I can recollect after thirty years have gone by, about thirty yards long by eight deep. These were about fifty yards apart, and on the middle one were gathered the men and two women—one of the latter in a red 'jumper,' that was afterwards known in fashion as a 'Garibaldi.' The Irish were massed on and around the two other mounds, and during the early part of the proceedings contented themselves with singing a refrain for 'God and Rome.' It was about ten minutes after your father had begun to speak that a signal was given, on which a sudden rush was made upon the meeting. There had not been up to this moment any indication whatever that the Irish were armed, but every man and woman (and there were many women and girls with them) was possessed of a bludgeon of some sort. Their onslaught was furious and

In the winter of 1862 Mr Bradlaugh made a public appeal to the Freethinkers of Great Britain to raise money on behalf of the distressed Lancashire operatives. He begged them to "waste no time, but at once in your large workshops and in your social meetings levy a rate for the reduction of the Lancashire distress." Those who were Freethinkers amongst the destitute in Lancashire were of course relieved by the General Relief Committee, but naturally they were excluded from the various charitable undertakings carried out by committees belonging to different denominations. As the relief afforded by the General Committee and the Board of Guardians only averaged 1s. 8½d. per head weekly, it will be seen how greatly dependent the distressed were upon the extra help of these other committees. A touching little story of Christian charity *versus* principle in rags was taken by Mr T. S. Oates, then Secretary to the Lancashire Secular Union Special Distress Fund, from the *Rochdale Observer* of Dec. 13th, and was, he said, a fair sample of what frequently happened. A benevolent lady belonging to Middleton, on making her usual charitable round, entered one day a house in Parkfield, where she found "poverty in its worst shape." The father of the family was in rags, and the lady told the man that if he would come to her house that evening she would give him other clothes. The man, of course, was overjoyed, but when

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brutal, and for a time successful. They carried the mound in a few minutes, but the blood upon many of our friends aroused such a feeling of indignation, that in a time less than it takes me to write it the mound was stormed from the Piccadilly side, and again captured by us. There were in the crowd about a dozen Grenadier Guardsmen, who were ardent admirers of Garibaldi, and there were quite fifty others, possibly passive spectators. The former formed two deep, and with their walking-sticks rushed down the mound into the mass of the yelling Irish. The effect was electrical. Their comrades in the crowd raised a sudden shout, and in ten minutes the Irish were in full retreat, throwing away their sticks to escape the indignation of the people they had so wantonly and brutally attacked. Many were captured by the police, and I clearly remember the constables gathering up their bludgeons, and making bundles of them with their belts. It must be confessed that no quarter was given, and scores of them got severely mauled. Cardinal Wiseman referred to the brutality of the infidel mob in a pastoral a few days after, in which he used the term 'lambs' to describe these religious ruffians. *Punch*, the next week, 'caught on' to this word, and in its weekly cartoon depicted this mob of Irish assailing a public meeting over the heading of 'Cardinal Wiseman's Lambs.'"

he was told that after he had the clothes he would be expected to attend church, and if he did not do so the clothes were to be returned, his joy was considerably cooled down. Then it was said that

"after making her statement, the lady left to make further inquiries into the cases of distress, leaving the man of poverty to reflect on the offer made to him. After a short consideration he commenced looking at his unsightly apparel, and then muttered to himself: 'Yo mun poo me through a bit longer, owd friends; it'll do noan to pop mi conscience for a shute of cloas!'"

My father did not preach without practising, although to me it is marvellous how, with his own struggle for existence, he always found a way to help others in their struggles. But this winter it was especially hard: several times he was called away to the Continent, and several times his health broke down, until he was so ill that he had to give up editing his paper, and for some months was also obliged to give up lecturing. Nevertheless, he contrived to keep an engagement he had made to lecture for the Relief Fund in Manchester on Feb. 1, 1863, in which he paid the whole of his own expenses, and so was able to hand £10 over to the Treasurer. Later on in the year he was lecturing again on behalf of the same object.

Almost concurrently with his efforts to raise money for Lancashire, he was making eloquent appeals for funds to aid Poland against her oppressors, and when he had somewhat recovered his health he addressed meetings on behalf of the struggling Poles. He spoke at Plumstead, Deptford, and Cleveland Hall, at Birmingham and Sheffield, where the fire and passion of his speeches evoked the utmost enthusiasm; at Halifax, where people walked eight and ten miles in the drenching rain to hear him, and at other places the details of which are not recorded. "Viva la Polonia" was a cry which, twenty years ago, found "a sympathising echo from every freeman in Europe, from every honest heart in the civilised world;" and my father was behind none in the warmth of his sympathy, or in the activity he displayed to give it practical effect.

Neither, with all this public work, was he unmindful or ungrateful for kindnesses shown himself personally; and so he never forgot the debt he owed his early friend, Mr Jones, who now in

consequence of old age and infirmities was reduced to extreme poverty. In the November of this same year he gave the last of his annual lectures for the benefit of his staunch old friend. On this occasion, too, Mr Bendall, the lessee of the Hall of Science, gave the use of the hall—as indeed he frequently did, often at considerable inconvenience to himself—and the proceeds of the lecture and subscriptions amounted to upwards of £8, of which the greater part served to pay the funeral expenses of the brave old man, who, contemporary with Thomas Paine, had played his part in the struggles for a free press, particularly in those which we associate with the names of men like Richard Carlile, Wooler, and Hone.

In March 1864 occurred the great inundation at Sheffield; along the valleys of the Loxley and the Don all was ruin and desolation. Whole rows of houses, mills, and bridges were carried away, and huge trees were torn up by the force of the rushing water. Many lives were lost, and those who escaped with life lost every atom they possessed save the garments in which they escaped. Many funds were started for the relief of those so suddenly made destitute, and Mr Bradlaugh was not slow in offering his help. A Sheffield man, writing at the time, said that the quality of practical sympathy was one possessed by Mr Bradlaugh "in a pre-eminent degree, and it is a trait in his character which will add lustre to his name, and form a rich gem in the wreath which shall adorn his memory long after he shall have laid his honoured head in the silent tomb. . . . His large, generous heart is never insensible to the sounds of human distress; and accordingly no sooner did he hear of the Sheffield catastrophe than he at once volunteered his services towards the relief of the sufferers." *

I have mentioned these cases with the idea of showing how wide and how ready were my father's sympathies. To give money help was no easy matter to him: he could not write a cheque and say, "Put my name down for this sum or for that;" he could not even give by denying himself some little luxury: every penny he gave had to be specially earned for that purpose, but not-

* He gave two lectures in the Mechanics' Institute (lent to the Freethinker for this occasion), and the proceeds, £8 11s. 4d., were handed over to the fund. "No lecturer gave more to the needy than Iconoclast," said Mr Austin Holyoake.

withstanding this, real distress rarely appealed to him in vain.*

Unable to do so much provincial lecturing in consequence of the demands made upon his time by his business, Mr Bradlaugh was yet often to be found during the latter part of 1865 at the Hall of Science, City Road; but in the early part of 1866 he was away in Italy so much, sometimes for weeks together, that he could do very little lecturing. The proceeds of these winter lectures at the old Hall of Science were to go to the Hall of Science Company, which he was then actively projecting. The lease of the City Road Hall expired early in 1866, and the renewal had been refused. It was proposed to lease or purchase a suitable building, or a site of land on which to build a lecture-hall and rooms for classes for secular instruction, etc. To aid in providing funds for this purpose, it was Mr Bradlaugh's desire to purchase one hundred shares out of the proceeds of his lectures, and to that end he devoted the whole of his profits on each occasion that he lectured at the Hall of Science.

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* One of the latest letters he ever wrote, bearing date Jan. 12, 1891, shows him always the same. He says: "I am extremely sorry to read your letter, but I have, unfortunately, no means whatever except what I earn from day to day with my tongue and pen. If the Committee think it wise, I will lecture for the benefit of such a fund."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REFORM LEAGUE, 1866–1868.

In 1866 the National Reform League was proving itself an extremely active organisation. Mr Edmund Beales was its honoured President, and Mr George Howell the Secretary. Mr Bradlaugh was one of its Vice-Presidents, and he had, oddly enough, amongst his colleagues the Rev. W. H. Bonner, the father of his future son-in-law. Mr Bonner had been, and was until his death in 1869, a Lecturer for the Peace Society, and was then a Vice-President and Lecturer of the Reform League. They worked together with the greatest cordiality, and Mr Bradlaugh on one occasion wrote that he wished there were more clergymen like the Rev. Mr Bonner. My father took part in most of the meetings of the League which were held in London and in many of those held in the provinces, and his value as an advocate was appreciated by men opposed to the Reform Bill—then before Parliament—as well as by those on his own side who were not blinded by bigotry.

On May 21st a great demonstration in support of the Bill was held upon Primrose Hill, and was addressed by Mr Beales, Mr Cremer, Colonel Dickson, Mr Lucraft, and others. Mr Bradlaugh moved the second resolution, and his eloquence so impressed the reporter to the *Standard* that that gentleman, who had assuredly come "to scoff," remained, if not "to pray," yet to give and record a reluctant admiration. The leader which appeared in the *Standard* for the following day was intended to he humorously descriptive of the proceedings without too fine a regard for facts; and in it we find the following notice of Mr Bradlaugh and his speech, which the writer said was frequently and enthusiastically applauded:

"At length, however, a young gentleman—by the name, we believe, of Bradlaugh—sprang into the chair, and for the moment awakened in

the wind-chilled throng a faint thrill of something like enthusiasm. At first, judging from the cast of his countenance and from a certain twinkle in his eye as he adjusted himself to his task, we anticipated a decidedly comic address. But the event soon showed that we were mistaken, and the speaker, admirably as his face was adapted for purposes of comedy, was himself terribly in earnest; so earnest, indeed, and so thoroughly *d'accord* with his audience, that he soon woke them up from the lethargy in which they had remained ever since the first old gentleman had begun to read to them the unpublished proofs of next morning's *Star*, and set them crying 'Hear, hear,' 'That's so,' 'Hurray,' 'Down with the Peers,' 'Shame, shame,' and so on. Bearing in mind the blood-red banner and the *bonnet rouge*, it is needless to say that the speech of this energetic gentleman—who, be it observed, spoke really extremely well—consisted simply of a furious onslaught upon English institutions in general, and upon Government and the House of Lords in particular. He would like to see that wretched institution that battened upon the life-blood of the English people swept away for ever; and here the Reformers cried 'Hear, hear,' and applauded with voice and hand. And that was what things were tending to; that was what this Bill really meant; and he differed from their worthy president —who had apparently been endeavouring to persuade the meeting to adopt that convenient little Liberal fib that the present Bill had really nothing democratic about it—in being ready and willing to take his stand as a supporter of the Government measure upon the ground that it was democratic, and that its real effect would be to sweep away the whole expensive machinery of the constitution, Government itself included. All this, of course, everybody knew before, but it is not every Liberal Reformer who is bold enough to say it. . . . . The speaker concluded with a significant reminder that on this occasion they were allowed to meet undisturbed, because they met in support of a Government measure, but that their normal condition—he did not say normal, but that was the meaning of it—was one of opposition to all Government, and that he might have to call upon them to meet here or elsewhere, or even under the walls of the sham Parliament at Westminster, when the whole strength of Government would be put forth to prevent the meeting, and when the English people would rise in their might," etc.

The sarcasm and humour of the foregoing make it no easy matter to pick out the scattered grains of truth: nevertheless, we may gather from it that the boldness, earnestness, and eloquence of the "young gentleman by the name, we believe, of Bradlaugh," did this much—it made an unusual impression upon his Tory listener.

At a great gathering * held in Trafalgar Square on the 2nd of July, my father was one of the speakers. Lord Russell and Mr Gladstone had resigned from the Ministry, and Lord Derby had been "sent for." Parliament stood adjourned until July 5th, and the Reform League held this meeting prior to the reassembling of the House to protest against the proposed Derby administration, and to deplore the retirement of Mr Gladstone and Lord Russell. There was unusual excitement about this meeting, for Sir Richard Mayne had first of all intimated that it would not be allowed to take place. He, however, met with such a strenuous outburst of condemnation that for the moment he was checked, and withdrew his prohibition. By this time Mr Bradlaugh's popularity in London was becoming very great, and in the *Times*' notice of the meeting it is remarked that he was the chief favourite, and that "the mass soon commenced clamouring" for him.

The Derby Cabinet, as every one is aware, was formed with Disraeli † in Gladstone's place as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and with the formation of the new Cabinet all immediate hopes of the passing of any real measure of Reform were abandoned, although the League continued its work with untiring energy. An utterance of Mr Bradlaugh's on the chief point in the programme of Reform then advocated, viz. extension of the Suffrage, is worth repeating here, as it indicates a line of conduct which Mr Bradlaugh himself pursued and enjoined upon others in regard to other matters of Reform than the Suffrage. He would always seek and work for a thorough and complete measure; but if he could not get all that he asked for, rather than have nothing, and thus leave matters in the bad state in which he found them, he would take what ameliorations he could get *without ceasing to aim at ultimately winning the whole.* He had, at the time of which I am writing, occasion to allude to a little pamphlet published in 1838. He remarked:—

"The author says well when he tells you, 'Demand universal Suffrage;' but I am not quite sure that he is right in saying,

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* The number of persons present was variously estimated at from 30,000 to "upwards of 60,000."

† Mr Bradlaugh commented somewhat epigrammatically: "The Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli is perhaps the man best fitted to be in opposition, and the least fitted to govern amongst our prominent men. His waistcoats have been brilliant, but his Parliamentary measures cannot always successfully compare with the result of his tailor's skill."

'Take no less than your full demand.' He is right in declaring the Suffrage a natural right, and therefore undoubtedly all our agitation should be based on this principle; but I am not of opinion that the extension of the Suffrage to a portion of the working or middle classes necessarily makes them enemies to their unenfranchised brethren. Each step in the Reform movement, whether theological, social, or political, is educational in its effects even beyond the circle in which the step is taken. My advice would be: Seek justice; but refuse no point which may be conceded, for each concession gives you additional means and strength to enforce your claim. The people are growing stronger and more worthy every day; but there are, alas! even yet in this country hundreds of thousands who are intellectually too weak for, and apparently hardly worthy of, enfranchisement. Our mission is to educate them to strength and worthiness, to strip off the badge of servitude they wear, to teach them that labour's rights and duties are as honourable and onerous as the rights and duties of the wealthiest employer of labour, and that the labourer—if honest and true to his manhood—has a higher patent of nobility than was ever given by yellow parchment or crumbling seal."

The Tories had declared that the people themselves did not want any extension of the suffrage, and spoke sneeringly of the apathy and indifference of the working classes towards any measure of enfranchisement. Determined to show they were not apathetic, working men in London and the provinces held meeting after meeting. The one in Trafalgar Square was followed three weeks later by that famous gathering in Hyde Park, when the railings "came down." This meeting was announced for Monday, July 22nd, but a few days before the time arrived Sir Richard Mayne posted a notification on the park gates forbidding the meeting to take place; and this time Sir Richard Mayne held to his prohibition. The Council of the National Reform League met on the 20th specially to consider this police order; Mr Beales, the president, stated the case as impartially as possible, and put the legal difficulties before the Council. Mr Bradlaugh moved that notwithstanding the police notice of prohibition the meeting be persisted in. Mr Cremer and others opposed the resolution, but when it was put it was carried by a large majority. Mr Bradlaugh put himself entirely under the direction of Mr Beales, and it was arranged that at the given time the leaders of the demonstration

should appear at the Marble Arch and demand admission into the park; if this was refused, having made their protest, they should separate into divisions and proceed quietly by different routes to Trafalgar Square.

When the time came, procession after procession marched in orderly fashion to the park gates, and the meeting became a truly magnificent one, composed as it was mainly of respectable working men, thoroughly earnest in their desire for Reform. They were not all Londoners either; there were representative men from the provinces, from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Plymouth, and other parts, men who had travelled many miles and undergone much fatigue to take part in the forbidden demonstration. From a brief notice of the meeting which Mr Bradlaugh wrote for the *National Reformer*, it appears that Mr Beales and the committee reached the Marble Arch Gates shortly after seven o'clock, and leaving their vehicles they went together to the police at the gate to demand admission. "The police, however, meant mischief; one mounted man, 'V. 32,' backed his horse right on to Mr Beales and myself, and the example being followed by another mounted policeman, some confusion was created, and this was evidently the result desired by the police. The truncheons were all out, and some rough intimations given to those in front that mischief was meant." On his demand being made and refused, Mr Beales and his colleagues turned, as had been arranged, to lead the meeting by different routes to Trafalgar Square. Mr Bradlaugh's division turned down Park Lane, but some of those on the outside, being irritated by the behaviour of the police, made an attack upon the railings of the Park. Having read numerous accounts of this episode, I should judge that the first railings fell partly accidentally through the enormous pressure of the moving crowd, and were partly torn up in anger. When a few rails had given way, the idea of gaining ingress to the park in that manner spread through the crowd like a flash of light, and in a few minutes many yards of railings were upon the ground and the people leaping excitedly over them. Mr Bradlaugh, strenuously adhering to the programme of his leader to carry the meeting to Trafalgar Square, set himself to the difficult task of restraining the wild tumult and preventing the mass from destroying the railings and forcing an entry. After a little, although not before he himself had been knocked down, he was successful, and his column resumed its orderly and peaceful

march to Trafalgar Square, "whence, after much speechifying, we all went home." The *Times* remarked that in his efforts to prevent a breach of the peace "Mr Bradlaugh got considerably hustled . . . . falling under the suspicion of being a government spy." It is little to be wondered at that the people hardly knew friend from foe, for the confusion and excitement were so great that they were for a moment bewildered. The police, said the *Morning Star*,

"hit out with their truncheons like savages who, having been under temporary control, were now at full liberty to break heads and cut open faces to their hearts' content. It mattered not to them whether the interloper had actively exerted himself to force an entrance, or whether he had been merely hurled in the irresistible crush of those who pressed behind. Wherever there was a skull to fracture, they did their best to fracture it; everybody was in their eyes an enemy to whom no mercy was to be shown. The mob was at first stunned by the vigour of the assault, but presently turned upon the aggressors and repaid blows with their kind—in the end inflicting as much punishment as they received."

In any case the police attempt to prevent the people entering the park was futile, for although the more orderly passed on to the appointed meeting-place, in the course of half-an-hour many thousands gained admission through the openings made in the railings. At length, the police confessing themselves powerless, the military were called out and marched through the park. Lord Derby, in the House of Lords, asserted that altogether not less than 1400 yards of railings were pulled down, and complained loudly of the injury done to the flower-beds and other "property of the Crown;" but on this head a rather remarkable statement was made by Mr Cowper, M.P., formerly First Commissioner of the Works, who expressed himself against holding public meetings in the Park. Mr Cowper said that when the crowd (composed, according to the *Times*, of "London roughs") had

"forced down the railings and made good their entrance to the Park, they abstained from injuring the flowers, and even in the heat and hurry of the disturbance, they frequently went round along the grass so as not to tread upon the flower-beds and borders."

After all their prohibitions and precautions to prevent the people from holding orderly meeting and giving public expression to their opinion, backed too as they were by police and soldiers, the Government could only feebly say in the House that the measures

they had taken had prevented "some part of the contemplated proceedings from taking place." They might also have truthfully added that these same measures had also brought about the destruction of the Park railings, and numerous broken heads, "proceedings" which were not "contemplated," at least, by the conveners of the meeting.

A week later, before the excitement had time to cool down, another great meeting was held in the Agricultural Hall, and I have often heard my father say he had never seen gathered together in any building so many men as found their way into the Agricultural Hall on that occasion. He reckoned there must have been upwards of 25,000 persons present, without counting those who came and went away in despair at not being able to see or hear on the outskirts of so large a crowd. The great difficulty seems to have been to hear the speakers, and with such a vast assembly it is not surprising to find that many of them could only be heard by those nearest to the platform. Mr Bradlaugh himself felt how impossible it was to make every one hear. He moved the second resolution, praying the House of Commons to institute an inquiry into the conduct of Sir Richard Mayne and his subordinates at Hyde Park on the previous Monday, and wound up what the *Times* describes as a "telling speech," with his favourite quotation from Shelley's "Masque of Anarchy."

One of the results of this week of disturbance was the arrest of several "good men and true," amongst whom was Mr Nieass, whose recent death his friends and co-workers have good reason to mourn. On the evening of July 25th Mr Bradlaugh was suddenly summoned to Bow Street; some member of the Reform League Council was reported to be under arrest. When he reached the police station he found Mr Nieass, who had been seized by the police in the Strand on a charge of inciting the people to resistance, whereas, as it was afterwards proved, he had been persuading them to disperse, and but for Mr Bradlaugh's pertinacity, Mr Nieass would have been, as others actually were, locked up all night, in spite of the fact that good bail was offered.

The Reform movement seem to grow and spread through England with marvellous rapidity. The great meetings in London found their echo in great meetings in the provinces. As Mr Bradlaugh was not possessed of any mysterious power of reduplicating himself, he was not of course present at all these gatherings,

although he somehow (I hardly know how) contrived to make time to attend a goodly number. On the first day of September, 12,000 persons met at short notice on Brandon Hill, Bristol, Mr Beales and Mr Bradlaugh attending as a deputation from London. I find it noted* that Mr Bradlaugh was much applauded during his address, and that he sat down amidst long and continued cheering and waving of hats. In the *Bristol Times and Mirror* there is a letter about the meeting from "A Man in the Crowd," and among much that was hostile and absurd he wrote: "The speech that told more than any other on Brandon Hill was that of Charles Bradlaugh, Esq., and it was the best portion of it that was appreciated; . . . . his exhortation to men to be manly carried his hearers along with him. . . . . Nothing was listened to after Mr Bradlaugh had finished." In a day or so, however, the good people of Bristol began to realise who this eloquent man was who had so moved that great crowd, and two days later he was referred to in the *Times and Mirror* in most abusive and scurrilous terms, whilst the *Wiltshire County Mirror* tried to work upon the imagination of its more timid readers by drawing a lurid picture of what was likely to happen if the Reformers were triumphant: "Mr Beales is not a professed infidel, we believe, but we are persuaded that his religious convictions and feelings are of a very indiarubber kind. . . . . Let these two gentlemen [Mr Bradlaugh and Mr G. J. Holyoake] have their way, and there would be an end to the institution of marriage, and communism with all its abominations would be established amongst us." When a too fertile imagination has carried a man thus far it is difficult to see why he should not put even a little more colour on to his brush; as it was, his statements only frightened "old ladies" (masculine and feminine), and so served the purpose of political, religious, or social intriguers. In this case it was the political intriguers who were specially served, for it was considered a capital notion to associate Mr Beales—and through him the cause of Reform—with "Infidelity," the abolition of "the institution of marriage," and the "abominations" of Communism. The four ideas well mixed together by not over-scrupulous writers, formed such a fine jumble that the ignorant and pious could not always distinguish the one from the other.

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* The *Bristol Daily Post*.

In London, during the autumn and winter, Mr Bradlaugh spoke for the Reform League at Chelsea, Cleveland Hall, Battersea, Pimlico, South Lambeth, the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, and many other places, but the note we found struck in the *Wiltshire County Mirror* reverberated with such force that at length my father said that he was not sure whether "the course taken by the cowardly respectable press in denouncing the movement as an infidel one, may not render it wiser for me to leave the platform advocacy of Reform at the large gatherings to men whose religious or irreligious views are not so well known as my own." But when a few weeks later he was re-elected upon the Executive of the Reform League, he resolved to allow no sneer at his creed to influence him; no slander to make him hesitate, but to do his best, whatever that best might be, to aid in winning the battle

"between Tory obstructiveness and the advancing masses; between vested interests and human happiness; between pensioned and salaried lordlings and landowners' off-shoots on the one hand, and the brown-handed bread-winner on the other." "The people must win," he said.

Yes, "the people must win"—in the end; but complete manhood suffrage is not ours yet, and universal suffrage is still far off. "The people must win," but Oh how long the winning; and alas! the cost to the victors.

In October Mr Bradlaugh was speaking for the League in Northampton. I wonder whether there are Northampton men who still remember that Reform demonstration held in their town in the autumn of sixty-six, when they carried out their programme in the pelting, pitiless rain, just as "cheerily and as steadfastly as though it had been sunshine and a clear sky." Do they remember the procession, I wonder, when men and women marched through the incessant downpour, the women as earnest as the men? And the meetings in the Corn Exchange and the Mechanics' Institute, where Mr Bradlaugh's speeches were received with great applause by an enthusiastic audience? There was a meeting at the Town Hall too, to which he went at Col. Dickson's invitation; though on arriving it was only to find that the Town Hall was reserved for the "respectable great guns," and therefore there was no room for him on that platform. But other times, other customs, and many a time has the Northampton Town Hall rung with his

voice since that wet October day twenty-eight years ago, when, "too proud to intrude," he went away slighted and scorned.

Great spontaneity and heartiness met him at Luton, which, "though a small town in a small county, gave us great welcome," said Mr Bradlaugh. It had been arranged that a conference of delegates (amongst whom were Mr Beales and Mr Bradlaugh, representing London) should be held previous to the Town Hall meeting, at Messrs Willis & Co.'s factory, but, much to the amazement of the delegates, when they reached the factory gates they found a meeting of several thousand persons collected there without call or summons; the gathering was such as "no living man had ever seen in that still increasing town." * Every one was so anxious to hear the speakers from London and elsewhere that the conference of delegates was abandoned, and a public meeting was at once held in Park Square, an open space in the centre of the town. The *Mercury* devoted a little leader to this Reform demonstration at Luton, in which it said that

"the terse and argumentative speech of Mr Bradlaugh roused the feelings of the thousands assembled to their highest pitch, and as he put the case of reform in a clear light he was most enthusiastically applauded."*

In the course of his address, which was interrupted again and again by the cheering of his audience, he felt it incumbent upon him to deny that these meetings partook of the character of physical force demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of working men, he pointed out, had assembled and kept their own order even when the police in their officiousness had failed to preserve it. This denial was made necessary by the attitude taken up by the Tories and weak Liberals who began to be frightened by the growth of popular opinion as exhibited in these great and orderly outdoor and indoor meetings which were taking place every week in London and the provinces. In order to hide their fear of *opinion* they began to pretend fear of physical force, and by dint of crying "Wolf" often and loudly they did not turn belief into disbelief like the boy in the story, but reversed the process, and were at length believed by men who ought

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* *Bedford Mercury* of November 24th.

†The *Morning Star* (London) of November 22nd also notes the enthusiasm provoked by Mr Bradlaugh's "animated speech."

to have known a great deal better. Take, for example, Matthew Arnold, who a year or so later made a wholly unprovoked attack upon Mr Bradlaugh, speaking of him as "Mr Bradlaugh, the Iconoclast, who seems to be almost for baptizing us all in blood and fire into his new social dispensation;" and again, "Mr Bradlaugh is evidently capable, if he had his head given him, of running us all into great dangers and confusion."* The pious journals were of course always and increasingly alarmed at the growing popular influence of the hated and despised Atheist, and tried their best to counteract it, each according to its lights. The most common way was to decry him: thus he was not "endowed with superior attainments," nor had he "any faculty or power of teaching other men." And after devoting a column or so to showing how mean were his intellectual powers, the Christian critic would then proceed in the like amiable fashion to decry Mr Bradlaugh's personal appearance.

Just about this time Mr Bradlaugh expressed himself upon a small matter which will strike a chord in the memories of many of those who took part in meetings with him. I mean bands at processions. He said he was glad to note "a strong disposition on the part of the Executive [of the Reform League] to avoid the use of bands of music in our future processions. Ten thousand men tramping seriously along the streets towards Westminster will be unmistakable evidence of our earnestness." This is the first public expression of his feeling on this subject that I have come across, but there will still be many who can recall how much Mr Bradlaugh objected to a serious procession being accompanied by flying flags and a beating drum. A gala meeting on a Northumberland or Durham moor was one thing, but men proceeding together in orderly fashion to soberly demand a right or strenuously protest against a wrong was another. But people like noise and merriment, even when they are very much in earnest, and my father often had to submit to the band and the banner, although in his heart he wished them well at home.

He generously determined that his lectures should not cos the League one farthing. True, his Freethought friends helped him as much as lay in their power, but they were poor, and the

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* Essay in *Cornhill Magazine*, 1868, reprinted in book form as "Culture and Anarchy."

demands upon their purses many, so that at the end of the year 1866 he found that in work for the League he had spent out of his own pocket £30 in mere travelling and hotel expenses.

At the quarterly election of officers in December 1866 Mr Bradlaugh was again elected upon the Executive, and he appealed to his friends to show renewed activity in the time of hard work which he felt lay before them. On February 11th (1867) the League held two mass meetings, one in the afternoon at Trafalgar Square, and one in the evening at the Agricultural Hall. The Trafalgar Square meeting was, if possible, "more complete, more orderly, and more resolute" than any previous one. Mr Baxter Langley and Mr Bradlaugh were appointed "deputy marshals;" they were mounted, and wore tri-coloured scarves and armlets (I have my father's now). It was their special duty to see that order was kept, and their office was no sinecure; for although the main body was entirely orderly, still on the outskirts there was a fair sprinkling of people who had come "to see the fun," and were bent on seeing it, even if they had to make it for themselves. One form of creating "fun" was the snatching off hats and throwing them into the fountain basins; another was throwing stones from above on to the crowd below. This dangerous amusement was checked by Mr Bradlaugh, who, singling out a young fellow who had thrown a stone from the front of the National Gallery, rode his horse right up the steps in pursuit. The young man escaped amongst his companions, but Mr Bradlaugh's energy stopped that form of "fun." That poor little brown horse! It would be difficult to say which was the more tired, horse or rider, before they parted company that day; the horse was small—as I have heard my father say—for the weight it had to carry, and my father had not crossed a horse since he left the army in 1853. For six and a half hours they kept order together, and both must have been heartily glad when they reached the Agricultural Hall, and the little brown horse went home to his stall and his supper whilst Mr Bradlaugh went inside to speak.*

* In a general "damnatory" description of the demonstration given from "a club window," which appeared in the *Times* of February 12th, there is a caricature of Mr Bradlaugh, spiteful in intent, but amusing and really interesting if one looks between the would-be scornful words. We are told that "a dapper youth, mounted on a brown horse, exerted himself to make up

The day wound up with the meeting in the Agricultural Hall, which was addressed by professors, clergymen, and members of Parliament, Irishmen, Scotchmen, and men like Ernest Jones, directly representing the working men. Never was there such a wonderful sight as this gathering. At the previous Agricultural Hall meeting "the vast hall presented a surging mass of human beings without form or coherence;" this time it was a solid body of thousands upon thousands of citizens with faces all anxiously upturned towards the platform. I know not whether it was arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should be one of the speakers or not, but in any case he was called for again and again by the audience, and in response made a brief but earnest speech.

At the next quarterly meeting of the Reform League he was re-elected on the Executive by a vote of five-sixths of those present, although he had made a grave declaration to the Council "that events were possible which would necessitate holding meetings under conditions forbidden by Act of Parliament, and that he, having determined if needful to resist the Government decision as to Hyde Park, did not desire to remain on the Executive of a body whom he might injure by a policy too advanced."

The storm of abuse now broke over Mr Bradlaugh's head in full force—always with intent to damage the Reform League, for his enemies had not yet taken the measure of his power and proportions. For the moment he was merely considered as a weapon,

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for the shortcomings of the public force, and was a host in himself. He was evidently a man in authority, and acted in close connection with the Reform magnates, whose carriages stopped the way before our doors. He raised his whip as freely as if it had been a constable's truncheon or gendarme's broadsword, and apostrophised, or—why should I not say the word—bullied the crowd in a tone and with manners which would have done an alguazil's heart good. The sovereign people put up with the man's arrogance with incredible meekness and patience, and allowed itself to be marshalled hither and thither as if the Queen's highway were the Leaguers' special property and the public were mere intruders."

The "Club" man was evidently irritated that these same people who at Hyde Park had refused to obey a police proclamation backed by a free use of the truncheon and display of the bayonet, yet implicitly obeyed the "youth mounted on a brown horse" whose only authority was derived from the love the people bore him. The sneer as to "tone" and "manners" is not worth noticing; you cannot issue commands to tens of thousands in Trafalgar Square in the same gentle tone in which you can ask for the salt to be passed across the dinner-table.

to be used unscrupulously, and pointed with lies. In this method of warfare the *Saturday Review** at one bound took a front place. The *Standard* on the 11th of March reprinted from it the article, "Who are the Leaguers?" from which journals all over the country took their lead. It was in this article of the *Saturday Review* that Mr Bradlaugh is made responsible for the story of the "Fanatical Monkeys" written by Charles Southwell (who probably derived it from some old fable), and rewritten from memory by J. P. Adams, who sent it to the *National Reformer*, where it was published on February 17, 1867. This story was reproduced in a hundred shapes, and of course my father was said to be the author of all of them, a proof, asserted these veracious ones, of his utter depravity. I have noted a letter of Mr Bradlaugh's, written in 1868, in which he asked to deny the story for at least "the hundredth time;" but denial was of little use; the lie sown by the *Saturday Review* in March 1867, like most other ill weeds, throve apace, and was even repeated so late as two years ago. Speaking in Trafalgar Square on March 11th, where as usual he was "loudly called for," † he said those who were carrying on the struggle had not entered into it without counting the cost, and, confident in their own strength and manhood, they were determined upon gaining their rights. He compared the people with a "resistless wave," and warned those who should dare "to stem the tide." The *Weekly Dispatch* jeered at "the figurative Bradlaugh" for this speech, and, trying in its turn to injure the Reform League, suggested that the demonstrations were more welcome to the thieves than to any other class of metropolitan society. Others, like the *Sunday Times*, struck with the determination and confident purpose betokened in such a speech, chose to interpret it to mean physical force, and said—

"The Reform Leaguers throughout the country are beginning to talk treason and must be watched. 'Iconoclast,' who, but for his disposition to violence, would be altogether too vulgar for notice, systematically threatens violation of the law, and defiance of the powers that be."

The *Sunday Times* then went on, in the same paragraph, to speak in terms of reprobation of "a person" who, at some meeting at Newcastle, urged that an attempt should be made to win the sympathies of the army, so that in the event of "a collision" the

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* March 9th, 1867. † *Times*, March 12th, 1867.

people and the army would be on the same side. The remarks of an unnamed person at some meeting at which Mr Bradlaugh was not even present, were thus used as though he were responsible for them.

Lord Derby's Government began to be frightened at the possibilities evoked by its own fears and the determined persistence of the League. Special reporters were sent to the meetings in order to verify speeches for the purposes of a prosecution, a course which merely made the speakers more stern and more outspoken. In May it was resolved to hold another mass meeting in Hyde Park: the Reform League leaders were convinced that they had the law on their side, and they meant to insist on their rights. Mr Edmund Beales issued an address to the men of London, calling upon them to meet the Council of the League in Hyde Park on Monday evening, May 6th. "Come," he said, "as loyal, peaceful, and orderly citizens, enemies of all riot and tumult, but unalterably fixed and resolved in demanding and insisting upon what you are entitled to. If time presses, stay not to form in processions, but come straight from your work, come without bands and banners." On the same evening that Mr Beales' address was read over to the Council of the League, an "admonition" from the Government was served upon the delegates, warning all persons "to abstain from attending, aiding, or taking part in any such meeting, or from entering the Park with a view to attend, aid, or take part in such meeting."

Much pressure was put upon Mr Beales to prevent the meeting from being held, but he, knowing that he and his colleagues were in the right, and *knowing that the Government knew it also*, persisted in the determination arrived at, after due deliberation, by the Council. The Government reluctantly, and at the last moment—that is, in the issue of the *Times* for May 6th—acknowledged that they had no power to eject the demonstrators from the Park. Having decided that they had not the law on their side, Lord Derby, snatching at a straw, thought the Park regulations would help them, and sent a message to the League in the afternoon that the meeting would be prohibited; and there was a talk of prosecuting for trespass each person who had received the notice of prohibition. But all this "tall talk" was absolutely without effect: 200,000 persons went to the Park. Mr Bradlaugh was one of the first to enter, and Platform No. 8 was a "very great

centre of attraction, for this was the scene of Mr Bradlaugh's oratory." *

Mr Bradlaugh was, as I said, re-elected on the Executive of the League on the full understanding that he had determined to resist the Government decision as to Hyde Park. During the spring-time he lectured week after week in London and the provinces, not only bearing his own expenses, but on one occasion, at least, actually paying for tickets for his wife and friends. On May 6th, the demonstration maintaining the right of the people to meet in the people's park was held, in spite of Lord Derby's opposition and prohibition. On the following day, May 7th, Mr Bradlaugh tendered his resignation as vice-president and member of the Council and the Executive of the Reform League; he took this course "in order to deprive the enemies of reform of the pretext for attack on the League afforded by my irreligion, and to save some of the friends of the League from the pain of having their names associated with my own." Especially Mr Bradlaugh praises the honourable and straightforward conduct of Mr Beales, but deeply regrets that he (Mr Beales) should have felt it necessary publicly to disclaim responsibility for his sayings, and hopes that his resignation will relieve him from pain. The League only accepted Mr Bradlaugh's resignation, as far as it related to the Executive Council; he continued a Vice-President of the League from its foundation to the end, but after this date he rarely appeared upon its platforms. If there should be trouble, and his services were desired, he said, he was ready to do his duty; otherwise he preferred to remain aloof. Now, mark the generosity of his opponents! Finding he did not appear as frequently as before on the Reform platform, they began to circulate every reason for his abstention save the true one—his honourable desire to aid the cause of Reform even to the extent of self-effacement, since his persecutors made that necessary. The *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1868 said:

"Mr Bradlaugh, who furnished the *Saturday Reviewers* with an additional sting to articles in which his name was coupled with Mr Beales', avowed Atheistical views, but they met with so little favour that he had to leave the Committee of the Reform Association because he brought discredit on the cause."

Mr Bradlaugh in reply asked if it was true his views found "little

* The *Standard*, May 7th.

favour," and answering his own question said, "Let the audiences crowding the theatre at Huddersfield, the circus at Grimsby, the theatre at Northampton, the halls in London, Dublin, Newcastle, Ashton, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, and Bradford—let these enthusiastic audiences reply." And, in conclusion, he printed this letter from Mr Beales in reply to his resignation, which he had received in the previous May, but now for the first time made public.

"4 STONE'S BUILDINGS, LINCOLN'S INN,
17*th May* 1867.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Pray excuse my not having sooner answered, or noticed, your letter of the 7th inst. to me, tendering your resignation as a member of the Executive of the Reform League, and asking that your name may be erased from the list of the Council and Vice-Presidents. I really have been in such a whirl of occupation since receiving your letter that it was not in my power sooner to write to you, as I wished. Meanwhile you have, I believe, received through Mr Cooper and others intimation that the Executive were unwilling to accept your resignation, and lose your services. In that unwillingness I concur, whilst I avail myself of this opportunity of communicating to you with the utmost openness and frankness, and with very sincere regard, my feelings in the matter. I have already expressed in public my strong sense of the services you have rendered to the League by your ability and good sense, and of the invariable fidelity, delicacy, and admirable taste with which you have studiously abstained from uttering a word at our meetings that could offend the religious scruples of the most sensitive or fastidious Christian. At the same time that your known and published opinions on these matters (I do not allude to the subject of the *Saturday Review's* savage attack, which was not, I believe, from your pen) have injured the League with many in a moral and pecuniary point of view must, I am afraid, be admitted, though I doubt whether such injury has outweighed the aid you have rendered to the League by your oratorical power and talent. At all events, I am not disposed to allow the evil to have outweighed the good. You say that the conduct of the Press in constantly coupling your name with mine has given me pain. Well, it has, but not quite from the cause you suppose. I despise from my soul the base motives of the writers in thus coupling our names together, and it would only make me more strongly tender to you the hand of friendship. But I do feel great pain at the thought of a man of your undoubted ability, and, I believe, purity of purpose and high honesty, being in such a position from your antagonism to Christianity as to make men imagine that they could pain or injure me or the League by thus coupling our names together.

"C. BRADLAUGH. "E. BEALES."

Mr George Howell, the Secretary, had also written expressing his deep regret at my father's resignation, and testifying to the kindly consideration shown himself, and to the earnest and powerful advocacy and support given to the objects of the League.

Probably in consequence of the form taken by these aspersions Mr Bradlaugh was again elected on the Executive Council in December 1868.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROVINCIAL LECTURING, 1866-1869.

I WILL take up once more the story of my father's lecturing experiences in the provinces by telling of the Mayor's attempt to prevent the delivery of some lectures he had agreed to give in Liverpool, in the middle of October 1866. The subjects to be dealt with were: "The Pentateuch: without it Christianity is nothing; with it, Humanity is impossible;" "The Twelve Apostles," and "Kings, Lords, and Commons." The bills announcing these particulars were posted all over the town, and seem to have much alarmed the Mayor. This gentleman was a Methodist, and held such peculiar ideas concerning the duties of chief magistrate of so important a place as Liverpool that he preferred, for example, attending a Scripture Readers' tea-party rather than the banquet given to the layers of the Atlantic Cable, at which he was expected. It can be easily understood that such a Mayor would be greatly disturbed by the possibility of an atheistic criticism of the Pentateuch and the twelve Apostles. So great was his perturbation that he consulted with the Chief Constable, Major Greig, with the result that the latter sent his subordinates to the lessee of the theatre to explain to him that he must close his doors against the wicked "Iconoclast." The lessee, hesitating, was carried before the Chief Constable himself, who, speaking with all the majesty of his office, told him that the lectures could not be allowed. On Saturday night (13th October) * Mr Bradlaugh's agent, Mr Cowan, called upon the lessee for the keys, but was informed that he had been ordered not to permit the meetings to be held. Poor lessee! between the upper and the nether millstone he got very little peace. Mr Cowan, after considerable discussion, took him, late at night though it was, to Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh had gone to bed, but got up at

* The lectures were announced for the following day.

the summons, and all three went to the Chief Constable's, but nothing was to be done there at that time of night. In the morning the lessee accepted Mr Bradlaugh's written indemnity against all consequence, and my father was permitted to lecture unmolested, although he and his friends were much diverted to find detectives, police, and magistrates amongst the audience.

A fortnight later Mr Bradlaugh was due in Glasgow, and on his way to Scotland made a little halt at Newcastle. For some weeks past a clergyman, the Rev. David King, sufficiently well known in certain circles, had been playing the braggart in the north of England. All, and nothing short of all, the "Infidels" were afraid of him; none dare meet him in debate—if he had modestly stopped at that, there would have been little harm done, but to his boasts he added gross slanders of Freethinkers, both living and dead, individually and in the mass. My father went up north at the right moment, for on Saturday, 27th October, this Mr D. King was announced to lecture at Bedlington on Secularists and their perversions; the Newcastle Freethinkers, who were highly indignant, asked Mr Bradlaugh to break his journey to Scotland in order to come and give the reverend slanderer a lesson, and this he agreed to do. "The news of Iconoclast's coming had spread like wildfire," said Elijah Copeland in a report he wrote at the time;* and since then I have heard from a Northumberland friend how swiftly the tidings spread from man to man, and from village to village, that Iconoclast was coming to teach David King a little truth and modesty. The excitement was so great that the Lecture Hall at Bedlington was hardly opened before it was full—but the hour came, and no Iconoclast. David King commenced his address—full as usual of boasts of himself and insults to Secularists. Time sped on lightning wings; every moment intensified the anxiety, every movement, every outside sound increased the excitement. To many Mr Bradlaugh was known only by fame, and if a fresh person came into the hall the question, "Is that he?" was eagerly whispered round the room, only to be answered by those better informed with a reluctant shake of the head. A little man sitting on the platform attracted some attention. "Could *that* be the redoubtable Iconoclast?" asked some of the anxious ones; no one seemed to know the stranger,

* *National Reformer.*

and at last the feeling grew so intense that some one put the question directly to the unknown man on the platform, and without surprise he received the obvious answer. The lecture was nearing its close, and as all danger of the threatened opposition seemed passing away the lecturer's language grew more and more unrestrained. When, hark! what was that? A noise outside of many feet, a loud determined knock, the door thrown open impetuously, letting in a flood of fresh cold air, and with it the almost-despaired-of Iconoclast, who was greeted with deafening cheers. When the real man came, no one had any doubt as to his identity—he was recognised at once by all. David King's tone changed directly, and when the time for discussion came Mr Bradlaugh gave the lesson he had come to teach, to the unbounded delight and satisfaction of all the Freethinkers present. After the discussion came the return drive of twelve or fourteen miles in the cold and the rain to Newcastle, which was reached at two in the morning. While my father snatched a couple of hours' sleep, some of his friends sat and watched in order to rouse him for the Scotch express, which passed through Newcastle about five o'clock. Arrived at Edinburgh, my father found he had twenty minutes to wait, so he thought he would get some breakfast, but "alas!" said he, "it was Sunday morning, and starvation takes precedence of damnation in the *unco guid* city. Instead of drinking hot coffee, I had to shiver in the cold, admiring the backs of the tumble-down-looking houses in the high "toon" for want of better occupation. I arrived in Glasgow just one hour before the time fixed for the morning lecture—dirty, weary, hungry, thirsty, and sleepy." *

After the evening lecture Mr Bradlaugh had to hurry from the platform of the Eclectic Hall to catch the train which steamed out of Glasgow at twenty minutes to nine, so that he might be in time for Monday morning's business in the city, having spent two nights out of bed, travelled about 900 miles, and spoken at Bedlington and three times in Glasgow in less than forty-eight hours.

Four weeks from the day of his Glasgow lectures,† my father was arrested at Huddersfield. Two accounts of this were given in the *National Reformer*, one from the pen of Mr Bradlaugh, and

* *National Reformer*, November 4 (1866).

† On November 25 (1866).

one from that of a gentleman who was with him the greater part of the time. It was a case of "the Devonport blunder" being repeated by 'the Religious Party of Huddersfield."

The Philosophical Hall, which for some little time previously had been used as a theatre, had been duly taken for "three lectures by Iconoclast;" there was a written agreement, the deposit paid, and a harmonium taken by the Huddersfield Free-thought Society into the Hall. Placards announcing the subjects of the lectures ("Temperance," "Reform," and "The Twelve Apostles") and the name of the lecturer were posted more than a fortnight beforehand throughout the town and upon the hall itself. On Saturday, at the eleventh hour, the proprietor, Mr Morton Price, secretly urged by persons too cowardly to appear themselves—at least, so it was rumoured—resolved that the lectures should not take place, and on Sunday morning Mr Bradlaugh "found the doors of the building locked and barred, and the police authorities on the alert. I tried," he tells us, "to gain admittance, but the wooden barriers were far stronger than my shoulders, and after bruising myself more than the doors, and waiting in the rain for about forty minutes, while some sort of iron bar was vainly searched for, I returned very disconsolate to my lodgings. Several members of the Huddersfield Society begged me to lecture in Senior's schoolroom, but I positively refused; there were friends in from the country for miles round who could not be contained in so small a meeting-place. The Yorkshire energy was roused, and a dozen volunteers started to open the door; I followed, and came in time to twist a crowbar into curious shapes, and be arrested by the police and lodged in the station. At first I was ordered into a cell; my money, watch and chain, keys, toothpick, and other dangerous weapons being taken from me. As, however, since Devonport, where the lock-up was damp, I object to cells on principle, I gently argued the matter, and ultimately the presiding authority announced that I should be let out *if I could get a magistrate to become bail.* This was not very probable, and looked like being locked up for two whole days, but two good friends not only started to arrange with some local magistrate about bail, but actually succeeded. During the time they were absent I had, however, effected my own release from custody without any bail at all. . . . . When the charge was entered by Superintendent Hannan, who, I am bound to say,

behaved in a most gentleman-like and courteous manner, I again discussed the matter, and ultimately the stage-manager said he would find bail if I would agree not to lecture. This I indignantly refused. I came to lecture, and I meant to lecture; and after many *pour parlers*, I walked out of custody without any other condition than my word of honour to appear before the magistrates to answer the charge on the following Tuesday. The news spread like wildfire, and I had an enormous audience, crowding the theatre from floor to ceiling, the chiefs of the police honouring us with their presence."

People had come from far and near to hear him lecture—from Dewsbury, Bradford, Leeds, Halifax, Manchester, and elsewhere, and great was the dismay when it was found that the Hall doors were closed against them. When it was known that he would not lecture in the schoolroom, and he had determined to make an effort to force the doors, volunteers for the work immediately stepped forward; they begged him "to keep out of action" until the doors were down; but to look on whilst others got into trouble never came easy to my father. So he took a crowbar and helped with the rest, and the twisted iron was preserved in triumph by some Huddersfield friends until a few years ago. They attacked the pit and gallery door in Bull and Mouth Street, and their united exertions soon threw it open to the crowd impatiently waiting to enter. The Police Office was next door to the Philosophical Hall, so the police were able to watch the proceedings with little trouble to themselves. When they arrested Mr Bradlaugh, so great was the indignation of the crowd that they even threatened to rescue him by main force, and guards of police were hastily put at all weak places. It was, however, Mr Bradlaugh himself who relieved the fears of his captors. He sent a message to his friends, asking them to leave peacefully and without disorder, assuring them that he would be all right. In compliance with his request the people who thronged the hall quietly dispersed, only one person remaining behind to keep possession of the theatre. Messrs Armitage and Mitchell rushed off in a cab to find a magistrate liberal enough to become bail for the imprisoned Atheist, and during their absence—on what seemed an impossible errand—Mr Bradlaugh sent word from the police-station to the committee that he would lecture at half-past six. This message was received with the wildest enthusiasm, but since Mr Bradlaugh

was still in the hands of the police and it was then four o'clock, it seemed, on reflection, highly improbable. But the first messenger was rapidly followed by a second, bringing word that "Iconoclast" was free once more. On his appearance on the platform of the Philosophical Hall at the appointed time the enthusiasm and excitement were unbounded, and his lecture on "Reform" was said to have been "one of the most splendid and eloquent he had yet delivered."

On the following Tuesday Mr Bradlaugh had to appear before the Huddersfield magistrates. Though there were five upon the Bench—only two, G. Armitage, Esq., and S. W. Haigh, Esq.—heard the case. Naturally enough, the Court was densely crowded, and many were unable to obtain admission. Mr Nehemiah Learoyd prosecuted. This attorney was defined as "a gentleman according to Act of Parliament," though it does not appear that he had any other claim to the title. In the case against Mr Bradlaugh he conducted himself with such effrontery and coarseness as to make it more than ever evident that Acts of Parliament have their limitations. My father was charged with doing damage to the door of the Huddersfield Theatre to the amount of twenty-four shillings: after this charge was read another charge of committing a breach of the peace was brought forward. Mr Bradlaugh suggested that each charge should be gone into separately: Mr Learoyd would have them taken together, and the magistrates decided in his favour. The case for the prosecution was opened and witnesses called. Mr Bradlaugh raised an objection to the jurisdiction of the Court, and after some argument and some further examination of witnesses, the magistrates retired to consider the point. After an interval of ten minutes they returned, having decided in Mr Bradlaugh's favour that they had no jurisdiction. Mr Learoyd then, with unblushing effrontery, wished to proceed with the second charge—the breach of the peace; but he had elected at the outset to take both charges together, and by that he was compelled to abide. The decision of the magistrates was greeted with instant applause, which was of course rebuked by the Court. The case was reported at length by the *Huddersfield Examiner* and the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, and gained for Mr Bradlaugh many friends in Huddersfield and the surrounding districts. And thus for once was bigotry frustrated.

On the following Sunday Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing at New-

castle, and many people, women as well as men, came in distances of fifteen and twenty miles to hear him. One man told how he had come thirty-eight miles "to get a grip" of my father's hand. Two days after this he was at Northampton, where he found himself becoming quite "respectable," and, "to the horror of the saints and my own surprise," he said, he was permitted the use of the Mechanics' Institute for his discourses. A week or so later he was lecturing in the great Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on behalf of the widow and family of his late colleague, John Watts. He gave himself no rest in body or mind, nor did he seem to relax the strain for a moment. The old year closed, and 1867 opened with a course of lectures at the City Road Hall, at one of which, by the by, it is interesting to note that Mr Bradlaugh defended Mr Gladstone from an attack made upon his sincerity of purpose, "believing him to be the most able and honest statesman whom the people have on their side."

Notwithstanding all his lecturing, the great quantity of literary work he was then engaged upon, the Reform Demonstrations, and harassing private business, Mr Bradlaugh yet found time in the spring of 1867 to engage in a six nights' debate with the Rev. J. M'Cann, M.A., curate of St Paul's, Huddersfield. The discussion was arranged to take place in the theatre, or Philosophical Hall, which had been forcibly closed against the Freethinkers only a few months before. The preliminaries to the debate were a little ominous: in the first place Mr Bradlaugh was obliged to agree to the terms dictated by his religious antagonist (or his committee), otherwise there would have been no discussion; and above and beyond this the Rev. Mr M'Cann "refused to debate if the name Iconoclast be used, and therefore it will be Charles Bradlaugh who answers for the shortcomings of Iconoclast, despite the injury in business caused by the wide publicity recently given to the name and thus repeated." *

The debate arose out of some "Anti-Secularist lectures" which Mr M'Cann had been delivering in Huddersfield, presumably inspired thereto by the sensation caused by the theatre episode of the previous November. The subjects of these lectures were to be discussed for six nights, three hours each night, Mr Bradlaugh attacking and Mr M'Cann defending. Mr M'Cann, who was an

* C. Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*, March 1867.

Irishman, and who from the active part he was taking in the Literary and Scientific Society and other institutions of the town, was regarded as a "rising young man," rather disappointed many of the Freethinkers after the first two nights' discussion. Immovably confident in the ability of their own representative, they were anxious to see him meet someone worthy of his steel. Mr Bradlaugh's opinion, expressed at the conclusion of the six nights, was that Mr M'Cann was a fluent, ready speaker, honest and earnest, although no great debater.*

The year 1868 was a terribly busy one: the Irish question (of which I will speak later), the first Government prosecution of the *National Reformer*, and his first Parliamentary candidature for Northampton, kept my father constantly hard at work. During the year he lectured frequently in London, besides visiting Grimsby, Bedlington, Newcastle, Hull, West Bromwich, Birmingham, Kettering, Northampton, Huddersfield, Bradford, Sheffield, Ashton, Manchester, Bury, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Keighley, Sunderland, Plymouth, and other towns.

At Huddersfield he was always welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm, although some of the inhabitants still seemed determined to resist his visits. As the theatre was too small to accommodate all his auditors, the Huddersfield Committee took the circus for some addresses which he had arranged to deliver in the town in March. The Improvement Commissioners, however, eager to imitate the conduct of Mr Morton Price of a year and a half before, drew back from their agreement to let. Then a curious thing happened. When he was aware of the behaviour of the Commissioners, Mr Morton Price himself offered the Huddersfield Freethinkers the use of the theatre; and not only did he let it to them, but he gave a special advertisement of the meetings. The advertisement was so peculiarly and significantly worded that I reproduce it:

"Theatre Royal, Huddersfield.

"Mr Morton Price begs to inform the nobility, gentry, and general public of Huddersfield that, finding his efforts to preserve his theatre from Atheism and Profanity *so appreciative and remunerative*, he has let the said theatre for a series of lectures by Mr Bradlaugh, the 'Iconoclast,' on Sunday next, March 15th, 1868."

In connection with the Manchester lectures also an amusing

* No verbatim report of this discussion was ever published.

incident took place. It may be remembered that a man named William Murphy was about this time lecturing in different parts of England on behalf of the Protestant Church in Ireland, and his conduct had been so strange, and his language so inflammatory, that in the north he had been the cause of some very serious "No Popery" riots. In Manchester he was arrested, and his lectures practically prohibited. My father going to Manchester just after this prohibition, it occurred to certain good Christians that this might perhaps be turned to account against him. Consequently, when he arrived in Manchester on the Saturday night (September 5th) prior to his Sunday lectures, he found all kinds of rumours in circulation, friends even telling him that there were warrants out for his arrest. This was much exaggerated, and what really had happened was this: On the Friday, at the City Police Court, before the stipendiary magistrate, Mr Fowler, an application had been made by Mr Bennett, solicitor, for proceedings to be taken against Mr Charles Bradlaugh, then announced to deliver a series of lectures in the Free Trade Hall on Sunday. "The sworn information of a respectable householder, living in Boundary Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock," was forthcoming that the lectures could not take place "without giving rise to a breach of the peace." There was no contention that any overt acts of violence had ever been committed on account of these lectures; nevertheless, "the respectable householder"—whose name was afterwards stated to be Smith—thought they ought to be prohibited, "as in the case of Mr Murphy." Mr Fowler argued the cases were very different, and suggested that Mr Bennett should look up his law, and then, if he thought his position satisfactory, he could attend on the following morning with his witnesses. So much, indeed, Mr Bradlaugh had gathered from the London papers read on his journey northwards. Arrived at his journey's end, he was still in suspense as to what had happened that day, and the friends who met the train could not set his anxieties at rest. However, from an evening paper he learned that Mr Bennett had not found any further support in law for his application, which the magistrate told him must consequently fail. He said further:

"You say this case is similar to that of William Murphy, whose case was heard in this Court on Tuesday last. But it appears to me very different. We must be very careful indeed as magistrates not to interfere in any way with the freedom of discussion, and in no way by the

decision of Tuesday, as far as I can see, have we done so. In the case before us on Tuesday it was proved on oath that William Murphy was about to deliver a series of lectures, which he had already given in other towns, where, from his own conduct, and the threatening attitude he assumed by producing a revolver, and other acts, very serious riots had arisen, followed by great destruction of property and even danger to life; and from what was proved before us as to what had already taken place in this city since the announcement of these lectures, it appeared there was every probability of the same thing occurring here. To prevent this—exercising the power which as magistrates, in my opinion, we undoubtedly have—we called upon the defendant, William Murphy, to enter upon his recognisances for his good behaviour; you mark the words, 'good behaviour,' Mr Bennett. That, of course, includes keeping the peace; and under similar circumstances to those proved before us, we should certainly do the same whether the defendant was Roman Catholic, Protestant, or of any other denomination. Now, I think you have entirely failed to show in the application you made yesterday that any such result has ensued, or is likely to ensue, from the lectures about to be given by the person against whom you apply. Therefore the application is refused."

The upshot of this application at the Police Court was a wide advertisement of the lectures, an intense excitement, and anxiety to hear the lecturer. The *Saturday Review*, true to the feelings of bitter animosity which it cherished against Mr Bradlaugh, thought that

"it might perhaps be plausibly argued that the same reasons which weighed with them [the magistrates] when they refused to restrain Mr Iconoclast Bradlaugh from attacking and insulting all religions, might also have influenced them when they were asked to restrain Murphy from insulting one form of the Christian faith."

The *Saturday Review* elsewhere spoke of Manchester as having been "the theatre of riots" in consequence of Murphy's behaviour and of the "savage brutality" exhibited. No sort of disturbance could be alleged as resulting from Mr Bradlaugh's lectures, but anything was "plausible" to the *Saturday Review* as against him.

Of course this rushing about from city to city, and several hours' speaking in crowded halls sandwiched in between the long railway journeys, meant a great physical strain.

In February my father tells how he had travelled on the previous Saturday in a tremendous storm to Morpeth for Bedlington, arriving at Morpeth (five or six miles from Bedlington) at the very hour at which he ought to have been on the platform. "A

rapid wash while horses were being got ready; no time for tea, and off we sped to our destination, where we found the little hall crowded with an eager and appreciative audience, some of whom had walked many miles to be present." A midnight return drive with storm most furiously raging, and then to Newcastle, where three lectures were delivered on the Sunday. "In forty-eight hours I travelled nearly 630 miles, delivered four lectures, and came back to that daily toil for that life-subsistence which is so hard to win. I need hardly add that the mere travelling expenses on such a journey swallow up all profit derivable from the lectures." The Glasgow and Edinburgh lectures in the beginning of August meant "one thousand miles and four lectures in two days and three nights, and back to business by ten on Monday." At the end of August another visit to Newcastle meant "another six hundred miles and three lectures in one day and a half and two nights, following upon no less than three open-air addresses at Northampton."

In the following year my father continued to do a great deal of public speaking. His home troubles were growing greater, and his business life in the city was daily becoming more difficult, but this seemed only to make him toil the harder in that cause of religious and political progress which lay so near his heart. At the new Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, which had just been leased in the interests of the Freethought party, Mr Bradlaugh delivered in the year upwards of forty lectures, for none of which he received a single penny, devoting the whole of the proceeds towards paying the debt upon the building. He did not allow any one month to pass without giving one or more Sundays to the New Hall. He lectured several times also at the hall in Cleveland Street; and in the latter part of the year, for the most part, he visited thirty or more provincial towns, at many of which he gave three discourses on the Sunday. In 1869 also Mr Bradlaugh took part in an examination into alleged spiritualistic phenomena held by the London Dialectical Society, but without any satisfactory results. Undoubtedly the chief event of the year for him was his final defeat of the Government in their prosecution of the *National Reformer*, and through this the repeal of the odious Security laws. He was involved in another law-suit, which, as we shall see later, led to the amending of the laws relating to evidence.

Matters went rather more smoothly with my father's provincial

lecturing this year; no town seemed to be sufficiently encouraged by the course of affairs in Devonport and Huddersfield to follow their example very closely. But still he met with some rebuff. For instance, when he was at Blyth on April 3rd, the innkeepers there were all so pious that none would give him food or shelter. April 3rd was a Saturday, not a Sunday, so there was not even the lame excuse of keeping the Sabbath Day holy by refusing to harbour an Atheist. The people of Blyth who undertook to provide for the creature comforts of the inhabitants and visitors must have been bigoted to the last degree, for in the week before Mr Bradlaugh's visit, a coffee-house keeper had refused to supply with tea some persons who were rash enough to admit that they had attended Mrs Law's lectures. Happily, such churlish bigotry was by no means universal, for the Blyth Lecture Hall was so crowded when Mr Bradlaugh arrived that he had to gain admittance through a back window. He afterwards related how "one hearty fellow and two or three Unitarians volunteered to give me a night's shelter, but I was unaware of this until I had made my arrangements for a midnight walk in the dark to Bedlington under escort of half a dozen stalwart fellows." This is the occasion to which Mr Thomas Burt referred in his article in the *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review* for July 1891. Mr Burt there says that all the ordinary halls and schoolrooms were refused to Mr Bradlaugh, but that a gentleman, Mr Richard Fynes, who had recently purchased a chapel, and was a true lover of free speech, granted the use of his building to the Bedlington Secular Society. Mr Burt, who had gone from curiosity to hear Mr Bradlaugh, at the close of the meeting asked him and some friends home to supper. His people were rather horror-stricken, but, with true courtesy, allowed nothing of it to appear to their guest, and the supper passed off quite smoothly, Mr Bradlaugh making himself very agreeable. It is rather curious that Mr Burt had no idea how *àpropos* his hospitality was. It was not until after he had given his invitation that he learned that in all Blyth there was no place of refreshment that would open its doors to the Atheist.

But unfortunately it was not only to Mr Bradlaugh himself that violence was used or threatened: those who attended his lectures or who were suspected of sympathising with his opinions sometimes ran considerable risk. For instance, he had been

lecturing at Portsmouth on Monday, May 10th, on the Irish Church and the Land Question, and his lecture created considerable excitement in the town. Shortly afterwards a "converted clown" was holding forth on Portsea Common, and a man suspected to be in sympathy with Mr Bradlaugh stayed to listen. The converted one frequently addressed the new-comer as an "unhappy infidel animal," and so worked upon his pious listeners that in the end they turned upon the "infidel," who was "hissed, hooted, kicked, cuffed, and knocked about so unmercifully that he sought protection" in flight. The whole brutal mob pursued and overtook him, "his clothes were almost torn from him, and but for the assistance of several passers-by—some of whom also received rough treatment—he would probably have been killed."*

True, everywhere he went my father met with hate and scorn; yet everywhere he went he also met with a trust and love such as falls to the lot of few men to know. The hate and scorn passed over him, scarce leaving a trace, but the love and trust went deep into his heart, making up, as he said, for "many disappointments." At Keighley "two veterans, one eighty and one seventy-three, walked eleven miles to hear me lecture; and at Shipley another greeted me, seventy-six years old, asking for one more grip of the hand before he died."† On Mr Bradlaugh's return journey from Yorkshire, at every station between Leeds and Keighley men and women came to bid him good-bye; from a dozen districts round they came, "old faces and young ones, men, women, and smiling girls," and he was moved to the utmost depths of his nature to see how their love for him grew with his every visit.

Summer or winter, fair weather or foul, people would come many and many a mile to hear him speak. At Over Darwen, where he had some fine meetings that October, he found that some of the poor folk had come in from a distance of "twenty-three miles; many had come ten to sixteen miles, some walking steadily over the 'tops' through the mist and rain, and having to leave home as early as six in the morning in order to get to us; one

* *West Sussex Gazette*, June 24th. And *these* are the people who affect to believe in Mr Bradlaugh's violence and coarseness! "Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

† C. Bradlaugh, in *National Reformer*, July 1869.

sturdy old man declaring that he never missed when I was within twenty-five miles of his home."*

I should like also to note here the open-mindedness shown about this time by a Catholic priest at Seghill. Mr Bradlaugh was to lecture in the colliery schoolroom on "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle," but almost at the last moment the authorities would have none of such a wicked man. Upon hearing this a Catholic priest named Father O'Dyer allowed the lecture to take place in his chapel at Annitsford, and he himself took the chair. Mr Bradlaugh, of course, greatly appreciated this unlooked-for kindness on the part of Father O'Dyer, though in his surprise at such unwonted conduct he might humorously comment "the age of miracles has recommenced."

In December Mr Bradlaugh was in Lancashire—one Saturday at Middleton, the next day at Bury, where considerable excitement had been created by the burning of the *National Reformer* in the Bury Reform Club by one of the members; on Monday at Accrington, where the lecture was followed by a three hours' drive in the night across country, over bad and slippery roads, to Preston to catch the London train. At Preston the station was locked up, but Mr Bradlaugh managed to get inside the porters' room, where there was happily a fire, by which he dozed until the train was due. "Then six hours' rail in the frosty night, and back to city work for Tuesday morning. Who will buy our bishopric?" he asked. But to this there was no reply.

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* Of these Darwen lectures all the Preston papers gave long reports. The Conservative *Preston Herald* thought that "the burning words of eulogium [on Mr Gladstone] that fell from the lips of the clever advocate" laid Mr Bradlaugh "open to the suspicion of having accepted a retainer and a brief from the astute statesman"! About 1200 persons attended each lecture, and the "quiet village of Darwen was rendered as throng as a fair" by the influx of people from so many of the surrounding villages.

CHAPTER XXV.

IRELAND.

I AM now come to a point in my father's history at which I must confess my utter inability to give anything like a just account of his work. All I can do—in spite of great time and labour almost fruitlessly spent in following up the slenderest clues—is to relate a few facts which must not be taken as a complete story, but merely as indicating others of greater importance. The reason for my ignorance will be found in Mr Bradlaugh's own words written in 1873:—

"My sympathy with Ireland and open advocacy of justice for the Irish nearly brought me into serious trouble. Some who were afterwards indicted as the chiefs of the so-called Fenian movement came to me for advice. So much I see others have written, and the rest of this portion of my autobiography I may write some day. At present there are men not out of danger whom careless words might imperil, and as regards myself I shall not be guilty of the folly of printing language which a Government might use against me." *

That "some day" of which he wrote never came; and to-day we know little more of what help he gave to the chiefs of the "so-called Fenian movement" than we did in 1873. There is, however, one man still living—perhaps there are two, but of the second I am not quite sure—who could if he chose throw considerable light upon this period; but this person I have been unable to reach. From the time when, by sending the 7th Dragoon Guards to Ireland, the English Government was kind enough to afford the newly enlisted Private Bradlaugh an opportunity of studying that unfortunate country from within, and by sending him on duty at evictions to bring him face to face with the suffering her wretched

* *Autobiography.*

peasantry had to endure—from that time (in the early fifties) until his death, English misgovernment of Ireland and the condition of the Irish people occupied a very prominent place in his thoughts. Between 1866 and 1868, while Ireland was in a state of agitation and insurrection, he frequently brought the subject of her grievances before his English audiences: articles on the Irish land question and the English in Ireland appeared in the *National Reformer*, and he himself took the Irish question as a frequent theme for his lectures. "Englishmen," he would say, "have long been eloquent on the wrongs of Poland and other down-trodden nations, insisting on their right to govern themselves; but they have been singularly unmindful of their Irish brethren. Advocacy of the claims of Poland showed a love of liberty and freedom. Advocacy for Ireland spelled treason. The three great curses of Ireland were her beggars, her bogs, and her barracks. The reclaiming of the millions of acres of bogland, now waste, with proper security for tenants, would diminish the beggars; and as bogs and beggars decreased, contentment would increase, and Government would be deprived of all excuse for the retention of an armed force." Talking in this strain, he would strive to win English sympathy for Ireland. At meeting after meeting he pointed out the evils of our Irish legislation, and won the thanks of Irishmen for his "outspoken language."

The Fenian Brotherhood, was, as we know, a secret association, founded and framed by James Stephens, for the establishment of an Irish Republic. That the association was a secret one was the fault of the English Government, since it forbade all open and orderly meetings; and the more open agitation was suppressed, the stronger grew the Fenian movement. Some of the Fenian leaders, amongst whom were Colonel Kelly and General Cluseret, came to Mr Bradlaugh for legal advice; and one of the results of the many consultations held at Sunderland Villa was the framing of the following proclamation, which was published in the *Times* for March 8th, 1867, at the end of two or three columns of excited accounts of the Fenian rising in Ireland:—

"I. R.—Proclamation!—The Irish People to the World.

"We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands, and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of

the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living and the political rights denied to them at home; while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers. Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful. To-day, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom. All men are born with equal rights, and in associating together to protect one another and share public burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it. We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government, we aim at founding a republic, based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour. The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England; our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields—against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our blood and theirs. Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom. *Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic.*"

"THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT."

This proclamation was printed by Colonel Kelly,* who obtained possession of some printing works at Islington, and in one night

* Headingley, p. 105.

set up this famous manifesto. Mr J. M. Davidson says that the document was drawn by Mr Bradlaugh's hand.* Mr Adolphe S. Headingley † says that "the informers Massey and Corydon in their evidence insist that Bradlaugh himself drew up the proclamation." In spite of a very considerable search I have not yet been able to find the words used by Massey or Corydon; but on this point, at least, I am able to quote the highest authority—my father himself. I was talking to him in his study one day, and in the course of our conversation he pulled down a thick green volume—an Irish history—and opening it, put his finger upon this proclamation. "They say I wrote that," he said with a smile. "And did you?" I asked. He then told me that the draft of the proclamation, as it left his study after being approved, *was* in his handwriting; but that when he saw it in print he found that it had been altered after leaving his hands. Unfortunately, I did not go over it with him to ask where it had been altered; but words written by him in January 1868 throw a little light on the matter. He then said:

"I am against the present establishment of a republic in Ireland, because, although I regard republicanism as the best form of government possible, I nevertheless think that the people of England and of Ireland are yet too much wanting in true dignity and independence, and too ignorant of their political rights and duties, to at present make good republicans. We are growing gradually towards the point of republican government; but it is not, I think, the question of to-day. A forcible separation of Ireland from England would not unnaturally be resisted by the latter to her last drop of blood and treasure; and I do not believe that the Irish party are either strong enough or sufficiently united to give even a colour of probability to the supposition of a successful revolution." ‡

Again, "I do not believe in an enduring revolution to be effected by revolvers; . . . . I do not believe in a lasting republic to be formed by pike aid." ‡

Hence from Mr Bradlaugh's own words, written in January 1868, it will be seen that he could not possibly have joined in the proclamation of a force-established republic in March 1867.

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* *Weekly Dispatch*, November 16, 1879. † Headingley, p. 104.

‡ Pamphlet on the Irish Question.

Throughout the year (1867) the country was in a very disturbed state. The Fenians were numerous, but inefficiently organised; they made isolated attacks on police barracks in Ireland, and attempted to seize Chester Castle, which contained a considerable store of arms. In September Kelly and Deasy were arrested at Manchester, and on the 18th of that month they were rescued while being moved with a number of other prisoners in the police van from the police court to the city jail. This rescue was destined to cost a number of lives, commencing with that of poor Sergeant Brett, whose death was followed, on the 23rd of November, by the execution of the three patriots, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien. For several months from the time of the Manchester rescue our house was watched, back and front, night and day, and two policemen in uniform were stationed at Park Railway Station to scrutinise all the passengers who alighted there. I hardly know in what light my father regarded this surveillance, but I do not think he can have taken it very much to heart; we children looked upon it sometimes as a great distinction and sometimes as a capital joke, and we must to some extent have reflected the mood of our elders—not that I mean that Mr Bradlaugh was silly enough to regard this unremitting attention on the part of the police as a "distinction," but that we could not so have felt it had he been even a little troubled by it.

Just before the trial of the Manchester Martyrs, Mr Bradlaugh wrote a short but most eloquent plea for Ireland. He concluded it by urgently entreating:

"Before it be too late, before more blood shall stain the pages of our present history, before we exasperate and arouse bitter animosities, let us try and do justice to our sister land. Abolish once and for all the land laws, which in their iniquitous operation have ruined her peasantry. Sweep away the leech-like Church which has sucked her vitality, and has given her back no word even of comfort in her degradation. Turn her barracks into flax mills, encourage a spirit of independence in her citizens, restore to her people the protection of the law so that they may speak without fear of arrest, and beg them to plainly and boldly state their grievances. Let a Commission of the best and wisest amongst Irishmen, with some of our highest English judges added, sit solemnly to hear all complaints, and let us honestly legislate, not for the punishment of the discontented, but to remove the causes

of the discontent. It is not the Fenians who have depopulated Ireland's strength and increased her misery. It is not the Fenians who have evicted tenants by the score. It is not the Fenians who have checked cultivation. Those who have caused the wrong at least should frame the remedy." *

Then came November and the sentence of death upon the four men who had taken part in the rescue of Deasy and Kelly at Manchester. Despite the bitter weather that followed, thousands of people assembled at Clerkenwell Green to memorialize the Government to pardon the condemned men. Mr Bradlaugh spoke at the meetings held there, and at Cambridge Hall, Newman Street. But such meetings were of no avail. Englishmen were panic-stricken, and sought to protect their own lives by taking other people's. Eloquence, justice, right are pointless weapons when used to combat blind fear.

Hard upon the "Manchester Sacrifice"—December 13th—followed the Clerkenwell explosion, by which four persons were killed and about forty men, women, and children were injured, in a mad attempt to blow up Clerkenwell Prison in order to rescue Burke and Casey, who were then on their trial.

This dastardly crime was a shock to all true friends of Ireland, just as the crime of the Phœnix Park murders was fourteen years later. Mr Bradlaugh wrote in the *National Reformer* a most earnest and pathetic denunciation of the outrage. He wrote it with the consciousness that he might lose many friends by the declaration that he had been "and even yet am favourable to the Irish Cause, which will be regarded by a large majority as most intimately connected with this fearfully mad crime." The Committee of the Irish Republican Brotherhood also, I believe, hastened to protest against and repudiate the outrage.

In the same issue of his paper, Mr Bradlaugh had an article on the Irish Crisis, in which he laid stress upon his opinion that "it is utterly impossible to hope for improvement in the general condition of Ireland until the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland are completely altered." In January 1868 he published an essay on "the Irish Question," which he afterwards issued as a

* *National Reformer*, October 20.

pamphlet.* In this he dealt with four methods which had been put forward as giving a "fair prospect of solution for the Irish difficulty." These were (1) Separation of Ireland from England: the people deciding their own form of government by vote; (2) "Stamping out" the rebellious spirit by force; (3) A Commission of Inquiry into Irish grievances having extensive powers of amnesty, to act immediately, and to be followed by the redressal of all *bona fide* grievances; (4) Political enfranchisement of Ireland, or a separate legislature. The first two methods, which he discussed at some length, he rejected as "impracticable and objectionable"; the third course he favoured strongly; and the main difficulty to the fourth seems to have been the existing suffrage. A separate legislature, he observed, had been advocated by "some very thoughtful writers, some able politicians, and some men of extraordinary genius." He wound up his essay with an appeal—an appeal to the Government and an appeal to the Irish Republican party. To both he pleaded for "forbearance, for mercy, for humanity." The Irish Republican party he specially and in most eloquent language entreated to "repress all violence—to check all physical vengeance."

Ireland was now more than ever the subject of Mr Bradlaugh's advocacy, and in connection with it there occurred on the 17th of January (1868) a rather curious incident. A gentleman—perhaps I ought not to mention his name—who was a correspondent and friend of my father's, belonged to a Quaker family, and was at the period of which I write a member of the Society of Friends, although he subsequently resigned his membership. He belonged also to a discussion society connected with the Friends' Institute, Bishopsgate Street. A debate was arranged upon the Irish question, and Mr ———, knowing how interested Mr Bradlaugh was in this subject, wrote inviting him to come to the meeting. This friend

* When he republished this as a pamphlet it was read by Mr Gladstone, who wrote to him the following autograph letter:—

"11 CARLTON TERRACE,
July 17, 1868.

"DEAR SIR,—I have read your pamphlet with much interest, and with many important parts of it I cordially agree.—I remain, Dear Sir, yours very faithfully and obediently,
W. E. GLADSTONE.

"Mr C. BRADLAUGH."

This letter is still in my possession.

writing to me says: "He did come, and by a curious coincidence I was elected to the chair. Your father spoke, and quite delighted the Quakers with his earnestness and eloquence. They did not, however, know who the stranger was, but they pressed him to attend the adjourned meeting; he said he would, and come fortified with facts and statistics." My father was extremely gratified by the courtesy shown him, and the permission given him as a stranger to speak for double the usual time. At the same time he felt very awkward at receiving the cheers, congratulations, and special compliments, because he feared that they would hardly have been so freely accorded if his "real name and wicked character had been generally known there." His fears were fully justified, as Mr ———'s letter to me shows. He goes on to say:

"After the meeting was over and your father had shaken hands with me and gone, the members crowded round me to inquire who the eloquent visitor was. When they found it was the, at that time, notorious Iconoclast, you may imagine their feelings were of a mixed sort. And I got into disgrace for introducing him. That I did not mind, and I secretly enjoyed their confusion. However, the result was that the Secretary of the Society was ordered to write to your father and tell him he was not required to attend again."

And Mr Bradlaugh actually did receive a letter officially inviting him *not* to attend their next meeting on the Irish question.

In February the formation of an "Ireland Society" was announced in the *National Reformer*. This was an effort to bring Englishmen together with the aim of forming "a sounder public opinion" on Irish matters, but I doubt whether it met with the success the idea deserved. It had specially for its objects (1) The abolition of the Irish State Church; (2) A harmonious settlement of the land question; (3) Education for the poor in Ireland; (4) Atonement for English oppression by encouraging Irish Industries. At Leeds, at Sheffield, at Newcastle, Mr Bradlaugh spoke to his audiences on the subject of Ireland until they were moved to tears by his pictures of the wretched condition of the unhappy Irish people. At Newcastle, a warm-hearted Irish Catholic stepped upon the platform and gave his earnest thanks "to the orator" for expressing the sentiments held by all true Irishmen,* and the audience from end to

* *National Reformer*, Feb. 16, 1868.

end rose cheering and waving their hats. At Ashton-under-Lyne in April he spoke to an audience of 5000 persons, and reminded them that the Irish question might equally be called the English question, as it affected England as well as Ireland. Previous to this lecture there were rumours of violence, and threats "against life and limb," and the town was in a state of extreme excitement, a strong police force were mustered, and one magistrate attended the meeting with the Riot Act ready in his pocket! About a score or so of Orangemen managed to get into the hall and created considerable disorder at the outset, but they reckoned without chairman or speaker. The chairman, J. M. Balieff, Esq., J.P., despite the outcry raised against Mr Bradlaugh on account of his views on religion, had yet the moral courage to support him in his political opinions. The Orangemen opened up with a storm of hisses and groans, which was responded to by the friends of Ireland with excited cheering. This went on for some minutes, but was quickly quieted when the chairman resolutely stated that if it were necessary he should stay there all night, for he was quite determined that Mr Bradlaugh should state his views. At the conclusion of the lecture Mr Balieff publicly rebuked the bigotry which, unable to answer Mr Bradlaugh's political advocacy, assailed him for his speculative opinions. Amongst other places, my father went to Huddersfield to speak on the Irish question. My sister and I were in Huddersfield at the time staying with some friends, and we, of course went to the lecture, which was held in the theatre on Saturday, the 25th of April. This is the first lecture of my father's that I distinctly remember. I had been present at very many before, but of those I have only the vaguest recollections. The one at Huddersfield stands out as a complete picture in my memory. A stormy day, followed by a stormy night with strong wind and rain, had not prevented the earnest Yorkshire folks from coming to hear "the lad" (as they so often called him), and the theatre was full of eager, sympathetic faces when we went upon the platform. Mr Woodhead took the chair, and we, my sister and I, sat a little to the back of the stage, where I remember we were much troubled by the cold wind blowing round the "wings." So vivid is the memory that it seems almost as though I could recall the very words my father uttered, and the tones of his voice—now earnest, now impassioned, at one time severely rebuking, at another ardently pleading, or

gravely narrating. Or there was some joke or amusing anecdote, and the audience—who a moment before had been brushing away their tears openly or surreptitiously, each according to his temperament—now with one consent burst into hearty laughter. There was one old man in the front row, who with ear-trumpet to ear remained eagerly bent forward throughout the whole lecture, so unwilling was he to lose a single word. I was just ten years old then, and it seemed a revelation to me; for the first time I felt and realised something of my father's power over men.

In spite of fears entertained for his safety as a suspected man entering a disturbed country during the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act, on the 18th of March Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in Dublin under the auspices of the Irish Reform League. It was St Patrick's day, and "an enthusiastic barrister" whom he knew drove him about in his carriage. He wrote home that he heard the band play "'God save the Queen,' and the populace acknowledged it with a mixed sort of hiss and groan, which I believe is called 'keening.'" The lecture was delivered at the Mechanics' Institute, the hall was crammed to its utmost capacity, and lengthy reports of the speech appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* and *Dublin Evening Post*. At the conclusion an address was presented to Mr Bradlaugh as some testimony of Irish appreciation of his "disinterested and sincere devotion to our country's cause." The address reads: "We can but offer you our best thanks and warmest admiration, and tender you the unaffected aud sincere love of warm Irish hearts, thus proving that Irishmen are never insensible to kindness," etc. By the light of later events, what bitter irony all this seems! The "sincere love of warm Irish hearts" looked much more like hate and malice in the years of Mr Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle. However, it was doubtless honest at the moment, and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed amongst the Dublin audience when the address was formally read and presented. The proceedings were orderly and unanimous throughout; nevertheless when the meeting separated they found the front of the building occupied by a detachment of police numbering about a hundred men; inspectors in attendance took the names and addresses of those who had taken any prominent part in the business of the evening; while the rank and file scrutinised the faces of the audience. The Dublin correspondent of an Irish Catholic paper published in London indulged in a

tirade of abuse against Mr Bradlaugh, whom he described as "the hired agent of the English Reform League, the Atheist Bradlaugh;" but he only aroused a host of defenders, whose defence, since he was unable to answer, he affected to despise.

When the turn of Elections in 1868 brought Mr Gladstone into power, Mr Bradlaugh applied at the Treasury for the withdrawal of the warrant out against General Cluseret for his arrest on the charge of treason-felony, but this clemency was refused.* With the subsidence of the Fenian agitation and the relief anticipated by the Disestablishment of the Irish Church there was less and less immediate need to Ireland for Mr Bradlaugh's activity, and when 1870 ushered in the Franco-Prussian War, his energies were turned for the time in another and more instantly pressing direction.

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* Headingley, p. 107.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NORTHAMPTON, 1868.

THERE is, I think, not the least doubt that very early in my father's life he began to nurse dreams of one day playing his part in the legislature of his country, and indeed it is currently reported in Northampton that as early as 1859 he spoke to some friends there of his wish to represent that borough in Parliament. As I have no exact evidence that Mr Bradlaugh went to the town before that year, I think the report puts the date a little too early, but in any case I do not find that the idea took any definite shape in his mind until about the end of 1865 or early in the following year. In 1867 it is clear that the possibility of his candidature was realised even by those outside the circle of his personal friends, for in the spring of that year we find a sarcastic prognosis of the possible results of the extended franchise in a West of England paper, in which the writer says: "Mr Bradlaugh would perhaps take the Government of India from the hands of Sir Stafford Northcote, his intelligence being not less, and his catholicity in religious matters making him a more acceptable ruler to the 'mild' but shrewd Hindoo." In place of the Government of India Mr Bradlaugh was destined to take other things of not quite so pleasant a nature from the hands of Sir Stafford Northcote, although it is rather curious that the *Western Times* should have selected in jest an appointment which would have afforded him so much scope for good and useful work.

Some time before anything definite had been said as to my father's candidature at the forthcoming elections in 1868, it was regarded as so much of a certainty that people began spontaneously to subscribe towards his election expenses. In June he notified his friends through the *National Reformer* that he would shortly announce the name of the borough to which he proposed to offer himself, and at the same time he would issue his address. This

was done within the next few days, in the midst of the burden and anxiety of the Government prosecution of the *Reformer*.

My father was well known in Northampton. Since he went there to lecture on the invitation of Mr Gurney and Mr Shipman, he had, as we have seen, many times visited the town, and his opinions on political, social, and religious questions were thoroughly well understood. As his address forms a sort of landmark of Mr Bradlaugh's views on many of these important subjects, some of which are still hotly discussed, and most of which still await a satisfactory solution, I give it exactly as he issued it.

"*To the present and future electors of the borough of Northampton:*

"In seeking your suffrages for the new Parliament, I am encouraged by the very warm feeling exhibited in my favour by so many of the inhabitants of your borough, and by the consciousness that my own efforts may have helped in some slight degree to hasten the assembly of a Parliament elected by a more widely extended franchise than was deemed possible two years ago.

"If you should honour me by electing me as one of your representatives, I shall give an independent support in the new Parliament to that party of which Mr Gladstone will probably be chosen leader; that is to say, I shall support it as far as its policy and action prove consistent with the endeavour to attain the following objects, which I hold to be essential to the progress of the nation:—

"1. A system of compulsory National Education, by which the State shall secure to each child the opportunity of acquiring at least the rudiments of a sound English education preparatory to the commencement of the mere struggle for bread.

"2. A change in our land laws, commencing with the abolition of the laws of primogeniture and entail; diminishing the enormous legal expenses attending the transfer of land, and giving greater security to the actual cultivation of the soil for improvements made upon it.

"3. A thorough change in our extravagant system of national expenditure, so that our public departments may cease to be refuges for destitute members of so-called noble families.

"4. Such a change in the present system of taxation that for the future the greater pressure of imperial taxes may bear upon those who hold previously accumulated wealth and large tracts of devised land, and not so much upon those who increase the wealth of the nation by their daily labour.

"5. An improvement of the enactments relating to capital and labour, so that employer and employed may stand equal before the law, the establishment of conciliation courts for the settlement of trade disputes, and the abolition of the jurisdiction in these matters of the unpaid magistracy.

"6. A complete separation of the Church from the State, including in this the removal of the Bishops from the position they at present occupy as legislators in the House of Lords.

"7. A provision by which minorities may be fairly represented in the legislative chambers.

"8. The abolition of all disabilities and disqualifications consequent upon the holding or rejection of any particular speculative opinion.

"9. A change in the practice of creating new peerages; limiting the new creations to life peerages, and these only to be given as rewards for great national services; peers habitually absent from Parliament to be deprived of all legislative privileges, and the right of voting by proxy in any case to be abolished.

"10. The abolition as a governing class of the old Whig party, which has long since ceased to play any useful part in our public policy. Toryism represents obstructiveness to Radical progress, but it represents open hostility. Whiggism is hypocritical; while professing to be liberal, it never initiates a good measure or hinders a bad one. I am in favour of the establishment of a National party which shall destroy the system of government by aristocratic families, and give the members of the community born poorest fair play in their endeavour to become statesmen and leaders, if they have genius and honesty enough to entitle them to a foremost place.

"In order that my competitors shall not have the right to object that I unfairly put them to the expense of a contest, I am willing to attend a meeting of the inhabitants of your borough, at which Mr Gilpin and Lord Henley shall be present, and to be governed by the decision voted at such a meeting as to whether or not I persist in my candidature.

"In asking your support I pledge myself, in the event of a contest, to fight through to the last moment of the Poll a fair and honest fight. It would give me special pleasure to be returned as the colleague of Mr Gilpin, whom I believe to be a thoroughly honest and earnest representative; and if you elect me I shall do my best in the House of Commons for the general enfranchisement and elevation of the people of the United Kingdom. CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

"Sunderland Villa, Northumberland Park, Tottenham."

In the above address as it appears in the pages of the *National Reformer* for July 5, paragraphs 7 and 9 are lightly struck through in pencil by my father's hand, but whether these pencil marks have any significance I am not prepared to say. His ideas for a reform of the House of Lords certainly went very much farther, in later years at least, than those indicated in the ninth paragraph. He believed in a single Legislative Chamber and

considered two unnecessary, but as a rule he disliked any sudden abolition of old-established customs, and therefore in advocating reforms of the House of Lords, he put forward such as would lead gradually and naturally to its discontinuance as a House of hereditary legislators.

This address was read in Northampton to a large audience on the last Sunday in June. Two days later, at a public meeting of about four thousand persons held in the Market Square, a vote was taken as to Mr Bradlaugh's candidature, and only one hand was lifted against it.

The issue of this address and the subsequent public meeting produced a considerable flutter in the political dovecots of Northampton. A great outcry was raised at Mr Bradlaugh's unheard-of audacity in putting himself forward without receiving the usual requisition, but, as he calmly explained at a meeting in the Northampton theatre a few weeks later, he had for two years intended to become a candidate for Parliament, and had determined to offer himself to any body of men wherever he thought he had a fair chance of success. He believed Northampton was that place, and in putting himself forward without formal invitation he did not think he had imperilled either his own dignity or that of the electors. The *Northampton Mercury*, * the local Whig paper, affected the utmost scorn for his candidature, saying that he had "no more chance of being elected member for Northampton than he has of being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury." "*Nous verrons*" was Mr Bradlaugh's only comment upon this declaration, which was afterwards taken up and repeated by different papers as a sort of *bon mot*.

But the disdain of the Northampton Whigs was well balanced by the enthusiasm of the Northampton working-men. They threw themselves into the work of the election contest, from the very outset, with the utmost zeal and ardour; they delivered the address by hand at every house in Northampton—and the work was all done gratuitously. And so with all the elections in which my father took part: he had neither paid agents nor paid canvassers; he had no paid speakers (beyond, in some cases, out-of-pocket expenses) and few paid clerks; all such work was freely and eagerly volunteered. Nor were the women less ardent than

* July 4th.

the men. They soon decided upon his election colours, and at the conclusion of a meeting held by him in the theatre in the middle of July, they presented him with a rosette made of mauve, white, and green ribbons, a combination unique amongst election colours, afterwards generally identified with Mr Bradlaugh and loved for his sake. Some of these same rosettes fashioned and worn at this election in 1868 were cast into the grave at Brookwood in 1891, and some others, which their owners had carefully treasured for six-and-twenty years, were worn for the last time on the 25th June 1894, when the statue of Mr Bradlaugh was unveiled in the town whose name will be for ever associated with his own.

Amongst those who came to speak for him the first place must be given to George Odger, who was himself trying to win a seat at Chelsea. Besides Mr Odger there were the Rev. J. K. Applebee, Austin Holyoake, R. A. Cooper, E. Truelove, C. Watts, and others, and everywhere the meetings were large and enthusiastic. Poor men—freethinkers and radicals—throughout the country vied to help in this election; but men in Edinburgh and men in Lancashire could neither vote nor canvass, so they resolved to give aid in money. Long and costly was the candidature; the elections did not come off until November, and thus the campaign continued over five months. Some of the northern towns endeavoured to raise a regular monthly subscription, some a weekly one, and soon long lists appeared in the columns of the *National Reformer*, long lists made up mostly of small sums, of threepences or sixpences, or shillings; sums of £1 and over were rare, and seldom indeed was there such a heavy donation as £10, Mr Bradlaugh's supporters being, with scarcely an exception, poor working men. At the end of August John Stuart Mill drew upon himself a hailstorm of abuse by sending £10 to Mr Austin Holyoake, secretary of the Election Fund, with the following letter:—

"Avignon, August 28th, 1868.

"Dear Sir,—I enclose a subscription of £10 to the fund for defraying the expenses of Mr Bradlaugh's election to the House of Commons. I do so in the confidence that Mr Bradlaugh would not contest any place where by so doing he would risk the return of a Tory in the room of a supporter of Mr Gladstone, and of the disendowment of the Irish Church.—I am, dear Sir, yours very faithfully, J. S. Mill.

"Austin Holyoake, Esq."

Much capital was made out of the assertion that Mr Bradlaugh was trying to divide the Liberal vote at Northampton, and so let in a Tory, but it was an assertion entirely without foundation. Over and over again he stated that it was Lord Henley's * seat that he was trying to win, and that rather than risk the losing of it to a Tory he was prepared to submit to a decision of a test meeting of the electors. At that time there were 5,729 electors on the register, and of these as many as 3,400 were new voters, so extensively had the new Act affected the voting power in the single borough of Northampton. Mr Bradlaugh's offer to be governed by the decision of a public meeting of the electorate was entirely ignored. "It was in vain," says the writer of the little *Souvenir* book issued on the occasion of the unveiling of my father's statue at Northampton, "it was in vain that Mr Bradlaugh offered to abide by any fair test that might be devised to settle beforehand which of the two Liberal candidates in the field should go to the poll." A test ballot had been taken at Manchester to decide the claims of Ernest Jones. "If, however," continued the writer of the *Souvenir*, "the Manchester method were unacceptable, Mr Bradlaugh was prepared to agree to any other form of gauging the opinion of the constituency that was equally just to him" and to Lord Henley. But the Whigs seemed afraid to put it "to the touch," and my father's address was rapidly followed by one signed jointly by Charles Gilpin and Lord Henley. The Tories followed considerably later with two candidates, Messrs Merewether and Lendrick, and later still came a sixth candidate, Dr F. R. Lees, well known as a Temperance advocate. Why he came it is a little difficult to say, for before coming he wrote my father that he was not hostile to him; and he publicly declared that if he were elected in Mr Gilpin's place, he would at once resign in that gentleman's favour. Mr Bradlaugh therefore asked him, as it was impossible that both could win Lord Henley's seat, "to at once consent to adopt some course which will avoid division of the Radical strength." At his first meeting amendments were carried in Mr Bradlaugh's favour, but Dr Lees persisted right up to the last day, and abandoned his candidature "only on the day of the poll, when it was too late to prevent

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* The sitting members were Charles Gilpin and Lord Henley.

nearly five hundred electors recording their votes on his behalf."*

During the whole time, from the end of June to mid-November, Mr Bradlaugh was of course constantly addressing meetings from one end to the other of the constituency, and it is rather curious to note that in one of his earliest speeches he shadowed forth what really happened to him twenty years later. At the conclusion of an address delivered in the theatre on the 16th of July on the subject of "Capital and Labour and Trades Unions," some one asked him whether if he were delegated to the House of Commons he could "guarantee to enact laws that should satisfy all Trades Unions and the public generally." "Certainly not," was the reply; "I daresay I should give as much dissatisfaction to Trades Unionists as anybody. But that would not be my fault. I should act honestly, and if the Trades Unionists were the bulk of my constituency, and they thought I acted in contravention of my programme, I should resign my trust into their hands." And when Mr Bradlaugh did act thus honestly in the matter of the Employers' Liability Bill in 1889, the Trades Unions were exceedingly dissatisfied with him, and were for the most part very bitter against him.

In a very short time the Northampton election became the subject of discussion everywhere, and the press from one end of England to the other had some sort of comment to make upon it —hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, of course. The *Daily Telegraph*, then professing Liberal views, was one of the earliest to raise the *odium theologicum* against him;† it speculated in pious dismay as to "what outrage on good taste and on the conscientious convictions of his fellow-citizens 'Iconoclast' may not attempt in the wider circle to which he seeks admittance," and held up its Jewish hands in holy horror in imagining the possibilities of a time "when Englishmen will revile the sublime moralities of the New Testament." My father challenged Mr Levy, the editor, to give an instance of any such "outrage" committed by him, adding, "I do more than this; the Government have, out of the public funds, paid for shorthand notes of several of my speeches since 1865. These notes still exist; I know in some cases the actual

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* *Souvenir.*

† *Daily Telegraph*, August 3, 1868.

professional reporters employed, and I dare the publication of these notes."

The cowardly insinuations of the *Daily Telegraph* were printed as a placard and posted all over the town, where they produced the strongest excitement and bitterness. This placard was quickly followed by another of bright green, conveying a message from "The Irish Reform League to the Irishmen and friends of Ireland in Northampton." Northampton was entreated to return to Parliament "a man like Charles Bradlaugh, who advocated the cause of Ireland with pen and tongue when such advocacy was unpopular, if not dangerous." Irishmen in Dublin appealed to Irishmen in Northampton not to deserve the reproach of the defeat of such a man. "We, the Reformers of Ireland, gladly and heartily recommend him: by his works in the cause of Reform we know him; as a politician we endorse him; . . . we believe him to be true, we have faith in his political honesty, in his undaunted perseverance, and in his desire to elevate the downtrodden in our land and in his own." *

In September one of the newly enfranchised electors wrote to Mr John Bright for his advice as to the casting of his "maiden vote," and received from Mr Bright the following letter in reply:—

"Rochdale, September 17, 1868.

"DEAR SIR,—I cannot interfere in your election matters, but I can answer the question you put to me.

"I do not think you can improve the representation of your borough by changing your members. I think Lord Henley and Mr Gilpin worthy of your support.—I am, yours truly, JOHN BRIGHT.

"Mr THOMAS JAMES, Northampton."

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* In October Mr Keevil, chairman of the Irish Reform League, wrote again to Northampton. "Our members," he said, "consist of every denomination of Christians, and although we regret that Mr Bradlaugh does not believe in matters of religion as we do, and probably Mr Bradlaugh also regrets that we are not of the same religious opinions as himself, yet we do not think such controversial matters can hinder his usefulness for the people's work in the House of Commons. We in Ireland have had special opportunities of knowing the value of Mr Bradlaugh's works. . . . The field of Mr Bradlaugh's early labours was Ireland; the Lecture Hall in French Street, Dublin, was the arena of his triumphs, and the people soon recognised in him a champion. Private Bradlaugh was well known in County Cork many years ago as a man who would maintain the oppressed tenants against the injustice of landlordism."

When Mr Bradlaugh saw this letter, which was given the fullest publicity, he wrote Mr Bright as follows :—

"23 Great St. Helen's, London, E.C.
"September 19, 1868.

"SIR,—I feel some difficulty in intruding myself upon you ; but as you have taken a step in the Northampton election which I regard as prejudicial to my interests, you will pardon my trying to set the matter right. At the end of June I issued the address of which I enclose you a copy ; the only other address issued is that of the sitting members You will see in my address that I offered to submit my claims to the decision of an aggregate meeting, which offer has been entirely disregarded by Lord Henley. Whether or not Lord Henley is worthy of the support of the electors is a query to which a large proportion of the inhabitants of Northampton have already responded ; they declare that he is not. As to whether I shall make a better member, I here offer no other remark than that through my life I have actively striven to advance the cause of Reform ; while Viscount Henley has often discouraged and hindered effort, and has only voted in obedience to the irresistible pressure of public opinion. That you should support Mr Charles Gilpin with the weight of your great influence is natural, but that you should bolster up tumbling Whiggism as represented by Lord Henley I confess surprises me. Mr Gilpin's name has been associated as a working member in many highly valuable social and political reforms. Lord Henley's activity has been nearly limited to the prevention of compulsory education, the advocacy of increased expenditure for fortifications, and general care for landed interests.—Yours most obediently, CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

"JOHN BRIGHT, Esq., M.P.

"*P.S.*—I shall take the liberty of printing this letter and any reply you may forward me."

To my father's letter Mr Bright made answer that he had written an honest reply to a simple question, with no suspicion that he should be considered as taking sides with any party in the contest, adding some remarks as to his regard for past services and a tried fidelity, without any further definite opinion on Lord Henley's fitness. But if Mr Bright did not suspect that he should be considered as taking sides—and my father loyally accepted his statement—other people took a different view of the matter, and his letter was freely used against Mr Bradlaugh. The *Spectator* was of opinion that Mr Bright had succeeded "in more than neutralising the effect of Mr J. S. Mill's very injudicious and unexpected testimonial to Mr Bradlaugh's (Iconoclast's) claims as

candidate for Northampton;" whilst the *Saturday Review* considered that if this letter saved Northampton "from the discredit of electing Mr Bradlaugh," Mr Bright would have done the borough "valuable service."

Finding that this letter had been such a success, the Whigs next addressed themselves to Mr Gladstone, asking him if he endorsed the opinion expressed by Mr Bright. Mr Gladstone promptly replied in these terms:—

"Hawarden, N.W., Sept. 25, 1868.

"SIR,—While I am very unwilling to do or say anything that could be construed into interference in any election, I cannot refuse to consider the question you have put to me. Having for many years sat in Parliament with Lord Henley and Mr Gilpin, I have always considered both these gentlemen entitled to respect and confidence as upright and highly intelligent men, cordially attached to the Liberal party.—I remain, Sir, your faithful servant, W. E. GLADSTONE.

"I send this answer to you individually, and I should not wish it to be published unless you find that your brother-electors wish to know the purport of it."

I confess that I cannot understand the object of the postscript, for it must be manifest to the meanest intelligence that immediately it transpired that an elector had received a communication from Mr Gladstone upon the subject of the representation of the constituency, all the rest would be wild with curiosity "to know the purport of it." As a matter of course, it was read at the next meeting of the Liberal Association, and then reproduced in the public press.

In striving to win Lord Henley's seat, Mr Bradlaugh had not only Lord Henley, and Mr Bright, and Mr Gladstone fighting against him, but also Mr Gilpin, whose seat he was most anxious not to imperil. Mr Gilpin, although personally very friendly to my father, felt in honour bound to support his colleague, as he repeatedly stated at meeting after meeting: "Infinitely would he rather go back to London the rejected of Northampton than be the man who had deserted a friend in order to get another in." Nor was this by any means all that he had to contend against; he had actively against him nearly the whole of the press of England and Scotland, and no terms seemed too vile or slander too mean to use to injure him. Of all the newspapers circulating throughout the

United Kingdom, there were not more than three or four—of which the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* was one—who dared to say so much as a kindly word of him or of his candidature.

In the town of Northampton itself the opposition of the Whigs and the Tories grew so bitter and was carried to such an excess that in October it was found necessary to form a society for the purpose of aiding working men who lost their employment through their support of Mr Bradlaugh.

Dr F. R. Lees started a personal house-to-house canvass; this was followed by the joint canvass of Henley and Gilpin—undertaken at the urgent request of Lord Henley, for Mr Gilpin publicly declared it to be a practice which ought not to be encouraged—and then came my father's canvass. Much as he disliked it, he felt obliged in this case to do as the other candidates were doing; he issued an address, however, in which he said: "I desire to put on record my formal protest against the system of house-to-house canvassing, in which I only take part in obedience to the wish of my General Committee, and because all my opponents having resorted to it, some might think me slighting them if I abstained. I hold with Mr Gilpin that the system is a bad one. In canvassing, I do not come to beg your vote; if you need such a pitiable personal appeal, I prefer not having your support. I come to you that, seeing me, you may question me if you desire, and that you who cannot be present at the meetings may have the opportunity of better knowing my principles."

The canvassing in those days of open voting was even harder work than it is to-day; but Mr Bradlaugh was gallantly supported by a number of warm friends, amongst whom he was proud to have the veteran Thomas Allsop, and there was also much that was inspiring in coming face to face with the ardour and enthusiasm of the Northampton Radical working men. But if there was much to inspire, there was likewise sometimes much to sadden; in several instances a voter's wife answered that her husband "must look to his bread," and one threw an ominous light upon the penalty liable to be paid for a conscientious vote by saying that her husband "had lost his situation last election, and this time she would take care that he voted as his employer wished." My father, in the course of his canvass also, as might be expected, met with instances of "bitter and coarse fanaticism," which must have

been peculiarly unpleasant in the somewhat defenceless position of a candidate making a personal canvass.

At a great town's meeting, held for the purpose of hearing an expression of their political views and an account of their political action from the borough members, Mr Bradlaugh's committee sent a deputation to ask whether their candidate would be heard. They were told that he would be refused admission; he attended, and was refused admission, but his friends carried him in. The report before me says that "Mr Gilpin, on appearing on the platform, shook hands with Mr Bradlaugh and with Dr Lees; Lord Henley, supported chiefly by his legal advisers and their friends, shook hands with nobody, but shook himself when the groans echoed through the building." The four candidates addressed the meeting, but the uproar during Lord Henley's speech was so great that he could scarcely be heard, and the proceedings terminated with "three cheers for Bradlaugh."

As the weeks flew on, fiercer and fiercer grew the fight. The Lord's Day Rest Association came to the aid of the Northampton Whigs and Tories, and posted the town with placards headed: "Do not vote for Charles Bradlaugh unless you wish to lose your Sunday rest;" other candidates for other constituencies rushed to the rescue. Mr Giffard, Q.C.—now Lord Halsbury, then the Tory candidate for Cardiff, and the all-time bitter enemy of Mr Bradlaugh—said, with that fine regard for accuracy for which he has ever been distinguished: "Mr Bradlaugh was the avowed author of a work so blasphemous that one or two boroughs had refused to have anything to do with him."* Mr Charles Capper, M.P., also betrayed a similar inclination towards fiction. At a public meeting in Sandwich he related that he had been

"told by the hon. member for Northampton (Mr Gilpin) that the man whose name you have heard to-night, Mr Bradlaugh, stood in the Market Place of Northampton, and taking his watch from his pocket, said: 'It wants so many minutes to so-and-so. I will give you five minutes, and I call on your God, if he is your God, to strike me dead in this Market Place.' (Loud cries of 'Shame, shame.') That was Mr Bradlaugh, the man to whom Mr Mill sends his £10 to support his

* The latter part of this myth, at least, seems to have gained credence, for in July of this year (1894) Mr Courtney is reported to have said at Chelsea that "Mr Bradlaugh had to try constituency after constituency because he could not get a majority in any particular place."

candidature. Can you conceive anything more wretched? Do you think if a man of that kind were to come into this town (A voice: 'Turn him out') you would not turn him out?—you would kick him out!"

As will be seen when I come to deal fully with this subject, Mr Capper was not absolutely the first to have the doubtful honour of reviving this ancient "watch" story, and applying it to Mr Bradlaugh, and it is hardly necessary to say of so honourable a man as Mr Gilpin that, when my father saw him on the matter, he indignantly denied that he had ever said anything of the kind.

The *Primitive Methodist** jubilantly remarked that "Iconoclast has been made to wince lately by the reproduction of his published opinions—very inconvenient to him at this time." My father's comment on this was that, "as a matter of fact, Mr Bradlaugh's published opinions are about the only things which have not been reproduced. His opponents prefer quoting the opinions of others, or else drawing on their imaginations."

The *Saturday Review* delighted in an attack on Mr Bradlaugh not merely for its own sake, but even more as a means of injuring Mr Mill. I have not heard that John Stuart Mill ever expressed the least regret for his donation, but had he done so there would have been small cause for wonder, for he had to pay a heavy penalty for his generosity. It was used against him everywhere, and his own defeat at Westminster was by many persons attributed to the outcry raised about his subscription towards my father's election expenses. Even the mighty *Times* was not too mighty to add its voice, saying that the countenance Mr Mill had given "Iconoclast" had given great offence to the middle classes. The use of the name "Iconoclast" was quite gratuitous, for Mr Mill did not send his cheque to assist in the work of "Iconoclast," the Atheist lecturer; he sent it for the use of Charles Bradlaugh, the Radical politician.

It will be a matter of interest to those connected with the movement against compulsory vaccination to know that during the course of this election contest Mr Bradlaugh attended a meeting in the Town Hall called by the Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League, and that, while expressing "no opinion as to the theory of vaccination," in view of the many objections urged

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* See article on "Electioneering Rowdies," October 1868, in which, with innate delicacy, it speaks of Mr Bradlaugh as "impudent."

against the practice, he promised to support a demand for a Royal Commission for full investigation of the facts. The growth of opinion is so gradual that, although indeed there was a Select Committee in 1871, it was twenty years before the Commission was actually appointed, and then, as every one will remember, Mr Bradlaugh was himself nominated to sit upon it.

On the tenth of November, a week before the polling day, my mother, my grandfather (Mr A. Hooper), and we three children went to Northampton to attend a special tea-party given in the Corn Exchange, and I have a most vivid recollection of the enthusiasm then displayed. The time of our expected arrival having become known, hundreds of people, with bands and banners, came to meet us quite of their own accord, and when we returned to take the train back to London it seemed to my childish imagination as though the whole town must have turned out, for the streets were thronged from end to end with men and women cheering, singing the new song, "Bradlaugh for Northampton,"* laughing and crying in a veritable intoxication of excitement, until the moisture stood in my father's own eyes.

On the Monday after, ten thousand people were gathered in the market square to witness the nomination of the six candidates. The hustings, or, as I find it was sometimes called, the "booby hutch," was unusually large. It was built seventy feet long, in order to allow ten feet to each candidate and his supporters, and ten feet for the Mayor and the Corporation officials. The Mayor, Mr J. M. Vernon, opened the proceedings with a speech, and he was followed by the proposer and seconder of each candidate. Mr Bradlaugh was proposed by Mr Councillor Gurney, and seconded by Mr Dunkley. When these twelve speeches had come to an end, it fell to the candidates to address the electors. In the course of his speech Mr Gilpin alluded to the complaints that had been made against him for standing by Lord Henley. "Now," said he, "I want to do justice to a gentleman who stands on this platform. Mr Bradlaugh never made that complaint. He could honour the 'chivalry,' as he was pleased to call it, because he knew I could not have a selfish motive to serve in doing as I

* This song was written by a young shoemaker named James Wilson, and was set to music by another poor but gifted man, John Lowry. Poor Wilson died early, but his song became a sort of war-cry in Northampton, and will live long in the hearts of his fellow-townsmen.

did." The Mayor, in calling upon Mr Bradlaugh to address the eagerly waiting crowd, said: "Let me say that I have had the opportunity of witnessing the conduct of Mr Bradlaugh in presenting himself to this constituency. He has acted in the most gentlemanly way towards me, and I hope he can say in return that I have acted in the same manner towards him."

When all the speaking was over, and every one had had his "say," the Mayor took a show of hands for the various candidates, and declared the result to be in favour of Mr Gilpin and Mr Bradlaugh, a statement which was received with the utmost enthusiasm.

And yet my father was beaten: crowds did not always mean voters; and so, in spite of grand meetings, in spite of popular enthusiasm, he was beaten. His partial canvass resulted in promises of 1600 votes, whereas only 1086 were recorded for him, so that at the last moment 500 at least failed to give their votes as they had promised. In his *Autobiography* * he himself says: "I was beaten; but this is scarcely wonderful. I had all the journals in England except three against me. Every idle or virulent tale which folly could distort or calumny invent was used against me."

The poll took place on Tuesday the 17th of November, and was officially declared by the Mayor from the hustings in the market square on Wednesday at eleven o'clock.

The figures were:—

C. Gilpin	2632
Lord Henley	2105
C. G. Merewether	1625
W. E. Lendrick	1378
C. Bradlaugh	1086
Dr F. R. Lees	485 †

* Page 28.

† These were the figures given in *National Reformer*, November 22, 1868. The *Northampton Mercury* of that week gives them rather differently, and the *Souvenir* brought out in June 1894 again differently. They give the poll as follows:—

	Mercury.	*Souvenir.*
Gilpin	2691	2623
Henley	2154	2111
Merewether	1634	1631
Lendrick	1396	1374
Bradlaugh	1086	1069
Lees	492	492

After the public declaration of the poll the various candidates were supposed to "return thanks" for the support given them, but three only—Mr Gilpin, Lord Henley, and Mr Bradlaugh—appeared on the hustings. Mr Gilpin in a short speech said: "I turn to Mr Bradlaugh, and I say to him that since I met him in Northampton I have had prejudices removed in reference to himself, and I say unreservedly, when I observed the peace of this town, after the exciting scenes that we have had, I feel, and I should not be an honest man if I did not acknowledge it, it is owing to Mr Bradlaugh having used his influence to obtain it." These generous words of Mr Gilpin's were received with much cheering, and when it came to the Mayor's turn to speak he too said: "I feel it my duty to acknowledge my obligations to Mr Bradlaugh, because he not merely endorsed the sentiments I uttered,* but from the balcony of his hotel he backed them up by all the power of argument he possesses in urging you to comply with my wishes. I knew the appeal that was being made to you was made under the most exciting circumstances, and I felt the way in which it was conducted might leave an impression on the people of this country for a long time to come."

Charles Gilpin did more than speak favourably of Mr Bradlaugh from Northampton platforms. A day or two after the election he wrote to the *Morning Star*:—

"Sir,—I observe that several papers continue to reflect in strong terms on the candidature of Mr Bradlaugh at Northampton, and it is not of course for me to defend him; but I think it should be known that at the declaration of the poll, the Mayor publicly thanked him for his successful efforts to preserve peace and good order in the borough during an unusually exciting contest, and from my own observation I can fully endorse the observations of the Mayor.—I am, sir, yours truly, Charles Gilpin.

"November 20."

Mr Gilpin, moreover, undeterred by the furious onslaught made upon John Stuart Mill, sent a donation of £10 towards Mr Bradlaugh's election expenses, and in the March before he died he recommended Mr Pickering Perry, his own agent, to vote for him.

The extracts from Mr Gilpin's and the Mayor's speeches I have taken from the *Northampton Mercury*, a paper then thoroughly hostile to Mr Bradlaugh, and I confess to a feeling of shame that

* Praying that there should be no breach of the peace.

it should be necessary at this time of day to thus bring forward "witnesses to character"; yet, while there are many now willing to concede that my father was in his later years an honourable, temperate, law-abiding, and even "distinguished" man, they add that he was not all this in his early years: then he was coarse, violent, and vulgar. If the word of the Mayor of Northampton in 1868 counts for anything, and if the manly testimony of one of Northampton's most honoured members, the Quaker Charles Gilpin, has any weight, men will find that they must still further revise their opinion of Charles Bradlaugh, and admit that the change has been in themselves and not in him, that the qualities they grant for him in 1890 were his in 1868, and from the very outset of his career. There was no greater change in him than comes to us all through the mellowing touch of time; in truth, he changed less than would most men, and in spite of being a Radical and Reformer of a very advanced type, he was in many ways extremely conservative. He clung to old friends, to old habits, and to precedent. He formed his opinions not hastily but yet rapidly, and after due deliberation, deliberation which included a really marvellous power of putting both sides of the question before himself and others. His judgment once formed, he was extremely slow to alter it, and a course of action once entered upon, he was rarely if ever diverted from it.

My father left Northampton, followed to the station by such an enormous crowd of sorrowing men and women that his defeat was grander than many a victory; he could never, he said, forget those whose hot tears dropped on his hands on the day he left the borough, and as he wrote those words we may be sure that his own tears dimmed his eyes and blurred the page. Hard as iron to opposition, he was acutely sensitive to every token of affection or kindly feeling.

But there were more to rejoice over his defeat than to sorrow for it. The Rev. Thomas Arnold, addressing an audience of Northampton men, said, regardless of his own blasphemy, that they had shown that "they would not be servants of the man who trampled on their God and their Saviour;" and the Rev. A. Mursell, who a few years later found more kindly things to say of my father, speaking at Dundee, "thanked God that Mr Bradlaugh had been so signally defeated."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOUTHWARK ELECTION, 1869.

ABOUT a year after the General Election the appointment of Mr Layard as ambassador at Madrid created a vacancy at Southwark, and a number of working men electors immediately asked Mr Bradlaugh to become a candidate for that borough. Meetings were summoned for the purpose of proposing his name, and a committee was formed with a view of promoting his election, and a very active committee it proved to be. At a crowded meeting, convened by forty of the "chiefs of the Liberal Party," held in the middle of November, six names of possible representatives were brought forward—Mr Milner Gibson, Sir Francis Lycett, Sir Sydney Waterlow, Sir John Thwaites, and Mr Odger. The "forty chiefs" did not propose Mr Bradlaugh, whose name was however received with great cheering, when it was proposed by way of amendment by Mr Hearn, a Southwark Radical. A week later a meeting was held to decide upon a candidate to be supported by the working-class electors of the borough, and this meeting both Mr Odger and Mr Bradlaugh were invited to attend. The room engaged for the purpose was soon full to overflowing, and at length the speakers adjourned to the balcony in front of the house and addressed the crowd of three thousand people congregated in the road below. Mr Odger was unable to come, and after Mr Bradlaugh had addressed the meeting a resolution in his favour was passed by "an overwhelming majority."* He said that although he was there at the earnest invitation of several working men, he was not to be regarded as a candidate until he had issued his address. If Mr Odger came definitely before the constituency and was pledged to go to the poll, he should not contest the borough himself. He wished to see Mr George Odger in Parliament, and he believed that he would be an admirable representative.

* *Daily News.*

Apart from any question of Mr Odger's possible candidature, my father had another reason for hesitating before incurring such heavy expenses as the contest of Southwark would entail: the Northampton election, in spite of the long subscription lists made up from slender purses, had left him heavily burdened with debt. In August (1869) he wrote that he had still £250 of borrowed money to repay; by November this had become reduced, though even then there was still £100 "due to a friend at Norwich, and £20 to another friend in Huddersfield." A debt of £120 will seem a mere bagatelle to a rich man, who will pay more for a handsome dog that takes his fancy, and ten times as much for a thoroughbred horse; to a poor man, however, a debt of £120 is a millstone. And for that matter, if this debt had been the only one, my father would soon have repaid it, but he was hampered on all sides. Being so encumbered, he naturally felt bound "to exercise extra caution in contracting further liabilities for election purposes, especially as the large portion of the funds for such a struggle would probably be provided by my working friends throughout the United Kingdom, whose subscriptions I have no right to take except with the certainty of fighting a creditable if not a successful fight."

However, at the end of November all hesitation on my father's part was brought to an end by the receipt of the following letter from Mr Odger:—

"DEAR MR BRADLAUGH,—I have decided on going to the poll. I shall see the Southwark Committee this evening (November 29th), and make the declaration to-morrow.

"Thanking you for your manly and straightforward conduct,—I remain, yours truly, GEO. ODGER.

"18 High Street, Bloomsbury."

Under these circumstances my father at once announced that he should not seek the suffrages of the Southwark electors. He believed Mr Odger had a better chance of being supported by voters "who would be afraid of returning one whom the *Daily Telegraph* had described as an English 'irreconcilable,'" although, as he frankly said, he made no disguise of his wish to be in Parliament, and of his intention to be there as soon as possible. He earnestly entreated all his friends in the borough to give their unreserved support to George Odger, who was a real representative man.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LITIGATION, 1867-1871.

MR BRADLAUGH took part in so many law-suits during his life that people have hurriedly jumped at conclusions, and condemned him as a "litigious" man. They have not troubled to consider the circumstances of the different suits; it was sufficient that Mr Bradlaugh took part in them, and that at once stamped him as litigious. Now, as a matter of fact, it will be found that in a large number of cases he figured as *defendant* in the action, and where he was plaintiff I think it must be admitted that it was rarely without sufficient cause. Although many years constantly libelled, he seldom brought an action for libel; there were indeed such actions, all of which will be found mentioned in this book. After he had engaged a hall for lectures, it was no uncommon thing for the proprietor to break his contract; and if it was a very gross case this occasionally resulted in a suit, but much more frequently he accepted the situation, trusting to time to wear away prejudices against him.

In each of the four cases I am now about to speak of Mr Bradlaugh was the plaintiff. The first was an action arising purely out of his business as a financial agent, and would have little interest now were it not for the terms of the Vice-Chancellor's judgment. The second also arose in the course of business, but was greatly complicated by the oath question. The third was a libel case; while the fourth was against the Mirfield Town Hall Company for breach of contract.

In January 1867 the case of the English Joint Stock Bank (Limited) and Charles Bradlaugh was heard in the Court of Chancery before Vice-Chancellor Wood. Mr Bradlaugh claimed to be admitted as a creditor against the Bank, then in course of winding up, for £12,350, or for such less sum as the Court might think just and reasonable, in consideration of his having negotiated a purchase for the Bank of the banking business of

Messrs Harvey & Hudson of Norwich for the sum of £210,000. The sum thus claimed was the one agreed to be paid him by the general manager of the Bank. The Court decided against him for reasons not necessary to enter fully upon here, and the Vice-Chancellor's judgment was reported at considerable length in the *Times* of the following day. The extracts given here are based upon the shorthand notes of the case. Vice-Chancellor Wood commenced his judgment by referring to "the great ability with which Mr Bradlaugh had argued his case;" and after dealing with the arguments at some length, said that he regretted to come to the conclusion that there was no completed agreement which could be enforced, "as Mr Bradlaugh—to whom he gave implicit credit as to everything stated by him on his own recollection—had no doubt been put to very great trouble and anxiety, but in deciding against his present claim he would not be shut out from obtaining what he could for his services on a *quantum meruit*. The costs of the summons would be reserved until the result of such an application should have been ascertained. The question had been argued with extreme ability by Mr Bradlaugh, and he could not possibly have been assisted better by whatever counsel he could have retained than he had been by his own advocacy. He had put it in the clearest and most concise manner possible, and the Court had been much assisted by the whole of his argument. He had very fairly produced every document that he knew anything about, or which he thought could throw any light upon the transaction." The Vice-Chancellor repeated that he gave unfeigned credit to everything that Mr Bradlaugh had said; he did not try to exaggerate or to improve upon his case; and he was sorry—because he had no doubt that Mr Bradlaugh had had great trouble and anxiety in the matter—he was sorry that he must decide against him on his claim.

These words of Vice-Chancellor Wood's are specially valuable; first, as showing a judge's appreciation of Mr Bradlaugh's legal ability even when he was arguing a case which concerned an ordinary business matter only, and was neither directly or indirectly a defence of those principles of liberty of speech, of press, or of conscience which were so close to his heart; and next, as a tribute to that calm and well-balanced temperament which even as a young man of thirty-three enabled him to state his case so manifestly without gloss or exaggeration.

Later in the same year (1867) my father commenced a suit against a gentleman named De Rin. This case went through various Courts, and although the subject in dispute was really a private matter, the peculiar course taken by the defendant resulted in a public benefit, viz. the extension of the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869. The suit, begun in 1867, was not finally disposed of until 1870, but during these years the side issue of the competency of an Atheist to give evidence involved so much fighting that my father actually lost about fifteen hundred pounds before it was decided in his favour.

As endorser of three bills of exchange, Mr Bradlaugh brought an action against Mr De Rin as acceptor of the same. The bills were drawn in Brussels, and sent for acceptance to the defendant in England; he accepted, and afterwards endorsed them to a legal gentleman named Gallet, who in turn endorsed them in France to Mr Bradlaugh. The action was brought by the latter to enable him to realise the bills in this country, and was heard before Mr Justice Montague Smith and a common jury, in the Court of Common Pleas, in December 1867. Mr Lumley Smith was counsel for the plaintiff; Mr D. Keane, Q.C., and Mr Wood were for the defendant.

When Mr Bradlaugh entered the witness-box Mr Keane interposed, saying: "I have a most painful duty to perform, and that is to object to the witness being sworn on account of his being an Atheist and holding notoriously Atheistic opinions." Mr Keane repeated that he felt it an extremely painful duty, but that he had no discretion in the matter; he had instructions to take this objection, and therefore he must take in. He added: "At the same time I must say that I have met Mr Bradlaugh several times on business, and have never seen any conduct on his part unbecoming a gentleman."

Mr Justice Smith: "You have power, Mr Keane, to waive the objection. Sometimes it is material to make the objection considering the matters in issue. But in the present case is it so? I consider this a case in which the objection had better be waived."

As counsel against Mr Bradlaugh in the Devonport case, Mr Montague Smith, Q.C., had himself examined Mr Bradlaugh upon his opinions, but this he considered altogether a different matter; this was purely a commercial transaction.

Mr Bradlaugh stated that he was ready to affirm or to give evidence upon oath, and after a short discussion Mr Justice Smith said that he should take it upon himself to allow him to affirm; but Mr Keane again interposed, urging that he would not be competent to do so. Mr Bradlaugh then made his counsel formally tender him as a witness, but after some conversation Mr Keane agreed to admit the facts which Mr Bradlaugh was to prove. It was then contended that the endorsement was not valid according to the law of France, but ultimately the verdict was given for the plaintiff, with leave to the defendant to move the verdict for him on the objections he had raised.

Mr De Rin accordingly moved the Court of Common Pleas, and in July 1868 the Court granted a rule absolute to enter the verdict for the defendant, on the ground that the endorsement did not confer on the plaintiff the right of suing on the bills in this country. Mr Bradlaugh appealed against this decision to the Court of Exchequer, and the Court of Appeal suggested an inquiry as to the fact whether the endorsed bills came into Mr Bradlaugh's possession by post in England or whether they were handed to him in France, and Mr S. Prentice, Q.C., was nominated as a referee to ascertain the fact. When the case came on appeal before Mr Justice Lush in October 1868, in the Exchequer Chamber, bail had to be given for costs, and Mr Austin Holyoake was tendered as such bail, but Mr Wood, counsel for the defendant De Rin, objected to Mr Holyoake as not competent to take the oath. "I am known to be a Freethinker," wrote Austin Holyoake, with just indignation, "and it is therefore competent for any solicitor or barrister to openly insult me by calling in question my ability to speak the truth."

After a very long delay, in December 1869 the case came before Mr Prentice to ascertain, as I have said, whether the bills were delivered to Mr Bradlaugh in England or in France. Once more Mr Bradlaugh presented himself as a witness, to prove their delivery to him in England, and once more, despite the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act in the previous August, his evidence was objected to. Mr Bradlaugh appeared in person, and Mr Wood, who had been counsel for the defendant at the hearing before Mr Justice Lush, again appeared for him. On Mr Bradlaugh tendering himself as witness, Mr Wood—who, like

his predecessor Mr Keane, said that, acting under special instructions, he took a course which gave him considerable pain—asked him: "Do you believe in God?"

Mr Bradlaugh's objection to answer this question was followed by a long discussion, at the end of which Mr Prentice held that he was bound to answer. Again Mr Wood put the question: "Do you believe in God?"

Mr Bradlaugh: "I do not; that is, I do not believe in any being independent of the universe, governing or ruling it."

Mr Prentice: "Do you believe in a future state of rewards and punishments?"

Mr Bradlaugh: "After death, certainly not."

"Then," said Mr Prentice, "I must refuse your evidence."

A day or so later my father, undaunted, carried his case before Mr Justice Brett at Judges' Chambers, and asked for an order to compel Mr Prentice to take his evidence; but Mr Justice Brett held, although with some doubt, that Mr Prentice was not authorised by the Act of Parliament to administer the alternative declaration.* The Judge added that Mr Bradlaugh ought to have liberty to apply to the Court against the decision, and endorsed his judgment with the opinion that it was "a fit case to go before the full court."

A few days after this refusal of Mr Prentice to hear his evidence, and Mr Justice Brett's confirmation of this refusal, Mr Bradlaugh was called as a witness in the Central Criminal Court to prove the signature of Dr Shorthouse of the *Sporting Times* in an action for libel brought by Sir Joseph Hawley. On his objecting to take the oath he was readily permitted to give his evidence upon affirmation. Such was the confusion in which the law of evidence was left after the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869. A witness perfectly competent to give

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* The Evidence Amendment Act 1869 (32 and 33 Vict. c. 68) enacted "that if any person called to give evidence in any court, whether in a civil or criminal proceeding, shall object to take an oath, or shall be objected to as incompetent to take an oath, such person shall, if the presiding judge is satisfied that the taking of the oath would have no binding effect upon his conscience, make the promise and declaration the form of which is contained in the same section." Mr Prentice, as arbitrator, did not consider himself a "presiding judge" within the meaning of the Act, and was not therefore qualified to satisfy himself as to the state of a witness's conscience.

evidence in one Court was incompetent in another, or else it was a matter of doubt whether he was competent or not.

In January 1870 Mr Bradlaugh carried his case before Lord Chief Justice Bovill and Justices Keating, Brett, and Montague Smith, in the Court of Common Pleas; but after half-an-hour's argument the Judges refused to hear him on the ground that he was not moving on affidavit. "That is," said Mr Bradlaugh, "I was sent back to be sworn as to the refusal of my testimony before I could be allowed to argue that I was not liable to take the oath, and before I could be allowed to claim that I had, notwithstanding, the right to give evidence." A very pretty tangle of contradiction!

He then proceeded to satisfy all conventions by swearing (affidavits could not then be affirmed) that Mr Prentice did not consider him competent to give evidence on oath, nor himself competent to receive the evidence on affirmation. Mr Bradlaugh returned two days later to the Court of Common Pleas and asked that "Mr Prentice be directed to take the evidence of Mr Charles Bradlaugh on the fact to be stated in a special case." After a very long argument the Court decided that it had no power to give directions to an arbitrator.

Although no more advanced than when he first brought his action in the winter of 1867, Mr Bradlaugh did not even yet despair, but determined to carry his case to the highest possible legal tribunal. Pending the final decision of the law, petitions were got up all over the country and sent into Parliament, praying for a further amendment of the Act.

On the 7th of February the case was mentioned at the Sittings in Error; but although there were seven judges present, Lord Chief Baron Kelly refused to proceed with it in the absence of the Lord Chief Justice. He said that the case was one "of the greatest possible importance, not only in this country, but throughout all Europe; it was therefore of importance that the Court should be so constituted as to insure general satisfaction with its decision. The Lord Chief Justice Cockburn had been present when an argument on part of the case had been heard; it would be advisable, therefore, that the case should stand over until the Sittings in Error after the next term."

In consequence of this, it was not until the 16th of May that the long-drawn-out proceedings in this suit—involving at the outset

a simple business transaction, but now including far wider issues—entered upon their final stage. For more than two years justice had been persistently perverted from its course, and used as the tool of fraud, but now at length matters wore a different aspect. The case was heard in the Court of Exchequer Chamber, before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, Lord Chief Baron Kelly, Justices Blackburn, Mellor, and Lush, and Barons Channell and Cleasby. The Court was unanimous in its decision that the endorsee was entitled to sue, and that the verdict must be entered for Mr Bradlaugh. The Lord Chief Justice remarked that the defendant had no merits at all in the case; he had relied upon this "somewhat unrighteous" defence, and the judgment now given was "in accordance with the good sense and justice and equity in the case."

So, in the end, my father won his suit, but the victory was very costly. The judgment of the Court of Exchequer did not entitle him to recover any of the expenses he had incurred in fighting the oath question. Upon that point the decision of the Court of Common Pleas was final. In a public statement made at the end of the year at Bristol, in reply to some observations which had fallen from Professor Newman, Mr Bradlaugh remarked that in contesting the oath question in the law courts he had himself lost £1500. This was an allusion to his losses in the De Rin case, the costs in which alone reached to more than £1100; in addition to these enormous costs, he lost his debt of £360 because the Christian De Rin, who objected to the evidence of an Atheist, became bankrupt when the case was finally decided.

Before the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act in 1869 all persons who disbelieved in God or in a future state of rewards and punishments were held to be incompetent to give evidence in a Court of Law. Freethinkers had long and bitterly felt the injustice and hardship of their position; and in 1868 and 1869, after the first action in the case of Bradlaugh and De Rin, a most determined effort was made to move Parliament to amend the law of evidence. The National Secular Society sent in petitions to the House of Commons, and the Executive of that Society put itself in communication with members of both Houses. Mr Bradlaugh said in 1870 that they tried "to pass a much more distinct clause in favour of Freethinkers than the one as it now stands, which is in its legal effect entirely different from the clause

as originally drawn by the Hon. Mr Denman, and printed in the Bill first read before the Commons. It is Lord Cairns to whom we were ultimately indebted for the main words which really serve us in the Act of 1869."

In 1870 another Bill, prepared by the Hon. G. Denman and Mr Locke King, was passed through Parliament to further amend the law of evidence, but it only met such difficulties as had arisen in the case of Bradlaugh and De Rin, and did not touch the law as it related to jurymen, affidavits, or Scotland. Mr Bradlaugh was continually urging members of the House to get these points amended, but nothing further was done until he himself carried his Oaths Act of 1888, by which the whole law relating to oaths was radically altered.

Until the passing of this Act, jurors without religious belief were liable to be committed to prison if they refused to be sworn, and the law did not permit them to affirm. Affidavits on interlocutory proceedings could only be made upon oath. In Scotland all Atheists and disbelievers in eternal torment were, in addition, incompetent as witnesses.

In any case, too much discretion was left to the Judge, who was supposed to satisfy himself, according to the monstrous formula laid down by the Act, that the oath would have "no binding effect" upon the conscience of a heretical witness. A promise is binding upon the conscience of an honest man in whatever form it may be made, and it put Freethinkers in an entirely false position to be obliged to assent to the statement that some particular form was not binding upon them. Conscientious witnesses who wished to affirm hardly knew what to answer when the Judge put the question to them, and he would not always be satisfied with the mere statement that the oath gave no additionally binding effect to the promise. And sometimes his assent to the formula would be used to the discredit of a witness. I myself once heard Baron Huddleston tell the jury that it was for them to consider what was the value of the evidence of a witness whom an oath would not bind.

Amongst the multitude of papers hostile to Mr Bradlaugh's candidature for Parliamentary honours in 1868 was one called the *Razor*. This journal went so far in its condemnatory strictures that Mr Bradlaugh felt—as his counsel, Mr Digby Seymour, put it

—that he had no option but to bring an action against the proprietor. The *Razor* must have been in a general way a tolerably obscure publication, for when I went to look it up in the British Museum, no trace of it could be discovered, although the officials there took considerable pains to find it for me. But the article against Mr Bradlaugh had been recopied from its columns and widely circulated in Northampton, where it was calculated to produce serious mischief. Later on Northampton grew accustomed to hearing my father accused of every possible crime, and, knowing their absolute falsity, became hardened to such slanders; still, at that time the acquaintance was comparatively young between Northampton and the man whose statue it has this year placed in one of its most public thoroughfares.

The libel endeavoured to connect Mr Bradlaugh with Broadhead (of the Sheffield trade outrages), and with the misdeeds of which Mr Montagu Leverson had been guilty two years after my father quitted his office. It was published on August 15th, and was read by Mr Bradlaugh on the 19th. He at once telegraphed a demand for an apology, and on the same day received a letter from the proprietor saying that the editor, who was then absent, would be requested to offer a suitable apology. This the editor showed no inclination to do, and some correspondence ensued. Ultimately the *Razor* people agreed to publish a statement of facts if Mr Bradlaugh would draw it up and send it to them. This he did, but the statement did not appear, and, tired of these proceedings, in October he issued a writ against them. The case came on in December, at the *nisi prius* sittings at the Guildhall, before Mr Justice Blackburn and a common jury. Mr Bradlaugh did not conduct his own case, but Mr Digby Seymour, Q.C., and Mr Day appeared on his behalf, while the defendant Mr Brooks was represented by Mr O'Malley, Q.C., and Mr Griffiths.

No attempt was made to justify the libel, nor was any apology offered, although Mr Digby Seymour intimated the willingness of his client to accept it even at that late hour. Mr Bradlaugh was the only witness (the defence called no evidence whatever) other than those required for formal proofs; and, having no case, the counsel for the defence endeavoured to excite the prejudices of the jury by cross-examining him as to his theological opinions. The method pursued by Mr O'Malley was so gross that, lest I seem to do him an injustice, I will quote the exact words of the

report of his cross-examination. After asking a number of questions about Broadhead and trades unions, Mr O'Malley asked:

"Do you believe in the existence of a God?"

C. BRADLAUGH: I decline to answer that question, because, according to the present laws of this country I might by so doing render myself liable to prosecution.

Mr O'M.: Have you not said, "There is no God"?

C. B.: No; on the contrary, I have repeatedly said and written that an atheist does not say "There is no God."

Mr O'M.: Have you not made statements in public against the existence of God?

C. B.: I decline to answer that question.

Mr O'M.: Did you not once at a public lecture take out your watch and defy the Deity, if he had any existence, to strike you dead in a certain number of minutes?

C. B.: Never; such a suggestion is utterly unjustifiable.

Mr JUSTICE BLACKBURN: If any issues in the action depended on this course of proceeding, Mr O'Malley, I should not object, but I cannot see that these questions have any relevance to the matter before us.

Mr O'M.: I think I shall be able to show by a few questions more the importance of the plaintiff's answers. Are you (to plaintiff) a writer in the *National Reformer?* And have you written under the name of "Iconoclast"?

C. B.: I decline to answer these questions, because prosecutions for penalties are at present pending against the *National Reformer* at the instance of the late Government.

Mr O'M.: Did you write this passage, which appeared in the *National Reformer:* "There is a great big monkey," etc. [fable already referred to on p. 233].

C. B., after some hesitation: I might refuse to answer this question on the same ground I have refused to answer the other questions. I prefer, however, to answer, and I say that passage did appear in a paper with which I was connected, but was not written by me. It was part of a translation of a German fable, and was copied nearly two years ago into the *Saturday Review* without the context. If the context were read with it, the meaning of the passage would be entirely different. It related as much to Hinduism as to Christianity. I wrote a reply to the *Saturday Review* at the time.*

Mr O'M.: Did you ever take legal proceedings against the *Saturday Review* for publishing this article?

C. B.: No; I considered it a criticism on my opinions, and answered it by other articles in other papers. I should never sue a journal for an attack on my opinions.

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* This reply was refused insertion.

Mr O'M. : Do you believe in the truth of the Christian religion?

C. B. : I decline to answer, because it is a prosecutable offence for a man to deny the truth of Christianity after he had been brought up in its tenets.

The defence, as I have said, called no witnesses; but Mr O'Malley was a host in himself, and as far as the jury were concerned, the "eloquence" of his address more than made up for the weakness of his case. He said that from Mr Bradlaugh's refusals to answer his questions, "it is fair to assume that he has no character to be injured by such a criticism as this," meaning by that that an Atheist had no character to be injured when his principles were likened to those of such a man as Broadhead, a "self-confessed assassin," and his morality to that of a man compelled to flee the country on a charge of fraud. Mr O'Malley went on to say that while it would have been better if the article had not appeared, "it was nonsense to talk of it as injury to the notorious character of such a man. The smallest amount of damages would be sufficient to set up the character of that 'noble' man. He asked the jury, as Christian men, to refrain from giving their endorsement to that man Bradlaugh, to that man Bradlaugh, to that man Bradlaugh."

In the course of his summing up, Mr Justice Blackburn said that "all in Court must have been disgusted with some of the questions which had been put in cross-examination." That all were not disgusted was soon apparent, for, after a short consultation, the jury, feeling bound to respond to this appeal to their Christianity, returned a verdict for the plaintiff indeed, but with one farthing damages.

My father was deeply hurt at the mockery of this verdict, and, overcome by a sense of helplessness in the face of such intolerance, he wrote these bitter words:—

"Outlaw or Citizen? Which am I?

"When at Bolton I sued for damages occasioned by the breach of contract for the hire of the hall in which the lectures were to be delivered, I was non-suited by the County Court Judge on the ground that the lectures to be delivered were illegal (although there was, of course, no possible evidence of what I should have said). When I was illegally arrested at Devonport, confined in a damp cell for one night, and twice brought before the magistrates,

an Exeter jury, although they in point of fact decided entirely in my favour, gave me one farthing damages; and Lord Chief Justice Erle, on appeal to the Court sitting in *banco*, laid down the doctrine that the imprisonment which prevented a man like myself from making known his views (although that imprisonment had been by the verdict of the jury utterly unjustifiable) was rather a benefit to the individual imprisoned than a wrong for which damages could be sought. When, at Wigan, the evidence of myself and a gentleman and his wife were all refused by the County Court Judge, on the ground of our being all well-known Secularists, I was legally robbed of nearly thirty pounds. When concerned about three years ago in another litigation, the statement of my opponent that I was 'Iconoclast, the Atheist,' sufficed to defeat me. When I sued as plaintiff last year in an action to which there was no defence [Bradlaugh *v.* De Rin] in the Court of Common Pleas, my evidence was objected to on account of my disbelief in the Scriptures. When on appeal on a point of law I tendered Mr Austin Holyoake as bail, he was refused because he was a well-known heretic, and could not therefore be allowed to be sworn. Now I am grossly libelled, the libel is not justified; the only cross-examination is on my opinions; and the counsel for the defendant, who actually admits that the libel ought never to have appeared, asked the jury to give me the smallest possible damages because I am an Atheist. The jury respond to his appeal to their religious prejudices, and I get one farthing damages. What am I to do? If when I am libelled I take no notice, the world believes the libel. If I sue I have to pay about one hundred pounds costs for the privilege, and gain the smallest coin the country knows as a recompense. Duelling is forbidden alike by my code of morals and the law of the country. If I horsewhip the libeller, I am punishable for assault. Am I outlaw or citizen—which? 'Answer me, you who boast your superiority; you whose religion makes you better than myself. What mockery to tell me that I live in a free country, when it is thus justice is dealt out to such as I am!

"CHARLES BRADLAUGH."

In January (1869) Mr Bradlaugh prayed the Court to grant him a rule for a new trial, and Lord Chief Justice Cockburn observed that "no one could say that because a man was an Atheist (even

assuming him to be one) anyone was entitled to say he was a murderer or a swindler. That, however, probably was not quite the way in which it was put to the jury; it was probably put rather in this way, that when a man had publicly put forth certain sentiments in certain language, it might be that his character was not such as deserved or required much vindication. As a general principle the damages in actions of tort, especially in actions for libel, were eminently for the jury." Mr Justice Mellor made some similar remarks, and Mr Justice Hannen having put some questions as to the refusal of the apology and the manner of the denial of the charge, the Lord Chief Justice granted the rule.

It never came to a new trial, however, for in the following November the defendant, Mr Brooks, withdrew the whole of the charges against Mr Bradlaugh and apologised for their publication, but his solicitor intimated that he was in no position to pay the costs. Therefore, although my father obtained the barren satisfaction of this tardy apology and the withdrawal of the charges, it cost him not less than £200. The *Razor* itself did not survive this litigation, for before the new year of 1869 had dawned it was already discontinued.

In accordance with the wishes of some Yorkshire friends, Mr Bradlaugh had promised to give two political lectures in Mirfield on the 18th and 19th November 1870. The Mirfield Town Hall was engaged for this purpose on the 21st of September, and the lectures announced were—"War: its Effect upon European Peoples, and an Appeal for Peace," and "England's Balance Sheet." The hall belonged to a Company, and when it was realised that their property was let to the wicked Atheist for the purpose of pleading the cause of peace in Europe, some of the directors objected, and objected so strongly, to the proposed desecration of their building that they determined to back out of the agreement under the pretence that the hall-keeper had no authority to let it, although, in fact, he had taken four guineas, money paid for the hire of the hall, and had given a receipt for it. Mr Bradlaugh persisted in his right to lecture, and on making inquiries learned that the hall-keeper had let the hall on former occasions without any objection on the part of the directors. In order to complicate matters the Directors let the hall for the dates assigned to Mr Bradlaugh to a party of Ethiopian serenaders.

As Mr Bradlaugh made no sign of yielding when the time arrived, the assistance of the police was summoned, and the hall was guarded, inside and out, by a body of constabulary numbering about thirty men, under a superintendent. The directors evidently loved war better than peace. Mr Bradlaugh reached Mirfield at about a quarter past six on the evening of the 18th, but, fearing a disturbance, he went straight to the Town Hall, at once and alone, although the meeting was not summoned until eight o'clock Upon reaching the hall he found it prepared for a siege; in addition to its garrison of police, it was barricaded with huge baulks of timber. He held some conversation with the Superintendent of the Police, who was sufficiently polite, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors, a gentleman particularly prominent in his opposition to Mr Bradlaugh, and now present to watch over the premises in person. During the conversation a crowd of about four hundred people collected, but at my father's request they remained perfectly quiet and took no part in the proceedings. Mr Bradlaugh then endeavoured to open the door, but in addition to being strongly barricaded the handle was held by Mr Johnson (the Chairman), and another man, the former of whom boasted that he would spend a large sum to keep Bradlaugh out of Mirfield. Finding the force against him too great, my father, after a little struggle, gave up the attempt to enter.

He at once commenced an action against the Town Hall Company, but owing to various delays the suit was not tried until the summer of 1871. It then came on at the Leeds Assizes on August 7th, before Mr Justice Mellor and a special jury. Mr Bradlaugh conducted his own case, while Mr Digby Seymour, Q.C., and Mr Mellor appeared for the Hall Company. Mr Bradlaugh opened in "a very temperate speech" of "great clearness," and then called his witness, Mr Stead, to prove the hire of the hall. Mr Stead had to go through a preliminary confusing examination as to his fitness to make affirmation, although Mr Justice Mellor was as considerate as the obnoxious wording of the Evidence Amendment Act would allow. Objection being taken to certain questions Mr Bradlaugh wished to put to his witness, my father was obliged to go into the witness-box himself to prove the points. Of course Mr Digby Seymour could not forget the lesson in tactics learned a few months before from Mr O'Malley, and like his opponent in the *Razor* case—though

happily with less coarseness—seized the opportunity thus offered to rouse the religious prejudices of the jury, although the sole question in dispute was the validity of a contract made by the servant of a Company on its behalf.

But relevant or irrelevant, by hook or by crook, the religious question was almost invariably dragged in against Mr Bradlaugh: and just as invariably a bad case was bolstered up by diverting the minds of the jury from the real merits of the case to a contemplation of the wickedness of Atheistic opinions. Hence, according to the usual procedure, Mr Digby Seymour began:

"You are the proprietor of the *National Reformer*, I think?"

Mr BRADLAUGH: I decline to answer that question on the ground that it might make me liable to a criminal prosecution. I am threatened with one at the present moment.

Mr S.: Oh, you state that, do you?

Mr B.: Yes, I do.

Mr S.: I think you hold strong opinions on political subjects as well as on religion?

Mr B.: Well, I hold opinions some of which are similar to those held by Dean Stanley, Mr J. S. Mill, and others.

Mr. S.: Without putting it unfairly, you hold extreme opinions?

Mr B.: I hold opinions held by a great many of the first men in Europe.

Mr S.: And I suppose, as you have refused, I must not ask you any question as to the contents of this *National Reformer* (holding one in his hand). May I ask if you think Christianity has a ludicrous aspect?

Mr B.: You may ask, but I shall not answer the question.

Mr S.: Do you know a work called "The Ludicrous Aspects of Christianity"? Is it in your library?

Mr B.: It is not in my library.

Mr S.: Then you think that Christianity has a ludicrous aspect?

Mr B.: I cannot answer that.

Mr S.: At all events, under your eloquent handling, I believe Christianity has been made to assume ridiculous aspects?

Mr B.: I have never written such a pamphlet as you refer to, nor delivered lectures under such a title.

At this point the Judge interfered, and after pointing out that the lectures to be delivered at Mirfield were of a political character, warned Mr Seymour that such questions were unnecessary. "If they were to destroy Mr Bradlaugh's credit I should not object, but there is really no part of his evidence in dispute," he said.

As Mr Bradlaugh had not otherwise sufficient evidence of the lettings of the hall, he was obliged to call the hall-keeper himself. This man, Thomas Balme, was, as might be expected, a very unwilling witness, with a peculiarly defective memory. Having heard him, Mr Justice Mellor came to the conclusion that he really had no authority to let the hall, and that consequently the plaintiff must be non-suited.

Mr Bradlaugh decided to try for a new trial, and applied to Mr Justice Willes at Judges Chambers a few days later that judgment might be stayed until the fifth day of Michaelmas Term, in order to enable him to move the Court of Queen's Bench. Mr Thomas Chitty appeared for the defendants.

When Mr Justice Willes read the receipt, which ran as follows: "Mirfield Town Hall Company, Limited. Mr Charles Bradlaugh have taken the Hall for two nights, November 18th and 19th, for the sum of four guineas. Paid 21st of September 1870. Thomas Balme, Hall-keeper, liabal to damages,"—he said to Mr Bradlaugh, "I shall be very glad if you can make out that the law helps you, for I think your case a very hard one. (Turning to Mr Chitty) With such a receipt and memorandum as this, having paid my four guineas, I should most certainly expect to lecture. It is very hard for the plaintiff so be defeated by the mere statement of your own servant that he had no authority."

Mr Chitty opposed the application. "There is really no good ground shown for a new trial," he said. "Perhaps at this moment no legal ground," replied the Judge, "but a strong suggestion which I am inclined to listen to. This is an application by a plaintiff who will be stopped if I do not aid him, and the circumstances, not ordinary ones, are certainly in his favour."

In the end it was arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should have an opportunity to move, if he could pay £60 into Court within seven days, and on his side my father pledged himself not to trouble the Court unless he was quite satisfied that he could prove that Balme had let the hall on other occasions. I gather that he was unable to get sufficient evidence on this point, for he carried the case no further. The taxed costs of the Mirfield Town Hall Company amounted to £98 7s., and as Mr Bradlaugh was unable to pay this at once an attempt was made to enforce immediate judgment, but this failed, and it was ultimately arranged that Mr Bradlaugh should pay £10 per month. So here was another addition to debt

to the load of an already over-weighted man. The debt incurred in the Devonport trial took him three and a half years to pay. Happily, his own expenditure in this (the Mirfield) case was covered by the subscriptions of his poor friends, and they also ultimately contributed £25 towards the costs of the Hall Company.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PERSONAL.

In our house the year 1870, which was to bring death and sorrow to so many homes, and rage and despair to so many hearts, opened cheerlessly indeed. The outlook for my father was dark and gloomy in the extreme. Overweighted with debt, he seemed to be sinking ever deeper and deeper in financial difficulties. The prosecution of the *National Reformer*, the De Rin and the *Razor* litigation, had each and all left him more or less deeply involved. The great panic of 1866 had dealt him a serious blow from which he vainly attempted to recover; the identification of "C. Bradlaugh, of 23 Great St. Helen's," with "Bradlaugh, the Atheist lecturer," was fatal to business. The spirit of the boycott existed long before Captain Boycott lived to give it his name. People were much too good to do business with an Atheist, and just as the baker's wife took her custom from the boy coal merchant in 1848, so customers of a different class took their business from the City merchant twenty years later.

My father began to despair of making his business succeed under these conditions, and to think seriously of giving up his City life, and of devoting himself to public work. This course would relieve him from the anxieties of two clashing occupations; moreover, as he said, "while prejudice and clamour bring ruin to me as a business man, they can do me no injury as a lecturer and a journalist."*

In addition to all these difficulties—the outcome of his public work—there were others, less serious in some respects, it is true, but far more so in the discredit attaching to them and the anguish they caused. I refer to those home extravagances and home

* *National Reformer*, April 17, 1870.

debts, due to my mother's infirmity, which all helped to pile up the total liabilities to unmanageable figures. In March or April a man was put into possession at Sunderland Villa, and remained there for several weeks. My father felt this bitterly, but his course of conduct was now clear before him, and unhesitatingly decided upon; thus once more we see the pressure of money difficulties directly shaping his path. A few personal words in the *National Reformer* * indicated his resolve: "After five years' severe struggle," he wrote, "so severe, indeed, as to repeatedly endanger my health, I find it is utterly impossible to remain in business in the City in the face of the strong prejudice excited against me on political and religious grounds. I have determined to entirely give up all business, and devote myself to the movement. I have, therefore, taken steps to reduce the personal expenditure of myself and family to the lowest possible point, in order that I may set myself free from liability as early as I can, and I shall be glad now to arrange for week-night lectures in any part of Great Britain."

Hence, when these people, moved by their "political and religious" prejudices, drove Mr Bradlaugh from the City, and prevented him from making a livelihood in the ordinary way of business, they were unconsciously forging a weapon against themselves. Instead of giving a small portion of his time to writing and speaking against Theology, and on behalf of Radicalism and Republicanism, my father henceforth devoted the whole of his life to that work.

In accordance with his determination to reduce his personal expenditure to the lowest point, in the middle of May—before his words could have been read by those to whom they were addressed—my mother, my sister, and myself went to Midhurst, to find a home in my grandfather's little cottage, and my father set aside a modest sum weekly for our board and clothing. My brother remained with Mr John Grant of the Grenadier Guards for tuition, and Mr Bradlaugh himself took two tiny rooms at 3s. 6d. a week, at 29 Turner Street, Commercial Road, in the house of a widow who had been known to our family from her early girlhood. The size and style of these rooms may be guessed from the neighbourhood in which they were situated, and from the weekly rental asked for them. Within a few days or so from our leaving

* May 22, 1870.

London, our household effects at Sunderland Villa were sold, my father retaining a few of the least saleable articles of furniture to supply what was necessary for his two rooms.

Instead of taking the most comfortable bedstead, he took the one which had been used by us little girls, and this was the bed upon which he slept until a year before his death, when I removed it without his knowledge during his absence in India, and put a more comfortable one in its place. Our nursery washstand, a chest of drawers, a writing-table, and half-a-dozen chairs comprised all the furniture he thought necessary for his use. My mother was not allowed to take anything whatever with her beyond our wearing apparel and a few trifles of small actual worth, but which she specially valued. My father's books, of course, he took with him, these, and one other thing which I had almost forgotten. The bedroom and sitting-room at Turner Street communicated, and the walls of both were covered with shelves, except just over the bed-head, which was reserved for the one other treasure brought from home. This was a large canvas painted in oils for Mr Bradlaugh by an artist friend, Emile Girardot. The subject was very simple, being nothing more than a tired hurdy-gurdy boy sleeping in a doorway, with a monkey anxiously watching. Whatever the intrinsic value of the picture might be, to my father it was above all price. He had quite a love for it, and often spoke of it—even in his last illness he talked of it, and wondered where it was, and longed for it, for by that time it had gone out of his hands.

So by the end of May we were all adrift and separated—my father in his small book-lined rooms in the east end of London; my brother Charlie with the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards, wherever it happened to be; my mother, sister, and self vegetating in a Sussex hamlet. But bad as all this was, 1870 held still worse things in store for us. In June my brother was taken ill with a mild attack of scarlatina, of which we knew nothing until he came home to us for his holidays on the 20th of the month. Due precautions had been neglected, and almost immediately after he reached us kidney disease began to manifest itself. From this he died on the 15th July, and he was buried exactly a month from the day on which he came home. The shock of his death was terrible to all of us, and not least so to my father. Although barely eleven years old at his death, Charlie was a lad full

of promise, quick to learn and to comprehend, amiable, honourable, and generous; and of these traits I can recall many little instances. I have a photograph of him taken at the age of seven or eight, and as I look at it I see his eyes gaze out from under his square brow with a wonderfully clear and fearless look.

He was buried on the 20th day of July in Cocking Churchyard, my grandfather's cottage at Cocking Causeway (Midhurst) being in the parish of Cocking. Of course, we had to submit to the Church of England service, for it was before the Burials Act was passed, but the Rev. Drummond Ash was a kindly, courteous gentleman, and he made things as easy as the circumstances would allow. The burial would have taken place at the Brookwood Necropolis had my father been able to afford the expense. As he was not, Charlie was laid perforce in consecrated ground at the foot of the South Down Hills with Christian rites and ceremonies.

The Rev. Theophilus Bennett, a later Rector of Cocking, has stated that his predecessor, Mr Ash, "attended" my brother "in his dying moments." This statement is entirely without foundation; I am not aware that Mr Ash ever saw or spoke with my brother at all, and certainly the only persons present when the boy was dying were my grandmother, my mother, our nurse Kate (who remained with us at her own wish to help nurse him in his illness), my sister, and myself; moreover, Mr Ash was at that time reported to be himself ill and away from home, having left word that if "the little boy at the Causeway should die," all facilities for his funeral were to be given, or some such message.

The telegram bearing the totally unexpected summons to my father to hasten to see his son for the last time was handed to him on the platform at Bury just as he was about to deliver a lecture. I have been told that when he read the words he turned deathly pale, but with that self-control which never failed him in adversity, he rose, and with the least perceptible hesitation, commenced and went through with his lecture. On Tuesday night he received his summons; on Wednesday he was with us, though only to leave again by the early train on Thursday morning. On Friday the boy died, and on that same day and the next my father had to be in the law-courts as witness in a case relating to the Naples Colour Company.* His grief for the loss of his son was intense,

* This was an action to try the right of the Sheriff of Surrey to distrain upon the Colour Machinery at Hatcham. Baron dos Santos, of the Romish

but he shut it up in his heart, and rarely afterwards mentioned the name of his boy, of whom he had been so proud.

Legation, had wished to trade in Naples colour in England, under the name of the Company of which Mr Bradlaugh was Secretary. Mr Bradlaugh had bought and paid for the machinery to grind the colours before they could be sold, and he claimed to carry on the business until Baron dos Santos should purchase the things off him. Obliged to raise money in 1868, when he was contesting Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh borrowed £600 from Mr Javal upon the machinery, and he in turn raised some money from the Advana Company. Before this last had been repaid the defendants seized the machinery under an execution judgment as creditors of the Naples Colour Company. Mr Bradlaugh was the principal witness, and the newspaper report notes that he requested to be allowed to affirm instead of being sworn, but said that he should take the oath, if his lordship insisted upon it. He was allowed to affirm, and at the conclusion of the case the jury decided that the machinery belonged to Mr Bradlaugh, and therefore gave a verdict for the plaintiffs.

CHAPTER XXX.

LECTURES—1870-1871.

THE early part of the seventies was a period of much Freethought and Republican activity in England; everywhere in the Freethought ranks there was movement and life. In spite of the persistent refusal of Messrs W. H. Smith & Son to sell the *National Reformer*, its circulation was largely increasing, and in 1870 it was read in the four quarters of the globe. In England all sorts of devices were resorted to damage the sale; country news-agents refused, like Messrs Smith & Son, to sell it, or said they were unable to obtain it, or quietly returned it "out of print"; contents bills were no sooner posted in some towns than they were torn down, and on occasion the police employed themselves, or were employed, in this work. At Scarborough * evidence was obtained against Police Constable Charlton, and legal proceedings were commenced. At the last moment, however, the sum of 2s. was paid into Court, together with costs proportionate to the summons, and Mr Bradlaugh, overwhelmed with other work and worries, contented himself with this acknowledgment of the wrongdoing and did not pursue the matter further.

The high pressure at which my father had been living had so undermined his health that for a long time he was a martyr to acute neuralgia; still, notwithstanding this, in the early part of the year he was lecturing once or twice a week, and as soon as he was able to extricate himself from the City his lecture list grew tremendously. In the month of July alone—a month which, as we have seen, brought its own peculiar burdens—he gave as many as twenty-six lectures. I find it noted that during this last half-year he delivered as many as one hundred and seventy lectures, in forty-nine of which the proceeds were insufficient to cover his railway expenses,

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* May 1870.

and in the case of twenty more, although his railway was covered, there was not enough to clear his hotel bill.

Except in one or two very special cases* Mr Bradlaugh never took a fee for his lectures. He took whatever surplus remained from the admission money, after paying all expenses of the meeting. He made this arrangement originally so that no town or village might be hindered from promoting lectures on account of the expense. "Large and small places," he said, "will be visited indifferently." A charge for admission was always made at his lectures, usually a small one, varying from twopence or threepence to a shilling. He objected very strongly to "free" lectures and collections. Of course he now, as ever, very often gave away the proceeds of his lectures. His audiences were frequently very large, especially in places where he was known. He happened to make a note of the numbers who came to hear him on the Sundays in January 1871, and he records that on the Sunday evenings alone he had audiences whose total numbers reached six thousand, and at three morning lectures there was a total of two thousand five hundred.

Halls were often refused to him, although not quite so frequently as in former years. In 1870 the Stratford Town Hall was refused by the West Ham Local Board, and for many years he had great difficulty in obtaining a hall in Stratford. The St. Mary's Hall, Coventry, was refused to him by the Mayor of Coventry for a lecture on "The Land and the People," and the Mirfield Town Hall after it had been duly engaged for two political lectures was closed against him by the proprietors.† An exactly similar case occurred at Glossop a year and a half later. The Town Hall was taken for a political lecture, and at almost the last moment, after the lapse of several weeks, the Council instructed that the money paid for the hire should be returned. The effect of this was to produce a much greater and more widespread excitement and discussion than half a dozen lectures would have done.

It was in 1870 that Mr Bradlaugh began that close scrutiny of the history of our reigning family which resulted in the

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* These cases were so rare that the only one I can actually recall is that of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society.

† See p. 294.

publication of his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," a little book which created some considerable stir both when it was first published in 1871,* and when an edition partly revised by Mr Bradlaugh was brought out after his death. The "Impeachment" has been widely read both here and in America, where it was reprinted. Besides writing upon the Brunswick family, Mr Bradlaugh used to take the history of one or more of the members of it as a subject for his lecture, and taught many a good Republican lesson whilst discoursing upon the exceptional virtues of "George, Prince of Wales," or "the four Georges." A friend has told me an amusing story concerning one of these lectures. My father had promised to speak one Saturday evening at Sowerby Bridge on "George, Prince of Wales." By some curious blunder the friends who were making the arrangements placarded the town with the subject announced as "Albert Edward, Prince of Wales." The effect of this was to cause a large number of police to be drafted into the town, and a Government shorthand reporter was sent down from London, travelling by the same train as my father. The hall was, of course, crowded, but whether the audience were disappointed when my father explained the mistake in the subject of the lecture, my informant did not say. In any case I expect that the officials who had been so busy in preparing for treason and riot, and found only history and order, felt that the proceedings had turned out rather flat. At Stourbridge, where Mr Bradlaugh was invited † by some "gentlemen of Republican tendencies" to discourse upon the "House of Brunswick," Lord Lyttleton, as Lord Lieutenant of the county, tried to induce the Stourbridge Town Commissioners to withdraw from their agreement to let the Corn Exchange for the lectures, but his efforts were in vain.

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* At the end of 1872 Mr John Baker Hopkins made a violent attack upon Mr Bradlaugh for his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick" in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. A reply to this from my father's pen appeared in the January (1873) Number, but there was such an outcry raised in the press at the insertion in the "Gentleman's" Magazine of an article by "Mr Bradlaugh of Whitechapel and Hyde Park respectively" that Mr John Hatton, the editor, felt so far obliged to defend himself as to say a word in favour of free discussion. He further atoned for his sins by allowing Mr J. B. Hopkins to return to his attack in the following month.

† December 1871.

His Lordship seems to have been a little angry, and it was even rumoured that he went so far as to tell the magistrates that he would have Mr Bradlaugh arrested for treason. He succeeded in raising such a scare that a large extra body of police were drafted into the town under the order of the Chief Constable of the county. There were two lectures, and Colonel Carmichael, the Chief Constable, was present at both, but, as I gather from the printed reports, the meetings were large, the audiences delighted, and of both the end "was peace."

In the summer of 1871 Mr Bradlaugh went one Monday evening to Newton Abbot to address a meeting in the New Vegetable Market, used then for a public gathering for the first time. The subject on which he was to speak was "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle." Very few of the tradesmen in the town would consent to expose bills of the lecture, and several who did display them at first took them from their windows at the advice of the "respectable and pious," and in the end only two showed the announcements. Two gentlemen who were present at the meeting—one as a reporter for the local paper, the other, one of the five Radicals who invited Mr Bradlaugh to Newton—have given a vivid account of a little incident which enlivened the evening's proceedings. It appears that in 1871 a certain Mr John George Stuart was the High Bailiff of the town. "This gentleman," I am told, "was a Methodist, and had at that time two sons who were studying for the ministry. He was also a distinguished boxer, and he had the reputation of being the most formidable wielder of the gloves in England." Mr Stuart, supported by two friends, "attended the meeting with the avowed intention of obstructing Mr Bradlaugh. As soon as Mr Bradlaugh began to speak, Mr Stuart commenced to disturb the meeting. Mr Bradlaugh repeatedly requested him to reserve his criticisms until the close of the lecture, when an opportunity would be offered him of speaking from the platform. But Mr Stuart continued to shout his opinions upon Mr Bradlaugh's Atheism, although the lecture was on a purely political question. At last Mr Bradlaugh said that unless the interruptions ceased, he should be compelled to act as his own chairman, and to request Mr Stuart to leave the building. As Mr Stuart and his friends would not desist from shouting, Mr Bradlaugh stepped from the platform, walked up to the athlete, and carried him to the door with ease.

At the doorway Mr Stuart spread his arms and held the jambs, but Mr White, who was acting as doorkeeper, pushed one of his hands aside, and Mr Bradlaugh set the disturber down in the street. None of Mr Stuart's friends offered the least resistance, and the crowd, which was made up of hostile as well as friendly hearers, loudly cheered Mr Bradlaugh's unceremonious ejectment of the local hero of the 'noble art.'" The friends to whom I am indebted for the foregoing say further that Mr Stuart's pride was brought very low by this episode, and that he rarely appeared afterwards among the former admirers of his prowess.

In the course of my father's lecturing experiences, he several times met with local "champions," as defenders of the faith. A few months later, at Sowerby Bridge, a local champion wrestler entered the room during the delivery of his lecture and commenced abusing him loudly. The man was spoken to several times, but he would neither remain quiet, nor quit the place. Mr Bradlaugh was at length obliged to leave the platform and put him out *vi et armis*. Put out at one door, he reappeared at another; but this time the audience took the matter into their own hands, and kept him out. Another "champion" conducted a serious disturbance at Congleton, but of that later.

In the month of March (1871) Dr Magee, then Bishop of Peterborough, delivered three discourses in the Norwich Cathedral in "vindication and establishment of the Christian faith," and "directed against modern forms of infidelity." The Freethinkers of Norwich, anxious to give these discourses the attention which the high position and high reputation of the speaker demanded, had asked Mr Bradlaugh to come to Norwich to represent them on the occasion of the Bishop's discourses. This he consented to do, and attended all the lectures, but—as perhaps it is superfluous to say—he was not allowed to make any remark upon them. It was however desired that he should make some reply in the town where the lectures had been delivered, at least, if not in the Cathedral to Dr Magee himself, but it was not easy to obtain the use of a hall for the purpose. A circuit of the town was made in the vain endeavour to hire a building, and it was only after considerable difficulty that the Free Library Hall was at last procured. As my father truly said, "the approved mode of encountering modern infidelity seemed to be that of free speech for the Church advocate, and gagged mouth for the pleader on

behalf of heresy." * In the Norwich Free Library Hall he delivered three lectures in reply to Dr Magee. These he afterwards published, together with the Bishop's discourses; and as a statement of the cases for and against Christianity and for and against Freethought, coming from such representative men as the late learned and eloquent Archbishop of York and Mr Bradlaugh, they cannot fail to be of special interest.

During the autumn my father gave a lecture on behalf of the London Republican Club, and upon this speech all sorts of rumours were founded, not indeed upon what my father actually did say, but upon what his detractors chose to believe he said. Mr Disraeli had recently stated at an agricultural meeting at Hughenden † that it could not be concealed that Her Majesty was "physically and morally incapacitated from performing her duties," and my father took these words as the text of his lecture for the Republican Club in London. His speech, which was unusually long, occupying close upon an hour and a half, was a most careful recital of the duties of the Monarch and the rights and duties of the people, with special reference to the course pursued during the periods when George III. was officially declared incapable of performing the royal functions. Shorthand writers were present, and this address, or parts of it, was telegraphed all over the United Kingdom, to America and to the Continent. Much of it appeared in the American and Continental press of the next day or so, and after a short interval distorted accounts of it were to be heard of in most parts of England. There was one passage in particular upon which a whole mountain of mis-

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* "Christianity in Relation to Freethought Scepticism and Faith: three discourses by the Bishop of Peterborough, with special replies by Charles Bradlaugh."

A similar case in a small way happened at Deptford in April 1873. A Rev. Dr Miller had delivered some addresses in the Deptford Lecture Hall against "unbelievers," and it was proposed that Mr Bradlaugh should reply to these addresses in the same place. He had frequently spoken in the Deptford Lecture Hall before, but when the Deptford Freethinkers sought to engage it for a lecture in answer to Dr Miller, the Committee refused to let the hall for that purpose. This intolerance the *Kentish Mercury* applauded by referring to it in bold type as "noble conduct."

† September 26, 1871.

representation and worse * was afterwards based. In the course of his address Mr Bradlaugh had said: "Many of you are aware that I have lately repeatedly declared my most earnest desire that the present Prince of Wales should never dishonour this country by becoming its King. My opinion is that if four or five years of political education are allowed to continue in this land, that worthy representative of an unworthy race will never be King of England. My thorough conviction is that neither his intelligence, nor his virtues, nor his political ability, nor his military capacity—great as all these are for a member of his family—can entitle him to occupy the throne of Great Britain. I am equally opposed to his ever being Regent of England. I trust that he may never sit on the throne or lounge under its shadow."

Of course my father showed himself much too sanguine as to the time necessary for the political education of this country towards a Republican form of Government; but those who recall the seeming vigour of the Republican movement in England during the early seventies will know that he was not without excuse for his hopeful views. In any case, one would have thought that his expression in regard to the Prince of Wales was strong enough to have been dealt with by English Monarchists as he made it; but instead, it was perverted into an "impudent and disloyal announcement that he and a certain number of his friends would take care that the Prince should never come to the throne." † A very different thing indeed to the "desire" my father had uttered. The effect of all this was to raise such a tremendous journalistic storm against him, that a few weeks later he wrote: "As to the hostile attacks, they are during the past fortnight so numerous that I have not space even to catalogue them. Many journals call for my prosecution." One paper, a century or so behind the times, recommended a pillory and flogging.

A curious little incident which occurred ten or twelve days after Mr Bradlaugh's lecture helped to strengthen the outcry against him, especially on the part of Conservative speakers and the Conservative press. On the 28th of October Mr Gladstone addressed a vast meeting of his constituents on Blackheath. He spoke for two hours, defending the conduct of his colleagues and

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* See Chapter ix., vol. ii.

† Earl Fortescue at the King's Nympton Farmers' Club, November 1871.

himself since they had taken office three years ago. During this important speech he quoted, from what he called a "questionable book," these lines, which he said contained "much good sense"—

> "People throughout the land,
> Join in one social band,
> And save yourselves;
> If you would happy be,
> Free from all slavery,
> Banish all knavery,
> And save yourselves."

This sentiment was greeted with deafening applause by the thousands listening with eager ears to every word that fell from the Prime Minister. But the epithet bestowed upon the book whence he drew this example of the "good sense" it contained, roused a perfect frenzy of curiosity. Literary Conservatives imagined that Mr A. C. Swinburne was the author, and the dismay exhibited was almost beyond description when it was discovered—by the horrified *Scotsman*, I believe—that Mr Gladstone's "questionable book" was the "Secularists' Manual of Songs and Ceremonies," edited by Austin Holyoake and Charles Watts, with a preface by Charles Bradlaugh. The press comments upon the discovery are amusing to read, especially as Mr Bradlaugh was often made in some way responsible, not merely for the verse, but for Mr Gladstone's quoting it on Blackheath. Mr Giffard, Q.C., was amongst those who thought it "an outrage" that such a book should have been so quoted by the Prime Minister of England. The publisher was indictable, said he wrathfully, and the writer would have been sent to prison in the good old days when the Christian religion was more thought of. * But neither he nor any one else moved to prefer the indictment.

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* Address to the Cardiff Constitutional Association.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FRANCE—THE WAR.

When hostilities were declared between France and Germany in 1870, Mr Bradlaugh did not take sides with either nation; he entirely and unreservedly condemned the war. He and his friends kept clear of the war fever which seemed coursing through the blood of most people. "All the evil passions of Europe are aroused," wrote Austin Holyoake, "and even children gloat over the narratives of slaughter where thousands perish. The soldier, instead of the schoolmaster, has become the foremost man, and Rage, Revenge, and Murder are the gods of public idolatry." Not a word would Mr Bradlaugh or his colleagues say to commiserate the "insulted honour of France," not a word to glorify the triumphant arms of Germany.

But my father was not neutral because he was unmoved. His sympathies were always strongly with the French people, but these very sympathies made him bitterly antagonistic to the French Emperor. In the middle of August he replied to a correspondent: "You do not understand my position. I regard Napoleon as one of the greatest amongst modern scoundrels, and Bismarck as a crafty diplomatist striving to make a great German Empire under Prussia. I love Bismarck so little that when the Reform League wrote him an address, I refused to sign it. I hope to see a German republic, and I believe I shall, but this war will postpone it. I deeply regret the evoking the 'nationality' madness in France, for I fear that many of our brave Republican friends will be killed in striving to save, as they think, the flag of France from disgrace."

On the 4th of September was declared the third French Republic. The *National Reformer* was quick to give it welcome, but my father himself was away in the provinces just then, lecturing and debating with scarce a day's respite, and so overwrought with much speaking in heated rooms and much travelling

in wet and changeable weather, that his health seemed on the point of breaking down. At Leigh he had lectured on two successive nights in a wooden theatre, admirably adapted to give free admittance to every gust of the damp night wind. On the morning (Sunday) following these lectures he had left at six o'clock to go to Darwen. By that time his voice was reduced to a hoarse whisper, and the Darwen friend who met him looked grave when he saw how ill he seemed, especially when my father announced his intention of going to bed until the lecture hour. Three lectures he gave that day—morning, afternoon, and evening—with an hour's discussion after the morning lecture, but his appearance made such an impression upon his Lancashire friends that they wrote him an address of sympathy.

Ill-health, overwork, financial worries, and domestic sorrows made a heavy burden to carry; still, notwithstanding all this, he made the opportunity to write his sympathy with Republican France.

"First," he said, "that there may be no mistake, I throw in my lot with France—Republican France. While Louis Napoleon reigned at the Tuileries the memories of December were too bloody, nineteen-year-old hatreds too bitter, to let me even be just to any cause he led. A perjured liar, a cold-blooded murderer, a heartless coward, a paltry trickster, a dishonourable cheat, all this was Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. I was, therefore, well inclined to Germany from my utter hatred of the imperial demoralisation of France. But now, when events are moving so rapidly that perhaps ere this sees the light all may be changed, it is worth while to ask, Was Prussia guiltless in the war? and I answer, No! Bismarck and Prussian armies are evidence on this side. Bismarck using craft of a higher order than Napoleonic scoundrelism, and moved by a broader ambition than the mere embezzlement of national funds or personal aggrandisement, has outwitted Napoleon; but the English people, while repudiating with fullest indignation the wicked and most monstrous declaration of war, cannot forget that by-divine-right-ruling and for-victory-God-thanking William is as much a detester of popular rights as was Napoleon himself. . . . . At this moment the world's most fearful curse is in its armies, and our cry is Peace."

It was only just, he said, that the French Republic should pay some penalty for the previous folly of the nation, and if Prussia

exacted ever so heavy a war indemnity in money, it should be cheerfully paid. But he spoke most strenuously against the surrender of Alsace and Lorraine. To Germany he appealed for peace "while yet the glory is yours—if indeed it be glory to kill and maim, scorch and scathe, and this at the cost of as many killed and wounded, scorched and scathed, on your own side." Last of all he appealed to the peoples of England, France, and Germany to unite for peace; if they were earnest, he wrote, they must be obeyed, and their "glorious desire must be conceded."

This article was in print on the 14th September; and as he was at breakfast at his Turner Street lodgings one morning, three days later, my father received a somewhat startling visit from a French lady, at that time well known in French and English political circles. Madame la Vicomtesse de Brimont Brassac was a lady of great beauty and great persuasive powers, although in her errand that September morning she had no occasion for the use of either one or the other. She came to my father with the idea of persuading him to undertake the attempt to create a feeling in favour of France amongst the English masses; this was a work after his own heart, and one indeed to which he had already set his hand in the article to which I have just referred. This interview had for its immediate result a succession of public meetings, held both in London and the provinces, in favour of France and Peace. The first, held at the Hall of Science on Monday the 19th, was, despite the short notice, attended by upwards of 1400 persons. Through Madame de Brimont my father learned that Lord Granville was moving against the French Republic, and was in favour of replacing the Emperor in Paris. Friends everywhere were urged to counteract Lord Granville's efforts by striving to make a living public opinion in favour of France and Peace. At this first demonstration two addresses were agreed to: one to Mr Gladstone, praying him to use his high office "actively in favour of peace," for, it was urged, "it will be to England's lasting shame if every possible effort be not made to prevent further carnage;" the second was sent to the French Government of National Defence and to the French people, offering congratulations on the position taken by Jules Favre, and tendering deep and heartfelt sympathy to the nation in its sorrow.

In co-operation with Dr Congreve, Prof. Beesly, and other prominent Positivists, Mr Bradlaugh organised a series of meetings

in London and the provinces. One at St James's Hall on the 24th was a great success. The hall was densely crowded by an enthusiastic meeting, which was addressed by Dr Congreve, Prof. Beesly, Sir Henry Hoare, M.P., Mr George Odger, Colonel Dickson, and others. The addresses to Mr Gladstone and to the French Nation were voted unanimously, and a resolution moved by Prof. Beesly, calling upon the English Government to give an immediate and frank recognition of the French Republic, met with the utmost enthusiasm. The two addresses were sent for signature to thirty of the largest towns in England and Scotland, and in two days forty thousand signatures were obtained.

Just before the commencement of the proceedings at St James's Hall an incident occurred that admitted of an extremely simple explanation, but which the Tory press endeavoured to turn to the discredit of the "France and Peace" Committee. A little while before the speakers were expected on the platform, the gas, which had been wavering somewhat uncertainly for a few minutes, suddenly went out, leaving the hall in complete darkness. As may be imagined, there was great dismay, and with it all the dangers of a panic. A gentleman who acted as steward at the meeting tells me that the light was hardly out before Mr Bradlaugh's voice was heard crying, "Lead me to the front; lead me to the front!" This he and another friend succeeded in doing. Once at the front of the platform, he says that my father began to speak, and the audience, recognising his voice, gave a ringing cheer. He told the people that the gas would be relighted as soon as possible, and entreated the people to keep their seats. "He kept speaking for about fifteen minutes, when the gas was re-lit, and all danger past. The thought of what would have happened had not Mr Bradlaugh been there gives one an uncomfortable sensation. A panic under such circumstances would have been terrible, but the way the people responded to the desire of Mr Bradlaugh to keep their seats, and to keep quiet until all was put right, was extraordinary." Not less extraordinary was the explanation suggested by the *Observer*. Said the veracious chronicler of this high-class Sunday paper: "This *contretemps* created a good deal of speculation, and the general opinion was that the Committee and the proprietors had been unable to come to terms, and that the latter, in order to secure their money, turned out the gas." From this it would seem that to jeopardise the lives

of thousands of people* (without counting certain damage to the building) would have been a mere trifle to the proprietors compared with the possible loss of a few pounds. It must have been quite a shock to the originators of so diabolical an idea to learn that the accident was an accident pure and simple, and due to a matter so ordinary and commonplace as a defect in the water meter which supplied the gas to the hall.

The St James's Hall meeting was immediately followed by forty-eight others, and in every case the size of the meeting was restricted only by the capacity of the building in which it was held. It may be asked, But what was the outcome of all these meetings, what was their practical value? In 1873 Mr Bradlaugh gave the answer to this in the pages of his *Autobiography*. "They exercised," he said, "some little effect on the public opinion of this country, but unfortunately the collapse on the part of France was so complete, and the resources commanded by Bismarck and Moltke so vast, that, except as expressing sympathy, the results were barren."

Sympathy, however, is often very welcome; his efforts to help the cause of Peace were warmly received in France, and without any previous communication having passed between them, the Republican Government at Tours sent him the following letter:—

"RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.—LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ.

"Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale.

"TOURS, *le* 21 *Octobre* 1870.

"MONSIEUR,—Les Membres du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, réunis en délégation à Tours, après avoir pris connaissance du magnifique discours que vous avez prononcé au meeting d'Edimbourg, tiennent à honneur de vous remercier chalereusement du noble concours que vous apportez à la cause de la France et de l'Europe dans votre pays.

"Vous ne ménagez, Monsieur, ni vos efforts, ni votre temps, pour éclairer l'opinion publique depuis longtemps si puissante dans le Royaume-Uni. Nous nous plaisons à croire que tant de dévoue-

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* The *Observer's* own report stated: "At first there seemed to be an inclination to rush to the doors, which might have led to great sacrifice of life,

ment finira par convaincre l'Europe, sur laquelle l'opinion Brittanique exerce une si legitime influence, que la France lutte aujourd'hui pour la plus juste des causes, la défense de son honneur et de son territoire.

"Nous ne saurions trop le redire : la guerre actuelle a été entreprise contre la volonté de la nation française : la Prusse en la continuant combat sans droit et pour la seule satisfaction d'une ambition dont l'Europe ne tardera pas à sentir les ruineux effets.

"Remerciez en notre nom, ceux de vos généreux compatriotes qui vous écoutent et vous acclament dans ces magnifiques réunions publiques que nous leur envions, où se débattent les plus grands intérêts du monde.

"L'accueil qui vous est fait partout, nous est un sûr garant des sympathies du peuple Anglais pour la France et ses institutions nouvelles.

"Nous ne faisons aucun doute que de cette incessante propagande à laquelle vous vous êtes devoué, ne sortent bientôt la lumière qui doit dessiller tous les yeux et le triomphe prochain de la justice et de la civilisation.

"Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de notre très haute considération.

"Les Membres de la délégation du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, réunis a Tours :

"Leon Gambetta. Ad. Crémieux.
L. Fournichon. Al. Glais Bizoin."*

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* "The French Republic.—liberty, equality, fraternity.

"Government of National Defence.

"Tours, 21*st October* 1870.

"Sir,—The Members of the Government of National Defence, assembled in delegation at Tours, after having become acquainted with the magnificent speech which you delivered at the meeting at Edinburgh, have the honour to thank you most warmly for the noble help which you bring to the cause of France and of Europe in your country.

"You do not spare, Sir, either your efforts or your time in the attempt to enlighten public opinion—for so long all-powerful in the United Kingdom. We take pleasure in believing that so much devotion will end by convincing Europe, upon which British opinion exercises so legitimate an influence, that France fights to-day for the most just of all causes—the defence of her honour and of her territory.

"We cannot too often repeat it : the war itself was undertaken against the

To this letter are appended the following lines written in September 1871 by Monsieur Emanuel Arago, Member of the Provisional Government of September 4 :—

* "En lisant cette lettre, j'éprouve très vivement la regret de n'avoir pu, enfermé dans Paris, joindre ma signature a celles de mes collègues de la délégation de Tours. M. Bradlaugh est, et sera toujours dans la République, notre concitoyen.

"EMANUEL ARAGO." *

About the same time (October 1870) M. Tissot, the Chargé d' Affaires of France in England, wrote him :—

"Je viens de lire avec un extrême intérêt le compte rendu du meeting de Newcastle. La cause de la France et de la paix ne pouvait être remise entre de meilleures mains et plaidée par une voix plus éloquente. Laissez moi vous exprimer une fois de plus, Monsieur, tous mes sentiments de reconnaissance pour votre généreuse initiative, et y joindre l'assurance de ma haute considération et de ma profonde estime. CH. TISSOT." †

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will of the French nation ; Prussia, in continuing it, fights without justice, and solely for the satisfaction of an ambition of which Europe will not be slow to feel the ruinous effects.

"Thank, in our names, those of your generous compatriots who listen to you, and who applaud you in these magnificent public assemblies—which we envy them—where the greatest interests of the world are debated.

"The welcome which meets you everywhere is to us a sure guarantee of the sympathies of the English people for France and her new institutions.

"We have no doubt that from this incessant propaganda, to which you have devoted yourself, will soon come the light which should undeceive all eyes, as well as the triumph of justice and civilisation.

"Kindly receive, Sir, the expression of our highest consideration.

"Members of the delegation of the Government of National Defence, assembled at Tours :

"LEON GAMBETTA. AD. CRÉMIEUX.
L. FOURNICHON. AL. GLAIS BIZOIN."

* "In reading this letter, I feel a keen regret that, shut up in Paris, I was unable to add my signature to those of my colleagues in the Tours delegation. In the Republic Mr Bradlaugh is, and always will be, our fellow-citizen.

"EMANUEL ARAGO."

† "I have just read with extreme interest the report of the meeting at Newcastle. The cause of France and of Peace could not be in better hands, or pleaded by a more eloquent voice. Let me once more express to you,

At a crowded meeting held at the Hall of Science early in the following year Mr Bradlaugh was still denouncing the war in unmeasured terms. "There never was a war," said he, "more unjustifiable, more wicked, more insane, than this which France, as misrepresented by her Emperor, had declared against Germany." This the *Echo* condemned as "Whitechapel style," and loftily asserted that the English people would decline to accept "Iconoclast" as the representative of France and her sufferings. But after other immense gatherings at the Beaumont Institute, the Eastern Hall, Poplar, and the St James's Hall, there was a notable alteration in its tone. An extract from its report of the St James's Hall meeting held five days later makes a rather amusing contrast to its former unqualified condemnation. Said the *Echo* on this occasion of my father:—

"While Professor Beesly was opening the meeting, a tall man with a remarkably pleasant face, a little spoilt by a self-sufficient look, or, if we are really to describe it, a certain consciousness of power, had entered the room and received a perfect ovation of applause. This was Mr Bradlaugh, *alias* 'Iconoclast,' for whom the audience kept calling whenever the speaker for the time being grew tedious. . . . . We know more of Mr Bradlaugh than we wish. Last night, however, he hid the cloven hoof. His speech might have been that of Bishop Atterbury. Not an irreverent expression, not an ill-judged word escaped him. Mr Frederic Harrison speaks almost as badly as Mr Bradlaugh writes. Mr Bradlaugh speaks almost as well as even Mr Harrison writes. There was a sense of power about the man. His audience hung upon his lips; his speech was a success and well delivered. He is a master of oratory, and a master of action; his voice is powerful, rich, and almost musical. And after he had swayed the meeting as he chose for nearly half an hour, the huge crowd broke up, after several vain attempts to start the Marseillaise."

Amongst those who stood on the St James's Hall platform that night were George Odger, Lloyd Jones, George Howell, and Captain Maxse, who, together with Professor Beesly and Frederic Harrison, joined their voices to my father's to plead for the recognition of the French Republican Government and against the dismemberment of France. This series of meetings was held

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sir, all my feelings of gratitude for your generous initiative, and join to it the assurance of my high consideration and profound esteem.

"Ch. Tissot."

in consequence of the announcement that the European powers were to assemble in conference in London, and it was anxiously desired to impress upon the English Government the duty of making the question of peace between France and Prussia a matter for the consideration of the Plenipotentiaries. It had been hoped and expected that Jules Favre would come to London to take part in the conference, and Mr Bradlaugh was invited to meet him at the Embassy. A demonstration had been agreed upon to honour his arrival, and it was characteristic of my father that he urged those of his friends who prepared to take part in it not to make it a mere party demonstration; he begged them to avoid, and to try to persuade others to avoid, the use of flags calculated to insult Prussia or to cause bitterness of feeling in the minds of Germans. A great assembly of earnest, orderly men and women to greet the representative of Republican France would have weight; "bands and banners," he said, "are needless." Jules Favre, however, was unable to get to London; and in the absence of any appointed French representative to the Conference, Lord Granville conferred with Monsieur Charles Tissot both before and after the meeting of the Plenipotentiaries. A letter which my father received from Monsieur Tissot just at this time will once more show with what warmth his efforts to serve Republican France were received by foremost Frenchmen :—

"LONDRES, 4 *Février* 1871.

"MON CHER MONSIEUR BRADLAUGH,—Aucune sottise, aucune maladresse ne peuvent m'étonner de la part de Mr R.* Mais j'avoue que j'ai senti vivement et que je ne lui pardonnerai jamais cette à laquelle vous faites allusion. Je me demande comme vous s'il n'est pas devenu fou.

"Quant à moi, mon cher ami, je ne puis que constater ici, comme je l'ai déjà fait, comme je le ferai en toute occasion, la dette que nous avons contracté envers vous. Vous nous avez donné votre temps, votre activité, votre éloquence, votre âme, la meilleure partie de vous-même en un mot. La France, que vous avez été seule à défendre, ne l'oubliera jamais.

"Je n'ai aucune nouvelle de Bordeaux, ni de Paris outre celles que vous avez pu lire dans les journaux. Nous allons voir ce que

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* M. Reitlinger, "le Secretaire particulier," of M. Jules Favre, is, I believe, the person here referred to.

fera l'Assemblée, ce qu'elle decidera—et nous agirons, s'il y a lieu en conséquence.—Au revoir, cher et excellent ami. Je vous envoie toute mon affection.

CH. TISSOT." *

When the French elections took place in February 1871, Mr Bradlaugh was one of the candidates nominated by the city of Paris. I am under the impression that this was done without his wishes being in any way consulted, but the very proposal of his name—testifying, as it to some extent did, the honour in which he was held in Paris—roused scorn and anger at home. The editor of a Scotch paper, † in writing a leader on the elections, relieved his feelings by saying: "'Bradlaugh, English Republican,' figures in the list among the motley crew; but what number of votes were polled for this cosmopolitan patriot, who would have been a dumb dog in a French Parliament, has not transpired." As the "motley crew" included such honoured names as those of Garibaldi, Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, and Victor Schœlcher, it was a distinction to be placed beside them; but why, asked my father, should it be assumed that he would be dumb? "Thomas Paine," he added, "who did not speak French, was not a 'dumb dog' when he pleaded for the life of Louis XVI."

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* "London, 4th February 1871.

"MY DEAR MR BRADLAUGH,—No folly, no stupidity, on the part of M. R. can astonish me. But I avow that I have felt keenly, and that I will never forgive him this to which you make allusion. Like you, I ask myself whether he has not gone mad.

"As to myself, my dear friend, I can but acknowledge here, as I have done already, and as I shall do on every occasion, the debt that we have contracted towards you. You have given your time, your energy, your eloquence, your mind—in a word, the best part of yourself. France, whom you alone have defended, will never forget it.

"I have no news from Bordeaux or from Paris, other than that which you have been able to read in the papers. We shall see what the Assembly will do, what it will decide, and if opportunity arises we shall act accordingly.—*Au revoir*, dear and excellent friend. I send all my affection.

"CH. TISSOT."

† *North British Daily Mail.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COMMUNE, AND AFTER.

DURING the Commune my father found himself in a position of extreme difficulty. His heart was with the men who had been driven by most frightful suffering to wild words and still wilder deeds. Some of the oldest and the best amongst his French friends were playing their parts in the tragedies daily enacted in Paris; some, like the amiable Gustave Flourens—who has been described by Mr Washburne, then United States minister, as a "young scholar," and one of "the most accomplished of the agitators and revolutionists"—were laying down their lives; others, like those kindly and learned brothers, Elie and Elysée Reclus, were sacrificing their liberties. My father's whole being throbbed in sympathy with these men; but sympathise as he might, his reason could not commend, and he remained sadly silent, unable to approve, but refusing to condemn.

This feeling of standing aside whilst so many old and dear friends were risking life and liberty was torture to a man of his temperament, and when an opportunity occurred for active help on his part he welcomed it with joy. This opportunity came in the form of a request from some of the French leaders that he should act as intermediary between the Government of M. Thiers and the Commune. As a foreigner and a known friend of France, it was hoped that his intervention might be possible, and might lead to good results.

The terms of peace which he was empowered to propose to M. Thiers were:—

(1.) Acceptance of the principle of Republican Government. A condition rendered absolutely necessary by the intrigues of the Legitimists and the Orleanists, who were striving to place the crown on the head of the Comte de Chambord, with succession to the Comte de Paris.

(2.) Absolute and unconditional amnesty for all political offences.

(3.) Election by the people of the Chief Executive power of the Republic. Hostilities were to be suspended during the election, and disarmament to follow directly the result was known.

When this commission reached Mr Bradlaugh, he had just set out on a course of lectures in Scotland; but with his heart full of hope that this might perhaps be the means of staying the terrible bloodshed, and the tragedies then taking place in France, he determined to allow nothing to delay him, and, neglecting his engagements, immediately left Edinburgh for London. In the columns of the *National Reformer* he himself told how his errand was frustrated and his journey prevented.

On reaching Calais, after a somewhat rough passage, his ears were greeted with the "very old cry" of "Passeports, Messieurs!" His passport was produced and his features examined by means of a lantern. The result of this examination was that a few minutes later he was ushered into the grim presence of the Chief of Police, at the station passport office. "At first," related Mr Bradlaugh, "this gentleman was slightly brusque, but concluded with a great display of courtesy. The following discussion, after the Socratic method, took place, all rights of questioning being reserved by the police:—

Chief of the Police: What is your name?

Charles Bradlaugh.

What is your business?

Editor of the *National Reformer*, to report for my journal.

But you are something else besides editor?

A little.

You are one of the members of the International?

I have not that honour.

You make great speeches?

I try.

You presided at a meeting in Hyde Park the other day?

I did not.

I cannot permit you to go to Paris; your presence there would be too dangerous.

You do me too much honour to attribute to me so much influence.

The Chief of the Police then took down a book in which

'Charles Bradlaugh' appeared in good bold characters, with about twenty lines opposite in writing, which, being very small, I could not read. He then said: 'I have orders to arrest you. I must send you to the Sub-Prefect at Boulogne.'"

After being permitted to send a telegram to Versailles, he was sent off to Boulogne in charge of an officer and two men.

When they arrived there at three in the morning, Boulogne was in total darkness, and then they had about a mile to walk through the driving rain before they reached the Sub-Prefecture. Here, except one man on duty, all appeared to be fast asleep, and M. le Sous-Préfet, apprised of Mr Bradlaugh's arrival, telegraphed to the Government for instructions, refusing to take the case until the morning. My father made up a "bed" of all the chairs he could find, and, still in the close custody of his three guardians, he attempted to pass the time in sleep.

"In the morning," he said, "another and more severe interrogation took place, the Sub-Prefect declaring that I had presided at the Sunday Hyde Park meeting in favour of the Commune; that I had lately been on some revolutionary mission in Prussia; and that I had too much influence to be allowed to go to Paris, where I should be a rallying-point for all dangerous men." Mr Bradlaugh telegraphed to M. Favre, at Versailles, asking in what respect his position had altered since ten weeks earlier, when the Chargé d'Affaires of France, acting under his orders, had tendered him the formal thanks of the French Government for the services he had rendered France. The only answer from the Government was an urgent and imperative order to quit France by the next packet, and a notice that his description had been sent to every railway station in France, with an order for his arrest in the event of his return.

Some months later, after the fall of the Commune, Mr Bradlaugh once more set out for Paris; he was again arrested at Calais, and this time kept prisoner for nearly three days, but was then released and allowed to proceed on his journey. The Commissaire at Calais showed him the order signed by Jules Favre in the previous April. It was emphatic and unequivocal, and ran thus: "Empechez à M. Bradlaugh d'entrer à Paris à tout prix."* This document had apparently never been cancelled, hence Mr Bradlaugh's

* Prevent Mr Bradlaugh from entering Paris, at any price.

second arrest. He was never afterwards hindered on his way to the French capital, although, during the Presidency of Monsieur Thiers, his movements while in Paris were carefully watched. At one time the French authorities assumed that he was masquerading under the name of "Lord Campbell," and the late Lord Campbell and Stratheden, who used to visit at the house of one of my father's friends in Paris, was made quite unhappy by having his movements watched by detectives intended for Mr Bradlaugh. The situation was not without its amusing side, for the particular business upon which Lord Campbell was engaged just then was connected with a marriage he wished to contract with a young French lady.

After the fall of the Commune, London was full of French refugees, many of whom were in poverty and distress. My father did his utmost to help them; he never had money to give away, but he did then what he always did in cases needing pecuniary help—he gave a lecture on their behalf. As his views upon the Commune and the French situation were stated in some detail, I quote a few of the more important passages from a report of his lecture which appeared in his own paper.* He had taken for his subject "French Republicanism;" and after he had dealt with the proclamations of the Republic in 1792 and 1848, and the declaration of the 4th of September, he said:—

"Coming now to the 18th March, and the Commune, the audience would remember that he had in that hall, within a few hours of that date, guarded himself from any expression for or against a movement which appeared then to have but slight confidence in its own leaders, and which had at that date issued no programme. In judging it now, he should judge it more favourably than he did then, trying to avoid alike the exaggeration of its foes, and the indiscriminating endorsement of its friends. It was charged against the men of Paris that they commenced with the assassinations of Generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas—no one could justify these assassinations—but if this were to form ground for the condemnation of the Commune, which disclaimed all participation in the act, with how much more force would other forms of government fall under the same condemnation. Napoleon I. shot the Duc d'Enghien in a ditch; Louis XVIII. shot Marshal

* *National Reformer*, Dec. 24, 1871

Ney; and although, according to the laws of France, capital punishment for political offences had been abolished, the present Government shot Cremieux, Rossel, Ferri, and Bourgeois. He did not justify or excuse the shooting of the Generals; but those who condemned it should see whether their own hands were clean. Of the latest shootings he hardly dared trust himself to speak. M. Thiers had sheltered himself behind a Committee of Pardons, although he feared that it would not be an incorrect guess to hazard that M. Thiers' own influence had hindered any commutation. He considered the 18th March a fatal mistake, a sad blow to the prospects of Republicanism. The Commune asked for the recognition and consolidation of the Republic. But he denied their right to do that by force of arms. They had great provocation, for they had seen Republicanism and Garibaldi insulted at Bordeaux; they knew that the majority of the Chamber were Legitimist and Orleanist, that M. Thiers was Republican only in name, and that Prussia even had been intriguing to put Henry V. on the throne. . . . . But did the Commune initiate the struggle of force? The people of Paris had arms: they had these under the Constitution; they took other arms, to which also they claimed a Constitutional right. It was due to Thiers' weakness and want of capacity that there was any struggle for the cannon on Montmartre, or perhaps at all. He treated the men of Paris as rebels, ignoring that he was the chief of the executive power of a government of rebellion, unendorsed by any vote of the country. He refused all overtures of peace in a manner unworthy a man in his position, and availed himself of iron, steel, famine, and a worse than Prussian bombardment, to drive to frenzy men whom it might have been possible to win at an earlier stage by judicious negotiation. . . . . It was not wonderful that the Commune fell. There was a demon of suspicion, division, and even treachery amongst prominent men, and the terrible demoralisation of the masses, resulting from their position and the long continuance of the previous siege. The wonder was that it stood so long. It was remarkable how free the city was from common crime. There were, in all the Avenue Montaigne, only some two or three concierges left in charge, and all the property was as safe at the end of the siege as at the beginning. The rent of a first floor in one of those houses was £1000 a year, the furniture in proportion. Yet there was no pillage, as there would have been under almost any other

Government, with houses left deserted by their owners. But it was said that the hostages were shot and the buildings were burnt. Now he would be the last to utter one word of justification or defence. He trusted that he might never have to take part in an armed revolution. He believed that if in such a case it was proposed that the public buildings of our city should be destroyed, as those of Paris had been, he would kill without mercy the man who would attempt it. The only thing that could be said was that the men of Paris were ringed round with fire and steel, and all hope of mercy was shut out. To keep them in, Papal Zouaves on the one side, Prussian bayonets on the other. No quarter offered, no generous word of pardon spoken. It could not be wondered if in madness they committed those crimes. It was cruel and cowardly to kill the hostages, but was it for the Versailles troops to reproach the Commune with that? The madness of cruelty had been great on both sides, and the criminality was the greater on the part of the stronger. . . . The cry of vengeance raised [against the *bourgeoisie*] was criminal, it was also a blunder; for if nothing was to be done until the middle class was exterminated, then hope was impossible; it never could be exterminated. There should be no question of war in any political movement between the working and the middle classes. . . . A policy of conciliation as recommended by Talandier was the true one. Each must, if they could not forget the wrongs of yesterday, at any rate remember that fresh blood will not wash out these wrongs. Nations were not to be made up of one class or of another class, but of the people which included all classes. Here [in England] he desired a Republic, and would work for it; but if he could picture, as the only possibility, the walking to its achievement with bloody hands, fire and smoke, and grim visage, he would turn away now, ere it was too late. Republicanism in France would have enough difficulty without class war. Her suddenly increased national debt made a burden not to be borne with impunity. Self-restraint was needed to conquer hate. Generosity on both sides, to forgive alike errors and crimes. Amnesty for yesterday, peace for to-morrow, and then a true Republic might grow in the fair land of France."

A malicious paragraph subsequently went the round of the press stating that the French refugees, on whose behalf this lecture had been delivered, had unanimously refused the proceeds. Of course this statement was utterly devoid of truth; the refugees, far from

refusing the help of their friend, accepted it gratefully, and sent to Mr Bradlaugh a formal vote of thanks and an official receipt signed by the secretary and the treasurer of "La Fraternelle," the Society of French Refugees.

The acquaintance between Madame de Brimont and Mr Bradlaugh, commencing in her visit to his lodgings on the 17th of September 1870, ripened into a friendship which lasted for the rest of my father's life. From that September day these two never ceased to be friends; through good report and ill report Madame de Brimont stood by him. While my father lay upon what proved to be his deathbed, I received a letter from her in which, writing in French, she sent him a message from "sa meilleure amie," "and that," she said, "I think I may claim to be, for during the twenty years I have known him I have never once swerved in my friendship for him—no, not for a single moment." My father, very weak and ill, was deeply moved when I read the letter to him. "It is true," he said brokenly, "it is true."

In visiting at Madame de Brimont's in London and in Paris Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with many of the best known men in France. The Prince Napoléon he met in London at Madame de Brimont's apartments at the Grosvenor Hotel. He met him, and had fully an hour's talk with him before he knew to whom he had been chatting so freely; the title "Monseigneur" given to his companion by another visitor fell upon his ear; his mind immediately ran over the "monseigneurs" likely to be present, and by a process of elimination he arrived at the right one. These two men, so markedly dissimilar on most points, so similar on one or two, were at once mutually attracted. The name of Napoléon was a hateful one to Mr Bradlaugh; the idea of a reputed "professional demagogue" was hardly likely to be pleasing to a Napoléon; yet despite all the probabilities in favour of a determined antipathy on both sides, they were the best of friends. Prince Jerome, who was a Freethinker, went to hear Mr Bradlaugh's speeches at the Hall of Science, at the Dialectical Society, and elsewhere, and was delighted with them. My father told me an amusing little anecdote concerning the first time he dined with Prince Jerome. He (Mr Bradlaugh) did not at that time own the luxury of a "dress suit," and therefore was obliged to wear his ordinary frock coat and black tie. His host met him, dressed

of course in the regulation fashion; a few minutes later, as others came into the room, he disappeared, returning after a moment or two dressed also in a frock coat and black tie. My father's eye was quick to note this courtesy, and within a few days he regretfully spent money he could ill spare on a dress suit, determined never to put any one to that trouble for him again.

Very many letters passed between the two, covering a period from 1871 to 1889. Mr Bradlaugh often greatly disapproved of the projects of the Prince, and this after some years had the effect of lessening their intimacy, although it did not lessen their friendship. When in Paris Mr Bradlaugh was always a welcome visitor at 86 Boulevart Malesherbes, or later at the house in the Avenue d'Antin, and once he visited the Prince at the Villa de Pranzins. During the last ten years, however, they saw each other but little, although an occasional letter passed, always on Prince Napoléon's side of a warm, friendly character, like the one I now give:—

"Villa de Pranzins, Près Nyon,
"Canton de Vaud, Suisse, 30 7bre 1887.

"MON CHER MONSIEUR BRADLAUGH,—Quand on vous a connu et apprecié on ne vous oublie pas.

"Je suis charmé que mon livre vous ait fait plaisir. Si vous avez le temps lirez le, mais n'oubliez pas que c'est un livre uniquement français. Je lis quelque fois vos discours—vous traversez une crise—quel en sera le résultat? Je vois que vous n'avez pas oublié votre français. Je vous renouvelle tous mes sentiments d'amitiés.—Votre affectionné

"NAPOLÉON."*

The last occasion on which these two met was in 1889, when the Prince in crossing the Channel met with that terrible disaster in which his old valet lost his life. He wished my father to help him about his will; he told him quite tranquilly that he was suffering from Bright's disease, that he could not possibly live much longer; he had property in England as well as in France, and he wished to bequeath to his younger son, Prince Louis, of whom

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* "MY DEAR MR BRADLAUGH,—When one has known and appreciated you, one does not forget you.

"I am charmed that my book has given you pleasure. If you have the time, read it, but do not forget that it is a book entirely French. I sometimes read your speeches—you are passing through a crisis—what will be the result? I see that you have not forgotten your French. I renew every sentiment of affection for you.—Your affectionate NAPOLÉON."

he was very fond, every penny that the law did not compel him to leave to the elder son, Prince Victor. Over the dinner-table they had a long chat upon this and other matters, and my father promised to draft a will. After this they never met again. On his return my father told me how aged, shrunken, and ill the Prince looked; in commiserating his condition we had not the remotest idea that he was himself stricken with that identical complaint, and would be the first to die! The suggestions, or draft, for a will were sent according to promise, and Mr Bradlaugh received the following acknowledgment:—

"Villa de Pranzins, Près Nyon,
"Canton de Vaud, Suisse, 2 Mai 1889.

"MON CHER BRADLAUGH,—J'ai reçu le projet—de loin et par écrit il est difficile de m'en rendre compte. Je me reserver d'en parler avec vous à un prochain voyage que je ferai peut-être à Londres.

"Recevez, mon cher Monsieur Bradlaugh, l'assurance de toute ma consideration la plus distinguée. NAPOLÉON." *

At Madame de Brimont's Mr Bradlaugh also met Monsieur Emile de Girardin, then of course well on in years, but remarkable for his keen wit and clear-headedness—although I must confess that I did not, at that time at least, admire his keen wit. One evening, while we were in Paris for our schooling, my sister and I were introduced to him; he looked at us both critically, then again at my sister, and, not knowing that we understood French, turned to Madame de Brimont and said: "J'aime mieux celle-ci." I was quite conscious that my sister was better liked than I, and deservedly so, but to hear such a preference stated thus coolly before one's face is rather a shock to any girl. Then there was Monsieur Emanuel Arago, a tremendous talker, who had been one of the Government of the 4th of September, and with Jules Favre stood at the window of the Hotel de Ville with Gambetta when he proclaimed the Republic of France; there were also M. Dupont-Whyte, the economist; M. Massé, a judge of appeal; M. Edouard Pourtalés, a journalist of great

* "MY DEAR BRADLAUGH,—I have received the draft—at this distance and in writing it is difficult for me to fully understand it. I propose to talk it over with you on my next visit to London, which I shall perhaps make shortly. Receive, my dear Mr Bradlaugh, the assurance of my most distinguished consideration. NAPOLÉON."

pertinacity and even greater notoriety, and many others whose names now escape my memory. Léon Gambetta,* Mr Bradlaugh first met, not, I think, at Madame de Brimont's, but elsewhere. Yves Guyot, too, had long been a fast friend.

For his intimacy with such people as Prince Napoléon and M. de Girardin, Mr Bradlaugh was much attacked by a certain section of the French Republicans, as well as by Dr Karl Marx, who held him up to public obloquy for having committed the terrible crime of dining with such people. Mr Bradlaugh's answer to this was: "As to where I may or may not have dined, it is too ridiculous for serious reply. I have dined with a bishop, without giving allegiance to the Church of England; with a Jewish Rabbi, without adopting the faith of Abraham; I broke bread more than once with good old Father Spratt of Dublin, without inclining to Roman Catholicism." Such attacks as these troubled him little, but, although it made no difference to his conduct, he felt deeply hurt when some two or three French friends for and with whom he had worked did not understand that he could know a Prince and yet remain a Republican.

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* In the following extract from an article written by Mr Bradlaugh in January 1884 upon "The Attitude of Freethought in Politics," allusion is made to an interesting conversation held with Gambetta:—"My personal attitude as a Freethinker in politics," said Mr Bradlaugh, "was the subject of some hostile discussion in France about four years ago, when the partisans of M. Jules Ferry were rigorously and, as I thought, harshly, enforcing the laws against the clerical orders. I strongly disapproved of the application of penal laws to the religious orders. It was very forcibly and very justly urged to me by my Radical French friends, that these religious orders had been, and were, the persevering and persistent foes of liberty, and that when their party was in power, the clerical legion were merciless in persecuting the Republicans and Freethinkers. My answer was and is: 'As I do not admit the right of the Church to use the law to suppress or punish me, neither will I claim or countenance the use of the law against the Church.' It was urged, and quite truly, that the Roman Catholic Church throughout its whole history had been the never-ceasing persecutor and oppressor of all aspirations for human liberty. My answer still was and is: 'We should fight with the pen, the press, the tongue, the school; not the gaol or the officer of the law.' If we cannot win with reason, I will not try to win with force. Victory with the latter only decides which it is that is temporarily strongest. In a long conversation some eleven years ago—which went far into the night—with the late M. Léon Gambetta, in which he plainly put difficulties caused to the Republican party by the enmity of Clericalism to progress in France, and painted in vivid colours the danger of the struggle, I took the same ground, and here again I maintain it."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DOZEN DEBATES, 1870-1873.

In 1870 Mr Bradlaugh held five oral debates: one with Mr G. J. Holyoake, in London, in the month of March; the next with Alexander Robertson of Dundonnochie, at Edinburgh, in June; the third and fifth with the Rev. A. J. Harrison, at Newcastle, in September, and at Bristol, in December; while the fourth debate was held with David King,* at Bury, in December. Besides these there was a written debate upon Exodus xxi. 7-11, with Mr B. H. Cowper.

The discussion with Mr George Jacob Holyoake occupied two successive nights, the 10th and 11th of March, and was by far the most important of the five. It represents different schools of Freethought, and was for many years—is, perhaps, at the present day—copiously quoted, especially by persons opposed to every view of Freethought, who would confound representatives of one school by quoting opinions taken from the other. The full wording of the subjects discussed was: for the first night "The Principles of Secularism do not include Atheism;" for the second "Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism." Mr Holyoake maintained the affirmative of these propositions, and each disputant occupied two half-hours on each evening. Mr Austin Holyoake took the chair on both occasions. The difference between Mr Bradlaugh and Mr Holyoake was not so much a difference of opinion as a difference of the methods of advocacy of their opinion. Both were Freethinkers of the most convinced kind; but while Mr Bradlaugh called himself an Atheist, Mr Holyoake chose rather to describe himself as a Secularist, and the whole difference between them is indicated in these two names. The word "Atheist" had been—and is still, to some extent—used as a term of opprobrium; it has been perverted from its natural meaning to imply everything that

* No accurate report of this debate exists.

is vile; Mr Bradlaugh wore the name defiantly, and held to it the closer for the sake of the slandered Atheists of the past. He was an Atheist, *i.e.* "without God," in the simple meaning of the word; if others chose to attach to it an odious significance, the discredit lay in the narrowness of their minds and not in the Atheist, compelled to endure the baseless calumnies heaped upon him. Mr Bradlaugh was no "Infidel:" he least of any could be branded as unfaithful; but since Atheist and Infidel were often used as synonymous terms, he did not even flinch from sharing the name of "Infidel" with those brave workers for religious and political liberty, such as Paine or Richard Carlile. Nevertheless, Infidel he was not, although Atheist he was.

Now, Mr Holyoake was equally an Atheist, but he did not see that there was anything to be gained by the use of a name which had so undeservedly become a term of reproach; he preferred to find a new name and make a fresh start under new colours. In a debate held seventeen years before with the Rev. Brewin Grant, Mr Holyoake had said that opprobrium was associated with the word "Atheist," and that this would be got rid of by the use of the word "Secularist," which would also bring before the mind the moral objects in view. Moved probably by the idea of making the path easy to the faint-hearted who were frightened by the bogey conjured up by the word "Atheist," Mr Holyoake was anxious to disassociate his new name altogether from Atheism, and went so far as to say that Secularism did not involve Atheism or Scepticism. Thus the new Secularism looked askance at the old Atheism, and seemed anxious to have it known that the two had "no connection." Mr Holyoake regarded the "imputation" that Secularism involved Atheism and Scepticism as "the greatest impediment in the way of" national Secular education. He claimed for his Secularism that it was a "new form of Free-thought," perfectly independent of Atheism or Theism. Secularism proposed "to set up principles of nature in the place of principles of theology, and found, if possible, a kingdom of reason for those who found the kingdom of faith inadequate or unreliable." Secularism, Mr Holyoake contended, should assert its own principles, but not assail others, neither needing to assail nor condescending to assail theological systems. These ideas will doubtless commend themselves to many, especially to those who do not look under the surface of the words; but we know that

before we can put nature "in the place of" theology, we must depose theology, and we also know that when geology points out the secular truth of the numberless ages it has taken to form the earth's crust, by the mere assertion of such a truth it assails the theological dogma of the creation of the world in seven days. Mr Bradlaugh in his speech put it in this way: "The Secularist finds the kingdom of faith impossible, he finds belief in God impossible, he finds belief in religion impossible. What is the difference between finding belief in God impossible and an Atheist?" He said further: "Although at present it may be perfectly true that all men who are Secularists are not Atheists, I put it that in my opinion the logical consequence of the acceptance of Secularism must be that the man gets to Atheism if he has brains enough to comprehend." Mr Holyoake spoke of various bodies all over the kingdom occupied with a negative form of Freethought; he met with many orators who were mere negationists. The stock-in-trade of a negationist, he said, is the simplest possible; he has only to deny what some one else holds, and he is set up in the art of warfare. But these societies and these orators were entirely unknown to Mr Bradlaugh; those he had worked with for ten years or more had done positive work, and of this he gave many instances. This attack and reply are of importance because the terms "negationist" and "destructive freethought" have grown into cant phrases, used as terms of reproach by persons who do not trouble to consider either exactly what they mean, or whether there is anyone to whom they are really applicable. Mr Holyoake asserted that Atheism does not embody a system of morals, while Mr Bradlaugh replied that "You cannot have a scheme of morality without Atheism. The Utilitarian scheme is an Atheistical scheme. The Utilitarian scheme is a defiance of the doctrine of Providence, and a protest against God." Referring to Mr Holyoake's objection to the words "Infidelity" and "Atheism" because of the opprobrium which has gathered round them, Mr Bradlaugh said:—

"I maintain that the opprobrium cast upon the word Atheism is a lie. I believe Atheists as a body to be men deserving respect—I know the leading men among them who have made themselves prominent, and I do not care what kind of character religious men may put round the word Atheist, I would fight until men respect it. I do not quarrel with the word 'Secular' if it is taken to

include this body of men, but I do object to it if we are told Atheism has nothing to do with it. I object when we are told that Atheism is not its province, because I say that the moment you tell me that you have to deal with the affairs of this life, to the exclusion of the rest, you must in effect deny the rest. If you do not deny the rest, you leave your Secularism in doubt, you partially paralyse the efforts on your own side. If you tell our people, 'You must not impugn the sincerity of your opponents, that you must not impute bad motives to them,' when they read the foul lies heaped on the graves of the great dead, and hear the base calumnies used against the hard-working living, I say you are teaching to them that which I do not consider their duty. You should never lightly impute, never rashly urge against any opponent motives, you should never do it without full proof to justify your imputation."

The proposition for the second night's debate, as worded by Mr Holyoake, was, "Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism." Mr Bradlaugh opened in a very careful speech. Dealing first with the word Scepticism, he went on to say, "Criticism is, I presume, the art of judging upon the merits of any given proposition; and I put it, that you cannot have criticism at all without doubt. Doubt is, in fact, the beginning of knowledge, and I put it expressly, that it is utterly impossible to have Secular Criticism without having scepticism; as to the dogmas of Theology in general, and scepticism as to the Bible and Christianity in particular." He then proceeded to state in detail and at considerable length the points of Scepticism involved by Secular Criticism. Mr Holyoake, so far from traversing this position, really endorsed it when he said (in his first speech on the second night): "The secular method is to criticise the Scriptures so as to adopt that which is useful, leaving alone that which is mischievous or disagreeable." A criticism of the Scriptures, undertaken with the view of accepting some points as worthy and rejecting others as unworthy, cannot by any possibility exclude scepticism. We examine a set of precepts, we judge them, we distinguish between the false and the true, the beauties and the blemishes. To do this, we must begin by doubting their truth and beauty as a whole, and before we can leave any alone, we must be sceptical whether a belief in them is necessary to our salvation and a disbelief in them a sure road to eternal damnation. Mr Holyoake

also spoke favourably of ignoring Christianity, apparently failing to see that in a country, Christian by law, with a State-supported Christian religion and Christianity taught in our schools, to ignore is impossible. Much of Mr Holyoake's speech had no bearing upon the subject under discussion, but was simply an attack upon persons and the more transitory aspects of the Atheistic position. To this Mr Bradlaugh replied, and of course his reply was as irrelevant as the attack, but putting this aside, he asked in his last speech: "Has Mr Holyoake shown that Secular Criticism does not involve Scepticism? Not at all. What secular principles has he advanced which are inconsistent with the position I take? None." I think with this everyone who carefully reads the debate will agree. Mr Holyoake in his final speech, which also wound up the debate, indulged in considerable sarcasm at his opponent's expense, and made his memorable and oft-quoted sneer at the Hall of Science; speaking of it as "this kind of place in which we now meet, opposite a lunatic asylum, where people, so the enemy says, naturally expect to find us." Before sitting down, Mr Holyoake quoted statements he had made elsewhere as to Secularism, from one of which I will take a few lines, in order to put his position fairly in his own words:—

"Secularism," he said, "is not an argument against Christianity, it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, it advances others. Secularism does not say there is no light and guidance elsewhere, but maintains that there is light and guidance in secular truth, whose conditions and sanctions exist independently, act independently, and act for ever. Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life."

Mr Austin Holyoake, who, as I have said, occupied the chair on both evenings, was specially invited by his brother to express his opinion. This he objected to do at the debate, but he afterwards wrote a short criticism, in the course of which he asked the pertinent question: "How can any one *not* an Atheist be a Secularist?" and the answer to this would, I think, be hard to find.

On the 22nd and 23rd of June Mr Bradlaugh met Alexander Robertson, Esq., of Dundonnochie, to discuss with him the Existence of Deity. The meetings were held in the New

Waverley Hall, Edinburgh, and there was a large attendance on each evening. Mr Robertson, however, proved utterly incompetent; and the affair, regarded as a debate, was a complete fiasco.* On the second evening, indeed, a number of Christians left the room as a protest against Mr Robertson's method of advocacy. All that I need note here is that Mr Bradlaugh once more stated his position as an Atheist. I repeat it, as he himself put it at different times in his life, because even to this day his views are often misapprehended.

In his opening speech Mr Robertson had conjured up several absurd theories of Atheism (amongst which the inevitable "chance"-made world figured), and had triumphantly disposed of them. Mr Bradlaugh in his reply said:—

"I am an Atheist, but I do not say there is no God; and until you tell me what you mean by God I am not mad enough to say anything of the kind. So long as the word 'God' represents nothing to me, so long as it is a word that is not the correlative and expression of something clear and distinct, I am not going to tilt against what may be nothing-nowhere. Why should I? If you tell me that by God you mean 'something' which created the universe, which before the act of creation was not; 'something' which has the power of destroying that universe; 'something' which rules and governs it, and which nevertheless is entirely distinct and different in substance from the universe—then I am prepared to deny that any such existence can be."

On the next evening he referred to this, and enlarged upon it thus:—

"I said last night that the Atheist does not say there is no God, so long as the word simply represents an indefinite quantity or quality — of you don't know what, you don't know where: but I object to the God of Christianity, and absolutely deny it. In all ages men have fashioned their Gods according to their want of knowledge—the more ignorant the people, the more

* The *Fife News* spoke of it as a meeting between "the Atheist and the ignoramus," and the *Christian News* said: "The second night's debate was no debate. So completely did the Theist fail, in more senses than one, that he need never appear in the city of Edinburgh again as a defender of religion."

numerous their deities, because the Gods represented their personifications of force. Men beheld phenomena beyond, and independent of, human ability, and they ascribed these phenomena to deities, the 'God' in each case representing their ignorance."

The first debate with the Rev. A. J. Harrison was held for two nights in September, at the Newcastle Town Hall; and 3000 persons, at least, were present on each night. For each speaker there was a partisan chairman, and over these an impartial umpire—an arrangement particularly disliked by Mr Bradlaugh, who thought one chairman quite sufficient, and who was always willing that that one should be unconnected with the Freethought party. The umpire—that is to say, the real chairman—was on this occasion Lieut.-Col. Perkins, and he won golden opinions for his tact, unfailing good humour, and courtesy, qualities which the uproarious spirit of the audience rendered very necessary. Mr Harrison has a certain reputation, so that I can hardly pass this first debate with my father without some notice, as I might otherwise have been tempted to do; for, in truth, I do not think there is very much to be learned from it. Mr Harrison worded the subjects to be discussed, and Mr Bradlaugh accepted every condition which was proposed. The propositions which the reverend gentleman chose to affirm were: (1.) That Secularism, distinctively considered, is not a system of truth, and therefore cannot justify its existence to the reason; and (2.) That Secularism, distinctively considered, is not a system of morality, and is therefore unworthy of trust as a guide. Mr Harrison opened the debate by examining the proposition he himself had worded, declaring at the outset that Secularism could not be a system of truth, "*first*, because it has no truth to offer; and *second*, because it is not a system at all." Mr Bradlaugh, in reply, thought it was hardly necessary to discuss "what is needed to constitute a system, or whether Secularism is a system or not, because," he said, "I think I have made it clear enough all my life through that the great merit of the thought of which I am permitted to be the advocate is that it does not pretend that any one man, or any dozen of men, have a right to lay down a number of propositions, and say, 'These make a system which shall bind the world.'" Mr Harrison contended that there were three kinds of Atheism—the Atheism of doubt, the Atheism of ignorance, and a compound of doubt and ignorance, which last,

said the reverend disputant politely, was "Mr Bradlaugh's own Atheism."

This version of his views my father repudiated as "monstrously unfair as well as utterly untrue," and then went on to deal with such other allegations as:

"That the Atheist could commit murder, or steal, without fear of the consequences. To try the actual value of the argument," he said, "it is not unfair to ask, Did a Theist ever steal? If so, then a belief in God and his power to punish have been insufficient to prevent him from committing the crime. The fact is, that those who overlook such arguments overlook the great truth that all men seek happiness, though in diverse fashions. The Atheists hold that by teaching men the real road to human happiness, it is possible to keep them from the by-ways of criminality and error. The Atheist would teach men to be moral now, not because God offered as an inducement some reward by-and-by, but because in the virtuous act itself immediate good was ensured to the doer, and to the world surrounding him. The Atheist would prevent men from lying, stealing, murdering, not from fear of the eternal consequences after death, but because crime made this life itself a course of misery. On the other hand, Theism, by asserting that God was the creator and governor of the universe, hindered and checked man's efforts by declaring God's will to be the sole and controlling power. Atheists, by declaring all events to be in accordance with natural laws—that is, happening in certain ascertained sequences—stimulated men to discover the best conditions of life, and offered the most powerful inducements to morality."

In spite of this statement, directly bearing on the affirmative truths taught by Atheism, Mr Harrison continued to urge that Mr Bradlaugh had not proved that there was anything positive in Atheism. "All that Mr Bradlaugh said was positive with regard to Atheism belonged to Science and not to Atheism" he said, apparently failing to see that Science itself is really Atheistic in the true and literal acceptation of the word, although its teachers and professors may be Theists. Science teaches the origin and nature of phenomena without reference to God, and sometimes even in direct contradiction to theological dogmas.

On the following evening Mr Harrison sought to prove that

Secularism was not a trustworthy moral guide, and to this end he contended that Atheism was without the moral help that came from (1) a belief in God, (2) a belief in immortality, and (3) a study of human nature. This last contention showed utter ignorance or misapprehension of the Atheistic position. Mr Bradlaugh, in reply, dealt very trenchantly with the kind of moral help to be obtained from the God of the Old and New Testament, but he was stopped in his argument, as it was ruled that he must not deal with any particular phase of Theism, only with Theism generally. Before he was stopped, however, he stated that—

"The position of the Atheist was that he did not affirm a universe, and outside it a God; but he said, 'By your knowledge of the conditions of existence, so you may shape, and so will be shaped, your thought and your conduct, and that thought and that conduct which tend to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and to the least injury of any—that thought and that conduct are moral, whatever your religious profession may be.' But that guide to morality was not got out of any system of Theism; it was purely Atheistic—that was, it was found outside God, without God."

During this debate my father was suffering very much from a relaxed throat, and on both nights he had to speak amidst considerable uproar, the audience being exceedingly noisy. In his final speech, on the second evening, he became so exhausted by the continual interruption and outcries that he begged his audience "in mercy" and "humanity" to allow him to finish his argument in quiet, but this was an appeal which fell upon deaf ears.*

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* "The last speech of Mr Bradlaugh's was a piece of almost unparalleled eloquence, which might have been very effective had he received fair play, but this, we are sorry to say, was undoubtedly denied him, and he proceeded amidst a storm of interruptions, hissings, and howlings, renewed again and again."—*Blyth Weekly News.*

"Mr Bradlaugh was stormed down, and really refused a hearing. This kind of conduct was bad on the face of it. If his arguments were ridiculous, they would be the easier answered. If they were beyond or beside the point at issue, they were unworthy a reply."—*Sunderland Evening Chronicle.*

The Newcastle papers gave lengthy reports of the proceedings, and the *Weekly Chronicle* remarked that, in consequence of his suffering from an affection of the throat, the effect of a severe cold, Mr Bradlaugh "sustained the debate with considerable pain and difficulty."

The restrictions placed upon Mr Bradlaugh by the conditions of the Newcastle debate were such as to cause great irritation and discontent amongst Freethinkers;* and in consequence, a second debate was fixed to take place at Bristol on the 13th and 14th December. The subject chosen for argument was "Theism *v.* Atheism." Professor Newman was in the chair, and on each evening there was a very large attendance. In the course of his introductory remarks Professor Newman mentioned an interesting discussion society then in existence in London—"a society," he said, "called a Metaphysical Club. It was commenced by the poet, Mr Alfred Tennyson, and, I believe, by Mr Browning also. They associated with them certain eminent gentlemen in London, and they induced Archbishop Manning to enter it. Professor Huxley and others are also members of it, and it was made a condition that in their discussions every member should be free to deny the existence of God, and Archbishop Manning entirely concurs in this. Mr James Martineau, my friend, a very eminent and intellectual gentleman, belonged to it, and he regarded it to be essential that persons must speak out from the bottom of their hearts, otherwise they did not get the fulness of the argument."

Mr Harrison opened with a speech much more subtle than any of those delivered at Newcastle, and was throughout more courteous, though even now there were phrases which would have been better left unsaid, and, while extremely careful to keep his opponent within the limits imposed by the conditions of the debate, he was not always so scrupulous about his own words.† Mr Bradlaugh's arguments were clear and forcible to a degree; he was evidently in much better form than on the previous occasion, but it is not easy to detach passages, although there is much that is valuable as giving different aspects of his opinions.‡ In the

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* "I had said, in the course of my remarks against Secularism, that Secularism was Atheism, and Atheism was a negation. Mr Bradlaugh claimed the right to say what Atheism negated. According to the conditions of the debate, I objected to that subject being entered into" (the Rev. A. J. Harrison, December 1870). These words show how peculiarly one-sided the conditions were.

† "If Mr Bradlaugh had objected to some things said by Mr Harrison last night, I should have said they were out of order" (Prof. Newman on the second evening).

‡ Those who wish to read the whole argument will find a verbatim report in the *National Reformer* for 25th Dec. 1870 and 1st Jan. 1871.

following May the Rev. A. J. Harrison and Mr Bradlaugh engaged in a third contest. This was conducted in Socratic form: no speeches were made, the discussion being limited to question and answer. Mr Harrison undertook to prove that "there is an Intelligent Being superior to man," and Mr Bradlaugh that "there is not and cannot be an Infinite, Omnipotent, Immutable Being distinct from the Universe." This discussion was held at Birmingham, and lasted three nights. But even this did not satisfy the disputants and exhaust their energy, for in 1872 they had yet another debate, which was this time held in London, at the Hall of Science. The subject discussed at this, their fourth public controversy, was the teaching of Christian Theism* as represented on a certain page in Mr Bradlaugh's pamphlet, "A Plea for Atheism."

In the summer of 1872 Father Ignatius wrote to Mr Bradlaugh, asking that an opportunity might be given him to address an audience of London Freethinkers. This request was readily acceded to, but in consequence of other work and ill-health Father Ignatius was obliged to delay the delivery of this address until the end of November. The Hall of Science, which was put at his disposal, was crowded right out to the street, and it was estimated that at least two thousand persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr Austin Holyoake presided over what was really an informal debate. Father Ignatius elected to speak on "Jesus Christ, the central point of human history," and when he had finished Mr Bradlaugh spoke for an equal time in reply. The audience, densely crowded as it was, listened intently and earnestly, and the perfect stillness maintained during both speeches was broken only by applause. Not a sound of dissent was heard; each speaker was listened to with respect and attention. At the conclusion Father Ignatius was thanked by the Freethinkers for the fearlessness and the courtesy with which he had spoken, and the audience were thanked by the Rev. Father for the fairness with which they had listened to him. He said "he would be happy if his Protestant fellow-Christians would receive him with equal fairness."

As he desired to reply to Mr Bradlaugh's speech, Father Ignatius fixed to go again to the Hall of Science on the 12th of December,

* This debate is published in pamphlet form, under the title, "What does Christian Theism teach?"

but when the day arrived there was some doubt whether he could get there, as he had been subpœnaed to Worcester as a witness. In consequence of this the attendance was not quite so overwhelming as before. When Father Ignatius entered the Hall he was welcomed with much cheering, which was cordially renewed when he rose to speak. Before entering upon his subject, he said that he had received permission from Mr Bradlaugh and the Chairman (Mr Austin Holyoake) to ask God to aid him that night; but even with that permission, he would not do so, for he had no wish to hurt anyone's susceptibilities, unless the meeting also gave its sanction. Those present having signified their assent by a show of hands, Father Ignatius "in an impassioned prayer sought the assistance of God to render his address effectual." Then proceeding to the business of the evening, he deftly—if not very convincingly—explained away the objections which had been urged by Mr Bradlaugh to certain Biblical passages. As before, he was followed by Mr Bradlaugh, and both apparently spoke with great force. In the spring of 1873 there was held a third of these informal controversies. On every occasion a charge was made for admission, and the proceeds given, by Father Ignatius' desire, to the Hall of Science building fund. His frankness, fearlessness, and courtesy made an indelible impression upon the minds of the frequenters of the Hall. To Mr Bradlaugh he always wrote in terms of the greatest cordiality, and although the differences between them were of the widest possible kind, I am quite sure that my father was sensible of this kindly feeling and reciprocated it.

In addition to the pleasant interchange of opinion on theological matters with Father Ignatius, Mr Bradlaugh held, in the December of 1872, a set discussion upon Spiritualism with Mr Burns, editor of *Human Nature* and *The Medium and Daybreak*. Spiritualism was a subject to which he had given considerable attention for nearly twenty years prior to this debate. He had devoted a large amount of time to the reading of spiritualistic literature and the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena. He had taken part in many *séances*, and had seen different mediums, but except in one or two cases the sittings had led to nothing. With Mrs Marshall he witnessed some "clumsy trickery"; with the Davenport brothers he saw some "clever sleight-of-hand." When he went to "the conjuring performance of the Davenport Brothers"—as he

somewhere styles it—he was asked to take off his coat and lay it on the table. He was told, "You must sit in the dark; you must hold Mrs Fay's hands on one side and Mrs Ira Davenport the other." He asked, "But why?" They said, "The spirits might hurt you"; to which he replied, "I will take the risk of that." He was then told, "If you do not submit to the conditions, there can be no manifestation." Under these circumstances he concluded to accept the conditions.* The lights were extinguished, and after about a minute and a half they were re-lit, and Mr Fay, who was tied in a chair, was found wearing the coat. The lights were again extinguished and the coat thrown upon Mr Bradlaugh. All tests and opportunities for investigation were absolutely refused, but my father had no doubt that Mr Fay was untied and retied in the dark. He afterwards saw Maskelyne do every one of the tricks done by the Davenport Brothers, and more besides, though Maskelyne did not pretend that anything other than the clever art of conjuring lay at the bottom of the performance.

When the Dialectical Society made their inquiry into the phenomena attributed to Spiritualism, my father was one of the Committee. He was at every sub-committee meeting † at which D. D. Home, the well-known medium, was present, and at half a dozen of the general meetings at least. However, none of the boasted manifestations occurred, and the sittings were almost, if not quite, "void of result." Mr Bradlaugh, in giving his impression of Mr Home and the results obtained with him as medium, said:—

"I am bound to say that Mr Home met me in the frankest manner possible. He told me I was one of the few people he wanted very much to see, and probably, as my address was not known, and I am not a very public man in England, that was the reason he had not discovered me until I was placed upon that Committee. But I met him in the same frank spirit; and as he offered every opportunity for investigation, we took it. And the first evening we changed every shred of clothing he had on for some other. Perhaps that might have destroyed the proper combinations, for we had not the slightest scintilla of anything. I sat with Mr Home night after night till Mr Home was tired."‡

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* *National Reformer*, Jan. 19, 1873. † Held at 4 Fitzroy Square.

‡ *National Reformer*, Jan. 12, 1873.

And the only result, such as it was, of all this investigation may be summed up in a few words. There was a tinkling of glass, a slight wave of the table, and a few raps. The raps were such as could be easily produced by mechanical means, and were so produced by my father afterwards—not that he charged Mr Home with causing the raps in that particular way; but as he pointed out, it was impossible for any one, under the circumstances, to fix upon the precise spot whence such raps came; it was impossible that the unguided ear could exactly relegate the sound. The tinkling of glass was such as he had often heard in a room where there was gas burning; the wave of the table—which did not move more than half an inch—was afterwards repeatedly produced by Dr Edmunds and himself. Beyond these trifles there was no other "semblance of manifestation," and yet some Spiritualists boldly asserted that the result of the Dialectical Society's inquiry was to convert the investigators to Spiritualism.*

Mr Bradlaugh opened the debate with Mr Burns, and as always, when he made the opening speech, he used the most careful language in trying to make his position clear. Beyond that speech, and for what he told during the two nights of his personal experiences and inquiries into Spiritualism, the debate is really of little importance. Mr Burns afterwards apologised for his treatment of the subject on the ground of ill-health.†

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* *Human Nature*, Jan. 1871.

† *The Medium and Daybreak*, Dec. 20, 1873.

CHAPTER XXXIV

FAMILY AFFAIRS.

When our home was broken up in May 1870, and my father went to live by himself in those two little rooms in Turner Street, he was very downcast and lonely. Apart from the many weighty reasons he had to make him heavy-hearted, he felt the separation from his children, young though we were, much more than might be imagined or than we indeed quite realised ourselves at the time. He felt it for his own sake, but even more he felt it for ours. We had been away from him but little more than two weeks—weeks crowded with worry and work—when he wrote us a little letter, which I shall always keep amongst my dearest treasures, so much does it seem to convey a sense of his fatherly love for us, and his fatherly anxiety for our lives in the difficult circumstances in which we were placed. The letter is written in French and very legibly, the foreign language making a sort of excuse for the letter. He writes:—

"My Dear little Daughters,—I have a notion to write you from time to time in French, because by that means more than by any other I shall make you learn the language. Unfortunately for your instruction, my own knowledge of this beautiful tongue is very limited, but I hope that you will correct me each time you find mistakes. I want to know every thought, every act of your lives, because, as you will be too long out of my sight, I would keep you very close to my heart, and I want to watch in thought the steps I cannot see each day with my own eyes.—À vous, mes petites bien aimées, C. Bradlaugh."

Our brother's death drew us yet nearer to him, and while we were at Midhurst he wrote to us constantly, scolding us if we delayed too long in answering his little letters. As soon as he was able, he took a third room at Turner Street, and sent for each of us by turns to spend a month with him, to write for him; but as he was unwilling to separate my sister and me for long together this was by no means a regular arrangement.

After he became acquainted with Madame de Brimont, she soon expressed a desire to know us. I have said that she was a staunch friend to my father; to my sister and to me she was goodness itself. She asked my father to let her find a school for us in Paris, and as he had always been very anxious for us to know French, he let himself be persuaded, in spite of sundry misgivings about the extra expense. A school was found, and to Paris my father took us at the end of September 1872. We went a few days before the beginning of the school-term and stayed with him at his old hotel in the Rue Vivienne—now demolished to make room for the extension of the *Bibliothéque*. We were very proud to be with him, and proud of course to be for the first time in Paris; we lunched or dined at Madame de Brimont's, and our leisure moments were filled up by most delightful drives outside Paris, or walks along the Champs Elysées or the Boulevards. Before entering school, we three went one day with Madame de Brimont to make acquaintance with the Directress of the establishment and to look over the building. The two ladies walked on first, chatting of the school arrangements and so on, whilst we behind admired, but could not imitate, the deliberate calmness with which they trod the highly polished parquet floors. My sister and I, as we slipped about and frantically caught at each other for support, thought we never should be able to walk steadily on these waxed floors. Before we left, Madame la Directrice asked what was our religion. Mr Bradlaugh, inwardly expecting difficulties, answered, "None, Madame." Madame's "Ah! Monsieur, that saves trouble," brought a smile of surprise and amusement to my father's face. Seeing this, the Directress went on: "You know, Monsieur, I have young ladies here of various religions, but they are principally Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Greek Church; it is sometimes difficult to make their different religious duties fit in with the studies."

We were very happy at this school; there were good masters, and we had plenty of work to do. On Thursday afternoons, the "at home" day for the school, Madame de Brimont visited us, and our Saturday afternoons and Sundays were spent with her. Unfortunately, I was never very strong, and during the winter I fell ill. At Christmas my father came quite unexpectedly to fetch us home for the holidays. My sister went back in the course of a week or two, but the doctor would not allow me to return. The details of that journey home, and the sad story told at the end,

remain vividly in my memory. We had been surprised at receiving my father's letter to say we were to go home, a letter followed almost immediately by my father himself. It was two or three days before Christmas; he had travelled at night, and coming to us in the morning, gave us just a few hours to get ready, and in the afternoon he came to fetch us away. He seemed depressed and preoccupied, and though he made us plenty of gay speeches, we were conscious that his mood was not gay. We left Paris that night, and well do I remember what great care he took of me, the invalid, holding me in his arms a great part of the way. As we drove to Turner Street from the station, in the gloomy dawn of a dull December morning, I could not help noticing, in spite of my own pain and weariness, how grey and haggard his face looked. We passed the day in London, and in the evening he took us to Midhurst, where we were all to spend Christmas.

After the first excitement of our home-coming had somewhat subsided, my father got up from his chair, and throwing back his head with a peculiar movement, said abruptly, "Well, Bob's in prison."

"My God!" exclaimed my grandfather, who invoked the Deity as indifferently as if he had been a Christian.

My father was silent for some minutes, and then as, in a few short sentences, he told the story, my sister and I realised how heavy had been his care on the previous day whilst he had tried to make merry with us.

William Robert Bradlaugh was twelve years younger than his brother Charles, and was only seven years old at the time of their father's death. He was educated at an Orphan Asylum, and on his leaving this institution my father found situations for him, which, however, for one reason or another, he did not keep. At one time, after he had been very ill, I remember that he passed his time of convalescence at our house, where he found all the kindness and comfort it was a brother's part to bestow. To the distress of his relatives, and especially to the grief of his mother, he took to excessive drinking. His mother he completely neglected, even during the long illness which kept her to her room before her death.

Surprise has often been expressed at the evident estrangement between the brothers; and this has been especially the case with

religious persons after they have listened to, or heard of, the public protestations of religion and love for my father which have fallen from the Christian, protestations which the Atheist has received in silence. He, who so well knew the worth of these phrases, preferred to let himself be misunderstood by his silence rather than utter the miserable truth.

The story my father had to tell us that Christmas Eve was that his brother Robert (he was always called by his second name) had been arrested on the charge of embezzling various small sums from his employer. During the next few days, while he was under remand, he wrote from the House of Detention, thanking my father for his kindness to his wife, protesting his innocence, and expressing himself as "perfectly happy and contented," knowing he could clear himself from all charges, and asking my father's help in his defence. At the final examination in the Police Court the case was sent up for trial at the Middlesex Sessions, and at his brother's request my father instructed a solicitor to appear for him. Mrs W. R. Bradlaugh warmly expressed her gratitude to him for his kindness, hoping that some day she might be able to repay him; "Were it not for you," she said, "I do not know what I should do." Her husband, released on bail, protested that he would neither see nor speak to his brother until he had proved his innocence.

On the 8th of January my father wrote his sister, Mrs Norman, promising to allow his brother's wife a small weekly sum in the event of Robert's conviction, adding that they had already had £12, 10s. from him in six weeks. He was, as we know, himself so heavily involved in money difficulties that the smallest unforeseen expense made a serious addition to him; despite this, a week later he sent more money, and promised to pay the solicitor's costs. More, he vowed he would not do, "either for name or for money's sake." He felt the disgrace keenly, and considered moreover that his brother had no moral claim upon him, "for" as he wrote his sister, "when he was in full work, and I in distress, he did not even help me to keep his mother, who loved him so well." At the Middlesex Sessions a sentence of six months' imprisonment was passed, at the end of which Robert once more wrote his brother, thanking him for the kindness he had shown to his wife, and acknowledging his indebtedness to the extent of £30, which he

talked about repaying on some future occasion. At the same time he assured my father that his feelings should not again be harrowed by any misconduct on his (Robert's) part: henceforth his living should be honestly obtained, or he would starve.

My father sent his brother some more money. Then, of course, came other applications, coupled at length with the request that the money should be sent direct, and not, as was my father's custom, through his sister, Mrs Norman. But my father would not consent to this. He told his sister of Robert's demand, adding that if she would take charge of the money he would send what he was able; if she would not, he would send nothing. My aunt was perplexed; she did not know what to do. Although she had had her sister-in-law and the child at her house during Robert's absence, she had not seen her since his return, and she felt that she did not want to force her brother Robert to receive further kindness through her hands. However, she at last consented to continue to act as intermediary; consequently every penny that Mr Bradlaugh sent his brother passed through her hands.

Just before my father went to America, in the autumn of 1874, Robert (who, a few years later, alleged that in 1872 his brother cast him off) suggested that he should go to the States with him, and be introduced by him as a young man whom he had known for some time; but it is hardly necessary to say that my father did not acquiesce in this proposal. In the following year, while still receiving pecuniary assistance from his brother, Mr W. R. Bradlaugh attended some of Moody and Sankey's meetings, and there professed "conversion," although, as he was brought up and educated in the tenets of the Church of England, and was never at any time a Freethinker, it is difficult to understand from what he was converted. One day my Aunt Lizzie was somewhat surprised at receiving a visit from him. He had been to her house only a day or two before to receive a sovereign which my father had sent at his request, and she was not expecting to see him again so soon. He walked into the house, triumphantly exclaiming that he had got "another berth," at the same time showing her a sheet of the *Christian Herald* in connection with which he had been given employment.

From that day until my father's death his brother never ceased to try and annoy him—always, of course, under the cloak of religion and love. He would send him religious books—the last

came at the New Year of 1891. "This is from my beautiful brother," said my father, as he dropped it into the waste-paper basket. He sometimes lectured in the same town, on the same date as my father, and the hall engaged for his lectures would perhaps be quite close to the one in which Mr Bradlaugh was speaking. He would be announced, maybe, merely as "Mr Bradlaugh," or even as "the brother of Charles Bradlaugh," or "the brother of the Member for Northampton," and would very likely entreat his audience to unite with him in prayer for his "brother Charles Bradlaugh." He had named his son "Charles," and in a letter written to his brother in 1880, he had recourse to the following unmanly taunt: "I want not to trade upon your name; it has never helped me, it dies with yourself, and is to be perpetuated by the son of one whom you at present hate." My father's own son, who also bore his name and of whom he had been so proud, had then been dead ten years.

Mr W. R. Bradlaugh did not confine himself to these annoyances—which, after all, were petty, and even if they irritated at the time, could be easily endured—but he has been responsible for various false and injurious statements concerning my father's personal character. Some of these were circulated during his lifetime, but he remained silent with every provocation to speak. Even in a "private and confidential" letter to the editor of a friendly paper which had carelessly quoted some extremely malicious falsehoods alleged to have been uttered by Mr W. R. Bradlaugh, my father only said that, "being under great obligation" to him, his brother tried to injure him.

This is the second time in this book that I have been compelled to reveal a story of sorrow and disgrace that I would have given much to have kept hidden, but justice to my father demands that the truth should be known. If the telling it should bring the smallest injury to a man who, twenty years ago, erred and expiated his error according to the laws of our country, it will give me the deepest pain and regret. Counting surely on my father's silence, however, he chose to pursue a course of conduct which has obliged me to tell the truth concerning their estrangement. Out of regard for his brother, my father might knowingly and deliberately suffer himself to be misunderstood, and his silence to be unfavourably construed, but it is not for me, his faithful daughter and biographer, to allow the misunderstanding to continue.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REPUBLICANISM AND SPAIN.

As I have said elsewhere, during the early seventies the Republican movement in England was full of life and activity. There was quite a ferment of political energy tending towards Republicanism, and this seemed to be most active in 1873, after the temporary check felt in the reaction of loyalty evoked by the Prince of Wales' illness. In February 1871, the first of a series of Republican Clubs was inaugurated in Birmingham by Mr C. C. Cattell, and this was followed by the formation of others in every direction. By the spring of 1873 there were clubs in Aberdeen and Plymouth, in Norwich and Cardiff; and between these extremes were to be found more than fifty others, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Northumberland having perhaps the largest number. These Clubs held their periodic meetings, and the addresses delivered were often thought of sufficient importance to be reported in the local press. It may well be asked, What has become of all this Republican fervour? It is difficult to say. Probably much of the energy and activity has been diverted into other channels, but, however that may be, we see little sign of it now: in 1894 England is to all appearance utterly dead to the aspiration of an ideal Republic. But in the early part of 1873 the Republican movement was believed to be a growing one, and it was deemed advisable to call a Conference with a view of establishing a National Republican Organisation, which should unite all the heretofore scattered clubs. A circular was sent out by the Provisional Committee convening the meeting, signed by Mr George Odger and eleven others, of whom Mr Bradlaugh was one. Seeing my father's name amongst the signatures, an endeavour was made to injure the cause of Republicanism by denouncing the conveners as "Atheists," although, as a matter of fact, the majority were Christians. The conference was fixed for the 11th and 12th

of May, and the use of the Town Hall, Birmingham, was granted for the meetings.

Shortly before this date the Republic had been declared in Spain, and some of the English Clubs at once sent their congratulations to Senor Castelar. In addition to these, it was decided to send a resolution from the Birmingham Conference, expressing sympathy with Spain in her struggle to establish a Republican Government, abhorrence at the atrocities committed by the Carlists, in the interests of a Monarchical Government, and indignation at the non-recognition of the Spanish Government by the British Government. A resolution was also put to the great public meeting, held in the Town Hall on the Monday evening. This message of sympathy, which was passed with the utmost unanimity, in a meeting of fully 4500 persons, was, together with the Conference resolution, entrusted to Mr Bradlaugh to carry to Senor Emilio Castelar. The proceedings at Birmingham caused considerable stir; the local papers gave long reports, and notices appeared in different journals throughout the provinces, and even in Conservative London itself. The impression created by this quiet and business-like demonstration may be gathered from a leader which appeared in the *Examiner* for May 17, of which the following is a short extract:—

"The Conference of Republicans held at Birmingham on Sunday and Monday last far exceeded in numbers, importance, as well as in the intelligence displayed by its members, anything of a similar name or nature that has been held since the present movement was first originated. There were fifty-four accredited delegates present, representing nearly as many of our principal towns, and they came from every point of the compass—from Norwich, from Bath, from Hastings, Paisley, and Aberdeen. The proceedings were marked by singular unanimity, and general abstinence from all hasty and ill-advised language. This, the least expected feature of the Conference, is doubtless deeply regretted by its opponents. To openly avow Republican proclivities is, in the minds of a majority of the 'respectable' classes, almost synonymous with calling yourself an advocate of rick-burning, or any other mad devilry; the Conference will go far towards removing this ridiculous impression, and re-assuring the timorous. But it must be admitted that a party that can afford to speak in the moderate but decisive tones adopted by most of the speakers, convinces us, and, we would fain believe, all thinking persons, far more of its reality and permanence than had it indulged in the most savage braggadocio or bombast."

That same Monday night, with the vote to Senor Castelar in his pocket, and with the cheers of the crowd ringing in his ears, Mr Bradlaugh left Birmingham for London, where he arrived at five o'clock on Tuesday morning. To drive to his Turner Street lodgings, to wash, pack, breakfast, write some pressing notes, glance at thirty letters, then to Cannon Street to catch the 7.40 A.M. mail train to Dover was fairly quick work, but it was accomplished, and he found himself in Paris the same evening. Dining at the Orleans Station that night, he found Gambetta, with half-a-dozen friends whom he was seeing off to Bordeaux, dining at a table quite near to him. Referring to this incident, Mr Bradlaugh noted that "*Le Diarias*, of Madrid, says that in passing through Paris I had a long conference with Monsieur Gambetta. This, like most newspaper paragraphs about me, is a pure invention." Mr Bradlaugh published an account of his journey to Spain in the *National Reformer* at the time. Much of it—which he called "A fortnight's very rough notes"—was written while on his journey, and must have been done under very considerable difficulties. In carrying the message of the English to the Spanish Republicans, he went at the imminent risk of his life. In Paris and in London it was currently reported that he was killed. While he was cut off from all communication with us, we endured an agony of suspense—my mother and I at Midhurst, my sister at school in Paris; we read in the papers that he was dead, and received letters of condolence from different quarters. Indeed, at Midhurst our first intimation of his supposed death was a letter of sympathy to my mother, written by the Rev. A. J. Harrison, Mr Bradlaugh's oft-time opponent in debate.

My father gives so vivid a description of his adventures and his impressions in his "very rough notes" that I give them in his own words:—

"At 8.15 [Tuesday evening] I started for Spain, my hopes of a direct journey through that country being a little cooled by the fact that although the Spanish Consul-General had positively assured me that the line was clear to Madrid, the Railway Company refused to book me further than Irun, a small town on the banks of the River Bidassoa, and just over the French frontier. All information, however, as to the state of the Spanish lines was refused, ignorance being pleaded." At Bayonne, "while waiting

at the station, I was amused by two Spanish 'gentlemen,' who, after looking carefully at every passenger, came up to me and inquired if I was the bearer of letters for Marshal Serrano. Curiously enough, Marshal Serrano, whose ambition seems doomed to just disappointment, had just fled from Spain in a vessel from Santander. I replied in the negative, and the two, whom I presume to have been Spanish detectives, remained watching until the train left Bayonne. At Irun my troubles commenced: the railway line was completely cut, and I must either take to the road or turn back. The road was said to be extremely dangerous, for it was in this district that the vicious and bloodthirsty curé of Santa Cruz had his band. Some assured me that the Carlists—who, all agreed, had possession of nearly the entire Basque district—would not interfere with either English or Americans. Others were equally certain that the priest of Santa Cruz would show no mercy to either if he happened to be in a murdering humour. Everybody advised me not to go alone; but when I found that the only vehicles for more than two persons were some dirty, ricketty, awful-smelling omnibuses drawn by nearly broken-down hacks, in which—the direct route being impossible—nearly twenty miles must be done, at least, in a burning heat, through a dangerous district, before better conveyance could be got, I determined to risk the journey by myself. I hired a small open *calèche*, with two good horses, and having emphatically explained to the driver that if he stopped voluntarily on meeting with any Carlists I should fire at him, I cocked my revolver, laid it on my knees, and off we went at a sharp gallop, which scarcely ever slackened until we reached San Sebastian. We drove often close to the railway, which I found had been cut in many places; the telegraph wires were hanging loose and useless, many of the posts hewn in two. Two or three times my driver turned to me and said, 'Los Carlistos,' pointing to some men in blue carrying guns and hurrying across the field towards us. Our rate, which on these occasions he accelerated by sharp whipping, carried us on without encounter. Passing near a village on the River Bidassoa, about midway between Irun and San Sebastian, some very rough and ragged-looking men ran up to the carriage, and one, armed with a long knife in his sash, got hold of the door, and addressed me in Basque; but as I did not understand a word, I simply pointed the

pistol at his head and waved him sharply away. My driver continued to gallop, whipping his horses, and the other men who shouted to the driver, apparently to stop, having fallen in the rear, my friend with the knife, who appeared a little out of breath and not to like the look of the pistol barrel, followed their example. When we got about two miles ahead, my driver explained to me in French that these were only thieves, and not Carlists. I had afterwards reason to doubt whether this was not a distinction without a difference. The man who drove me into San Sebastian refused to go any further, alleging that between San Sebastian and Vittoria the road was too dangerous. Finding that it was a thirteen hours' ride, and that the necessary relays of horses and oxen for the mountains were prepared, and could only be obtained for the diligence which started at four next morning, I at once booked a place for the *coupé* of an antiquated machine, which appeared to have lain by ever since the introduction of railroads, and to have been dragged out hastily, and without repairs, in consequence of the sudden interruption of the railway traffic. The clerk who took my money quietly told me that the proprietors could not be responsible for my luggage. . . . At three o'clock on Thursday morning I was awakened out of a terribly sound sleep, for, not having been in bed since Sunday night, Nature had overcome will; I was more fatigued than I had imagined. At a quarter to four I was seated in the diligence, heavily freighted with luggage, with one fellow-passenger in the *coupé* [Senor Everisto de Churruca, a Spanish civil engineer, who not only spoke French but Basque], four in the interior, and three in the *banquette*, or open-hooded seat behind the driver. All these passengers, except one, we dropped at early stages of our journey. The first steep hill we went down at a gallop; but our breaks, old and rusty, would not work; the almost overweighted diligence swerving to and fro—and if we had had a bishop on board we must have capsized; as it was, your light-hearted servant just saved his neck. The diligence came to a standstill at the bottom of the hill, and after great shouting some olive oil was procured, and the screw was twisted backwards and forwards until it forgot its rust in its unwonted oil bath. Again we started, this time at even a greater pace, to make up for lost time. . . .

"The first bodily testimony of the fear of the Carlists was at Tolosa, an old Spanish city, Mauresque in its surroundings, which

was fortified with wooden stockades fitted with loopholes for guns. It was well garrisoned with a few regular troops and provincial militia. The volunteers were, on the whole, a soldierly-looking body of men. At Allegria the Town Hall or Public Court House was fortified by the doors and windows being blocked up with rough stones coarsely mortared in, the necessary loopholes being left for firing through. This being in the centre of the town evidenced the fear that the outer works might not be strong enough to resist the Carlist assailants. Between Allegria and Villafranca I came upon a shocking sight. The Carlists had cut the line close to the mouth of a railway tunnel, which they had also partially blown up. The next train from San Sebastian came on with its usual freight of peaceful ordinary passengers, and no friendly warning was given to stay the mad, confiding rush into the arms of death. Two carriages over the side of the embankment, and the guard's van smashed underneath, three carriages on the line crushed into one another, still are there, with the ghastly, sickening, dull, dried traces on them to show how well the bloody work was done. And these are Carlist doings—work by followers of the Divine-right-Bourbon! Prayers are said for these infamous scoundrels in Paris, and subscriptions are advertised for them in the London *Times*. If they had been Communists instead of Carlists, what then? . . . .

"At Beasain I found that the fine railway bridge was cut by the Carlists, several feet being taken out of the flooring on either side, so that any train coming might be utterly dashed to pieces in a leap to the depths underneath. When coming near Zumarraga we had two yoke of oxen added to our horses, to drag us up the steep hillside, our ascent being upon one of the small range of mountains that apparently link on to the Pyrenees. Here I began to think the danger was passed, as we found men engaged in repairing the permanent way, although the strong guard of soldiers protecting the workmen showed that this was not quite the opinion of the authorities.

"At Mondragon a new style of fortification met my view. All these cities are built with very narrow streets, and here, in the centre of the principal street, a chamber had been run across from window to window of opposite houses, built shot-proof, and loop-holed each side and underneath. This clearly proved that in this neighbourhood the Carlists were looked upon as likely to enter the

town itself. At Arichavaletta, where the regular troops were stronger than usual, I was much puzzled by the conduct of the sentries, who first signalled us to stop, and who—when the horses were pulled up to a walk—crossed bayonets to prevent our progress. It turned out that the Commanding Officer had broken his meerschaum pipe, and our important mission was actually to take it to Vittoria to be mended. More fortunate than some of the baggage we carried, it actually arrived at its destination. At Ezcarriaza, a small open town where we made our last change of horses, I noticed that most of the houses were deserted, and the doors and shutters fastened. The remaining inhabitants stared at us with a pitying kind of curiosity, as though they knew not what fate was in store for us. Candidly speaking, as we had now safely done more than four-fifths of our journey to Vittoria, I began to think that there was now scarcely any risk, and the more especially so as all advices of the Carlists placed them much to the north of where we then were. My judgment was inaccurate; the sting of the serpent was in its tail, the last fifth part of our journey was worse than all the rest. When we arrived at the *Cuesta de Salinas*, where two roads branched off, a rather good-looking young man, in a blue cap and blue blouse sort of uniform, armed with a rifle, a revolver in his sash attached by a ring to a cord slung round his neck, and with a bayonet sword by his side, waved his hand to our driver in the direction of the lower road. This road our diligence now took, our driver saying something we could not hear, and my companion adding to me, 'At last, the Carlists!' About half a mile further, up started in the middle of the road as rough a specimen of the human family as one could wish to meet. Armed and dressed like the previous one, he evidently called on our driver to halt, and as the diligence came to a standstill, two others, worse dressed and badly armed with indifferent guns, joined the first, and I cocked my revolver, keeping it however underneath my coat. Our driver chatted to the Carlists familiarly in the Basque tongue, but too low for my fellow-traveller to catch a word. The last of the Carlists who appeared was probably a deserter, as he wore part of the uniform of a private of the Twenty-ninth Regiment. Whether the three did not feel strong enough to attack us, or whether, as is more likely, they had orders to let us pass into the trap carefully laid at the other end of the road, I do not know; what is certain is, that again our driver gathered up the

reins, and away we galloped. I uncocked my pistol, and began to believe that the Carlists were a much maligned body of men. About a mile further, a house still in flames, with traces of a severe struggle close to it, again awakened our attention, and in the distance blue uniforms could be seen.

"At the *fuente de Certaban*, close to Ullsbarri Gamboa, in the province of Alava, we fairly fell into the Carlists' hands, like fish taken in a net. A party of twelve stopped the roadway, while two kept sentry on the heights close to the road, and some others, whom we could not see but whom we could hear, were close at hand. Our driver descended, and his first act was to give the leader of the Carlist party an ordinary traveller's satchel bag with shoulder-strap, which had evidently been brought intentionally from one of the towns we had passed, and which seemed to give pleasure to the recipient, who at once donned it, two or three admiringly examining it. Approaching me, the leader then asked, in the name of his Majesty Carlos VII., in a mixture of French and Spanish, if I had anything contraband? Unacquainted with the tariff regulations of this Bourbon bandit chief, I gave a polite negative, and was about to descend from the *coupé* to see more accurately our new visitors, when, on a signal from the chief, they all laid their guns against a bank, one of the sentries descending to stand guard over the weapons. Curious guns they were—English Brown Bess, old Prussian muzzle-loader, ancient Italian regulation muzzle-loader, converted breech loader, and blunderbuss, were represented. All who wore revolvers had new ones, perhaps bought by the funds subscribed by the London Committee.

"The diligence, which only contained one passenger besides myself and Senor de Churruca, was now literally taken by storm; and at present, seeing that there were no signs of fighting, I preserved an armed neutrality, keeping my revolver cocked, but still carefully out of sight under my coat, only moving the pistol-case on the strap, so as to have it ready for almost instantaneous use. The first search appeared to be for letters, and I began to quake for one directed in Mr Foote's* best handwriting to Senor Castelar, and of which I was the bearer. I soon found that only the chief could

* Mr Foote was Secretary to the Committee convening the Republican Conference.

read at all, and I much doubt if he could read anything but print. The principle of natural selection seemed governed by the appropriation of thick and large epistles; and even these, after being turned about, were restored to the driver, who, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, looked on as though he had but little concern in the matter.

"Presently a cry of triumph came from the top of the diligence. Thinking it was my poor black bag containing the Castelar letter, I pressed forward, but was stopped, and a sentry placed in charge of me. His gun was a treasure, and I consider that if he had meant shooting, there would have been nearly as much danger in the discharge to the shooter as to the shot. The triumphal shout had been caused by the discovery of two saddles and bridles, which were at once confiscated by his Majesty's customs collectors as contraband, and despite an energetic protest from the conductor, were carried off behind the rising ground. The next thing seized was a military cap in its oilskin case; uncovered, it was a thing of beauty—a brigadier's cap, thickly overlaid with silver lace. The Carlist commander took possession of this with almost boyish delight, giving his own cap to one of his followers, who had hitherto been decorated with a dirty rag for head-piece. The oilskin covering of the new cap was thrown to the ground, and one of the band, who seemed to have a sudden attack of madness, drew his bayonet and rushed at the poor cover, furiously digging the bayonet through and through, and crying out in Basque that he wished that he had the nigger, its master, there to serve in the same manner. Suddenly and menacingly he turned to me, and angrily asked in Basque whether the cap was mine. When Senor de Churruca translated this into French, it was too much for my gravity, already disturbed by the mad onslaught on the unoffending oilskin. My thick skull is of tolerably large size, this cap was small enough to have perched on the top of my head. My reply was a hearty laugh, and it seems to have been the best answer I could have made, my interlocutor grinning approbation. Bayonets were now called into work to break open the portmanteaus of which the owners were absent, and also to open certain wooden cases containing merchandise belonging to the third passenger. Boots appeared to be contraband of war, and liable to instant confiscation. One pair of long cavalry boots did us good service, for the chief determined to get into them at once, and

luckily they were so tight a fit that they occupied his time and attention for nearly twenty minutes, during which period the searchers came to my black bag, and found the official-looking envelope containing the vote of sympathy from the Birmingham meeting. As I was in a Catholic country, and the Carlists were pious Catholics, I adopted the views of the equally pious Eusebius, and shouted lustily, '*Io Inglese, esta mia passeporta.*' The man who held it looked at it, holding the writing upside down, and returned it to its place. Fortunately I had no spare boots, and my Carlist friends had no taste for shirts, so I got leave to fasten up my bag. My fellow-traveller, who had a fine military-looking appearance, and who had just come from Porto Rico, underwent a searching cross-examination, and I began to think he was to be walked off into the mountains. Fortunately, he not only talked Basque well, but had considerable presence of mind, and after exchanging cigars with the second in command (the first was still struggling into his boots, one of which resolutely refused to go on), he was allowed to move about uninterfered with. No. 3 passenger was in sore trouble; he had about thirty umbrellas, and was required to pay $2\frac{1}{2}$ reals for each, and also duties on some other articles, which he said amounted to more than their value. Senor de Churruca expostulated with the Carlists in their native tongue, while I reasoned with passenger number three in French. His difficulty was very simple: the Carlists wanted more money than he had got, and he looked bewailingly at his broken boxes and soiled goods. I got him to offer about thirty pesetas; these were indignantly refused, violent gesticulation was indulged in, our driver now really taking active part on our side, but occasionally breaking off and running up to the top of the nearest hill, as though looking for some one. At last the guns were picked up and pointed at us, everybody talked at once, and it looked as if it would come to a free fight after all, when suddenly some cry came from a distance—at first faintly, then more clearly; and whether some other prey approached, or whether the soldiers were coming along the road we had left, I know not, but number three's pesetas were hurriedly taken, and this sample of the army of Carlos VII. hastily disappeared, leaving us the unpleasant task of repacking the luggage on the diligence as best we could, with the cords which they had recklessly cut when too hurried to untie. Senor de Churruca stated that the Carlists claimed to have no less

than 3000 men well armed in the Montanas de Arlaban, round which the road passed, of whom 500 they said could be brought on the spot by signal in a few minutes. We resumed our route, pleased and disgusted—pleased at our lucky escape, and disgusted because the more than two hours and a half's delay would render us too late for the night express to Madrid.

"The road, too, was now more dangerous for the horses, as the telegraph wires lying across the road in curls made traps for their legs, and driving at a gallop was occasionally difficult. At last we came in sight of Vittoria. Outside, in the road, we came across a large body of armed regulars playing pitch and toss, and next a volunteer, in full equipment, driving a pig." From Vittoria "at eleven on the morning of Friday we started for Miranda, the train being escorted by nearly a regiment. The first railway station after leaving Vittoria—Nanclares—had been turned into a veritable fortress by hastily constructed stone barricades, and was full of troops; but we had no novelties until we reached Miranda at 1·30, except that an officer of the 12th Regiment had with him a little baby about twelve months old. Strange baggage in time of war! At the stations a private came and nursed it. I dared not make any inquiry as to his little companion, fearing I might give offence." At the Miranda station a couple of detachments of prisoners were brought in, of all ages from twelve to sixty-five. "The whole of these prisoners were to be sent to Cuba, to fight there for the Government against the Cuban insurrectionists. I could not help thinking that this practice of expatriating these Carlists was as impolitic as it is most certainly illegal. The practice was commenced by Senor Zorilla, and the present ministry have unfortunately followed in his footsteps." Between Miranda and Burgos four railway stations burned to the ground showed where the Carlists had been. "From Burgos I had a weary night's ride to Madrid, morning dawn showing me, on the left of the line, about twenty miles from the capital, the famous Escorial, chronicled amongst the wonders of the world. Just after, in a deep cutting through the rocks near Las Rozas, we pulled up with a sudden jerk and jump, which threw us off our seats. On descending hastily from the train, I found that these priest-ridden Carlist savages had planned here our total destruction. Some wood and iron had been fixed in two places on the rails, and an empty rubbish truck had been turned upside down right on our

track. Fortunately our train kept the rails, and although mischief was done to the engine, we all escaped unhurt, save for a rough shaking. A few of us hastily climbed the rocks, and I confess it was almost a disappointment to find no one in sight. I felt in my anger a desire to take vengeance with my own hand. If the train had gone off the line, we should have been pounded against the rocks, and nothing could have saved the bulk of us from death or frightful injury."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MADRID AND AFTER.

On arriving at Madrid, Mr Bradlaugh waited upon Senor Castelar at the Government Palace, Plaza de Oriente, where he was officially received, and whence a few days later came a fairly lengthy official document, addressed to Mr R. A. Cooper, as Chairman of the Birmingham Conference, which was as remarkable for its eloquence as for its moderation. From Madrid he went to Lisbon, by way of Cuidad Real and Badajoz, the journey taking thirty-six hours by "express" train. His visit to Lisbon was upon private business: he particularly desired to learn something concerning a Portuguese gentleman, the Baron Geraldo F. dos Santos, with whom he had been connected in 1867 in the Naples Colour Company, and who had in the October of that year "gone to Lisbon," leaving "no orders," as was tersely written upon a bill for three hundred pounds when it became due. The noble Baron who should have met it had returned to his native land, leaving it to be met by my father, whose name was on the back of the bill.

My father did not stay many hours in Lisbon, but while he was there a curious little incident happened. Going into a tobacconist's to buy a cigar, he asked for it in French, thinking that more likely to be understood than English. The mistress of the shop smiled, and answered him in his own tongue, addressing him by name. She was an Englishwoman, and knew him well, having heard him lecture at the provincial town where she had lived in England.

About the 22nd Mr Bradlaugh was back again in Madrid; on the 23rd he received the official reply to Mr Cooper, and also the following unofficial communication:

"Ministerio de Estado,
"Gabinete Particular.

"Monsieur Bradlaugh.

"Monsieur,—En réponse à votre lettre de ce matin je vous prie de vouloir bien m'attendre chez vous aujourd'hui entre deux et

trois heures. J'aurai alors le plaisir de vous voir et je pourrai vous donner des renseignments rélatifs à votre voyage.

"Agréez, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

"[Signed] EMILIO CASTELAR."*

"Madrid, le 23 Mai."

On the following day (Saturday) a banquet was given by the Madrid Republicans to Mr Bradlaugh at the Café Fornos, at which about eighty persons, including many leading Spanish Republicans, were present. There had been a loud demand for a banquet in the open air, and many hundreds of applications were received for tickets. The time at Mr Bradlaugh's disposal, however, was too short to allow of arrangements being made for a banquet upon such an extensive scale, and it was necessary to limit it to more modest proportions.

The invitation to this banquet was signed by the Alcade, Pedro Bernard Orcasitas, on behalf of the City of Madrid; by Francisco Garcia Lopez, the newly elected deputy for Madrid; by the famous Francisco Rispa Perpina, the President of the Federal Centre; by Juan N. de Altolaguirre, on behalf of the Republican Federal Centre; by Manuel Folgueras on behalf of the Provincial Deputies; and by a General and a Colonel commanding the Republican Volunteers.

At seven in the evening the Alcade came in person to Mr Bradlaugh's hotel to escort him to the Café Fornos. At the dinner the chair was taken by Senor Garcia Lopez, and the *New York World* gave a full report of the speeches delivered. Mr Bradlaugh spoke in English, but his speech was translated by Senor Eduardo Benot, Secretary to the Cortes, who in his official capacity had, with his colleague, Senor Pedro Rodriguez, signed the orders, first for Isabella, and then for Amadeus, to quit Spain. The banquet

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* "MINISTERIO DE ESTADO,
"GABINETE PARTICULAR.

"Mr Bradlaugh.

"SIR,—In reply to your letter of this morning, I would ask you to kindly await me at your hotel to-day between two and three o'clock. I shall then have the pleasure of seeing you, and I shall be able to give you information relating to your journey.

"Accept, Sir, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

"EMILIO CASTELAR.

"Madrid, May 23rd."

came to an end about half-past eleven, and so great was the enthusiasm that all the guests escorted the English Republican back to his hotel, where deputation after deputation waited upon him until half-past two in the morning. In the street without, a vast but orderly crowd waited patiently for a chance to see or hear the hero of the hour, and during the whole time music was played by the bands of the Engineers and the Artillery, specially sent by the Minister of War. At length, after repeated entreaties, Mr Bradlaugh said a few words in French from the balcony of the hotel to the enormous throng below. Thanking the people of Madrid from his heart for the great kindness shown him, he wished them peace, prosperity, and order, winding up with the cry, "Vivad la Republica Espanola." Then, as it was reported, "amidst loud and repeated 'Vivads,' the crowd peacefully retired, the ladies quitted the balconies, and at three o'clock Madrid went to bed just as the sun's first rays tried to overclimb the line of night." Mr Bradlaugh himself went to his pillow with the reflection that he had that night shaken hands "with at least eight hundred people."

On Sunday he started on his return journey, but a letter from Senor Castelar took him once more to his house before he left. Castelar wrote :—

"MADRID, le 25 de Mai.

"MON CHER BRADLAUGH,—Je vous prie d'etre chez moi a deux heures precis. Tout a vous, E. CASTELAR." *

This note was written in Castlelar's own hand, and is—as I give it—quite innocent of accents. The letter of the 23rd was written by a secretary and signed by Senor Castelar. These little notes are only important as witnesses to the friendly way in which Mr Bradlaugh was treated whilst in Madrid, there having been many assertions to the contrary, and Castelar himself having stated *since my father's death* that he "sent a message by a trusty emissary, requesting him not on any account to call on me at the Foreign Office, but to come and see me at my house, alone, and at an early hour in the morning, rarely chosen for visits in Madrid, where few

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* "MADRID, May 25th.

"MY DEAR BRADLAUGH,—I pray you to come to my house at two o'clock precisely.—Yours, E. CASTELAR."

people are early risers."* The welcome given to Mr Bradlaugh in Madrid provoked a stupid exhibition of rage and spite in certain quarters in England; and amongst the many fictions circulated at the time it was said that Senor Castelar would not see him at his official residence, and refused to receive the Birmingham vote except at his private house. Mr Bradlaugh corrected this preposterous falsehood at once.

"The vote was addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs," he said, "and I delivered it at the Ministry in the Palace, and received the answer officially from the Ministry. It is perfectly true that Senor Castelar invited me to his private residence, where I went, and passed some hours with him on three separate occasions, and that he did me the honour to visit me at my hotel; but these interviews, while I much valued them and am extremely pleased they took place, were unsought by me. The only visit I volunteered was the official one to the Ministry of State, and there is no pretence for saying that there was any reluctance to receive me."†

Mr Bradlaugh's return from Madrid occupied even longer time than the getting there. Although he left Madrid on Sunday, it was not until late on Friday night that he reached Paris, and in the meantime all sorts of rumours as to his death or capture had appeared in the French and English press. He delayed twenty-four hours in Paris in order that he might see his elder daughter, who was there at school, and some French friends, all of whom were in the greatest anxiety as to his fate. He arrived in London on Sunday morning, and in the evening lectured at the Hall of Science in reply to a speech delivered by the Bishop of Lincoln at Gainsborough upon the Inspiration of the Bible. The audience awaiting him had gathered together full of doubt and uneasiness, and the relief they felt was expressed by the vehement cheering, again and again renewed, which greeted his appearance as he entered the hall.

The story of his return journey we have in his own words.

"Favoured by Senor Castelar," he said, "with special aid in returning, we—that is, myself and a Government courier, with

* *Cardiff Weekly Mail*, February or March 1891.

† *National Reformer*, June 15, 1873.

despatches for Paris and London—left Madrid for our homeward journey on the afternoon of Sunday, May 25th. At the urgent request of many of those who had taken part in the demonstration of Saturday, I at the last moment determined not to return by the route I had come, and this determination was confirmed by the certain news that all the passes, either across the Pyrenees or by Salinas, were well occupied by the Carlists, who did not intend to let me slip easily through their fingers. I have no ambition to be a martyr, and determined not to be caught if I could avoid it." His return route was now planned to go *via* Santander and Bordeaux. "At Palencia," he continued, "where we arrived about three A.M., we received as escort some three hundred men of, I think, the Thirty-sixth Regiment. They came to parade after great delay, and in a manner showing great lack of discipline. I noticed that Pina and Espinosa were strongly guarded, and as soon as we passed between some of the hills near Alar del Rey, a sharp fusilade, which was returned from the train, wakened me from a half sleep, and gave me an occasion for smelling gunpowder, with an almost freedom of danger. Our train only went at about ten miles per hour, the engine-driver fearing to find the line torn up, or obstructions upon it; but fortunately for us, the party of Carlists by whom we were attacked were too late to hinder us, although I was informed that they succeeded in stopping the next train. The firing, sometimes sharp and sometimes interrupted entirely by the ravines, lasted about three-quarters of an hour. The Carlists were seen running down from the mountains to take part in the skirmish. The casualities were small, one soldier on our side being wounded in the shoulder. Not a single bullet entered the compartment in which I was seated.

"From Alar del Rey we passed through some beautiful country to Santander, where we arrived about five hours late, and in time to find that a steamer I had hoped to catch had left for Bayonne the night before my arrival. I went at once in a rage to the Government Offices, and was assured by the Captain-General of the port of Santander—who was the perfection of civility, and who stated that he had received a telegram from the Madrid Government to afford me every facility—that it would be impossible to leave for Bayonne before Thursday. This horrified me, for I was due to speak in Northampton on the 28th, and I at once rushed to the Telegraph Office to send a message. The clerk told me he

would take my money, but he would not ensure the delivery of my message. I was to return later to inquire. I left my money and my despatch, and went to the hotel to dine, or breakfast, or both in one. On returning to the Dispaccio Telegrafico, I learned that the wires were cut in more than one place; that the post-bags to the North were being seized by the Carlists; and that all means of communicating with my friends in England were temporarily cut off. To my disgust, I found that the boat for Bayonne, although advertised for Thursday, might not start till Sunday, and here I was, a prisoner at large in Santander, not even being able to return from thence to Vittoria, or to communicate my whereabouts to any one. . . . On Monday afternoon, while wandering about the streets, I came across a bill outside a shipping office headed 'Para Burdeos,' and not quite sure of my Spanish, or rather, being quite sure it would not do to trust to it, I went inside to inquire for some one who could talk French. The only person able to talk anything but Spanish was the principal, who turned out to be the same gentleman employed by Mr Layard, the English Ambassador at Madrid, to provide the steamer by which Marshal Serrano made his escape from Spain. I could not help wondering, when this shipowner, after closing, with an air of mystery, the sliding window communicating with the clerk's office, showed me the letters he had received from Mr Layard bespeaking the steamer, and from Marshal Serrano, thanking him after his escape. What would the English Government have said if the Spanish Ambassador in England had furnished one of the Fenian leaders with the means of escape from London to Southampton, and had there engaged him a steamer for Havre? Yet this is precisely what A. H. Layard did for Marshal Serrano last month in Spain. *Revenons à nos moutons;* I had rightly understood there was a steamboat, and 'a fine swift one,' announced to start for Bordeaux that evening. I wanted to embark at once, but found that some delay had taken place in the embarkation of the cargo, and the boat would not leave until two on Tuesday. But even this was comparative bliss; the boat was warranted to make the passage in twenty-four hours. I should be at Bordeaux at two on Wednesday; I should then be able to leave by the express train for Paris, get there on Thursday morning, perhaps catching the tidal train to London in time to encounter Father Ignatius at the New Hall of Science on Thursday evening. My spirits rose, and I

went back to the Fonda de Europa to sleep joyously till morning.

"Next morning I received news not so good. The captain of the vessel, the *Pioneer*, Captain Laurent, was staying in the same Fonda as myself; it was doubtful, he said, if he could weigh anchor before four or five. This was driving it very close for saving the train at Bordeaux; but worse news was to come: the boat did not start at all until Wednesday, and instead of doing the journey in twenty-four hours, it took nearer thirty-four hours, so that I ultimately arrived in Bordeaux towards midnight on Thursday, and naturally not in Paris until Friday night. . . . The good steamer *Pioneer* abounded in strange smells. The captain said it had never carried passengers before, and for the sake of the travellers I hope that she may never carry them again; but we (there were eight other passengers) made the best of our position, and bivouacked somehow with tarpaulin and sailcloth spread on the iron bottom of the hold; and except that in the Bay of Biscay the *Pioneer* sometimes suddenly put my head where my feet ought to have been, and then reversed the process with alarming sharpness, there was little to complain of."

Of course Mr Bradlaugh's journey was followed by the usual cry from those whose mercenary minds cannot conceive of a man doing anything he is not absolutely obliged except for the purpose of gaining some money reward. Just as earlier it had been said that he was paid by the Tories, or the Whigs, or the Communists, or some others equally probable, now the story was that he was paid by—of all people in the world—the Carlists!*

What Mr Bradlaugh thought of Senor Castelar will be a point of peculiar interest to those who have felt respect or admiration for both men. In narrating his Spanish adventures, my father uttered no set judgment on the Spanish statesman; he did not weigh him or criticise him, but here and there he alluded to this or that quality. "Of Senor Castelar himself," he said in one place, "it is difficult to speak too highly. . . . As an orator, he has no equal in Spain; and as a journalist, his pen has made itself a

* "We are informed, on what should be the very best authority, nevertheless we must refrain from guaranteeing the authenticity of the statement, that the expenses of the great Republican deputation from England to Spain was (*sic*) entirely defrayed by the Carlist Committee in London."—*Weekly Dispatch*, June 8th, 1873.

Transatlantic reputation." He then went on to enumerate some of the good works which Senor Castelar had inaugurated or in which he had taken part. Later on, speaking of the possibility of the maintenance of the Republican Government in Spain, Mr Bradlaugh said that there needed at the head of affairs "a Cromwell with the purity of a Washington. . . . Senor Castelar feels too deeply, and the pain and turmoil of Government will tell upon his health if he re-assumes power. He is honest and earnest and devoted to Republicanism, and withal so loving and lovable in his nature. I was present at breakfast with Senor Castelar when he received the telegraphic despatch announcing the fall of Monsieur Thiers, and the election of Marshal MacMahon as President. The news seemed to affect Senor Castelar very deeply. He evidently regarded it as paving the way for the accession of the Monarchical party in France, and consequently as giving encouragement to the Legitimist or Carlist party in Spain."

"Honest," "earnest," "loving and lovable," *—all admirable qualities, not enough to make a Cromwell or a Washington, but nevertheless all very admirable. My father believed Senor Castelar possessed these, and from him I learned to admire and reverence him. Since my father's death I have had reason to doubt whether Castelar really possessed any one of these fine traits of character. At the risk of his life Mr Bradlaugh went to him to carry a message of sympathy and congratulation at a critical moment in his career; Senor Castelar received him with the utmost friendship and cordiality, and every honour was shown him during his few days' stay in Madrid. Having thus professed friendship to his face, Senor Castelar waited for eighteen years, and then, a few weeks after my father's death, he wantonly published † one of the most grotesque, one of the most foolishly malicious attacks upon Mr Bradlaugh that it would be possible for a sane man to pen.

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* In New York Mr Bradlaugh afterwards spoke of Castelar as "one of the most honest, thorough, and loyal Republicans in Europe. Spain and the world should be proud of him."

† See *Cardiff Weekly Mail* and other English papers of this date.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GREAT GATHERINGS.

THERE will probably be many who remember the agitation there was in London when, at the end of the session of 1872, the Parks Regulation Bill was "smuggled" through the House of Commons, an agitation which did not subside until the Government announced that it would not seek to enforce the regulations before they had been ratified in the coming session by a vote of both Houses. This concession was regarded by many as a complete surrender to the Radicals, and equivalent to the handing over the four chief parks "to agitators, whenever they chose to take possession of them." In any case Mr Ayrton did not appear to regard the Government pledge as binding, for before long he posted the regulations in Hyde Park, and in November he caused Mr Odger and some ten or eleven others to be summoned as participators in a meeting held there in favour of the release of the Fenian prisoners. The case first taken was that of Mr Bailey, the chairman of the meeting, who, upon the hearing of the summons, was fined £5. As Mr Bailey's case was to decide the others, it was resolved that the magistrate's decision should be appealed against.

Mr Bradlaugh maintained that the Commissioner of Works had no power to make regulations without the sanction of Parliament, and immediately called a meeting of protest, to be held in Hyde Park on Sunday, December 1st. As there had been some disturbance at one of Mr Odger's meetings, as well as some threat of force to be used at his own, in his last notice convening the meeting my father specially asked that every one who went to the park should aid the stewards in preserving order.

Sunday December 1st came, and with it most inclement weather; but in spite of cold and rain and mud, thousands of men and women made their way to the trysting-place, which came well within Mr Ayrton's proscribed area. There were no bands

or banners, and the journeying of the people to the park was likened by Mr Austin Holyoake to "a pilgrimage of passion, all the more intense because subdued." At this meeting, characterised by the utmost unanimity, Mr Bradlaugh was the only speaker, and no other inducement was offered to people to come through all that dreary weather than that of uniting in a solemn protest against this infringement of the right of public meeting. "It is useless to blink facts," lamented one of Mr Ayrton's supporters,* "and it may as well be confessed that the assemblage was large, perfectly under control, and orderly, and composed of apparently respectable persons. These may be melancholy facts, but they are facts. . . . It was a dense assemblage, standing as closely as it could be packed, and extending over an area of more than an acre." Even the *Times* was impressed by the size, the orderly character of the gathering, and perhaps even more than all by the fact that those who came "without bands and banners, and marching through the streets," pledged nevertheless to maintain order, "and actually succeeded in no small degree in overawing the 'roughs' and thieves who congregate on these occasions." In continuation, the *Times* remarked that "Mr Bradlaugh, whose voice could be heard at a considerable distance, was listened to with great attention; he spoke throughout in terms of advice to the 'people' to preserve peace, law, and order."

When we find such reluctant witnesses speaking in such terms, one can form some idea of the size of the meeting and the spirit which animated it. It is to be regarded as not the least among my father's triumphs that he could always bring people together in vast numbers, with no other inducement than the justice of the cause which they had at heart. A little earlier in that very year George Odger had said in a letter to him: "It will be a grand day indeed when the Democrats of London are sufficiently organised as to be ready to march in their tens of thousands from all parts of London to the park or some other large place, inspired only by the conviction of right which the soundness of their principles must ultimately produce." This is exactly what happened at my father's meetings. He said: "Come, because it is right to come; come quietly, without clamour." He trusted the men and women with whom he was working; he knew that when they saw the

* *Scotsman*, December 2.

right, the cause alone would be sufficient to move them; they would want no other inducement. His trust was justified and reciprocated; the mass meetings which he called, and the control of which depended upon himself alone, were always great demonstrations, were always impressive, and were always perfectly orderly.

Notwithstanding this open defiance of his regulations, Mr Ayrton refrained from taking proceedings against either Mr Bradlaugh or any of those who took part in the meeting. And yet the magistrate's decision against Mr Bailey was confirmed on appeal by the Court of Queen's Bench, and the Treasury claimed costs against him. After some delay, however, this claim was abandoned by the Government, which, in the matter of these Parks Regulations, at least, does not seem to have distinguished itself by firmness or decision.

Another public meeting held that December furnishes a striking example of the way Mr Bradlaugh was looked upon as a pariah. My father, as is well known, attached much importance to the question of Land Law Reform, and was deeply interested in any measures that would tend to ameliorate the hard lot of those who live by the land. Hence, when a meeting was announced to be held in Exeter Hall, in connection with the Agricultural Labourers' Movement, he determined to be present. The chair was taken by S. Morley, Esq., M.P., who, himself a generous donor to the Agricultural Labourers' Fund, laid special stress on the necessity of giving substantial pecuniary help. The first resolution, moved by Cardinal Manning, ran thus: "That this meeting deeply sympathises with the Agricultural Labourers of England in their depressed circumstances, believing their present condition to be a disgrace to the best interests of the country, and is of opinion that measures should be adopted without delay for their social improvement and intellectual elevation." Mr Bradlaugh felt that this was at once very vague and very inadequate; it left the character of the "measures" to be adopted far too much to the imagination. Nor was the resolution made more clear by the speeches which followed from others, who, like Mr Arch and Mr Ball, eloquently as they spoke, failed to touch the vital causes of the miseries they deplored. Even the pecuniary help they were seeking, my father considered, would in itself but perpetuate troubles, unless the grievances themselves

were redressed. Under these circumstances. Mr Bradlaugh "felt bound to rise to move an addendum to the resolution." His rising was the signal for great excitement; a hawk in a dovecote could hardly have produced a greater flutter. "Some," said my father, "yelled lustily; Joseph Arch begged me as a favour 'not to irritate the kindly gentlemen disposed to aid the poor labourer,' and Mr Ball . . . said they did 'not want any political opinions which might prevent subscriptions to the movement.'" Archbishop Manning withdrew from the meeting as soon as the wicked Atheist came forward. I am in no position to say whether in this case *post hoc* meant *propter hoc*, though certainly in some quarters,* at least, the Archbishop's sudden disappearance was attributed to Mr Bradlaugh's appearance. Mr Samuel Morley asked Mr Bradlaugh not to move the addendum; my father, however, persisted. Mr Morley then asked him, "as a favour to himself, as it was then 10.32, not to speak in support." To this Mr Bradlaugh consented, while maintaining his right to speak, and merely moved that the following words be added to the resolution: "And there can be no permanent improvement in the condition of the agricultural labourer until such vital change shall be effected in the land laws now in force in this country as shall break down the land monopolies at present existing, and restore to the people their rightful part in the land." Had he been allowed to speak, he would have instanced as necessary "measures" abolition of primogeniture; easy land transfer; a graduated land tax, and compulsory cultivation of uncultivated lands capable of cultivation. This last reform he put elsewhere in the following words:—"Power to deprive holders of cultivable lands of their property, on proof of non-cultivation, at a compensation not exceeding seven years' purchase, calculated on the average nett rental of the preceding seven years. Such lands to be taken by the State, and let in small holdings to actual cultivators, on terms of tenancy, proportioned to the improvement made in value; that is, the greater the improvement, the longer the tenancy. Lands appropriated to deer forests and game preserves to be treated as non-cultivated."

Although Mr Bradlaugh's addendum was moved and seconded amidst the greatest confusion, and little as his intervention was

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* See *Weekly Register* (Catholic) for Dec. 14, and *Liverpool Daily Post* for Dec. 13.

approved of by the promoters of the meeting, four-fifths at least of those assembled voted in its favour.*

But if my father felt wounded by the way in which he was regarded, and his help was rejected by the conveners and speakers of this Exeter Hall meeting, he had his compensation in the following July, when he was invited, for the first time, to attend the Annual Demonstration of the Northumberland miners. He had always felt especial sympathy for the workers in the northern coal mines, and never forgot that one of the earliest and one of the kindest greetings he ever received in the provinces was from a coal-hewer at Bebside. At this demonstration he met Alexander Macdonald, whom he then regarded as one of the strongest men he had yet come in contact with, connected with any working men's organization in Great Britain. "To give," he said, "a faint notion of Mr Macdonald's power, it is enough to point out that he speaks with the authority of Miners' Organizations representing more than 200,000 men, and has brain enough and will enough to use this vast power unflinchingly." Mr Thomas Burt, then Secretary to the Northumberland Miners' Association, and "proposed" miners' candidate for Morpeth, Mr Wm. Crawford from Durham, and Mr Joseph Cowen, as well as my father's old antagonist in debate, Dr J. H. Rutherford, all attended to address the great gathering, which assembled on the moor; and although this was the tenth of these annual gatherings, it was the first at which any political resolutions had been proposed.

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* Commenting on this emendation, one provincial journal—the *Liverpool Daily Post*— remarked with more than usual outspokenness: "Thanks to Mr Carlyle, it has long been acknowledged that revolutions cannot be made with rose water; and Archbishop Manning and other amiable ecclesiastical philanthropists will have to learn that revolutions cannot be made with holy water either. In this world it is necessary to do good, even if the devil bids you; and if Mr Bradlaugh can get the ear and the vote of a vast meeting by turning half-measures into whole ones, his alliance will have to be accepted, and perhaps his advice may have to be followed." But the day for that was not yet come, and few saw the inevitable so clearly as Mr Bradlaugh. The *Times* very fairly admitted that on a division his supporters formed the majority of the gathering, but a very garbled account of the proceedings appeared in many journals, one paper even going to the length of saying that Mr Bradlaugh was "ejected" from the meeting, and another seriously admonishing him that his reception at Exeter Hall ought to show him that the bulk of the working classes had no confidence in him.

In the following year, when the Northumberland Collieries balloted for the speakers for their picnic, my father and Mr Burt came out side by side at the head of the poll. The date fixed was the fifteenth of June, and on that afternoon at least 20,000 miners assembled on Blyth Links. In the evening, in the Central Hall, an address was presented to Mr Bradlaugh on behalf of the Northumberland miners. In it was told their appreciation of the services he had rendered "the poor, the neglected, and the oppressed." It spoke of the prejudice against him on account of his opinions, but they were happy to affirm that "no such paltry feeling as this blinds the mining population of Northumberland to your deserts as a politician and a reformer. It may please you to hear, as it delights us to testify, that persons of all shades of opinion have combined in the present manifestation of approval and esteem." And indeed it appeared that Catholics, Wesleyans, Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians had all joined in presenting this address. As my father stood there that night, listening to the eulogistic speeches made about himself, and remembered how, but a few short years before, he was unable to obtain a lodging in that very town of Blyth, he fairly broke down. This address remained to the last one of his most treasured possessions, and always occupied the place of honour on his study wall. And the Northumberland miners were not less faithful than he. Year after year he was invited to their annual gathering,* and when he died, these poor men—who earn their wage under conditions often of the most frightful hardship—not only sent individual subscriptions towards the payment of the liabilities he had left behind him, but even voted £50 from their funds to the same object. And not only did they do that, but when his library was sold there were many who contrived to send the money to buy one or two books, so that they might possess some memento of the man whose eloquent tongue would speak to them no more.

In 1874 Mr Bradlaugh had his first invitation to the Durham

* In 1875 Mr Bradlaugh cancelled his acceptance of their invitation, because Dr Kenealy was also invited. During my father's absence in America Dr Kenealy had gone out of his way to make a most unprovoked attack upon himself, and to offer wanton insult to the Freethought party. Hence Mr Bradlaugh refused to be present on any platform with him, "except hostilely."

miners' (fourth) annual gala. Here, notwithstanding inclement weather and the difficulties put in the way of the meeting by the North-Eastern Railway Company, the gathering on the race-course was enormous; and although this was the first time he had come to their picnic, my father saw his own full-length likeness on the two banners belonging to the South Tanfield and West Auckland Collieries.* The evening, too, was made pleasant by the courageous avowal, in the presence of at least a dozen people, made by a gentleman of position and influence in Durham—a former mayor. He told my father that he was delighted to have the opportunity of seeing him, but he thought it only honest to add that before his (Mr Bradlaugh's) arrival he had refused to go upon the same platform with him. He had learned a lesson, he said, since he had been in my father's company.

As with the Northumberland men, so with the Durham: having once been invited to their picnic, Mr Bradlaugh was asked again and again, and in 1891 Durham miners also sent of their hard earnings towards the payment of a dead man's debts or to buy a book from his library.

At a monthly delegate meeting of the Yorkshire miners in 1874 Mr Bradlaugh's name was proposed as a referee in wages questions, but a delegate objected on the ground that he was an Atheist, and so the proposition was lost. Prejudice, however, did not carry all before it, for in the next year we find Mr Bradlaugh addressing the Yorkshire miners at Wakefield, and the Cleveland miners at Saltburn in 1876. Some years later I was with him when he addressed the Lancashire miners at a place near Wigan.

When the Somerset and Dorset agricultural labourers held their fourth annual gathering at Ham Hill, near Yeovil, in 1875, Mr Bradlaugh was invited to be present. The other speakers included Mr George Mitchell—"One from the Plough"—who was indeed the chief organiser of these meetings, Mr George Potter, Mr Ball, and Sir John Bennett, who evoked considerable indignation by his allusion to a suggestion said to have been made by

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*The miners cannot be accused of concealing their opinions; in 1875 my father saw not only banners bearing likenesses of well-known miners' friends and himself, but also one which proudly displayed portraits of Ernest Jones, Feargus O'Connor, Henry Hunt, and Thomas Paine.

Dr Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, that if Mr Arch visited the labourers in his diocese he should be ducked in the horse-pond. But, above all, it was said, "the great incident of the meeting, creating the utmost excitement, was the appearance of Mr Charles Bradlaugh."* My father found the gathering very different from those to which he had been accustomed—gatherings of Londoners in Hyde Park, of miners in Northumberland, of Yorkshiremen, or of Lancashire factory hands; there were ten or twelve thousand persons present at Ham Hill, but until Mr George Mitchell began to speak he doubted whether many of them cared much for the serious objects of the meeting. The attention paid to Mr Mitchell's speech, however, and the applause with which it was greeted, gave a clearer indication of the real feeling which animated the labourers.

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* *Weekly Dispatch*, 23rd May 1875.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA.

My father had many times been asked to go to America on a lecturing tour, but it was not until 1873 that he finally consented to do so. Then indeed he went, as he frankly said, in the hope of earning a little money, for there was so much that he wanted to be doing at home that, but for the ever-increasing pressure of debt, he would not have felt able to give the time for such a purpose. He visited America three times—in three consecutive winters—but although his lecturing met with enormous success, and he won friends amongst "all sorts and conditions of men," yet his fortunes received a check, of more or less severity, on each occasion. On every one of his visits something untoward happened; whether it took the form of an American money panic, an English election, or a serious illness.

These obstacles, unexpected and unavoidable, were over and above those prepared for him by the pious of various sects, from the Roman Catholic to the Unitarian, in the attempts to prejudice American opinion against him. As soon as it was fairly realised that Charles Bradlaugh was going lecturing in the States, the ubiquitous "London Correspondent" seemed to think it his duty to prepare the minds of his Boston or other American readers for the advent of their expected visitor, and each depicted him according to his fancy. The subjoined extracts will demonstrate not only the kindliness and veracity of the writers, but also the choice and elegant language in which they expressed their sentiments:—

I.—"You have heard of Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh is a creature six feet high, twenty inches broad, and about twelve thousand feet of impudence. He keeps a den in a hole-in-the-wall here, dignified by the title of the 'Hall of Science,' in which he holds forth Sunday after Sunday to a mob of ruffians whose sole hope after death is immediate annihilation. . . . The *Pilot*, if it can do nothing else, can warn our people from laying hands upon this uneducated ruffian—a trooper in a

cavalry regiment, a policeman, a bailiff's cud, a vagabond, and now a speculator in the easy infidelity of the States."*

II.—In England "practical politicians among the advanced liberal party avoid him as honest men avoid a felon, as virtuous women avoid a prostitute."†

On the 6th of September he left Liverpool for his first journey across the Atlantic by the Cunard steamship the *Scotia*, which arrived at New York on the 17th—a long passage, as it seems in these days when vessels make the journey in little more than half that time. He had been told of the insulting paragraphs so industriously circulated about himself, and he had so much at stake, that as the *Scotia* neared New York he felt oppressed with anxieties and nervousness as to what was in store for him in this yet untried land. From the very outset, however, he met with cheery welcome and friendly greeting. When he landed he presented his customs declaration in the usual way to the chief collector in order to get his baggage opened, but the collector surprised and pleased him by saying, "Mr Bradlaugh, we know you here, and the least we can do is to pass you through comfortably"—and he was passed through comfortably, for without more ado the chalk "sesame" was scrawled upon his portmanteau and rugs. He had barely established himself in his hotel when representatives from several New York journals came to interview him, and his arrival was advertised by the press to such an extent that within seven days of landing he had seen close upon three hundred newspaper notices of himself.‡

On the Saturday after his arrival he was invited to dine at the Lotos Club, where he received the warmest and most hospitable welcome, the Directory afterwards voting him the privileges of the Club during his stay in New York. A few days later he was asked to a reception given by the Lotos to Wilkie Collins. The guests were received by the President, Whitelaw Reid, and amongst them were Dr Ludwig Büchner and Bret Harte. Mr Bradlaugh

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* *Boston Pilot*, August 2nd, 1873.

† *Boston Advertiser* (editorial), September (18–20) 1873.

‡ We have a fairly full record of these visits to the States in the weekly letters my father sent to the *National Reformer*, in addition to numerous newspaper reports and private correspondence. The weekly letters to the *National Reformer* gave much information as to labour questions in the various places visited by Mr Bradlaugh, and this was at the time of the utmost value, and greatly appreciated by his readers.

was called upon to speak, and I gather that he made a very favourable impression. O'Donovan Rossa called upon him soon after his arrival, and thanked him for his work for Ireland, and showed him several small courtesies. On Sunday the 28th he was received by the New York Positivists and welcomed in extremely kind terms by the President of the Society. The religious journals were greatly irritated at the attention paid to Mr Bradlaugh, and did not neglect to show it, one even refusing to insert the advertisement of his lectures sent by the advertising agency.

Misfortune met him within a few days of his landing in the shape of a financial panic of unusual severity, which, commencing in New York, spread through the States. Speaking of this panic in one of his earliest letters home, he says: "I entered the house of Henry Clews & Co., about five minutes after Jay Cooke and Co. had stopped payment. Then the excitement was not so great; people seemed stupefied with the incredible news, as Jay Cooke was a name like Baring and Rothschild. Later every one seemed to grow delirious, and crowds gathered round the doors of several banks, clamouring for admittance, the inside of each bank being already filled with anxious and angry people waiting to cash cheques, and doubting while they waited. On Friday things got worse, and the sight on Friday night, in the hall and reading room and smoking room of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, was something to remember. There was a dense mass of men, packed together—Jay Gould, Vanderbilt, Clews, and hundreds of others who had commenced the week with enormous fortunes, some entirely ruined in the last two days, and others not knowing whether or not bankruptcy awaited them in the morning. The *élite* of New York as seen in that seething crowd did not show to advantage; the Money Devil had gripped their entrails and disfigured their faces. On Saturday the President of the Republic arrived at the hotel in which I was staying, and then staircases, hall, corridors, smoking and reading rooms were besieged, and outside, in the streets, were carriages and uneasy waiters to gather scraps of news or comfort. I guess that very few went to church on Sunday, September 21st. On Sunday evening President Grant left for Washington, but the multitude did not decrease until midnight came. Each one who had seen or who had spoken to the President was waylaid, buttonholed, and became the centre of an eager group

of questioners. The trouble was so intense that the bankers, brokers, and railway contractors actually forgot whether they were well or ill dressed." These financial troubles greatly affected all lecturing engagements, as one might easily imagine, and Mr Bradlaugh in particular found his difficulties considerably increased by the suicide of his agent, whose affairs had become considerably involved in consequence of the panic.

His first lecture was given in the Steinway Hall at New York, on October 3rd. Considering the home troubles, the audience was a good one, one which he himself felt to be very remarkable. Amongst those present were many members of the Lotos Club, including their President, Whitelaw Reid, and D. J. Croly, "Jenny June," Colonel Olcott, General Kilpatrick, Andrew Jackson Davis, Theodore Tilton, Mrs Victoria Woodhull, O'Donovan Rossa, the Rev. O. B. Frothingham, Colonel Hay, Bret Harte, and Mr Andrews were also amongst his listeners. My father had been feeling very nervous about this first lecture. When he arrived in New York he was asked how long he expected to remain in America. "If I fail at Steinway Hall on October 3rd, I shall take the next steamer for England," was the reply. But there was no question of failure; he met with an immediate and wonderful success; his audience came to criticise and remained to applaud. In the papers of the following day his speech was greatly praised, and he himself pronounced one of "the greatest of living orators." The Brindley episode,* which by covering him with ridicule might have done him serious injury, was, by his coolness and quick wit, turned into a decided advantage. On the day after his lecture he had numerous kindly callers and congratulations. Amongst those who called was Mrs Victoria Woodhull, and Mr Bradlaugh's impressions of this much-talked-of lady are not without a certain interest. When Mrs Woodhull called he was talking to Stephen Pearl Andrews, the author of a learned book entitled "The Basic Outlines of Universology," and, "while chatting with Mr Andrews," said my father, "a slightly built lady entered, who was presented to me as Mrs Victoria Woodhull, the present President of the American Spiritualists, and advocate of very advanced doctrines on social questions. The energy and enthu siasm manifested by this lady in our extremely brief conversation

* See p. 160.

were marvellous; her eyes brightened, her whole face lit up, and she seemed all life. It would have been impossible to have brought together two persons more exactly opposite than Victoria Woodhull and Stephen Pearl Andrews—one all fire, the other all quiet thought; the one intent on active out-door war, the other content to work almost isolated in his closet on a huge book, which few can read and fewer still will care to read. Mrs Woodhull is evidently made for sharp strife of tongue and pen. Her face lights up with a beauty which does not belong to it ordinarily, but which gilds it as she speaks. Mr Andrews uses his pen only to note down the record of his thought, without the slightest regard to the never-ceasing strife around him. His forehead is marked with the furrows hard thinking has ploughed upon it. Many people here speak very bitterly against Victoria Woodhull; at present I prefer to take sides with none. It is enough to say that she is most certainly a marvellously audacious woman." Before he quitted New York for the New England States the Lotos Club gave him another dinner, at which he met Petroleum V. Nasby and Colonel John Hay.

In Boston, despite all the prejudices excited against him by the Boston papers, Mr Bradlaugh met with a really splendid reception. His first meeting was presided over by Wendell Phillips, who introduced him as "a man who, Sir Charles Dilke says, does the thinking for more minds, has more influence, than any other man in England;"* and who himself compared him with Samuel Adams, "the eloquent agitator, the most statesmanlike mind God lent New England in 1776." Boston people remarked that the audience was a curious one, unusual to the regular lyceum lectures. It included many cultivated people, many scholarly and solid men, many accomplished and delicate women, but in addition to these, who were customary attendants at lecture courses, there was an unusually large number of young men present, and more remarkable still was the large attendance of working men, the whole forming a "strangely composite" but wonderfully sympathetic audience. On the platform were Charles Sumner, who, at the close of the address, spoke words of warm encouragement to my father; William Lloyd Garrison, who cheered him repeatedly; and other prominent Boston men.

* This saying, attributed to Sir Charles Dilke, was given on the authority of Mr Jenkins, author of "Ginx's Baby," who had lately been in Boston.

The next day, with Wendell Phillips and George Julian Harney as guides, he visited the different places of interest in Boston, including Theodore Parker's house, where he was deeply affected by the reverent care Mrs Parker bestowed on the rooms formerly occupied by her husband, and by the evident worship in which she held every memory of him. Mrs Parker gave him photographs of Theodore Parker and of the library; with these in his hand, he said, "I hurried away, almost too much moved to thank the widow for her gentle courtesy."

A large part of his first Sunday in Boston was passed with Charles Sumner in his rooms at the Coolidge House. They had a very interesting talk together on the politics of the hour and future possibilities, and also on matters connected with the Abolition struggle. Mr Bradlaugh felt a deep admiration for Sumner, and Sumner, in his turn, was most kind to my father and warm in his praises.

He was invited by Dr Loring, President of the Massachusetts Senate, to a dinner at the Massachusetts Club, given to Charles Sumner, to congratulate him on his supposed recovery to health—congratulations which proved, alas! all too premature. At this dinner he met Henry Wilson, Vice-President of the United States, and Joshua B. Smith—born a slave, then a Senator—besides other distinguished men. Every one was kind to him: Henry Wilson gave him a pressing invitation to Washington; Sumner bade him disregard the unfair attacks made upon him. When his health was proposed, and they all rose to their feet to give him three hearty cheers of greeting, he felt amply repaid for the pain he had suffered from those coarse attacks, bred by bigotry, which had alike preceded and pursued him from the Old World to the New. He dined with Sumner on other occasions, and receptions were given him in Boston, to which most of the leading men were invited. In fact, such honours and hospitalities were heaped upon him that, as one journal remarked, he seemed to have persuaded some people at least "that there are others besides Satan who are not so black as they are painted."

He naturally became a prey to the usual autograph-hunter. The "Theodore Parker Fraternity" determined to utilise the demand for his signature by procuring a supply for their "Fair," and Wendell Phillips undertook to beg them, which he did in the following letter:—

"23rd October '73.

"DEAR SIR,—The 'Theodore Parker Fraternity'—all the Church he allowed—hold a Fair, beginning October 27. At Mrs Parker's table she sells autographs—and wants some of yours. Now please write your name on the enclosed cards—a motto or sentiment also if you choose—and re-mail them to me, then I'll thank you, and earn their thanks also—and forgive you that you gave Mrs Sargent a photograph of yourself and forgot me!

"I hope you find crowds everywhere as cordial as those you gathered here—and where, as at Cambridge, if you don't happen on a crowd, I trust you may have one such hearer as you had there—Henry James, equal to about 1800 common folk—who was wholly carried away.—Yours, WENDELL PHILLIPS.

"Mr C. Bradlaugh."

Wendell Philips also presided at Mr Bradlaugh's second lecture in Boston, and again the audience was said to include some of the brightest intellects in New England. Amongst the visitors who came the next day to congratulate him on his success was William Lloyd Garrison, who, like Sumner, was one of my father's "great men." These Boston lectures produced an even greater sensation, and a revulsion of feeling in his favour more complete, than those delivered in New York.

After lecturing in the New England States, where I gather that many of the lectures originally contemplated had to be cut out in consequence of the distress occasioned by the financial panic, Mr Bradlaugh went west. He visited amongst other places Buffalo, Cincinnati (where the Roman Catholic Archbishop Purcell was amongst his auditors), St Louis, and Kansas, and at each place the newspapers waged fierce warfare after his departure. He reached Kansas in December, two days after the suspension of the chief bank in that city, and here he met with a somewhat serious accident. In passing along one of the inclines of the city, he slipped backwards on the frozen ground, and throwing out his right hand to save his back, he tore a piece out of the palm, and deeply gashed his wrist.* He was unable to get

* The *Kansas City Times* gave this amusing description of the accident:—"Kansas City is not a smooth city. Its greatest pride is its thousand hills, precipices, and bluffs. And the main characteristics of its inhabitants are their lofty airs, loud tone, and agility. This style is natural; it is acquired by hopping and skipping from the top of one side-walk, across a chasm or ravine, to the end of the "cut" or bluff, a limited distance, or across the

the wound properly dressed in Kansas, and as he had to be continually travelling and lecturing in the severe cold (about 6°), the injury was greatly aggravated, and it was many months before the wound was properly healed and without pain. While lecturing he suffered intensely, and when, as sometimes happened, some gesture or movement would set the wound bleeding afresh, it was, in addition, extremely inconvenient. The pain, at times exceedingly acute, rendered him abnormally irritable, and he afterwards told us one or two amusing stories of his trials and his temper at this time. At one place amongst his audience were a young lady, an elderly lady, whom he set down as the maiden aunt of the younger, and a young gentlemen, whom he assumed to be the young lady's lover. The young people kept up a continual flow of conversation, until, almost frantic with pain from his wound (which was also bleeding so freely that he was obliged to keep his hand raised all the evening), he stopped short in his lecture, and turning to the young people said, amidst profound silence, "If that young lady and young gentleman prefer their conversation to my lecture, I should be greatly obliged if they would continue it outside." The "aunt," he told us, looked daggers at the poor girl, and the culprits themselves did not dare to so much as exchange another glance during the rest of the evening; they looked so uncomfortable that he felt quite sorry for them, and repented of his irritability. At another place, where it was exceedingly cold, the man in charge of the stoves took the opportunity to thrust in huge logs with a great noise whenever he was unusually pathetic. He says that he bore with this as Job could not have borne with it

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street to a ledge or plank, which offers a temporary relief from acrobatic exercise. Bradlaugh is unused to Kansas City side-walks, and never having practised tight-rope dancing, or walking upon an inclined plane of forty-five degrees, found himself somewhat surprised on Thursday morning. He had just left the Broadway, or Coates House, in company with General Lamborn, of the Kansas Pacific, and was about to cross Tenth Street, when he suddenly found himself falling; his feet slid down the inclined plane called a crossing, which was covered with ice, and he fell. Mr Bradlaugh is a large, heavy man, and had a great fear of falling upon the edge of the pavement. He threw out his right hand, and the full weight of his body came down upon his wrist. His hand unfortunately struck upon the edge of some sharp substance, probably the edge of the side-walk or curbing, the keen knife-like edge of which tore through the palm of his hand, inflicting a serious wound, reaching beyond the wrist, creating a painful but not dangerous hurt. . . . It is a merciful providence that the life of this great and good man was saved."

had he been tempted to lecture there, but at last even his patience was exhausted, and he thundered out "words of affectionate remonstrance, which effectually prevented any more wood being used that evening."

Shortly after this he was at Chicago, and was amazed to see how the city had recovered from the recent fire; the spectacle of the magnificent buildings seemed like reopening a page from "Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp." Just before entering the lecture hall he saw a face he hardly recognised. "It was one I had not seen for a quarter of a century," he said. "'Don't you know me, Mr Bradlaugh?' was the greeting, and the voice seemed more familiar than the face. My memory went back to the days when food was short, and when I shared the scanty meal with the questioner, her mother, and her sister at Warner Place; but twenty-five years had sufficiently blotted the memory and blurred the page to confuse me in the recognition. Half-hesitatingly, I said, 'I am not quite sure; I think it is Hypatia.' I was wrong, however; it was her sister Theophila. And thus, after so long a time, I was again brought face to face with the daughters of one to whom the English freethought party in great measure owe the free press and free platforms we use to-day." He only stayed in Chicago one night, and had but a short interview with his old friends; yet even that brief glimpse of them brought him a throb of pain, "for," he said, "I could not help wondering whether, thirty years after my death, my own daughters might be in a strange land so entirely overlooked" as these ladies were.

From Chicago he went to Kalamazoo, and there the news of the death of his lecture-agent compelled his instant return to New York. He was very feverish and unwell at this time; his general health suffering from the effects of the wound in his hand, which had now become greatly swollen and inflamed, and caused him acute pain. The last days of the year found him once more in Boston, and they were made ever memorable to him by his first meeting with Ralph Waldo Emerson at a reception given by Mrs Sargent. As soon as he was able to use a pen—although writing was for some long time a matter of pain and difficulty—he himself described his meeting with Emerson, the hero of his boyhood's days.

"On Wednesday, December 31st," he wrote, "I had my first interview with Ralph Waldo Emerson, at a reception given to him

by Mrs Sargent at her residence in Chestnut Street. The rooms were filled by a company of probably the most chosen amongst New England's illustrious men and women, gathered to give greeting to 'the sage of Concord.' . . . My hostess gratified me soon after my arrival by searching me out amongst the crowd with the welcome words, 'Mr Emerson is specially inquiring for you.' I soon found myself face to face with a kind, truthful-looking man, reminding me somewhat in his countenance of the late Robert Owen. After a few words of introductory converse, I was assigned a chair, which had been specially preserved for me, next to Mr Emerson. The afternoon will always be memorable to me. Ralph Waldo Emerson commenced by quietly and unaffectedly reading in a clear, measured voice his new poem on 'The Tea-party Centennial.' His manner was so gentle that he seemed only reading it to one person, and yet his voice was so distinct that it filled the room with its lowest tones. When Mr Emerson ceased reading, a little to my surprise, and much to my delight, I was called upon to speak. Twenty-six years before, when too poor to buy the book, I had copied out parts of the famous lecture on 'Self-Reliance,' and now I stood in the presence of the great preacher, at least an example of a self-reliant man. After my tribute of respectful and earnestly thankful words to Emerson as one of the world's teachers, I could not refrain from using the spirit of his lines to ground a comparison between the public opinion of Boston in 1773 and 1873. Mr Emerson smiled an almost fatherly approbation of my very short speech; but, what the *Traveller* terms my 'kindly, courteous, but frank rebuke of the spirit of the age,' called forth quite a lively debate, which was opened by Wendell Phillips, who was followed by Henry Wilson, by the Rev. Mr Alger, and Dr Bartol, then by Mr Alcott, and last, but by no means least, by a notable woman, Julia Ward Howe. Mrs Howe strongly recalled to me the cold, intellectual face of Archbishop Manning, but she manifested feeling as well as intellect in her brief address. Wendell Philips spoke a second time, and to my immense delight, for it gave me a better opportunity of judging the greatest orator in New England. I fully expected that Mr Emerson, who had listened with marked attention and evident interest to the conflicting statements, would give some opinion; but as the oracle remained silent, I was obliged to be content with his pleasant personal words of promise

to seek me out for another meeting before my departure for England."

On the same night Mr Bradlaugh lectured to a brilliant and crowded audience in the Music Hall, and the next day the Vice-President of the United States came to congratulate him on his "continued successes," at the same time presenting him with the first volume of his invaluable work upon "The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America." At Salem, where my father lectured shortly afterwards, he was the guest of Dr Loring, President of the Massachusetts Senate. Then at the special request of the Rev. A. A. Miner, D.D.—who had heard him speak in Boston—he addressed the students and officers of Tuft's College, and found in them a rarely appreciative and enthusiastic audience. On the journey back to Boston Dr Miner told him that he liked his students to hear every man he thought a true man, whatever might be his views. "Some denounce me as a bigot," he added, "and others regard me as a heretic. I wish that when my young men leave me they may be carefully trained to hear all opinions and to form their own."

Everywhere my father found good friends, both amongst the poor and amongst the well-to-do; many old remembered faces, too, he met—poor men who had left the Old World to tempt, and sometimes to win, better fortune in the New. When he visited Niagara, the man who drove his buggy turned out to be a Northampton man and a devoted admirer.

But all the kindness and all the friendliness shown him in America did not weaken his fondness for his mother country and his determination to serve it. He loved his own land, and the men and women there who trusted him and worked with him. In the middle of January he wrote home: "My heart now yearns for Europe; and when I have covered another twenty thousand miles or so . . . I shall pack up the remnants of my shirts and come home." Little did he think as he wrote those words that within the brief space of a fortnight he would be on the sea, going back to England as fast as the *Java* could take him. But such was to be the final misfortune attending his first American lecturing tour. As he was journeying towards Washington to lecture, and to pay his promised visit to Henry Wilson in that city, a telegram from Austin Holyoake reached him, telling him that Gladstone had dissolved Parliament. He stopped

short in his journey, and turned back to New York in order to take the first vessel bound for home.

On his return to England he found that his lectures in the United States were represented as having been a dead failure; and that he himself had been mostly laughed at and ridiculed, statements exactly the reverse of truth. That his lectures brought him no money profit was the consequence, not of his unpopularity, but of the terrible financial panic that took place almost as soon as he arrived in the States. Then just as he was beginning to recoup the losses owing to this, he was summoned back by the dissolution of Parliament; and this final catastrophe brought him home with pockets almost as light as when he started; and worse than all, with a tremendous burden of liabilities incurred through broken engagements.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TWO NORTHAMPTON ELECTIONS, 1874.

In the spring of 1873 there was much talk of a dissolution of Parliament, and everywhere the constituencies were making ready for the general election—the first under the Ballot Act. In reviewing the candidatures Mr Bradlaugh said he hoped to see re-elected "Jacob Bright, as representing the women's question; Sir Charles Dilke for his outspoken Radicalism; George Dixon for his great services in the education movement; Henry Fawcett for his advanced Radicalism, and his knowledge of India; Charles Gilpin for his courage in striving to abolish capital punishment; C. Wren Hoskyns for his views on the land; Vernon Harcourt, despite his personal ambition, for his manly advocacy of popular rights; Edward Miall for his disestablishment advocacy; Anthony John Mundella and Duncan M'Laren for their useful support to their betters; Dr Playfair for his brains; Samuel Plimsoll for his shipping impeachment; Henry Richard for his services as a peace advocate; Peter Rylands for his endeavours to revive Joseph Hume's memory; Peter Alfred Taylor for his crusade against the game laws; and William M'Cullagh Torrens for knowledge of India and general utility." He did not agree with all these, but "they have work to do," he said, "and they try to do it." He added: "I shall be rather glad to see Samuel Morley again returned for Bristol. Personally, I do not know Mr Morley, but I believe him to be a good honest reformer as far as he goes, and after his own fashion." Amongst the new members he hoped to see sitting in the House were Mr Burt* (mentioned first of all), Mr Arch, Mr Odger, and Captain Maxse.

* How prepared Mr Burt's mind was for the staunch and unfailing support he subsequently gave Mr Bradlaugh during the long Parliamentary fight may be gathered from an answer given at this election. The cry of "heresy" had been raised against him at Blyth, and at a public meeting he was asked to answer—Yes or no, did he believe in the authenticity of the Bible? His answer was noteworthy, especially when looked upon in the light of later events. "As," he said, "I am not a candidate for a professor-

The possibilities of a dissolution, which did not after all come until February 1874, kept the candidates and committees busy all the year. Mr Bradlaugh was, of course, active at Northampton, although the Whigs, or Moderate Liberals as they were also called, asserted that "under no possible circumstances could Mr Bradlaugh be accepted as the candidate of the United Liberal party," and they declared he had no chance whatever of getting elected. Again Mr Bradlaugh offered to abide by a decision of the Liberal electors of the town or by a test ballot, but his offers were treated with disdain. In April he received a communication from the Tower Hamlets Radical Electoral Committee, asking him to allow a requisition to be promoted in his favour as a candidate for the borough at the next election, but he was not willing to desert Northampton. The prolonged electioneering, of course, meant an expensive contest, and to meet this an election fund was started, and subscriptions were sent in very readily.

Just as Mr Bradlaugh was leaving for his first visit to America, that is, in the early part of September, he issued his address to the electors of Northampton. In this address he declared himself in favour of various Parliamentary Reforms, such as:—

Short Parliaments, Redistribution of Seats, the Same Franchise Qualification for Borough and County;

Reform of the House of Lords, including Deprivation of Hereditary Legislative Privileges; Withdrawal of Legislative Privileges from existing Peers habitually absent from Parliament; the Creation of Life Peers, selected for ability in public service; the Veto of Lords to be a Suspensive Veto only, capable of being overruled in the same session by sufficient Veto of the Commons; Exclusion of the Bishops and the Archbishops;

Disestablishment of the Church;

Reform in National Expenditure and in Taxation; and

Changes in the Land Laws; Abolition of the Game Laws;

Alteration of the Law relating to Employer and Employed, and Extension of Conciliation Courts.

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ship of theology or the occupancy of a pulpit, I decline to say whether I do or do not believe in the authenticity of the Bible. It is entirely foreign to the business before us. The contest in which we are engaged is a political, and not a religious one. I maintain that the constituency has no right whatever to institute an inquisition into the faith or creed of any candidate who may solicit its suffrages. For this reason I refuse to answer all and every question of a theological nature that may here or elsewhere be put to me.'

Not expecting the dissolution of Parliament to occur before March at earliest, Mr Bradlaugh left England with an easy mind as far as Northampton was concerned, knowing that in his absence his interests would be well guarded by his true and trusted friend Mr Austin Holyoake, Mr Charles Watts, and Mr G. W. Foote, and intending to return in ample time for the next election. When, on the 24th January, it was announced that Mr Gladstone had dissolved Parliament, and further, that the writs for the new Parliament were returnable, in the case of boroughs at least, on the 5th February, every one was taken by surprise. Mr Austin Holyoake, whose health, unhappily, had now become very fragile, telegraphed to Mr Bradlaugh with such promptitude that the message reached him on the afternoon of the same day that Mr Gladstone's declaration was published, while he was on his journey to Washington, where he was announced to lecture. He delayed not a moment, but, as I have said, turned back at once to New York and took the first steamer homeward bound.

In the meantime Mr C. Watts and Mr Foote held meetings in Northampton on behalf of his candidature every night; there was considerable enthusiasm, and the song "Bradlaugh for Northampton," written for the '68 election, was to be heard through the streets at all hours of the day. The local papers were, as usual, bitterly hostile. Mr Gilpin and Lord Henley, in spite of many indications to the contrary, came forward upon a joint programme, while the Conservative candidates were Messrs Phipps and Merewether.

The nomination took place on 31st January, my father being proposed by Mr (now become Councillor) Gurney, as before. Lord Henley's lawyer opposed the nomination on the ground of Mr Bradlaugh's absence. Mr Watts, as representing my father, pointed out that there were other cases of candidates absent from their constituencies, notably Mr Gladstone from Greenwich. In their anxiety the Radicals also sought legal aid, only to find, Mr Austin Holyoake said, that "every lawyer in the town had been retained by our opponents." After a little consideration, however, the Mayor and the Town-clerk opposed the objection of Lord Henley's agent, reminding him that if he persisted in an illegal objection he might render the whole election void. If the interval between the nomination and polling was short, the meetings held were many, and, considering the absence of the candidate, the fervour and enthusiasm at a wonderful pitch. Mr Watts and Mr Foote, as well as the Northampton committees, worked with un-

flagging ardour and zeal. Notwithstanding all this, the election was lost, and Mr Phipps, one of the Conservative candidates, a fellow-townsman and a brewer, was placed at the head of the poll. The voting was declared as follows:—

Phipps	2690
Gilpin	2310
Merewether	2175
Henley	1796
Bradlaugh	1653

An analysis of the voting showed that 1060 voters had such confidence in Mr Bradlaugh that they did not split their votes, but gave them to him solely. In 1868 he received 1086 votes; now, little more than five years later, with all the disadvantage of his absence—for, notwithstanding all the good and loyal work done, this disadvantage must nevertheless have been considerable—he polled 567 more, and Lord Henley, in spite of the fact that he was joint candidate with Mr Gilpin, only received 143 votes more than his rival.

Nothing had been heard from Mr Bradlaugh since the telegram despatched by him immediately on receiving news of the dissolution, to announce his return by the next boat. Just before the polling day a rumour was current that he had not left America at all, but had disregarded the claims of Northampton. This rumour was only dispelled by the receipt of a telegram two days after the declaration of the poll, telling of his arrival in Queenstown. He reached London on the morning of Sunday the 8th, and went to Northampton on the Tuesday following. The scene at the station defied description, and the crowd assembled to meet him extended right into the town. Along the route to the Market Square people were at the windows, and even upon the housetops, anxious to see and greet the defeated candidate. He addressed a few words to the mass of people gathered in the Square, and in the evening 5000 people crowded the Circus to suffocation, in an overwhelming desire to see and hear him, and when the time came to vote their confidence, not a single dissentient hand was held up.

As there was already some talk of Mr Gilpin's early retirement, in consequence of his failing health, and knowing that the divided representation of the borough was a cause of much vexation to Whigs and Radicals alike, since it meant the practical disenfranchisement of Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh made one last offer "for the sake of peace." He offered to submit the question

of his future candidature to Mr Gilpin, and if that gentleman, "in his heart and conscience," after hearing him, and an official representative of the other (Whig) side, should think it right to decide against him, he pledged himself to withdraw. This offer, like all the others of a similar kind, was refused. Before his death, however, Mr Gilpin expressed himself favourably towards Mr Bradlaugh's candidature,* and he had, as we know, subscribed £10 towards his expenses in the former election. The expenses of the present contest were quickly cleared by subscription, but my father's burden was greatly added to by the liabilities incurred by his sudden return from America. The broken engagement at Washington cost him 219 dollars. And after all his haste, not allowing one moment's avoidable delay in leaving, he had not the satisfaction of arriving in time for the poll, the borough elections having been carried through within twelve days, and the Atlantic passage taking some days longer then than it does now. It is small wonder if he felt somewhat despondent and disheartened, as he thought of the liabilities contracted on the other side of the Atlantic, and the lost election at home.

He arranged to leave again for the United States about the third week in September 1874. In many cases where damages had been claimed for his broken engagements of the spring, he had obtained indulgence by promising to fulfil them in the autumn, and lectures were arranged for him for dates extending from October to Christmas. All arrangements for his lecturing tour were complete, when the death of Mr Charles Gilpin in the first week of September put him in a terrible dilemma. His engagements in the States must be kept, Northampton must be fought.

Directly after Mr Gilpin's funeral Mr Bradlaugh issued his appeal for renewed support, and his address was extensively circulated, although indeed he might well have felt that the Northampton people must be getting tolerably familiar with the reforms he desired to advocate, if permitted to take his place as their representative in Parliament. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, and a most enthusiastic audience crowded every corner. For some days it was not known when the new writ would be issued, whether immediately—in which case my father might be

* In a statement made by Alderman P. P. Perry late in 1876 on the subject of Mr Bradlaugh's candidature, he said that the late Mr Charles Gilpin, immediately after his election in 1874, "earnestly recommended us to come to some arrangement with Mr Bradlaugh."

able to stay for the contest, or in a few weeks—when he ought to be on the other side of the Atlantic fulfilling those broken engagements, or after the reassembling of Parliament in the February of the following year, by which time he could arrange to return. As the days went on he became more and more perplexed as to what was the right course to pursue, but when, after a delay of a week or so, it was announced that the writ would be issued at once, he decided to stay to fight the battle himself, and again throw himself on the indulgence of his American friends, although this would necessarily involve a further pecuniary loss, great or moderate, according to the number of engagements broken. Mr C. G. Merewether once more contested the borough in the Conservative interest, and after much searching the Moderate Liberals finally selected Mr William Fowler as their candidate. This election was the most bitter my father had yet fought. In addition to the usual gross exaggerations concerning his political and religious opinions (which this time included the perennial "watch story"), the most cowardly statements were made concerning his private life by Mr Fowler and his adherents. Mr Bradlaugh sought to meet Mr Fowler face to face; he sought admission to his meetings but was refused, orders being given to use force if necessary; he went to the house where Mr Fowler was staying and sought a private interview, but the servant brought a message that Mr Fowler was "too busy to see Mr Bradlaugh." Five times at least Mr Bradlaugh tried to meet this man publicly and privately, but without avail; then, said Mr Bradlaugh, "I shall ask the electors of Northampton whether they will record their votes for a liar and a coward." At this there was a terrible outcry, and he was condemned as "foul-mouthed" for using such "hideous adjectives and substantives," such "vulgar virulence." The London and provincial press were equally severe on him. Mr Bradlaugh, in a speech to the electors during the contest, thus defended himself: "It had been said that his language had been strong. What else but strong language could be expected from a man who found himself slandered behind his back, and who found that not only was he himself libelled, but that foul language was cast upon those he was bound by every tie of honour and manhood to protect? To Mr Fowler he owed it that that afternoon a formal inquiry had been made to him whether he was married to his wife; to Mr Fowler he owed it that that afternoon he received a note asking if it were true that his mother were now living on

parish relief. They would not ask him to deny these things, even to deny them would degrade him; but he asked them what weapon a man could use against a foe who trampled on his dead mother's grave, and who struck at women, who at least ought to be safe from attack?" * Later on, in a letter from America, he wrote in reference to this: "In consequence of Mr Fowler's language as to my social morality, and my theories on marriage, I received anonymous letters inquiring if I had ever been married; my committee-men were actually formally asked if my daughters were illegitimate; and it was charged against me that my mother was now living in receipt of parish relief. Protected by Mr Fowler's words—which he dared not utter to my face—the oft-refuted 'watch story' was circulated with a dozen variations. And yet men wonder that I called the man 'liar and coward' who did this behind my back, and who refused me the opportunity of either public or private explanation." The nomination took place on the 2nd of October, and to Mr Joseph Gurney's name as proposer was added that of Mr Thomas Adams, one of the truest and most loyal of men, and an honour to the town of Northampton, of which he was several times Mayor. His devotion and friendship for Mr Bradlaugh was always the same—steady, constant, and reliable—and was broken only by his death. This, there is too much reason to believe, was hastened by overtaxing himself on my father's behalf whilst suffering from a severe attack of influenza.

The extraordinary bitterness of feeling in the town awakened by the personalities indulged in on the Whig side and Mr Bradlaugh's strongly expressed but quite natural resentment, had also its reaction of intense devotion to my father's personality, and there were most pathetic evidences of this. When the polling-day came one man ill in bed insisted upon being lifted out and carried to the polling-booth, declaring he would go to vote for Mr Bradlaugh even if he died on the way; another ardent supporter who had broken his leg in two places a week or two before, in spite of my father's expressed wish to the contrary, had himself conveyed to the polling-place in order that he might record his vote. Amongst the working women were many of his most enthusiastic adherents, and one poor woman, very ill indeed, dragged herself to the window on the polling day, and, watching for my father, opened it as he passed to give him greeting and a cheer. Enthusiasm there

* See Mrs Besant's account in *National Reformer*, October 11th 1874.

was in plenty, but unhappily not voting power enough to carry him into Parliament, although indeed that was increasing rapidly, for when the poll was declared on the night of Tuesday the 6th, it stood thus:—

Merewether	2171
Fowler	1836
Bradlaugh	1766

In eight months therefore he had increased his vote by 113, and had crept up to within 70 of the Whig candidate.

At the declaration of their defeat the Northampton Radicals, for the first and only time, lost their self-control; the vile charges made against the man they had chosen to honour had worked them up to a state of the extremest indignation and anger, which, hitherto restrained, now in the first bitterness of their disappointment broke out in violence. An attack was made upon The Palmerston, Mr Fowler's headquarters; but Mr Bradlaugh was soon in the midst of the rioters, and using his utmost energy of rebuke and persuasion succeeded in dispersing the crowd. Unfortunately, he had to leave at nine o'clock to catch the Cunard steamship, the *Parthia*, at Queenstown. Relieved of the restraint of Mr Bradlaugh's presence, the rioting recommenced. The Palmerston was once more attacked, and the *Mercury* printing office, and the houses of some of Mr Fowler's supporters were besieged, in some cases the windows and doors being very much damaged. Mr Fowler's effigy was carried round the town by a woman, and was hooted and insulted until captured by the police. Fighting commenced, and as the excitement increased, the quieter and more timid inhabitants began to feel greatly alarmed; the soldiery was then called out, and the Riot Act read. At first this seemed only like pouring oil upon the flames, for these men, after their weeks of patience and forbearance, seemed for the time to have lost all restraint; but little by little the tumult subsided, and then the fighting was over for good, leaving for the next day a legacy of excitement or despondency according to temperament, and a legacy also of many bandaged heads, which happily betokened but few really serious injuries. The whole fury of the rioters was directed solely against William Fowler and his supporters, and it is noteworthy that, although the Conservative quarters were close by The Palmerston, they were unmolested. The press was, as usual, for the most part very unfair to Mr Bradlaugh—some even making him responsible for the rioting which occurred after

he left Northampton. There were, however, a few exceptions, and of these the *Times*, the *Examiner*, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, and the *Birmingham Daily Post* were the most notable.

Helping in the work of this election, we again find the name of George Odger. Two years before there had been some talk of asking him to become a candidate for Northampton, but he would on no consideration allow himself to be put forward in opposition to Mr Bradlaugh. Instead of coming to Northampton to stand against him, he came to try and win votes for him. Mr Watts and Mr Foote again unweariedly gave their services, and Mrs Annie Besant was in the town reporting the proceedings for the *Reformer* under the pen-name of Ajax.

Captain Maxse was amongst the subscribers to the expenses of this contest, and he wrote that he regarded Mr Bradlaugh's candidature as a national one. One would never guess, to see the long list of subscriptions (most in small sums, as always), that these same people had already supplied the funds for an election once before in that same year.

For upwards of five years the Liberals and Radicals of England had before them the melancholy sight of the Radical borough of Northampton represented in the Commons House of Parliament by two Conservatives. Even the Northampton Whigs began to feel that keeping Bradlaugh out was costing the borough too dear, especially as the people, sometimes in their very families, were divided into personally hostile camps. Hence, soon after this last election, the representatives of both parties met together and formally agreed to unite in contesting the Municipal and Parliamentary elections. As the Municipal elections were close at hand, the good results of this alliance were immediately visible. I am bound to say, however, that this amicable agreement between the Whigs and the Radicals was not very enduring, and long before the General Election of 1880 parties seemed almost as much divided as ever. The more far-seeing among the Whigs realised after the 1874 election that they must choose between being represented by the obnoxious Bradlaugh, or the equally (if otherwise) obnoxious Tories, but the more obstinate and more prejudiced still cried "No Bradlaugh," and it was not until the eleventh hour, when Mr Labouchere was brought in to run as a joint candidate with my father, that these yielded; and even then, as the analysis of the poll clearly showed, there were many who did not vote straight.

END OF VOL. I.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN.

Mr Bradlaugh had agreed to make a second lecturing tour through the States in the autumn of 1874, and he started on it under the most inauspicious circumstances. We have just seen how he was obliged to delay his journey—just as earlier in the year he had been obliged to hasten his return—to contest the election at Northampton, where he was once more defeated for the third and last time. He had originally taken his passage by the White Star Line, in the *Republic*, leaving on September 24th. At his request the owners obligingly transferred him to the *Baltic*, leaving October 1st. Unable to get away by this boat, he forfeited his passage, and leaving Northampton on the night of the poll, he just caught the Cunard ship the *Parthia* at Queenstown on the 7th. He started on his voyage despondent, utterly wearied, and with "a tightish sensation about the heart," for he had hoped and believed until the last half-hour that he was going to win the election. He thought, too, that before he had left the town he had succeeded in pacifying his disappointed and angry supporters in Northampton, but the receipt of a telegram at Holyhead, telling him of the rioting there and the calling out of the military, depressed him more than ever.

When he got on board the *Parthia* a curious little incident happened. As he was "standing gloomily, watching the last package carried on board," he wrote, "I was approached by a man, a steerage passenger, who, reverently touching his billycock hat, said, 'Father, do you go with us to the other side?' For a moment I was puzzled; but seeing that the man was serious, I

answered, 'You are mistaken; I am not a Father.' The man looked dubious, nervously scratched the deck with a blackthorn held loosely in his left hand, and rejoined, 'No offence meant; I ask your reverence's pardon, but anyhow, it will be a blessing to have you with us on board, Father.' That I looked clerical I had been told by the *Gaulois*, which described me in 1871, when attending the Paris Courts Martial, as dressed like a bishop; but this man's evidently earnest disbelief in my repudiation of priestly honours, coupled with his quiet acquiescence, made me doubt whether I was really the man who had been placarded a few hours before in Northampton as 'Bradlaugh the Blasphemer.'"

The journey began badly, and continued so until New Jersey was sighted. The sea was rough, the *Parthia* rolled, and the captain proved a churl. The embarkation of the steerage passengers was managed with an "uncouth harshness" which was painful to witness; to threaten "to put a man 'in irons' for coming back to give a last wave of his hand to a weeping sweetheart," commented my father, "was just a little too hard." On the 17th the passengers on board the *Parthia* had the mortification of seeing the *Adriatic* (White Star Line), which had left Liverpool two days after them, pass them, and forge ahead with a speed which soon left the *Parthia* behind. Everything seemed combined to render his journey unpleasant and vexatious.*

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* In reference to Mr Bradlaugh's voyage in the *Parthia* I append an extract from the *New York Herald* for 7th September 1881, which purports to be an account of an interview between the reporter of that journal and Mr J. Walter, M.P., of the *Times*:—

"THE BRADLAUGH INCIDENT.

"'Don't you think Bradlaugh was harshly treated?' 'Oh dear, no,' was Mr Walter's eager response. 'That's all nonsense about his having erysipelas, and having been so brutally treated. He's a perfect ruffian. A fellow-passenger on the *Bothnia* told me of Bradlaugh and some of his comrades violently disturbing some religious services held on board the *Parthia*, so that Captain Watson was compelled to threaten him with putting him in irons before he would stop.'"

My father, of course, wrote to the *New York Herald* and to Mr Walter, contradicting this, saying that the statement was "monstrously untrue." He made only the one voyage on the *Parthia*; he said: "No attempt of any kind was made by any one to disturb religious services during that voyage. There was a disagreement between Captain Watson and the passengers as to the singing after dinner in the smoking-room, but it had not the smallest

My father arrived in New York unfortunately too late for many of his engagements. He was due to speak in Dartmouth College (New Hampshire) on the 20th, and he had barely time to get there. On the way he was delighted to meet Henry Wilson in the train. They chatted long together, enjoying each other's company, and talking much of Charles Sumner, a man reverenced and honoured by both, who had died since Mr Bradlaugh's last visit to America. As it happened, too, Sumner's opinion of my father's first lecture in Boston had only lately been published in the Boston papers. It was given in a letter written by Wendell Phillips in reply to some inquiries made of him by the Secretary of a lecture committee at Winchester, Mass. The letter ran: —

"DEAR SIR,—In reply to your note of October 1st would say: I heard Mr Bradlaugh the first time he spoke in Boston. What Mr Sumner, who sat near me, said of that lecture, will deservedly have more influence and weight than any opinion of mine. While Bradlaugh was speaking, Sumner looked to me and said, 'This is very fine.' At the close of the lecture he remarked, 'This is, I think, the most eloquent speech I have heard for some years.' WENDELL PHILLIPS."

"BOSTON, *October* 2, 1874."

At Dartmouth Mr Bradlaugh lectured to the students in their church, and the Rev. Dr Smith, President of the College, presided at his lecture. Two days later he was speaking at Cambridge, having this time a fine audience of over a thousand persons, including most of the Cambridge professors and a strong force from Harvard College. At Philadelphia on the 25th he won the sympathies of a crowded meeting, although here he had been publicly preached against, and people had been warned not to go to his lecture. At Charlestown (Mass.) he spoke in the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, with the pastor, the Rev. Mark Trafton, as president. In Boston he spoke in the Rev. James Freeman Clarke's Church of Disciples, and at Winchester in the Unitarian Church—"and yet," he said, "miracles are not believed in!" On the journey from Bangor to Dexter my father, at the invitation of the engine-driver, rode part way on the engine, and

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connection with religious services. The particulars were given in a letter signed by the passengers, and which was published at the time in several of the American papers. I never sang in my life, and was most certainly not even one of the singers."

he relates how he found himself "perched on a nice soft seat in a corner, with my toes near enough to the furnace to make me forget that a sharp frosty wind was whistling; engine-driver Chase turned out to be quite a philosopher, and I had a pleasant time." Presently they had to slacken speed; "there are cattle on the track, three oxen and three full-grown calves. They run on in front, sometimes crossing the line; we ring the bell, whistle furiously, and puff-puff vociferously, till at last engine-driver Chase gets angry and says, 'It is no use, those cattle are as stupid as your House of Lords.' 'Yes,' I answered, 'and will get run down like the Lords, if they do not get off the track.'"

Senor Castelar stated after Mr Bradlaugh's death that he was shunned by the ladies; but Senor Castelar's English was a little at fault. When my father was at Delaware he was taken by the students to the Female College, "where," he said, "the president introduced me to the senior ladies' class, who sang to me the American national hymn. I was asked to make them a speech, and am afraid I made myself supremely ridiculous. It is no joke to be suddenly called on to say something to twoscore of extremely good-looking young ladies. . . . They all looked happy, and gave me a very pleasant greeting, one which made me think of my own girls at home." The girls on their side were evidently equally pleased with their visitor, for just before my father commenced his lecture that evening he received the following note:—

"The members of the Clionian Society, having made Mr Bradlaugh an honorary member of the same, desire, if he has no serious objection, to see him wear their badge this evening. ANNA C. LONG."

He did wear the badge in his button-hole, "and very pretty it looked, and very pretty the donors looked too as they sat in the opera-house in front of me," he said.

In continuing his journey west he lectured at Chicago, and this time he was fortunately able to spend some hours with Hypatia Carlile and her husband. At Milwaukee his visit created extraordinary enthusiasm. "Nearly all the prominent lawyers, divines, newspaper men, merchants, thinkers, and writers of the city, with their wives, heard his first lecture; and they applauded at shorter intervals than any lecturer ever was applauded here before. It is rare indeed that such an aggregate of intellect is seen gathered

together at one time in this city as was the case on Thursday, and that one man receives such approval." * The Milwaukee people urgently begged for a second lecture, which a fortunately vacant date in the following week enabled him to give them.

Iowa was the furthest point west he reached on this visit, the whole journey covering a distance of more than 4500 miles. When he went west again in the following February he met with a terrific snowstorm, generally described as the worst seen for many years. At Milwaukee the cold was so severe that at his lecture the audience sat enveloped in furs and rugs, although the janitor protested that he had used three tons of coal in his endeavour to warm the Music Hall. "The next time," commented my father, "I hope he will use thirty tons." The cold grew more and more intense, until at Fond du Lac (Wisconsin) which he reached on 10th February, the spirit thermometers registered forty degrees below zero. On leaving Fond du Lac there was a wait of ten hours at the station before any train came by which he could get to Oshkosh, where he was due that evening; at which place—reached only just in time—he found a fine audience awaiting him in spite of the weather, if "weather" can be looked upon as an adequate term for atmospheric conditions where one thermometer registers forty-five degrees below zero and the others are congealed. The following day he was due at Madison, but as traffic was suspended he remained for a short time snow-bound at Oshkosh. Towards the end of February his farewell lecture was given at Chicago to the largest audience he had had that winter. "Every seat was filled, the stage was filled, the aisles were filled, and even the staircases were alive with people." † On this journey west he did a tremendous amount of travelling; in one stretch of eight days he was only two nights in bed.

In the Eastern States he had lectured at Salem (Mass.), with Dr Loring once more for his host and chairman, and an audience who gave him a glorious reception, although, apart from the warmth of their greeting, nearly everything was in "a state of unmitigated freeziness." At Bangor (Maine), where the snow was six feet deep

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* *Chicago Tribune.*

† He spoke in M'Cormick's Hall to an audience of 3600 persons, of whom 3500 had paid for admission; the hall had never been so full before, and the audience was as enthusiastic as it was large.

in drifts, and was nowhere less than two feet save on the most travelled roads, the intense cold (twenty-three degrees) kept away the audience; but amongst those who did "brave the elements" was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maine, who warmly congratulated Mr Bradlaugh at the end of his lecture. At Lynn (Mass.), where he gave one of his last lectures in New England, in going from the railway station to the hall, he humorously relates: "I sat down twice to reflect on the uncertainty of human progress. To sit down in snow two or three feet deep is not dangerous, but is cold, and most certainly is ridiculous, especially when the sitter is tall and heavy. The second time I sat down I broke one of my ribs—that is, one of my umbrella ribs, and I filled my gloves with snow. I was reconciled to my fate when I learned that the gentleman sent out to escort me, and whom I had missed, had sat down three times."

At Philadelphia he spoke before the Pennsylvania Peace Society, and was delighted to find amongst his auditors Mrs Lucretia Mott. After the lecture Mrs Mott, on the invitation of the chairman, stood up to speak, and, said my father, "I felt reverence for the white-haired dame, which was mingled with astonishment when, her voice losing the tremor of age noticeable in the first few sentences, she spoke as clearly and distinctly as though at least thirty years had been taken from the count of her full-spent life. I valued highly the praise she gave me."

At Boston and at New York he was welcomed as heartily as ever. After his first lecture this time at Boston it had been noted that "for once" the great audience, who, it was said, seemed completely under his control, remained to hear the last word; after the last it was agreed that his lectures had been the greatest success of the season. His headquarters had been this time in Boston, and whenever he returned there from his lecturing journeys receptions were given to him, and every one seemed eager to show him some kindness or courtesy. Not the least valued mementoes of this visit were a complete and finely bound edition of Sumner's works, a handsome memorial volume printed in honour of Sumner, and three fine photographs of the dead statesman. All these were brought him at different times by the Hon. Joshua B. Smith, who idolised the great Abolitionist. He brought these tokens of Sumner to my father because, as he once said, "Mr Bradlaugh was the friend of one I loved."

Although he was comparatively little at New York, still while he was there he met amongst others James Paxton, E. C. Stedman, the poet, and Anna E. Dickinson, who greatly charmed him by her apparent sincerity, her eloquence, and her clearness of thought.

My father returned at the end of February, with the satisfaction of knowing that, despite its ominous commencement, his winter's work had been a success in every way. The liabilities incurred by his sudden departure from the United States the year before, and his delayed arrival this year, had been met, and his indebtedness at home had been cleared to the extent of £1000.

He came home by the *City of Brooklyn*, and met with a very stormy passage. There was a furious gale, the waves sweeping the decks and bursting the doors. The wheel became unmanageable; the wheelmen were flung right and left. "For five hours and twenty minutes," wrote my father a week later, "our engines were stopped; the sea played with our helpless vessel as with a toy, and the whole of those on board stood near death's gates. Captain J. S. Murray behaved in this terrible emergency with a courage and self-possession for which no praise can be too high. The *City of Brooklyn*, too, proved to be a good sea boat, and the morning light saw us out of danger; but in that twenty-four hours we only made ninety-one miles, and the log recorded a 'violent hurricane with mountainous seas.'"

My father's departure for the United States for his third lecturing tour, in the autumn of 1875, was very different from that of the year before, or even that of 1873. Now, at last, Fortune seemed to smile upon him, and everything was propitious. He set out in gay spirits and high hopes; his successes of the last two winters had assured him a welcome when he reached the States, and there was every prospect that by the time he came home again he would be able to lighten that terrible incubus of debt even more substantially than before.

He sailed in the *City of Berlin*, then one of the largest and most perfectly fitted Atlantic Liners afloat. He felt quite at home in her, for there were several familiar faces amongst the officers, and the captain was so courteous that the passengers voted him a special vote of thanks. It is rather curious that this resolution should have been signed on behalf of their fellow-passengers by Dr Fessenden, N. Otis, and Mr Bradlaugh, because a little later Dr Otis proved a friend in need to my father. On the voyage all

went well, the weather was good, and the *Berlin* made a record passage of seven days eighteen hours.

After two or three days spent in New York my father went on to Boston, to find that city in the throes of an election for the office of Governor of Massachusetts. He attended a "Republican rally" at the old Faneuil Hall, and as he sat listening to the speeches of Henry Wilson and others, the influence of the room seemed to grow upon him; he remembered that it was there "that Otis pleaded against Lord North and George III.; it was there that the Boston men gathered that very December day on which the tea was thrown overboard in Boston harbour; it was there that groans accompanied the reading of the Boston Ports Bill." The meeting had the still further interest to him that it was presided over by R. H. Dana, the man who had been counsel for Anthony Burns.

Another question was also agitating, not merely Boston, but the whole country, and dividing parties into hostile camps, and that was the Currency question; and as upon this subject my father and Wendell Phillips took opposite views, their relations were by no means so friendly as heretofore.

The religious feeling which had been raised against Mr Bradlaugh every time was renewed with special bitterness this winter, and created quite a panic amongst the managers of lecture courses. It is much to their credit that the Rev. Dr Miner and the Rev. Dr Lorrimer had the courage to disregard the outcry, and invited him to lecture to their congregations as before.

At the end of October he was feeling very unwell, but persisted in continuing his work, and for a week or two seemed rather better. Since the friendship which sprang up between them on board the *City of Berlin*, Dr Otis and my father had not lost sight of one another, and when he became worse again he consulted Dr Otis, who strongly advised change of scene and climate, as preparation for the hard work and the cold which would have to be faced on his Western tour. Hence, in the middle of November, finding himself part way there, he went on to Washington. At Washington he found that almost his only friend in the city, Henry Wilson, the Vice-President of the United States, was lying sick unto death in the Capitol. He called upon him, but finding him so ill, simply left his card. Mr Wilson, on hearing of his visit, sent his secretary with a note—the last, I believe, that he

ever wrote—asking him to come on the following morning, but my father never saw him again. He returned to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York, sad and ill. Dr Otis saw him professionally and in the report he sent to England early in December he said he had been suffering from "much work and little rest" for several days; later he found him suffering from pleurisy and some threatenings of typhoid. As the fever rapidly developed, Dr Otis suggested that he should go to St Luke's Hospital, where he could have the best care—professional and general—and on my father agreeing, he took him there in his own carriage on 30th November. At St Luke's Hospital Mr Bradlaugh felt that he owed his life "to the great skill and generous kindness of Dr Leaming, to the unremitting attentions of Dr Abbe, and to the patient and never-ceasing care of my nurse, William Shaw." Even before he was allowed to leave his bed it was decided he could do no more lecturing that season, and within four days from leaving his sick-bed he was on board the *City of Richmond* on his way home. Friends said he was rash—that the journey would kill him. He was so weak that he could scarcely stand, and he shed tears almost directly a kind word was said to him; but if his body was weak, his will was strong; he would go, and he was sure that he would grow stronger more quickly moving on board ship than inactive in New York. A copy of "Alice in Wonderland" had been accidentally left in his cabin; he was so weak that it took him nearly the whole voyage to read this little book; he laughed over it and delighted in it like a child. Afterwards, he always remembered it with a certain enjoyment, and was ever ready to quote from it such touching verses as "You are old, Father William," "'Tis the voice of the sluggard," or "Will you walk a little faster?"

Speaking of his sudden return a week or two later, Mr Bradlaugh said: "I came back to England because I was advised that it would have been suicide in my weak state to face the Western winter. I come back to Europe reluctantly, for I went to the United States to earn enough money to pay my debts, and I am compelled to return poorer than I left. Indeed, I owe it to Mr Moncure D. Conway's assistance that I was enabled, at the moment, to discharge the obligations my illness had created in New York."

Mr Conway has since told me that when he went to see my father while he lay ill in the St Luke's Hospital, my father begged

him to make inquiries of nurse and doctors whether he had said or done anything during the time of his illness which could be construed into an alteration of his opinions upon religious subjects. He wished Mr Conway, in the event of his death, to bear testimony that his convictions had remained unchanged. Mr Conway, whose own opinions were by no means so heretical as Mr Bradlaugh's, was nevertheless anxious to carry out the wishes of the sick man with the utmost exactitude, and therefore made the most scrupulous inquiries. But he only learned that Mr Bradlaugh had been a most docile, uncomplaining, and grateful patient, and that he had not uttered a single word which could afford the slightest justification for a suggestion of recantation. That my father's dread of the usual "infidel deathbed" myth was well founded we know by what has happened since 1891. Even as it was, although he recovered from his illness in New York, and was alive to contradict such fables, it was actually said that he had sent for a minister to pray with him, and one clergyman was even reported to have specified the "minister" as a Baptist! It was long before my father entirely recovered from this illness, and although formerly a smoker, after this he lost all desire for a cigar. It was not until a few years before his death that he renewed the habit, and even then only in a very modest way—a cigar in going to the House of Commons, a cigar in coming back he enjoyed; at other times he smoked little.

It is worth noting that while Mr Bradlaugh was in the States, whenever he had an evening to spare, wherever he might happen to be, he generally devoted it to going to hear some lecture or sermon, or attending some meeting. In this way he heard, amongst others, Parker Pilsbury, Newman Hall, O. B. Frothingham, M. D. Conway, Horace Seaver, and Dr Miner. He two or three times attended and spoke at Women's Suffrage meetings, and was invited on at least two occasions to take part in Masonic festivals.

Everywhere he went he made careful inquiries into the labour conditions of the locality, and where possible, he visited mill and factory, and talked with both workers and employers. He also specially studied the workings of the liquor laws in the States where they obtained, and the effect of his observations was to decide him against them. On each visit he wrote home weekly letters for the *National Reformer*, which were interesting for what

they told about his own doings and about persons, and invaluable to intending emigrants for the information they gave concerning labour in the different States which he visited. He afterwards published the result of his investigation into labour questions in America as a little booklet entitled "Hints to Emigrants."

CHAPTER II.

MRS BESANT.

In 1874 Mr Bradlaugh lost a friend and gained one. Between himself and the friend he lost the tie had endured through nearly five-and-twenty years, of which the final fourteen had been passed in the closest friendship and communion, tarnished neither by quarrel nor mistrust. By the death of Austin Holyoake my father lost a trusty counseller and loyal co-worker, and the Free-thought movement lost one who for fully twenty years had served it with that earnest fidelity, high moral courage, and unimpeachable integrity which were amongst his most striking characteristics. In health and in sickness he toiled incessantly to promote the interests of the cause he had at heart, and at no time of his life did he shrink from duty or responsibility.

Austin Holyoake died in the spring of 1874, and was buried in Highgate Cemetery in the presence of a great crowd of sorrowing friends. Just before his death he dictated his "Sickroom Thoughts" to his wife, uttering the last broken paragraph only a few hours before he died. For three years he had known that death was near, and this final statement of his opinions on death and immortality was purposely deferred until the last moment he deemed it prudent, so that he might leave a record of his last deliberate opinions, and as such these "Thoughts" provoked very considerable comment.*

Austin Holyoake, like his friend, lived and died a poor man, and my father pledged himself to him on his deathbed to raise a sum of £650 to purchase the printing and publishing business

* "My mind being free from any doubts on these bewildering matters of speculation," he said, "I have experienced for twenty years the most perfect mental repose; and now I find that the near approach of death, the 'grim King of Terrors,' gives me not the slightest alarm. I have suffered, and am suffering, most intensely both by night and day; but this has not produced the least symptom of change of opinion. No amount of bodily torture can alter a mental conviction."

hitherto conducted by Mr Holyoake in the interests of Freethought literature. The money raised was to benefit the widow and the two children, and the business was to be handed over to Mr Charles Watts. A subscription which was started realised rather less than £550, and the National Secular Society determined to make up the balance out of a legacy left to the President by a Dr Berwick. Unfortunately, however, Dr Berwick's trustee absconded with the money, and consequently, as Mr Bradlaugh had promised his dead friend that the sum of £650 should be raised, he paid the deficiency out of his own pocket, by weekly instalments.

Austin Holyoake, the friend Mr Bradlaugh lost, was steadfast, loyal, unassuming, and unswerving in his opinions; Mrs Annie Besant, the friend he gained, was even more remarkable, though in a very different way.

Having enrolled herself a member of the National Secular Society in August 1874, Mrs Besant sought Mr Bradlaugh's acquaintance. They were mutually attracted; and a friendship sprang up between them of so close a nature that had both been free it would undoubtedly have ended in marriage. In their common labours, in the risks and responsibilities jointly undertaken, their friendship grew and strengthened, and the insult and calumny heaped upon them only served to cement the bond.

This lasted for many years until Mrs Besant's ceaseless activity carried her into paths widely divergent from those so long trodden by her colleague, paths which brought her into close association with persons strongly inimical to Mr Bradlaugh and the aims to which he was devoting his life. For some time before he died, he had, as Mrs Besant herself has written in her recently published *Autobiography*,* lost all confidence in her judgment; she had disappointed him, and it would be unworthy of both not to recognise that the disappointment was very bitter, though his desire to serve her and shield her always remained unchanged. For thirteen years she had stood upon the same platform with him; and when she one day said that for ten years she had been dissatisfied with her own teaching, he felt it very keenly, but he neither uttered a word of blame himself, nor would he allow any one else to blame her in his hearing.

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* See page 322.

Every movement, every cause, has its ebbs and flows; there seems to be only a certain amount of activity possible to men in the mass, and now it flows in one direction, now in another. The Freethought movement, when Mrs Besant came into it, had for some years been slowly but surely increasing in activity and prosperity. The National Secular Society, although not so complete an organisation as it was soon to become, was nevertheless to be found in all the great centres of population. The *National Reformer*, the representative organ of Freethought, in the five years which lay between 1867 and 1872 had nearly doubled its circulation, and was read in almost all parts of the world. It was sent to the three presidencies of India, the United States and Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the Cape of Good Hope, the West Indies, Egypt, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Germany. On its staff there were several very able writers, and if it was not exactly a profitable property, it at least paid its way.

People have sometimes deliberately asserted that Mrs Besant's desertion and Mr Bradlaugh's death inflicted an irremediable injury on the cause of Freethought, but this is merely an assertion, and one which will not bear a moment's investigation. Happily for the human race, the growth of public opinion does not depend upon any single man or woman, however able, however energetic, he or she may be. The loss of a leader amongst men may for a moment check the onward movement, and it may be there is even a temporary reaction—a swing back—but never in the history of the world has the loss of one of its pioneers proved an "irremediable injury" to the cause of progress.

If indeed it should be thought, and it is a proposition that I am not in a position to deny, that this is a moment of ebb in the tide of Freethought, the fact would only be in harmony with the general tendency of the times, and would prove nothing against the ultimate acceptance of the truths of Materialism. The growth of population in our great cities has caused the evils of poverty to press more closely upon general attention, and the public energy is directed towards seeking a solution for these immediately important problems, rather than for those more abstract theorems arising out of religious speculation.

Mrs Besant was herself obeying this tendency when, in 1886 she thought she had found in the optimistic dreams of Socialism a

remedy for this most bitter of human ills. This was the point upon which she first diverged from Mr Bradlaugh, and once having separated her thought from his, the breach swiftly widened. Socialism was, as it were, the fork in the Y of their lives. Nothing, I think, will show how far these two had drifted asunder more than that Mr Bradlaugh should first learn of Mrs Besant's adhesion to the Theosophical Society through an article written by her in a weekly paper, and not from her own lips.

Mrs Besant's first contribution to the *National Reformer* appeared in its issue for 30th August 1874, and with that she entered in good earnest upon the work which was to engross her for many years to come. Over the signature of "Ajax" she commenced a series of notes, entitled "Daybreak," which were to mark "the rising of the sun of liberty . . . when men should dare to think for themselves in theology, and act for themselves in politics," and these notes were continued weekly for several years. From August 1874 to April 1891 Mrs Besant remained connected with the *National Reformer*, first as contributor, and then as sub-editor, becoming shortly afterwards co-editor and co-proprietor. The co-editorship was resigned in October 1887 for reasons set forth by Mrs Besant in her *Autobiography*,* and the co-proprietorship ceased with the dissolution of the partnership between herself and Mr Bradlaugh, in December 1890.

When my father heard Mrs Besant's first lecture in August 1874, in the Co-operative Society's Hall, Castle Street, upon the "Political Status of Women," it impressed him as "probably the best speech by a woman" he had ever listened to. It was not until the following year, however, that Mrs Besant started definitely as a lecturer upon the Freethought platform, but from that time forward she was indefatigable. She was very fluent, with a great command of language, and her voice carried well; her throat, weak at first, rapidly gained in strength, until she became a most forcible speaker. Tireless as a worker, she could both write and study longer without rest and respite than any other person I have known; and such was her power of concentration, that she could work under circumstances which would have confounded almost every other person. Though not an original thinker, she had a really wonderful power of absorbing the thoughts of others, of blending them,

* See p. 320.

and of transmuting them into glowing language. Her industry her enthusiasm, and her eloquence made of her a very powerful ally to whatever cause she espoused.

Mrs Besant had been connected with the Freethought party for about two and a half years when an incident occurred which was destined to have considerable and lasting results. In the winter of 1876 a man, alleged to have an unpleasant reputation as a seller of indecent literature, was convicted at Bristol for selling a pamphlet, written by an American physician of repute, Dr Charles Knowlton. This pamphlet, entitled "Fruits of Philosophy: An Essay on the Population Question," had been on sale in England for forty years, and this was the first time it had been prosecuted. It had been openly sold by James Watson, a publisher of the highest repute, who had been dead only a short time; by Mr G. J. Holyoake; by Austin Holyoake up to the time of his death; and by others both in England and America. Mr Charles Watts had bought the plates of this and other works from the widow of James Watson, and, acting upon Mr Bradlaugh's advice, Mr Watts went to Bristol, and declared himself the responsible publisher of the book. He was himself arrested on 8th January 1877, and on 12th January was committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court. The trial was to be heard on 5th February, but before that day arrived Mr Watts came to the conclusion that the pamphlet was indefensible, and decided to withdraw his plea of "not guilty," and to plead "guilty" instead. Upon learning this, Mr Bradlaugh felt exceedingly angry. "If the pamphlet now prosecuted," he said, "had been brought to me for publication, I should probably have declined to publish it, not because of the subject-matter, but because I do not like its style.* If I had once published it, I should have defended it until the very last." He was strongly of opinion that the matter ought to be fought right through; and differing so widely on a matter of principle with Mr Watts, he determined to sever all business connection with him. He gave his reasons for this course as follows:—

"The Knowlton pamphlet is either decent or indecent. If decent, it ought to be defended; if indecent, it should never have

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* The late Mr Grote, however, thought sufficiently of this pamphlet to preserve it in his own library. He, moreover, presented a copy to the library of the London University, where it was at the time of this prosecution.

been published. To judge it indecent, is to condemn, with the most severe condemnation, James Watson, whom I respected, and Austin Holyoake, with whom I worked. I hold the work to be defensible, and I deny the right of any one to interfere with the full and free discussion of social questions affecting the happiness of the nation. The struggle for a free press has been one of the marks of the Freethought party throughout its history, and as long as the Party permits me to hold its flag, I will never voluntarily lower it. I have no right and no power to dictate to Mr Watts the course he should pursue, but I have the right and the duty to refuse to associate my name with a submission which is utterly repugnant to my nature and inconsistent with my whole career."

When Mr Watts' case came on for trial he pleaded "guilty," and was released, on his own recognisances of £500, to come up for judgment when called upon. It was contended at the trial that it was unlawful to publish such physiological details as were to be found in Dr Knowlton's pamphlet, even for a good purpose. Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant (who had now entered into a formal partnership under the style of "The Freethought Publishing Company") determined to republish the pamphlet to test the right of publication.

A great deal was said at the time by way of blaming Mr Bradlaugh for allowing Mrs Besant to associate herself with him in this struggle, and of lauding Mrs Besant for her great courage in this defence. Many were the unworthy taunts cast at Mr Bradlaugh for "sheltering" himself "behind a woman," though not one of those who sneered stayed to reflect that even if this association had some advantages it also had distinct disadvantages. The gain was both to the principles involved, and to my father personally. To see a woman brave enough to stand by the side of a man in defence of the free publication of unpopular doctrines, was an incentive to the public to investigate those doctrines with a view to forming an independent judgment upon them; it was also an inspiration and a constant spur to the man—had he been the one to need spur or inspiration in such a cause. Mrs Besant's unwearying industry in working up the extra-legal side of the case, in hunting up in other works statements of physiological fact exactly similar to or stronger than those found in the prosecuted pamphlet, was invaluable. In the week which intervened

between the verdict and the sentence on their own case, Mr Bradlaugh took the opportunity to express his appreciation of Mrs Besant's work, and this despite the fact that her decision to join in the defence was contrary to his wish and advice. He wrote :—

"I have often faced hard toil, but I have never had to encounter persistent, wearying, anxious labour greater than that of the last three months. And here—while my hand is yet free to pen these lines—let me record my deep sense of gratitude to the woman who has shared my fight, aided me by her help, encouraged me by her steadfastness, and strengthened me by her counsel. It is not alone the brilliant eloquence, patient endurance, and sustained effort manifested for so many hours in the Court—qualities displayed by Mrs Besant, which, coupled with her great tact, won repeated praise from the Lord Chief Justice, and congratulations from almost the whole of the barristers who crowded the Court—so much of Mrs Besant's work has been recorded by most of the press in terms of the highest laudation. The personal acknowledgment from myself is more due for the weeks of unrecognised but most wearying and continued drudgery in analysing a mass of scientific works, searching out authorities, and generally preparing the huge body of materials required for use on the trial. Few can appreciate the enormous labour involved in the careful analysis of medical works, and their comparison, line by line, with the Knowlton Pamphlet. Yet, without this labour, the defence would have been impossible."

The disadvantages of the dual defence were considerable, but they were known to very few, and were moreover purely personal. Upon Mr Bradlaugh lay the whole responsibility of the defence; his was the mind that planned it, and he had to conduct the fight, not merely for himself, but for the woman beside him; he had to consider two briefs instead of one, and as Mrs Besant was at that time totally unfamiliar with the procedure of the Law Courts, he had to instruct her, not only in the things it was desirable she should say, but also in those which were better left unsaid. He was but too well aware that Mrs Besant risked not alone imprisonment, but also the loss of her child; and in the event of failure, and the imprisonment of both himself and his colleague, the problem naturally presented itself, Who was to edit the *National Reformer* and to look after the new business? Mr Watts'

plea of "guilty," followed by Mr Bradlaugh's indignation, had for the moment produced considerable division amongst former friends, and there had been hardly time to reckon which were friends and which were foes. Nothing could better mark the extent of my father's difficulty than the fact that he had to hand over these onerous duties to us, his daughters, two girls fresh from a dreary country life, and hardly out of our teens. Hence, although he was justly proud that a woman whom he held in such esteem should stand by him publicly at such a moment, it increased his anxieties and his responsibilities enormously that Mrs Besant's risks were so heavy, and there was thus no trusty colleague free to undertake the burden of a weekly journal, and the drudgery of the management of the new publishing business.

Some at least of these difficulties were pointed out to Mrs Besant; friends besought her by every argument they could think of not to risk the loss of her child; but she had chosen her course, and she adhered to it in spite of all entreaties. And such is the irony of fate that she lost the society of her daughter for ten years, and was subjected to the grossest insult from Sir George Jessel, as Master of the Rolls, for defending doctrines she now repudiates.

CHAPTER III.

PROSECUTION OF MR BRADLAUGH AND MRS BESANT.

On Friday, 23rd March, Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant went together to the Guildhall, to deliver the earliest copy of the new edition of the Knowlton pamphlet to Mr Martin, the Chief Clerk, with a notice that they would personally attend, at a certain hour on the following day, to sell the pamphlet. Similar notices were left at the chief office of the Detective Department, and at the office of the City Solicitor. On Saturday afternoon Stonecutter Street was thronged with a crowd of persons anxious to purchase copies of the pamphlet from Mr Bradlaugh or Mrs Besant, and amongst these purchasers detectives were easily identified by Mr Bradlaugh's quick eye. A few days later the partners were arrested on a warrant—not served with a summons—and marched off to Bridewell, after a fruitless search for compromising literature had been made on the Stonecutter Street premises. From the Police Court, where Mrs Besant had to endure the indignity of being personally searched, they were conveyed to the Guildhall. Mr Alderman Figgins heard the charge, and remanded the case until the 17th of April.

A defence committee was formed, which soon included the names of many well-known men and women, both in England and abroad, and a fund was started to meet the expenses of the defence. The long lists of subscribers which appeared week by week in the columns of the *National Reformer* give unmistakable proof of the widespread sympathy.

When the further hearing of the case came on at the Guildhall, the prosecution was conducted by Mr Douglas Straight and Mr Mead, instructed by Mr Nelson, the City Solicitor. Mr Figgins was again the presiding magistrate, and there were several other aldermen on the Bench. At this hearing—which lasted a couple of days—Mr Straight offered to proceed against Mr Bradlaugh alone, letting the charge against Mrs Besant drop · but to this the

latter would on no account agree. At the conclusion they were liberated on their own recognisances, to appear at the Central Criminal Court on 7th May. The prospect of standing in the dock of the Old Bailey was not very alluring to my father, so he went to the Court of Queen's Bench and made an application to the Lord Chief Justice (Sir Alexander Cockburn) and Mr Justice Mellor for a writ of *certiorari* for the removal of the case to that Court, to be heard before a judge and a special jury. After some argument the Lord Chief Justice said :—

"If, upon looking at it [the pamphlet], we think its object is the legitimate one of promoting knowledge in a matter of human interest, then lest there should be any miscarriage resulting from any undue prejudice, we might think it is a case for trial by a judge and a special jury. I do not say it is so, mark, but only put it so ; that if, on the other hand, science and philosophy are merely made the pretence of publishing a book which is calculated to arouse the passions of those who peruse it, then it follows we must not allow the pretence to prevail, and treat the case otherwise than as one which may come before anybody to try. If we really think it is a fair question as to whether it is a scientific work or not, and its object is a just one, then we should be disposed to accede to your application, and allow it to be tried by a judge and special jury, and for that purpose allow the proceedings to be removed to this Court. But before we decide that, we must look into the book, and form our own judgment as to the real object of the work."

Their Lordships took the book to consider on its own merits, and refused to read the evidence given at the Police Court. A few days later the writ was granted in the following words :—

"We," said the Lord Chief Justice, "have looked at the book which is the subject-matter of this indictment, and we think it really raises a fair question as to whether it is a scientific production for legitimate purposes, or whether it is what the indictment alleged it to be, an obscene publication. We think that is a question which will require to be decided by a judge, and, we think, by a special jury, and therefore there will be a writ of *certiorari* granted."

Mr Bradlaugh's recognisances for £400 for the costs of the prosecution were accepted. He regarded this granting of the writ by the judges, going hand in hand, as it were, with the very plain language of the Lord Chief Justice, as a most favourable sign ; and on the matter of the recognisances Mrs Besant wrote : "They

become as we go on small by degrees and beautifully less. We began by arrest on a warrant; from a warrant we passed to liberation on bail, four sureties and our own recognisances being required; from this we proceeded to liberation on our own recognisances only, and now we are free on Mr Bradlaugh's sole recognisance."

The name of the prosecutor had not yet transpired, though at the outset it was assumed that the city authorities were responsible for the proceedings, since at the first hearing before Mr Figgins the name of the City Solicitor had been mentioned, while at the second counsel appeared instructed by him. In May, however, the identity of the prosecutor had sunk into still greater obscurity, for on the 4th of that month Mr Nelson (the City Solicitor) declared in writing that "the Corporation of London has nothing and never has had anything to do with the prosecution." He further stated "in general terms" that the prosecution was instituted by the Police. When, however, Colonel James Fraser, the Commissioner of Police, was applied to, he evaded any direct answer by referring my father to the sworn "information," which of course only gave the name of the detective, Wm. Simmonds, who, as informer, had bought the pamphlet. Simmonds was formally asked if he were the responsible prosecutor, but he merely acknowledged the receipt of Mr Bradlaugh's letter. My father, on 11th May, applied to Mr Justice Lush, at Chambers, for the name of the responsible prosecutor, but while the judge expressed his opinion that he ought to know, he regretted that he had no power to help him.

At this time the public excitement was further increased by the action of the Government, which commenced to make seizures in the Post-Office of literature sent out from the Freethought Publishing Company's office. Not only were open book packets seized, but in some cases even sealed parcels were suspected of being tampered with.

Not merely was Knowlton's "Fruits of Philosophy" confiscated, but also copies of the "Freethinker's Text-book," and a pamphlet written by Mr Bradlaugh entitled "Jesus, Shelley, and Malthus," as well as a considerable number of copies of the *National Reformer*. Concurrently with this a raid was made upon the shop of that brave old man, Mr Edward Truelove, in High Holborn, and a large quantity of Robert Dale Owen's "Moral Physiology," as well as another pamphlet "Individual, Family, and National Poverty,"

were seized by persons representing the Society for the Suppression of Vice, who immediately commenced a prosecution against Mr Truelove.

In the last days of the month Mr Bradlaugh made an application to the Court to take the case at an early day; it was fixed for the 18th June, and shortly afterwards it became known that the Solicitor-General, Sir Hardinge Giffard, Q.C., M.P. (now Lord Halsbury) was chosen the leading counsel for the prosecutors—whoever they might be. Up to this point—the eve of one of those great forensic contests which marked various periods in Mr Bradlaugh's life—he felt that the press as a whole had not been unfair, although indeed there had been some journals coarse and foul in attack, usually on the ground of Mrs Besant's association with himself. As regards the issue of the struggle, he wrote that to predict the verdict would be worse than folly, though, "should the deliverance be against us," he urgently begged his friends to aid his daughters in keeping his journal afloat until he should be free to edit it again. Mrs Besant's descriptive accounts of the various preliminary legal proceedings are all written in a light, often jesting, vein; indeed, I am inclined to think that she hardly realised all the gravity of her situation; a true sense of the possibilities involved was perhaps somewhat obscured by the atmosphere of excitement and admiration in which she was living.

On the trial it was Mr Bradlaugh's object to show that the doctrine of the limitation of the family was to be found in many other works in general circulation dealing with economical questions; and that in medical works, many published at popular prices, and some specially intended for the use of young people, there were physiological descriptions set forth in identical or even stronger language. Amongst other witnesses Mr Bradlaugh subpœnaed Professor and Mrs Fawcett (to formally prove certain statements in Prof. Fawcett's book), Charles Darwin, the Rev. J. W. Horsley (Chaplain of the Clerkenwell House of Detention), and the Rev. S. D. Headlam—the two latter to give evidence as to overcrowding. Prof. Fawcett refused to take his subpœna, and declared he would send Mrs Fawcett out of the country rather than that she should appear as a witness in the case. A second attempt was made to induce him to take the subpœna in a friendly way, but he again refused, putting his hands behind his back so that the paper should not be surreptitiously put into them—of

which he need have had no fear. Charles Darwin wrote his thanks for the courtesy of the notice, saying:—

"I have been for many years much out of health, and have been forced to give up all society or public meetings; and it would be great suffering to me to be a witness in Court. It is, indeed, not improbable that I may be unable to attend. Therefore, I hope that, if in your power, you will excuse my attendance. . . . . If it is not asking too great a favour, I should be greatly obliged if you would inform me what you decide, as apprehension of the coming exertion would prevent the rest which I require doing me much good."

As Mr Darwin was going away from home, he gave addresses where he might be found if he was wanted. But of course it was decided to manage without his evidence. Mr Horsley and Mr Headlam were both most courteous, and there was one volunteer witness whose help was invaluable—Mr H. G. Bohn, the founder of the well-known Bohn's Library. Dr Drysdale and Dr Alice Vickery also gave their assistance with the utmost cheerfulness. The trial was heard before the Lord Chief Justice, and extended over four days. The ability of the defence excited universal comment, and the masterly summing-up of the Judge was spoken of in the papers as being strongly in favour of Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant. But in spite of defence and summing-up the jury, after an absence of an hour and a half, brought in the following verdict: "We are unanimously of opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals, but at the same time we entirely exonerate the defendants from any corrupt motives in publishing it."

The Lord Chief Justice instructed the jury that this was a verdict of guilty. The foreman bowed acquiescence. The Clerk asked if they found the defendants guilty upon the indictment. The foreman again bowed, and a verdict of guilty was recorded. Sentence was not pronounced immediately; it was postponed for a week. The jury, however, were by no means so decided at heart and so unanimous as the prompt bow of the foreman led one to believe. One of these twelve "wise men and true" applied to the Associate for £4, 4s. as payment for his attendance; two others returned each their guinea fee to be put down to the defence; one wrote that he did not agree with the verdict, subsequently stating that six of the jury did not intend to assent to a verdict of guilty, and that it had been arranged that if the Lord Chief Justice

would not accept their special verdict they should again retire and consult. During the time they were locked in they discussed so loudly that they were heard outside, and their discussion was found to be by no means confined to the offence which they were supposed to be considering, as it included amongst other things the heretical views of the defendants.

On the 28th June Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant attended the Court of Queen's Bench to receive judgment from the Lord Chief Justice and Mr Justice Mellor. My father had thought it likely that there might be a heavy fine, but unlikely that there would be any sentence of imprisonment. He drew £250 from the bank, and showed me the notes as he put them in his pocket-book, bidding me, in the event of a sentence of imprisonment, take the notes from him and pay them into the bank again; and my sister and I accompanied him and Mrs Besant into Court. The Solicitor-General opened by moving the Court for judgment; some discussion arose on the absence of the *postea*, and then Mr Bradlaugh submitted three propositions to the Court: (1) A motion to quash the indictment; (2) a motion for arrest of judgment; and (3) a motion for a new trial. But the Lord Chief Justice would neither consent to a new trial nor to a rule for an arrest of judgment; he left the decision as to quashing the indictment to the Court of Error, declining, however, to stay execution until error was determined. The arguments over these points took up the whole morning, and after luncheon the Solicitor-General, in order to influence the Judge in his sentence, brought forward two affidavits, one asserting that Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant had continued to sell the pamphlet since the verdict, and the other stating that Mrs Besant, in a speech at the Hall of Science on the previous Sunday, had represented the Lord Chief Justice as being favourable to them, and the verdict as against his summing-up. Sir Alexander Cockburn was greatly incensed at the alleged reference to himself, and regarded the continued sale in the light of "a grave and aggravated offence." My father offered that if the Lord Chief Justice would stay proceedings until the writ of error was argued, he would pledge himself that no sort of advantage would be taken of the indulgence of the Court to continue the sale of the condemned book; but as yet the Judge was obdurate. "I think we must pass sentence," he said. "Have you anything to say in mitigation?"

"I respectfully submit myself to the sentence of the Court," my father replied in his gravest tones. "I have nothing to say in mitigation of punishment," added Mrs Besant.

The Judge then proceeded to sentence them to imprisonment for six calendar months, to a fine of £200 each, and to enter into their own recognisances for £500 each for two years.

The judgment was delivered towards the end of a long day of hard and wearisome fighting, and my father, who, with Mrs Besant, had of course received the sentence standing, was very white; his voice, however, was quite firm when, the Lord Chief Justice having concluded, he quietly and respectfully asked, "Would your lordship entertain an application to stay execution of the sentence?"

"Certainly not," was the answer. Mr Bradlaugh bowed; the officer of the Court moved forward to take him and Mrs Besant into custody; my father gave me his pocket-book, and bade us follow him as far as we were allowed. We had nearly reached the door when the Lord Chief Justice spoke again. In milder tones he said: "On consideration, if you will pledge yourselves unreservedly that there shall be no repetition of the publication of the book, at all events until the Court of Appeal shall have decided contrary to the verdict of the jury and our judgment; if we can have that positive pledge, and you will enter into your recognisances that you will not avail yourselves of the liberty we extend to continue the publication of this book, which it is our bounden duty to suppress, or do our utmost to suppress, we may stay execution, but we can show no indulgence without such a pledge.

Mr Bradlaugh replied: "My lord, I meant to offer that pledge in the fullest and most unreserved sense, because, although I have my own view as to what is right, I also recognise that the law having pronounced sentence, that is quite another matter so far as I, as a citizen, am concerned. I do not wish to ask your lordship a favour without yielding to the Court during the time that I take advantage of its indulgence." My father added that he wished it to be quite clear that he only pledged himself to stop the circulation of the book until the decision of the Court of Error. The Judge was satisfied with this assurance, although the Solicitor-General was not, and Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant were liberated on their own recognisances of £100 each.

This "on consideration" of the Lord Chief Justice entirely changed the course of events. In the following February (1878) the case was argued in the Court of Appeal before the Lords Justices Bramwell, Brett, and Cotton, who in a very elaborate judgment gave their decision in favour of Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant; and the indictment was quashed on the ground that the words relied upon by the prosecution as proving their case ought to have been expressly set out. Two American cases brought forward by the Solicitor-General before the Lord Chief Justice as against Mr Bradlaugh's argument were regarded by the Lord Justices of Appeal as of no weight; while any value they might have had was absolutely in favour of the defendants.

The total amount disbursed in this defence and provided by public subscriptions was £1065. The expenses of the prosecution must have been enormous; but to the end the name of the prosecutor was refused. In March 1878 Mr Bradlaugh wrote: "It is not the Government, we are assured on the highest authority; it is not the Vice Society; and it is positively stated that it is not the city authorities, and yet the City Solicitor instructed counsel, and the proceedings are conducted from the law offices of the Corporation. However, in spite of the positive statement of the City Solicitor, the official report of the Common Council mentioned that the prosecution was ordered by Alderman Ellis; and later, at a meeting of the Common Council, presided over by the Lord Mayor, the Solicitor, in answer to a question, said the prosecution was instituted by the city police and carried on by him under the direction of Alderman Ellis. The actual costs of the prosecution would be, he thought, "about £700." As Mr Bradlaugh commented: "This becomes embarrassing; on 4th May 1877 Mr T. J. Nelson wrote that 'the Corporation of London has nothing and never has had anything to do with the prosecution.' If so, why do the city authorities pay even £700 towards the costs? And who pays the rest? For with three counsel to fee all through, £700 will most certainly not cover the bill. . . . Why, unless the Solicitor-General, as a labour of love, worked half-price, his fees alone would spoil the £700." And, as my father further asked, "Why did Alderman Ellis direct the prosecution?" for he was not even the sitting magistrate.

In addition to the main proceedings in the Court of Queen's

Bench and the Court of Error there were a number of side issues which were heard before other Courts; points were argued in *banco;* an application was made to Mr Vaughan for the 650 copies of the Knowlton pamphlet seized by the Vice Society at Mr Truelove's. An appeal was lodged at the General Sessions against Mr Vaughan's order for their destruction, a successful application was made to the Court of Queen's Bench to quash Mr Vaughan's order, and a summons heard against Inspector Wood for unlawfully detaining the pamphlets. Not a few were the comments in the press when twice within six months Mr Bradlaugh succeeded in getting quashed decisions given against himself (first, the indictment, and with it the sentence of imprisonment and fine, and next the magisterial order). One journal even suggested that "much loss of time might be avoided" if Mr Bradlaugh were appointed "to consult with our legal luminaries and revise their decisions."

In the meantime Mr Edward Truelove had been twice tried. At the first trial the jury did not agree; but at the second, which took place in May 1878, he was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a £50 fine. Scores of purses were eagerly opened to furnish the fine, but no one, alas! could relieve this brave heart from the hardships of a prison. Mr Truelove, suffering for his opinion's sake, was obliged to wear the garb of common felons and to associate with them, and although nearly seventy years of age, he was compelled to pick oakum and to sleep upon a plank bed.

The immediate effect of these prosecutions was to draw public attention to the teaching of Malthus and his disciples. Works upon the population question were eagerly bought and read; and as the subsequent gradual lowering of the birth-rate in England testifies, the idea of the limitation of the family to the means has certainly, if slowly, made some way. The Malthusian League, first started by Mr Bradlaugh in the early sixties, was, in 1877, revived on a much larger scale; its branches and it literature soon spread to all parts of the kingdom, and enormous meetings were held everywhere. In November Mrs Besant brought out a pamphlet to supersede the Knowlton essay, entitled "The Law of Population: its Consequence and its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals." It was dedicated to the poor, and was eagerly welcomed by them. Mrs Besant in 1891 withdrew her pamphlet from circulation, a step which matters the less as,

since 1877, there have been other books written by medical men dealing with the same subject and issued at popular prices. But although there was this distinct gain to the public, not only in the stand made for the free discussion of such a question of vital economical importance, and in the sweeping away of general indictments, the cost to the principals in the drama was heavy indeed. Mr Truelove, a man of unimpeachable integrity, was, as I have just said, cut off from his family, and made the associate of felons. In April 1878 Mr Besant appealed to the law to give him the custody of his daughter.* The litigation arising out of this lasted many months; Mrs Besant lost her child, was grossly insulted by Sir George Jessel, and at length, the strain proving too much even for her strong constitution, her health gave way, and she was thrown upon a bed of sickness.

Nor was the position much less trying for Mr Bradlaugh. It must not be lost sight of that the ultimate responsibility for the defence, in every detail of these different law proceedings continuing over several years, remained with him: his hand was in it all. He made a great fight, but his days and often the greater part of his nights were spent in constant work and anxiety.

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* One of the reasons given for withdrawing Mabel Besant from her mother's charge was that while with her she was liable to come in contact with Charles Bradlaugh.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNIMPORTANT CHAPTER.

In the foregoing account of the prosecution of my father and Mrs Besant I have thought it best not to burden the narrative with any side issues not immediately important. As, however, it is my object in this book to picture my father and his surroundings as clearly as possible, so that from the picture a just judgment of his character may be derived, I will now devote a few pages to passing details more or less directly connected with this prosecution or arising out of it.

As soon as Mr Watts decided to plead "guilty," under the circumstances which have already been mentioned, and it became known that Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant had determined to publish the prosecuted pamphlet, it was found that there were would-be prosecutors eager for the fray, and ready to commence on anything else, whilst awaiting the new issue of Knowlton's essay.

One morning I was seated on the floor (chairs were a scarce commodity at Turner Street) in my father's study sorting some pamphlets when a knock was heard at the street door; the landlady opened it, and then came to say that a man had called who particularly wished to see Mr Bradlaugh. "Ask him in," said my father, and I began hurriedly to rise from my lowly position, but a "Stay where you are" nailed me to the floor. "What can I do for you?" asked Mr Bradlaugh pleasantly, as a thick-set man of middle age, with a reddish beard, entered the room. The man replied that he wished to buy a copy of a book written by my father and entitled, "Man, whence and how." Rather to my surprise, because as a rule he refused to sell any literature from his Turner Street lodgings, and indeed kept none there for sale, my father hunted up a copy of the Freethinker's Text-Book, Part I., entitled "Man, whence and how? or Revealed and Real Science in Conflict," carefully dusted

it, and handed it to the man, asking suavely, "Is there anything more I can do for you?" The man replied that that was all, put the book in his pocket, paid for it, and went away. He was hardly outside the door when my father began to laugh. "Did you see his boots, Hypatia?" he asked. "His boots!" I repeated vaguely, wondering rather what the joke was. "Yes; he actually came in the regulation boots," he said. "That was a detective, and those who instructed him evidently think that 'Man, whence and how?' is some book upon the population question." Undoubtedly it is a book upon the population question, but not exactly from the Malthusian point of view; and if it was bought in that idea, the purchasers must have felt rather foolish when they read the first lines referring to the Hebrew chronology and the alleged creation of Adam and Eve!

In 1876 my father was relieved from the pressure of those debts which had been burdening him for so long. First of all a Liverpool friend died, bequeathing to Mr Bradlaugh £100, less legacy duty. This is a "new experience," said my father on receiving the money, adding, "I owe £90 less than I owed last week." Then in August he received £2500 through a compromised will suit. Mr Henry Turberville, brother of Mr R. D. Blackmore, had a very great admiration for my father; so much so that the year before his death, when my father was about to go to the United States, he felt so anxious not to lose sight of him that he offered to pay the whole of his debts if only he would not go. He made a will leaving the bulk of his property, valued at £15,000, to Mr Bradlaugh, and to simplify matters he also made him his sole executor. Not long after this Mr Turberville, while staying at Yeovil, died suddenly, having a few hours before made his will in favour of a daughter of a chemist of the neighbourhood. Mr Blackmore asked the Court to pronounce for an intestacy, and he joined with Mr Bradlaugh as against the propounders of the new will. At last a compromise was agreed upon, by which Mr Bradlaugh received £2500 in addition to his costs. Like the £90 legacy, the £2500 was immediately applied by my father to the discharge of his liabilities. I was in Court with him when the suits were compromised, and we went straight from the Court to the office of his chief creditor. "That was only just in time, my daughter," he said, as we turned towards home.

As one or other of us girls was now almost continuously with my father, and his books were bursting all available bounds at Turner Street, in February 1877 he decided to seek some more wholesome and more commodious lodging. Turner Street left much to be desired from the sanitary point of view. I remember one hot summer's evening a kindly, enthusiastic gentleman, who lived in the west of London, came eastwards to speak at one of the working-men's clubs. My father was to take the chair for him, and he came to Turner Street before going to the club. We all walked down together, and this gentleman, turning with enthusiasm to my sister and me, said, "I think your father living here is just the right man in the right place!" My sister and I looked at one another; it had been so hot that day, yet we had not been able to open our windows to let in the air because of the abundance of smells which came in with it. If Turner Street was the "right" place, we, at least, did not appreciate it.

At the end of February we removed to 10 Portland Place (as it was then called), Circus Road, St John's Wood. It was a queerly-arranged house; we had the top floor and the basement, with a bath-room on the first floor, the ground floor and the rest of the first floor being occupied by a firm of music-sellers. In the basement was a very large and dark room, which we used for meals, and in which at first our tiny table and four chairs looked very desolate. On the top floor was one large room given over to my father's study, the other rooms being quite small. The library again outgrowing its bounds, in 1880 it descended to the still larger room on the first floor, whence the books were sold after the death of their owner in 1891.

At Circus Road my sister and I started housekeeping for my father, with one little servant much given to fainting. I was appointed head cook to the establishment, and my father and sister uncomplainingly devoted themselves to the task of swallowing my experiments in the culinary art. Never once, either while I cooked for him myself, or later when we ordered his dinners for him, do I remember my father grumbling at the food we set before him. His meals had to be punctual to the moment, or, if asked for at an unaccustomed hour, they had to be promptly served; if that was done, he was content with whatever was given him.

We had been only a few weeks at Circus Road when the new

edition of the Knowlton pamphlet was printed. Mr Bradlaugh was away in Scotland, and as Mrs Besant's mind was filled with the idea of the possibility of a police raid and seizure of the stock, we hid parcels of the pamphlet in every conceivable place. We buried some by night in her garden, concealed some under the floor, and others behind the cistern. When my father was informed of this cleverness he was by no means pleased, and sent word immediately that there should be no more hiding; and as soon as he came home again the process began of finding as quickly as possible these well-hidden treasures—some indeed so well hidden that they were not found till some time afterwards. He also knew that a search was possible, but he had no wish to look supremely ridiculous—to put it no more seriously—by parcels being found in all these eccentric places.

When the Saturday came on which Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant attended at Stonecutter Street to sell the new edition of the Knowlton pamphlet, my sister and I went with them: not to sell the book—that my father would not allow—but to help in the mechanical work of counting out dozens or in giving change; for although there had been no other advertisement than the one announcement in the *National Reformer*, the crush of buyers in the little shop was enormous, and in the course of twenty minutes over 500 copies changed hands, in single copies or in small numbers. Several days elapsed between this formal sale and the arrest, but my father had told me that in the event of such an arrest I was immediately to go home and fetch his volumes of Russell "On Crime and Misdemeanours," while my sister was to remain with them to take any instructions at the moment. Mr Bradlaugh notified the police headquarters that he and Mrs Besant would attend at 28 Stonecutter Street from 10 to 11 A.M. for the convenience of the arrest. The police accordingly made their appearance promptly at ten o'clock one morning; I flew off to St John's Wood, collected the great books, and caught the next train to the city. It was a warm morning, I was hot with running, and anxious, for I rather think that I had some sort of notion that "Russell" was a sort of golden key to unlock all legal difficulties. City men in the train, going to their ordinary business, looked at me rather curiously as I sat in the carriage closely hugging those three bulky red volumes (which would slip about on one another, for I had not stayed to tie them together) on criminal procedure, of all

things for a girl of nineteen to be carrying about with her on a sunny April morning.

But my sister and I felt very, very lonely and very cold at heart as we sat in the dreary Police Court at the Guildhall—I hardly know how we got there—listening to cases of drunkenness or assault, and waiting, with a shudder of horror and disgust at the thought, for our father and Mrs Besant to come and take their places in that dock which we had seen occupied by some of the lowest specimens of London low life. The time came for people to snatch what lunch they could get; and a kindly gentleman with a slightly foreign accent came to us and wanted to take us to lunch. He knew us, for he was my father's very good friend, Mr Joannes Swaagman, though we did not know him. However, he talked to us of our father, and found the way to persuade us, so we went with him; and I shall never forget the feeling of gratitude towards him, and the sensation of comfort we felt in seeing his friendly face and hearing his friendly voice. We attended the first day's hearing at the Guildhall, but at our father's wish we were not afterwards present during the trying of the case, either at the Guildhall or at Westminster. After they were committed for trial Mr Bradlaugh proceeded to make his arrangements for the conduct of his paper, and of his new business in case of a hostile verdict. The course he then took proves, as I have said, in a startling way how utterly alone he felt at that moment—old ties were broken, new ones were not yet tested; to whom could he turn to help him in this emergency? There was no one but his daughters—girls with no experience, and in many ways young for their years. But we might be ignorant, we might be stupid; still we loved him so well that we could not help being absolutely faithful to any trust he might confide to us. I was apt to be more forward than my sister; she was nearly two years my elder, but she was needlessly distrustful of herself, and so I was the one whom my father selected to instruct in the possible editorial duties. I sat with him, note-book in hand, with fainting heart at the frightful prospect, and meekly took note of all his wishes. I was then taken into the bank, introduced to the manager, and recorded my signature, for I was to be the financial agent also!

During the long hours of the four days' trial at Westminster, my sister and I used to walk up and down the great hall, watching

for any one to come out with any news of how the case was going on. Melancholy figures we must have looked, nearly always alone, dressed in black gowns—for our mother had died suddenly in the midst of all this—and very frightened at heart at what might happen. There was one person who used invariably to step out of his way to speak to us as he passed up the great hall to his place in the House of Commons, and that was Joseph Biggar, the Member for Cavan. A little kindness at an hour such as this makes an impression on the mind that nothing can efface, and my sister and I never afterwards heard Mr Biggar's name mentioned without recalling how he thus kindly went out of his way to say a pleasant word to a couple of girls miserably walking up and down outside those Law Courts at Westminster. On the fourth day we were summoned inside the Court. The jury had retired, and every one was so sure of a verdict for the defence, that my father thought we should like to hear it—for in spite of all his worries and anxieties, he could yet think of us at such a moment. When the verdict came it was a shock, the more so that until a few minutes before, when an idea of the truth somehow reached the Court, a favourable one had been anticipated.

On the first day (Monday) of the trial, in giving the history of the Knowlton pamphlet, Mrs Besant, as a matter of course, mentioned that it had been sold by Messrs Holyoake & Co., saying, "One of the firm is Mr George Jacob Holyoake, whose name is probably well known to you. The other is Austin Holyoake," and further, "from Mr Holyoake the book went into the hands of a Mr C. Watts." On Wednesday, the third day, a communication from Mr G. J. Holyoake appeared in the *Times*, in which he attempted to explain away his connection with the pamphlet, adding, moreover, that after the Bristol trial he advised Mr Watts to discontinue its publication. As the only effect of this letter could be to injure the defendants, it may be imagined that my father did not take it as a very kindly act.* Indeed,

* From the time when Mr Holyoake refused to continue to publish "The Bible: what it is," there were several instances of a want of friendliness on his part towards Mr Bradlaugh, and sometimes—as at this trial and in the Parliamentary struggle—these occurred at a most critical moment in my father's career. Mr Bradlaugh, of course, generally retaliated; but when his first vexation and anger had passed, he always showed himself willing to forget and forgive. One of the very first things he did on his

Mrs Besant put it that the letter was one "carefully calculated to prejudice the jury against us, and sent to the very paper with which one of our jurymen* was connected." As Mr Holyoake had been silent so long, "silent while he sold it, silent while he profited by the sale, would it have been too great an exercise of self-control," she asked, "if he had maintained his silence for two days longer?"

The next week my sister and I were with my father and Mrs Besant all day in Court when sentence was pronounced; but in spite of all our vague fears, I do not think we altogether realised what imprisonment could mean until the Judge pronounced the awful words. The whole Court seemed to fade away as I listened, and it needed the knowledge that my father relied upon me to do something for him to bring me to myself. I took his pocket-book from him as he had bidden me, and was with my sister mechanically following him from the Court when we were stopped by the Lord Chief Justice, his mild tones forming a contrast to the last sharply uttered words. It seemed, indeed, as though ages of agony had been lived through in those few minutes.

Apparently Sir Alexander Cockburn had been told of our waiting outside, and had noticed us in the Court, as afterwards some very kindly words which he had said of Mr Bradlaugh and ourselves were repeated to my father.

When, later on, Mrs Besant was directed by order of Sir George Jessel to give up her daughter, my father knew that Mr Besant's advisers would not lose a moment in claiming her. By his instructions we drove at once to Mrs Besant's house and carried off Mabel to Circus Road. We then took her by road to Willesden Junction Station, and there gave her into Mrs Besant's keeping as she was passing through on her way to fulfil a lecturing engage-

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return from America in 1875 was to join in an effort to buy an annuity for Mr Holyoake, who had been so prostrated by illness that at that time it was thought that he would not be capable of continuous work again. Notwithstanding old differences, some of which had been extremely and bitterly personal, my father joined in the appeal with the utmost heartiness, and expressed his vexation that the readers of the *National Reformer* had not been permitted to be amongst the earliest subscribers to the fund.

* Mr Arthur Walter, son of the principal proprietor of the *Times*, was on the jury.

ment at Manchester. Thus the poor mother was able to take her farewell of her child in peace, instead of having her torn from her arms at a moment's notice. Then when Mrs Besant's health gave way we nursed her through her illness, and went with her to North Wales, where she rapidly regained her strength.

Up to the time of Mrs Besant's illness she used to ride with us regularly when time permitted, but after that she gave it up for a while. I was never very strong, and one day the doctor had said to me, "If you were a rich young lady, I should order you horse exercise," to which my father, who was with me, replied, "She is not a rich young lady, doctor, but we will see what can be done." And my riding, which was purely the outcome of fatherly love and a desire for his daughter's health, has been turned by some people into a sort of crime against Mr Bradlaugh!

My sister cared very little about riding, so after Mrs Besant gave it up I used to go out alone, riding a little mare, Kathleen, which Mrs Besant then kept at livery stables. As Kathleen had several little peculiarities of temper, and I was accustomed to ride quite alone, I used to ride her in Regent's Park in the quiet of the morning. One snowy morning in March she bolted with me, and after a considerable run we fell together just within the Clarence Gate. I was carried insensible to the nearest doctor, and my sister was summoned by a passer-by who recognised me. Mr Bradlaugh had been lecturing in Scotland, and was travelling all night so that he might reach London in time to be in the Appeal Court at half-past ten, where Mrs Besant was appealing against the decision of the Master of the Rolls. When he was near home some one stopped my father's cab, and he came on at once, to find me lying unconscious on the floor of the doctor's parlour. Nothing had been done for me; the doctor could not even say whether any bones were broken; his wife had indeed brought me a cup of tea, but of that I knew nothing. To make up for any lack of attentions to my poor body, they turned their thoughts to my sister's soul, and in the afternoon the doctor's wife wrote to my sister that she would pray to her "Heavenly Father" that "in this great affliction you may be led to know Him as your Saviour and Comforter." If a Freethinker wrote to a Christian who was sick or in trouble that hell was a delusion and heaven a myth, it would justly be considered an outrage, but the zealot has

two codes of morality—one for those who differ from him, and another for himself.

It must have been very hard for my father that day in Court; three lectures the day before, travelling all night, and at home a daughter who, for aught he had been able before leaving to learn to the contrary, might be dying or permanently injured.

MORE DEBATES.

IN April 1874 the preliminaries for a six nights' discussion between Mr Bradlaugh and the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., were arranged. It was to be held in the Bow and Bromley Institute, and to commence on the 20th of May. It will be remembered that Mr Grant was no novice in debate, and had in fact several times previously met Mr Bradlaugh on the platform. These encounters had been so unpleasant that my father quite shrank from any renewal of them, and the present debate was brought about mainly through the mediation of the Rev. A. J. Harrison, M.A. On the first three nights Mr Grant was to attack Secularism, and Mr Bradlaugh to defend, and then Mr Bradlaugh was to assail Christianity, and Mr Grant defend. On the first evening the chair was taken by the Rev. Arthur Mursell, and Mr Grant as the opener had the opportunity to set the course of the debate, but so little did he realise his responsibilities that in his opening speech, almost indeed in his opening words, he fell back upon his old tactics of vulgar personalities, and this, of course, provoked some reply from Mr Bradlaugh. On the second night the Rev. Brewin Grant was perhaps not quite so bad, and my father for his part had resolved to try and endure the taunts levelled against himself, and against those with whom he worked. With the fourth night, when the chair was taken by the Rev. Mr Driffield, Rector of Bow, came Mr Bradlaugh's opportunity, and he made the most of it; this time he was the first speaker, and he opened the debate in a careful and closely reasoned speech, but unfortunately Mr Grant was not content to follow him. The *Eastern Post*, in an article on the first four nights, remarked that if the Rev. Brewin Grant was selected by the churchmen of the district, the choice did "no credit to their judgment." The writer went on to point out that although Mr Grant had the advantage of being able to prepare his speech for the first three nights, he did not show

himself capable of speaking with any sequence or coherence, but instead he flung all sorts of opprobrious charges at Mr Bradlaugh, and introduced the most trivial personalities, which had not the remotest bearing upon the subject. "Mr Bradlaugh in his first speech gave his definition of Secularism, which ought to have furnished excellent material for criticism and debate; but his reverend opponent adhered to the system of personal disparagement, and at last Mr Bradlaugh retaliated. . . . Things improved somewhat on the fourth night, but this was perhaps due to the fact that the exponent of Secularism led the debate."* This, from the pen of an outsider, will serve to show the impression produced upon those who listened to the speeches. The chairman of the committee of the Bow and Bromley Institute waited upon Mr Bradlaugh after the first night, and told him in the presence of the Rev. Mr Schnadhorst (one of Mr Grant's committee) that in consequence of Mr Grant's conduct they had received a requisition, in which clergymen had joined, asking them to put an end to the debate.

On the fifth night the North London Railway Company, to whom the Institute belonged, stepped in and closed the hall just as the people were assembling to go in. As there was no proper legal agreement for the hire of the hall, there was no redress. There had been no notice of the closing of the hall, hence Mr Bradlaugh and Mr Grant, the chairman and the committees, were all in attendance at the Bow and Bromley Institute, as well as the audience who had paid their money to hear the debate. It was decided, on taking a vote of those present, to adjourn to the nearest available place and finish the debate there. The Clay Hall grounds were suggested, and there is an amusing account of Mr Bradlaugh proceeding to this place followed by the audience, who were considerably added to from the general public *en route*. The proprietor was at first rather alarmed at the advent of such a besieging party, but a reassurance from Mr Bradlaugh and a payment in advance soon calmed his fears. Mr Grant, however, for reasons best known to himself, did not come to Clay Hall, although the Revs. A. Mursell, W. Schnadhorst, S. Bardsley, and W. Loveridge came, as well as other friends of Mr Grant. Mr M D. Conway, who was to have taken the chair, also followed the

* *Eastern Post*.

party to the Clay Hall grounds, where he presided at the informal meeting then held. The whole matter was discussed, and the kindly words on both sides cleared away much of the ill feeling which had grown up during the debate; and at the conclusion of the meeting, in replying to the vote of thanks, Mr Conway said:—

"GENTLEMEN,—I must say that I came to-night with a good deal of pain and apprehension. Though I accepted the invitation to preside at this discussion, I did so in the interests of truth, and from my desire to promote anything like honest discussion. When I read the debate as reported in the *National Reformer* for the first time, I thought that Mr Bradlaugh seemed to resemble St Paul—that is, that he was fighting with beasts; and I came down with a great deal of apprehension that there might be scenes that were not decorous. I quite felicitate you and myself that instead of that, and instead of such recriminations, we happen to be in the presence of gentlemen on both sides who have indicated so much fairness and so much fine spirit. I will say for Christians, that if what has been levelled at Mr Bradlaugh, as it seems to me, has conveyed any impression against the Christian religion, as perhaps it has to some minds, the extremely gentlemanly discourse of some of the Christians we have had here to-night is calculated to recall that."

Mr Mursell spoke to Mr Bradlaugh as to fresh arrangements, but Mr Bradlaugh had never wanted to meet Mr Grant, and now would only do so if a dozen clergymen put him forward as their representative; "then, and then only," he said, he would meet him, "not as Mr Grant, but as the representative of those dozen clergymen." For his part, he would be no party to doing anything voluntarily towards renewing such scenes as they had just had. Strange as it must seem to any one who has read the pages of these debates, Mr Grant found fifteen clergymen willing to vouch for him as a fit and proper person to represent their views on Christianity, and another (and happily, final) debate was arranged for the following year. My father, in order to show that he did not measure all clergymen by Mr Grant's inches, selected Mr Mursell to represent him in the preliminary arrangements, just as on the previous occasion he had consented to abide by the decision of the Rev. A. J. Harrison. The debate was to be held on one night in each week for six weeks,* and by securing South Place Chapel as

* June and July 1875.

the building in which it should be held the Committee were ensured against the possibility of intolerant proprietors closing the doors of the hall upon them in the midst of the discussion. The subject to be argued as chosen by the Committee was, "Is Atheism, or is Christianity, the true Secular Gospel, as tending to the improvement and happiness of mankind in this life, by human efforts, and material means?" Mr Grant was to lead on the first three nights, with objections to show that Atheism was not the true Secular Gospel. Mr Bradlaugh on the remaining three nights was to show thatChristianity was not the true Secular Gospel. As might have been expected, this debate was only a modified repetition of what took place on the previous occasion; Mr Grant was certainly less free of speech, but with all that he could not keep clear of personal accusations and epithets which at times provoked much unseemly uproar and confusion.

Much has been said at one time or another about Mr Bradlaugh's adoption of the views of Spinoza, and to leave his position perfectly clear on that head I will quote the words he himself used in answer to his opponent on the third night of this debate. "It is perfectly true," he said, "that the argument as to one existence was adopted from Spinoza. . . . The precise distinction between the views of Spinoza and myself is this: Spinoza contended for the infinite attributes of extension and intelligence. I cannot conceive the possibility of attributes, except as the characteristics of the thing conditioned, the mode thought, and, therefore, cannot conceive infinite attributes at all. Spinoza held one existence, which, to him having infinite intelligence, made him a Pantheist; and I, not able to conceive that, stand to Spinoza in the relation of Atheist, and that is just the distinction between my thought and that of Spinoza."

On the fourth night the Rev. A. Mursell took the chair, and made kindly acknowledgment of the uniform courtesy he had all through received from Mr Bradlaugh. On this, and for the remaining nights, my father, according to the arrangements, had the debate. On each occasion his opening speech was carefully prepared, and was listened to with the most profound attention; but although a man may "lead" a debate, he cannot compel his antagonist to follow, and on the fifth night the Rev. Brewin Grant actually brought a manuscript prepared beforehand, which, unless by the merest coincidence, could obviously be no kind of reply to

the arguments Mr Bradlaugh was advancing. This MS. he read very quickly, and often almost inaudibly, and again his conduct resulted in uproar and confusion. At the conclusion of Mr Bradlaugh's final speech, although there was still one to come from the Rev. Brewin Grant, the audience had become so incensed with that gentleman that the majority determined to leave. Mr Grant thereupon bent down to his own reporter, and read to him from his MS. quickly and in a low tone of voice. As it was impossible to argue upon propositions which he could not hear, Mr Bradlaugh also rose and left the building. On the sixth and last night Mr M. D. Conway occupied the chair. At the very outset considerable confusion was caused by Mr Grant's demand that some rules should be read from a book which Mr Bradlaugh objected to as incorrect and unauthorised. At length the chairman settled the matter by saying to Mr Grant, "If you can give me the Divine Authority for the infallibility of this little volume, I will read it all." When Mr Bradlaugh sat down after his last speech, he had so moved the audience that they called for three cheers for him; but he begged them, if they thought he deserved praise, to show it by remaining perfectly quiet during the fifteen minutes that Mr Grant had still to address them. His hearers responded to his appeal, and listened mutely to the end.

A few words from a speech delivered by the Rev. Arthur Mursell, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in the spring of the following year,* give some insight into the impression Mr Bradlaugh's eloquence produced, even under such difficult circumstances as those of a debate with Mr Grant. Said Mr Mursell:—

"I am indebted to one whom the world calls an Atheist, and who accepts the designation, but whom, in social intimacy, I would rather call my friend than thousands of the Christians whom I know; a man who, while casting doubt upon Him I call my Master, has shown more of His spirit in the practical intercourse of life, as far as I know it, than many a champion of orthodoxy; a man of honest, though religiously benighted creed, and eloquent tongue; to such a man I am indebted for a stimulus to fervour in the cause of what I deem the vital truth, which prompts me to attempt to press it home with emphasis upon you now. In public debate upon the principles of Christianity which he opposed, he closed a speech, smarting under what he deemed the too flippant satire of his antagonist, in words something like these:—'If I

* April 23rd, 1876.

believed in a God, which I do not; if I believed in a hell to be escaped, which I do not; if I believed in a heaven to be won, which I do not; do you imagine I could allow myself to rack my brain in coining the paltry jests of a buffoon, and tickling the groundlings' ears with quips and quirks? No! I would exhaust the logic of my brain, and the passion of my heart, in seeking to convince and persuade mankind that they might shun the one and gain the other, and try to seal a testimony which should be worthy of my conscience and my creed.' I felt condemned at my own apathy, as the eloquent sceptic lifted before me the standard of fidelity."

The debate held ten months later with Mr Walter R. Browne, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, is both pleasant and instructive reading. The question discussed was, "Can miracles be proved possible?" and the debate arose out of some lectures upon the subject of Miracles, delivered a little while before by Mr Browne in Leeds. The discussion was held in the Albert Hall, Leeds, on two evenings in April 1876. The Mayor (Alderman Croft) presided at the request of the Vicar of Leeds, and on both evenings there was a large audience of earnest and orderly people, who gave the closest attention to the whole proceedings. The report is pleasant reading, because one sees the undoubted intention on the part of each disputant to make his position clear to the other and to the audience; that he was influenced by no mere desire to catch the other tripping for the sake of a moment's applause. The moods of disputants and auditors seemed in complete harmony, and throughout there was not the slightest sign of disturbance or disorder. Mr Browne at the outset expressed his small confidence in the utility of public debates as a means of arriving at truth, and thought they were of little advantage either to the debaters or to the audience; but Mr Bradlaugh met this by remarking that he thought "that every objection which applies to a debate in public between two persons, applies with equal, if not greater, force to an *ex parte* statement made by one person in public, and that the mere delivery of controversial lectures upon such a subject necessitates that the person delivering the controversial lecture should be prepared to recognise at least as much utility in the clashing of his thought publicly with another man's, disagreeing with him, as in the mere utterance of his own thought where there is no one to check it at the moment."

The instructive character of the debate does not lie in any

definite conclusion which might be arrived at by a reader in doubt as to the possibility or impossibility of miracles, but rather in a realisation of the difficulty two capable men with different points of view may have in settling upon a common meaning for certain words. In Mr Browne's first speech he defined a miracle to be "a supernatural marvel wrought by God," but this was a definition upon which they could not agree, because Mr Browne would not accept Mr Bradlaugh's meaning for "nature," as "the totality of all phenomena," and as equivalent to the word "existence," or the word "universe," nor would he himself define "God," for that, he said, was "beyond definition." The meaning of the words "force" and "creation," the idea of "perception," the doctrine of "free-will," and the existence of evil, all proved stumblingblocks to the smooth course of the debate; but as Mr Browne truly said in his concluding speech on the first evening, while it was true that they had not at that time advanced very far in the argument, it was better to make the ground sure as they went along than to attempt too much before their conceptions were clear. Some of Mr Browne's arguments were, for a trained speaker and debater, amazingly feeble. For example, his objection to Mr Bradlaugh's definition of the word "nature" was founded upon "the simple reason that such words as 'supernatural,' 'preternatural,' and 'unnatural,' are certainly used amongst us," and it did not seem to have occurred to him that these might be merely instances of a popular misuse of words. He also thought that the American War, which resulted in the abolition of slavery, showed "conclusively that there was a God who governs the world;" in this case his mind seemed to dwell only on the one fact of the abolition of slavery, and to ignore the waste of human life and the horrors of the war as well as the prior fact of the slavery itself.

Mr Bradlaugh has often been accused of talking about the "unknowable," but a passage from this debate will show in what sense he used the word—if, indeed, he ever did use it. Referring to the allegation of creation, he said: "To me creation is a word without meaning; I only know creation in relation to change. I do not mean by it origination of substance; I only mean change of condition. I do not mean the bringing into being that which was not; I only mean the conditioning existence by characteristics by which I had not hitherto conditioned it. I cannot conceive the

possibility of a period when existence was less than it is now. I do not mean that because I cannot conceive it, therefore it is not true. But I do mean that, as I cannot conceive it, you who say you can are bound to give me your conception of it. Understand me clearly, I do not put any such monstrous proposition in this debate as that the inconceivable is therefore the untrue, or that because a position is inconceivable to me, therefore I have a right to call on all other men to reject it. But I do put it, that you have no right to call upon me to accept any position which is inconceivable to me; that you are bound to tell me how you conceive it before you have a right to ask me to accept that it is possible." I do not remember to have heard Mr Bradlaugh speak of the "unknowable;" and that he should use such a term is quite contrary to the whole of my experience of his careful methods of speech. In any case the above will serve to show that he would not be likely to put "any such monstrous proposition," as that the to him "unknowable" was therefore unknowable to men with wider means of knowledge.

In June of the same year Mr Bradlaugh held a debate with Mr Robert Roberts, a leader of a sect called the Christadelphians. He had challenged Mr Bradlaugh to the discussion, and the subject selected was, "Are the Scriptures the Authentic and Reliable Records of Divine Revelation?" The question was to be argued for six nights, two at Leicester and four at Birmingham. After the two nights at Leicester Mr Bradlaugh avowed his disappointment; he had hoped that at any rate the discussion would bring out some new thought, but after two evenings' experience, he doubted whether that result would be attained. "He may be a good preacher," said my father; "he is most certainly not a good disputant." At Leicester the audience were small; at Birmingham they were larger, but the debate does not seem to have been any more enlightening. Mr Roberts was described by one of the Birmingham auditors as "a man of considerable fluency of speech, and overflowing with religious enthusiasm," and also "in all respects a courteous gentleman," but unfortunately those qualities did not make him a debater. On each evening a quarter of an hour was occupied by each disputant in questioning his antagonist according to the Socratic method, and this feature of the proceedings seemed specially to attract the audience, although indeed

it must require considerable practice and skill before it can be successfully carried out. Mr Roberts challenged Mr Bradlaugh to further debate, but this the latter felt obliged to respectfully decline on the ground of the challenger's "utter incompetency."

A few days later Mr Bradlaugh was at Liverpool discussing the necessity for disestablishing and disendowing the State Church. His antagonist was Mr William Simpson, the working men's candidate at Liverpool at the general election of 1874. The Concert Hall, Lord Nelson Street, was densely packed, and it was said that there were thousands unable to obtain admission. The arguments were closely followed by those present, and although there was no sort of disturbance, the audience were sufficiently excited to give audible expression to their appreciation or disapproval, and such interruptions were generally met by a sharp repartee from the speaker of the moment.

Mr Simpson, while praised for his fluency, courage, and resource, was not thought equal to his task,* and in reading the verbatim report of the debate, one is drawn to the conclusion that he scored his greatest successes when making his greatest jokes.

My father had an unusual number of debates this year, and a little later in the summer was at Darlington discussing with a Mr J. H. Gordon on the question of "Atheism, is it rational?" The proceeds, after paying expenses, were given to the Darlington Hospital. There was no shorthand report, but in an article very hostile to Mr Bradlaugh which appeared in a local paper, there is a description of him well worth reproducing. The writer professed to think that my father's Atheism—which he said, with that calm assurance born of ignorance, paid him well "in money and gratified vanity"—was not a matter of conviction, but merely the result of a desire to be in opposition to the majority. He further ventured to prophesy that in Parliament he would be a failure.†

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* *Liverpool Post.*

† "At the Bar he would be a bully, in the pulpit a passing sensation, on the stage a passion-tearing Othello, in the Press a competent American editor, in Parliament a failure."

The following portrait of Mr Bradlaugh sketched by a pen so unfriendly, is a singular testimony to his power:—

"Mr Bradlaugh is a tall, muscular man, who stands firm on his legs, with broad shoulders, between which is a massive, square, powerful head. He dresses in plain black, relieved only by an ordinary display of linen, and a slender watch chain. He is closely shaven as a Roman priest. His features are large and open, his eyes are of a grayish hue, and his hair, which is fast turning gray, falls back from a brow on which intelligence, perception, and power are strongly marked. He has a face which can be very pleasing and very stern, but which conceals the emotion at will. As he sits listening to the denunciations of his opponent the smile of incredulity, the look of astonishment, the cloud of anger, pass quickly over his countenance. Rising from his seat, and resting one hand upon the table, he commences very quietly in a voice which, until the ear is accustomed to it, sounds unpleasant and harsh, but which, when it becomes stronger, loses much of its twang, and sounds almost musical. His enunciation is singularly distinct, not one word being lost by the audience. He addresses himself to all parts of the house—gallery as well as body. When warmed by his subject, he advances to the centre of the platform, and looking his audience full in the face, and with right hand emphasizing every important sentence, he expresses himself in tones so commanding and words so distinct that his hearers may be hostile or friendly, but cannot be indifferent. One may retire horrified at his sentiments, even disgusted at his irreverence and audacity — from a Christian's standpoint — but no one would go to sleep under him. He can be complimentary and humorous, but is more at home in sarcasm and denunciation. He is never ponderous; nevertheless, the grave suits him better than the gay. Cheering does not seem to affect him, though he is by no means indifferent to it; but he is quick to perceive disapproval, and is most powerful when most loudly hissed. With head erect, face coloured with a flush which has in it a little of defiance as well as earnestness, now emphasising with his right hand, now with folded arms, now joining the tips of his fingers as if to indicate the closeness of his reasoning, as he would have the audience believe it, he stands defying opposition, even going out of his way to increase it, and revelling in his Ishmaelism."

Then, comparing him with his opponent:—

"Mr Bradlaugh has not much action, but what he has is dignified, which Mr Gordon's never is. He can be severe, even harsh, but never petulant and peevish, which Mr Gordon frequently is. Mr Bradlaugh may abuse his opponent, but it is boldly, not like a bad-tempered school-girl. He can be pleasant, but never assumes the grimaces and gestures of a Merry Andrew.

His features are expressive, but he never pulls faces. He is essentially a strong man, strong in his language and his oratory, self-sustained, bold in the way he meets and even avoids the topic of dispute." *

There are, of course, some phrases in this description which I should contravene, but apart from these, it is a most vivid and lifelike picture of my father as a speaker. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that Mr Bradlaugh wantonly went out of his way to increase opposition, or revelled in his "Ishmaelism;" what is quite true is, that if in pursuing the path he had marked out for himself he increased opposition, he went on just the same, and did not turn away by so much as a hair's-breadth to avoid it. At heart he might be bitterly wounded, but that did not make him falter. To take, for example, one of the latest cases: when his attitude on the Employers' Liability Bill provoked such a storm of opposition from the very men for whom he worked, he wrote pathetically to a friend: "It is a little saddening to me to find that in the close of my life I am to be regarded as doing disservice to the men whom I desire to serve." But although he felt the men's distrust thus keenly, he did not hesitate nor turn from his course.

Nor did he revel in his "Ishmaelism;" he had no pride in being an outcast, neither had he any shame in it; the shame of his position was not his, it was theirs who thrust him into it. It shows a complete lack of appreciation of the facts to suggest that a man like Mr Bradlaugh could delight in being regarded as a sort of moral leper by his fellow-men, who indeed neglected no means to exclude him and his from society.

I have noticed these two points because it has been a common error to assume that because my father did not quail before opposition, therefore he courted it, and that because he was not ashamed when the law said, "You are an Atheist, and as such you are outside our protection," therefore he rejoiced in being so distinguished. Both assumptions are equally and entirely without foundation.

In the same year also Mr Bradlaugh held a written discussion with the Rev. John Lightfoot, of Wolverhampton, on the subject of Eternal Torment. This controversy consisted of four letters from

* From the *Darlington and Stockton Times*.

each disputant, and was printed in the *National Reformer;* it was afterwards issued in pamphlet form, and is still obtainable.

In 1877 he had too much work to allow him to indulge in public discussions on theological subjects, but in 1878 he held a debate with the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, a Unitarian minister much respected in Nottingham. This encounter was the result of a lecture given by Mr Bradlaugh in Nottingham in defence of Atheism, and as a reply to some lectures delivered by Professor Max Müller under the Hibbert Trust. Mr Armstrong offered some opposition at the close of Mr Bradlaugh's address, and a debate was suggested. Nothing further was said at the time, but the local Secular Society took the matter up, and pressed Mr Armstrong in such "courteous and earnest terms," that after consultation with his friends, he agreed to accept the challenge. The subject selected for discussion was, "Is it reasonable to worship God?" and the time appointed was the 5th and 6th of September. The debate was a great success, not indeed as furnishing the audience with a cut-and-dried answer "Yes" or "No" to the question argued by the disputants—a result rarely, if ever, attained—but both sides of the question were put forward with a calm and serious earnestness which must have been very pleasant to listen to. Mr G. B. Rothera made an admirably impartial chairman, and the audience, which crowded every corner of the Co-operative Hall long before the hour fixed for commencement, listened throughout with close and appreciative attention.

On the morning of the 5th Mr Bradlaugh had gone early to Coldbath Fields Prison to attend the release of Edward Truelove from his six months' imprisonment in defence of a free press. It had been a dull, close morning, damp with the rain which had not long ceased falling; inside the gaol the chaplain, not seeing my father and Mr Truelove's son, had sneered at the crowd of Freethinkers waiting in the damp and gloomy street without; had sneered, too, at the Freethinker, the prisoner, within, whose age might have been his protection. This was a sorry preparation for debate, but when the evening was over my father said, "I left London in no mood for debating. Coldbath Fields atmosphere hung about me all day, but the debate, as far as the first night has gone, is the most pleasant one in which I have ever taken part."

The discussion was afterwards republished as a pamphlet, to which Mr Armstrong added, by invitation, a few prefatory words

giving his reasons for taking part in it, and suggesting books for study to those who wished to learn more of the positive argument for Theism and Worship.

The last debate in which Mr Bradlaugh took part prior to 1880 was one in the early part of March 1879, with the Rev. W. M. Westerby, a Congregational minister of Burnley. The subject agreed upon, and worded by Mr Westerby, was, "Has, or is, man a soul?" The chair was taken on each of the two evenings by the Rev. R. Littlehales, Baptist minister, and the audiences were large and orderly. "The Rev. R. Littlehales was thoroughly impartial," said Mr Bradlaugh, "quite doing his duty, but scarcely saying a word that was not absolutely necessary." Of his opponent Mr Westerby, he spoke as "an able speaker, with considerable tact and judgment, and showing the utmost courtesy." The proceeds were given to the Blackburn and East Lancashire Infirmary, without any deduction for the expenses of the disputants. That was all very well as far as Mr Westerby was concerned, for the discussion took place in his own town; but Mr Bradlaugh had to journey from London to Burnley at his own cost, and pay his own hotel expenses. This heavy tax he rightly regarded as unreasonable, and such as should not have been demanded of him, nevertheless he thought the result was worth the sacrifice, and was glad he had made it. Indeed, this debate is regarded by many as one of the best in which Mr Bradlaugh ever took part. Amongst them, the Burnley and Preston papers gave about thirty-five columns of report; leading articles were written and sermons were preached upon the subject, and in that part of Lancashire, at least, the arguments were pretty thoroughly discussed. A verbatim report was published,* and in that and in a little pamphlet† issued many years before this discussion, Mr Bradlaugh's position on the question of the "soul" is fully set out.

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* "Has, or is, Man a Soul?" Two nights' debate with Rev. W. M. Westerby.

† "Has Man a Soul?" Theological Essays by C. Bradlaugh, vol. i.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME LATER LECTURES.

Mr Bradlaugh addressed an audience in Oxford for the first time early in May 1875, when he spoke upon the subject of "Land and Labour." Some difficulty had been made as to the use of the Town Hall, and a smaller hall, known as the Holywell Music Room, was engaged. A number of undergraduates put in an appearance, but as Mr A. R. Cluer, who was also present, observed, it was evident that they had come "more with the intention of attempting to interrupt than to listen quietly. But after the first few sallies of undergraduate wit had been effectively met and replied to by Mr Bradlaugh, in which encounters the laugh always remained on his side, the audience was tolerably peaceful." The Oxford papers gave their different versions of the lecture, but they all joined in the announcement that the chairman was a sweep by trade, whereat my father immediately wrote, "If Mr Hines is not ashamed to again preside for me, I shall be glad to ask him to take the chair at my next meeting." The "next meeting" followed close on the heels of the first, for on the 26th Mr Bradlaugh was again in Oxford, speaking in a room crowded to excess, upon the subject of "One Hundred Years of Tory Rule." The majority of the audience was composed of undergraduates, and the interruption kept up by these gentlemen in embryo was so continuous that "a complete sentence was almost impossible." Appeals to the good sense and decency of the audience were in vain; cigars and pipes were lit and smoked; shouts, yells, hisses, and insulting remarks were continued throughout the lecture. One of the most prominent of the disturbers was said to be Lord Lymington, son of the Earl of Portsmouth, who not only himself misbehaved, but also encouraged others to do likewise. In January 1877 my father was once more in Oxford, lecturing this time in the Town Hall. Again the undergraduates mustered for a disturbance, and at one time, when

a townsman was knocked down by a gownsman, it seemed as though a general *melée* was imminent.* This time, however, firmness and good temper brought all things right, and the lecture was allowed to come to a peaceful termination. It was succeeded by a sharp fire of questions, enjoyed no less by the person questioned than by the questioners.

A subject which Mr Bradlaugh lectured upon very much in 1876, especially during the early part of the year, was the Suez Canal. He had only just returned from America when he learned privately of the purchase by the English Government of the Viceroy of Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal. Ill as he was—he was just convalescent from typhoid fever—he at once gave a lecture protesting against the purchase, a protest in which for some time he stood quite alone. He wrote a stirring article asking, "Why should the people of England pay £4,000,000 to the Viceroy of Egypt?" and he lectured against the purchase week after week. About four or five weeks later others also began to protest. Sir Geo. Campbell, M.P., in the the *Fortnightly Review*, was one of the first to take ground against the Government. Inspired by Mr Bradlaugh, resolutions of protest were passed in different parts of the country, and so thoroughly did public opinion change that by the end of March the *Standard* itself was corroborating statements my father had made early in January.

An amusing circumstance happened at Darwen when Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing there in the summer of 1876. A foolish Christian challenged him to pay a visit of consolation to an old bed-ridden woman named Peggy Jepson, and offered him a sovereign if he would go. Amidst much laughter and cheering, he took the sovereign, and carried it straight to the old woman, who was of course surprised and delighted beyond measure with the unexpected gift; this was a form of "consolation" which met with her decided approval. Not so with the Christian challenger, however. He was so irritated that he threatened

* Although the lecture was purely political, the subject being "National Taxation," the *Oxford Times* attempted to justify this rowdyism by saying, "A man who identifies himself with a creed which denies the doctrine of reward and punishment in the future life cannot reasonably expect toleration here."

Mr Bradlaugh with County Court proceedings for the return of his pound.

At the end of September in this year my father and Mrs Besant had been invited to lecture at Congleton on two successive evenings, and to be the guests of Mr and Mrs Wolstenholme Elmy, at Buglawton, during their stay. The Town Hall having been refused for their lectures, the Salford Mill, an old silk mill, was engaged. Mr Bradlaugh spoke the first evening on "The right to speak and the right to think," but a certain section of the inhabitants of Congleton thought so little of these rights that they kept up a perpetual din outside the mill, and smashed the windows by throwing stones. While the attention of those on the platform was distracted by the removal of a little child out of reach of the falling glass, some coward threw something at Mrs Besant, striking her a severe blow on the back of her head. After the lecture the little party had a mile and a half to walk to Buglawton, which they did accompanied by a noisy crowd, which alternately used language of opprobrium and sang "Safe in the arms of Jesus." When the escort got too demonstrative Mr Bradlaugh and Mr Elmy turned about and faced them, and then, like sheep, the crowd turned about too. A woman was struck full in the face by a Methodist shoemaker, whom she had detected in the act of throwing mud and had reproved. At the house the crowd remained yelling outside until midnight. But if Monday (the first night) was bad, Tuesday was worse, because the rioting was more organised. For two hours before the lecture a crowd assembled in front of Mr Elmy's gate, hooting impartially every one seen entering or leaving the house. A cab had been engaged to drive to the mill where Mrs Besant was to lecture, although she was still suffering from the hurt of the evening before, and as they got into the vehicle a volley of stones was thrown, but fortunately no one was hurt. During the lecture eight persons came in together, and it was soon evident that a thorough disturbance was planned. One of the new-comers shouted, "Put her out," and as this seemed the signal for a fight, my father said sternly that the next one who interrupted should be put out. A man named Burbery, a local tradesman and well-known wrestler who boasted his prize cups, invited Mr Bradlaugh to make the attempt upon him. My father saw that if the lecture was to go

on something must be done, and that quickly, so he descended from the platform, and laying hands upon the champion, after a short struggle ejected him, and handed him over to the charge of the police outside. The audience inside cheered and hooted; the crowd outside yelled and threw stones—one of which, striking Mrs Elmy, cut her severely over the right eye. The excitement subsided in a few minutes, however, and the lecture concluded, and discussion was held in perfect quiet and order. An attempt was made at Mr Elmy's house to repeat the scene of the night before, but my father and his host went out, and at length succeeded in frightening the disturbers away.

I was myself present on one occasion when Mr Bradlaugh had himself to put some rufflers out of a hall in Newman Street, London. In June 1877 a meeting on the Population question was held at Cambridge Hall, and was attended by a number of medical students from, I believe, the Middlesex Hospital. There was a crowded meeting, and there were, in addition to my father, several speakers, both men and women. Several of the medical students got up to move amendments, and in the midst of a very coarse speech by one of them, some of his friends at the side commenced to flourish thick sticks, and emphasize their opinions by bringing these same sticks into contact with the heads of the peaceful members of the audience. A general fight seemed imminent, when Mr Bradlaugh in commanding tones requested every one to keep his seat, and himself going up to the ringleaders, seized three of them by their collars—two in one hand and one in the other—and partly carrying, partly pushing them down the hall, cast them out of the door amidst cheers of delight from the audience.* The students who remained ventured on no more disturbance, and the meeting proceeded in peace and order.

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* Dr Nichols had an amusing article on this meeting in the *Living Age*. "The juvenile sawbones," he said, "climbed upon the platform and moved their amendments with admirable audacity. They had not much to say, and they did not know how to say what they had thought of saying; but they mounted the breach bravely enough for all that. And the Malthusian majority behaved very well—much better than English audiences usually do when there is opposition. In the sudden charge that swept the forlorn hope out of the fortress, it looked for a few moments as if there might be a case for the coroner, but Mr Bradlaugh's disciples were mindful of his teachings."

In the autumns of 1877 and 1878 Mr Bradlaugh took my sister and me with him on a lecturing tour he was making in Scotland with Mrs Besant. These tours were a sort of combination of work and holiday, in which the work was to pay for the holiday, and they were both greatly enjoyed by us all. We went as far north as Aberdeen, and came south as far as Hawick. In several of the towns we visited—notably at Perth and Edinburgh—we found kind and hearty friends equally eager to make the holiday part of our visit as great a success as the work itself.

The arrangements were all well made, and it was not until the second visit that any serious hitch arose, and that came unexpectedly at Edinburgh. In 1877 Professor Flint had delivered a series of lectures on "Theism," under the auspices of the Baird Trustees. My father wrote some replies to them, and on sending the first to Professor Flint he received this kindly letter in acknowledgment :—

"Johnstone Lodge, Craigmillar Park,
"Edinburgh, December 25th, 1877.

"SIR,—I thank you kindly for sending me a copy of the *National Reformer* for December 23rd. I shall read with interest any criticisms you may be pleased to make on my book on 'Theism,' and I shall endeavour to answer them in a note or notes to the volume on 'Anti-theistic Theories,' a copy of which will be forwarded to you. I regret that my time will not allow me to do more than this.—Thanking you sincerely for your personal courtesy towards me, from whose views you so thoroughly dissent, I am, Sir, yours very truly, R. FLINT.

"C. BRADLAUGH."

In the autumn of 1878 Mr Bradlaugh determined to take one of Professor Flint's lectures, "Is belief in God reasonable?" and make some reply to it from an Edinburgh platform. The Music Hall was duly engaged, the lectures were advertised for the 26th and 27th of September, and everything promised successful meetings both for himself and for Mrs Besant. On the 23rd, however, the directors of the hall cancelled the hiring. As Mrs Besant's subject was "Christianity : Immoral in Theory and Demoralising in Practice," it was thought at the outset that the refusal was on her account, but a special mention of the subject of Mr Bradlaugh's lecture in the letter written by the directors contradicted this impression. The Edinburgh Freethinkers were indignant; they sought legal advice, but found they had no redress. Professor

Flint's lectures had been largely attended and fully reported in the Scotch papers, but of course he had argued in the affirmative. The Committee who had arranged the lectures for Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant then went to the Artillery Hall, and explained all the circumstances; the hall was then hired and paid for, but on the same afternoon the hall-keeper returned the money, saying that the proprietors would not let it for the purposes required, and further, that he was instructed to have the place "guarded by police" on the Thursday and Friday evenings. Many fruitless attempts were made to obtain a hall. On Thursday Mrs Besant's lecture had to be abandoned, and we went to the theatre instead, whilst a large number of persons, who had not seen the notices of postponement, assembled at the Artillery Hall. The Society of Arts Hall was obtained for Friday, and when this was known, much pressure was put upon the proprietors to rescind their contract; they held out until the afternoon, then they also gave way and refused the hall, and when the audience came in the evening they found the doors locked and the place under police protection. At last Mr Bradlaugh wrote to Professor Flint, shortly stating the case, and appealing to his sense of fair play to aid him in procuring a platform in Edinburgh where he might reply to his arguments. To this letter he received the following reply:—

"Edinburgh, September 30, 1878.

"SIR,—It appears to me that you have very good reason to complain of the injustice of the persons who, after granting you the use of their halls, cancelled their contracts. I sincerely regret the treatment you have met with in Edinburgh in this respect. I have no influence, however, with the directors of public halls in this city, and therefore cannot do more than assure you that I cordially wish you the fullest liberty you can desire to discuss and criticise my lectures on Theism. The more freely the grounds of religious belief are examined from all points of view the better.—I am, etc.

R. FLINT."

One immediate outcome of this exhibition of intolerance was an offer, publicly made and advertised in the *Scotsman*, of a sum of £500 towards the building of a hall in which free discussion might be held.

Mr Bradlaugh lectured many times in Edinburgh both before and after this date, but, as far as I am aware, this is the only time on which he had any difficulty about obtaining a hall to speak in.

Many Scarborough people will recall the fuss made over Mr Bradlaugh's lecture there in the Old Town Hall on "Eternal Hope and Eternal Torment" in April 1879. A protest, signed by nearly every clergyman in the borough, was sent to the Corporation. That Mr Bradlaugh should lecture in a public building belonging to the town was, said these intolerant clerics, "a public scandal," and "a most serious outrage upon the convictions of the rate-payers." The Mayor moved that this protest be entered upon the Minutes, but there were only five votes in favour of his motion, and it was therefore rejected. My father lectured in Scarborough in 1882 on "Perpetual Pensions," and was to have lectured there again in 1889, but this engagement had to be cancelled in consequence of his serious illness.

CHAPTER VII.

LUNATICS.

I SUPPOSE that all public men are more or less troubled with lunatic correspondents and lunatic visitors, so that in this respect Mr Bradlaugh was in no way singular; but perhaps they gave him more trouble than most men because he was so easy of access. Any one who wished to see him had only to knock at the door, to ask, and to be admitted if my father were at home.

Letters from insane persons were of constant occurrence, but they were soon disposed of—the wastepaper basket was large and was always at hand. There was one man, however, who wrote my father daily for years; indeed, sometimes he would write twice in a day. His letters were without coherence, written on scraps of paper of all shapes and sizes, and I do not remember that he ever gave either his name or his address.

But if there was the ever-hospitable wastepaper basket ready to receive a lunatic's letters, a lunatic visitor needed to be treated more discreetly. This was especially the case at Turner Street, where the room was small, and there was not much space in which to move about. When a visitor called he was usually requested to be seated at the side of the writing-table opposite my father. The chairs were few, and if the visitors were many, some had to sit on piles of books or pamphlets.

One day a man called at Turner Street, and was asked to sit down in the customary way. My father inquired his business, and without going much into detail the visitor explained, with a queer, uncertain look in his eyes, that he had "a mission from God" to kill him; and thereupon he drew out a formidable-looking knife. Mr Bradlaugh examined the man's face, and saw that it was no foolish hoax being played upon him. There was a quiet determination about his would-be murderer that was anything but reassuring.

The chair in which my father always sat was an old-fashioned, high-backed oaken chair, with arms, and from the back at the right hand hung, suspended by a strap, his heavy Colt's revolver; between himself and the lunatic was the small writing-table, 27 inches wide. My father carefully felt behind him until he felt the revolver under his fingers, and then he quietly asked the man if he was quite sure that God had given him this mission. Yes, the man said; he was "quite sure." "Have you consulted any one about it?" "No," was the reply. "Don't you think it would be better to do so?" gently insinuated Mr Bradlaugh; "I should be inclined to talk it over with some one—with the Archbishop of Canterbury, for instance—were I in your place. You see it might be rather awkward afterwards if there should happen to be any mistake about the matter."

This apparently was a view of the case which had not previously occurred to the lunatic, but he promptly accepted it, and announced his determination to go to Lambeth Palace forthwith; and it was with a perceptible feeling of relief that my father heard the street door close upon his visitor. He knew that there was no danger to the Archbishop, as there was no probability of such a man being allowed to see him.

Mr Bradlaugh had had a case a little before this of which the circumstances were rather peculiar. A man named John Sladen came up from his home in Cheshire on Thursday, March 31st, 1870, and in the evening he went to the New Hall of Science in Old Street, where a social gathering was about to be held to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the publication of the *National Reformer*. Before the proceedings commenced, John Sladen made himself known to Mr Austin Holyoake, to whom he was previously an entire stranger, and asked him if he could speak with Mr Bradlaugh for a few minutes. Mr Holyoake introduced him to Mr Bradlaugh, who took him into a private room. In the course of conversation Sladen informed my father that he had determined to kill the Queen, giving as his chief reason (if my memory serves me) that she wanted to marry him. Mr Bradlaugh returned to Mr Holyoake, and explained the state of affairs to him, and they both agreed that the police ought to be informed, so my father went to the police station and saw the inspector, who sent an officer in plain clothes to the Hall. In order to avoid any disturbance amongst the people present, Sladen

was allowed to remain until ten o'clock, when, as Mr Holyoake said, the police officer "very adroitly got him away." Sladen was so sensible on most matters that at first the police were disinclined to believe in his madness, but before the night was out they had more than sufficient proof. On the following morning Mr Bradlaugh telegraphed to Sladen's friends, and went himself to the police station to see that he was properly cared for. Eventually he was sent to Hanwell Asylum, and on the earliest opportunity he wrote reproaching my father. Of course he did not think he was mad, and he told Mr Bradlaugh that as he had been the means of putting him in the Asylum, it was his duty to get him out, or at any rate to send him papers to read. Later on my father communicated with Dr Bayley, the physician to the Asylum, who assured him that Sladen was not fit to be released, and that any political reading would be calculated to excite him and retard his cure. But a few years later I believe he was allowed to have the *National Reformer*. My father never lost sight of him; he used to send to the Asylum to make enquiries, and Sladen also wrote to him occasionally; he always felt Sladen's to be a sad case, and was oppressed by a feeling of responsibility in the matter just because he was the one to hand him over to the police. Of course there was a small public sensation about the matter, which the newspapers did their best to fan into a big one at Mr Bradlaugh's expense. The east end of London was posted with large placards announcing "A Threat to murder the Queen at the New Hall of Science." * An evening paper † giving a report of the proceedings, told how Sladen "heard Mr Bradlaugh lecture" at the Hall of Science, and *after the lecture* told Mr Bradlaugh of his determination to kill the Queen. The next morning this report was repeated, but with additional embellishments. Now it was said that Sladen "went to hear a lecture by Mr Bradlaugh, and soon afterwards burst into threats of such violence towards Her Majesty that he was taken into custody as a dangerous lunatic." ‡ That there was no lecture at the Hall that evening, that there was no bursting out into threats of violence,

* This was done by the *Eastern Post*.

† The *Pall Mall Gazette*. Mr Austin Holyoake wrote a short letter contradicting this report, and giving the simple facts of the case, but his letter was not inserted.

‡ *Daily News*.

that Sladen spoke to Mr Bradlaugh *before*, and not *after*, the commencement of the evening's proceedings, were of course matters of mere detail, without value when compared with the opportunity of raising a prejudice against Mr Bradlaugh. Similarly, when the lad O'Connor tried to frighten the Queen with an empty pistol, it was said that probably a large "share of the mischief was caused by the lad's attendance on the lectures of a notorious Infidel and Republican lecturer. whose inflammatory discourses, falling on a weak, excitable, untrained mind, produced the natural effect and goaded him on to mischief."* That there was no evidence that the lad had ever attended any such lectures was apparently of small importance.

At Circus Road I can recall several mad visitors: one in shirt sleeves and leather apron, who offered to reveal a secret to Mr Bradlaugh whereby he might become possessed of millions; another, a little old lady, who told with a mysterious air how she was "the Secret History;" another, who was so noisy that he had to be put out, and who then remained in the street below shouting out that Mr Bradlaugh had ill-used him, till he brought out all the neighbours to their doors, and the commotion he raised threatened to hinder the traffic. Then there were some who claimed to be descendants of one or other of the Brunswicks, and as such entitled to the Crown; but provided they were quietly listened to, these gave little trouble save in the time they wasted.

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* *City Press.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "WATCH" STORY.

THERE have been some fictions so pertinaciously circulated about Mr Bradlaugh that any story of his life would be incomplete without some reference to them. Lies are so proverbially hard to kill, however, that I dare not feel confident that even an exposure of them here will altogether discredit these old favourites, but at least I hope that it may have some little effect.

I think the most popular of all these is what has come to be known as "the watch story," and for this reason I have taken the trouble to trace back its history, not exactly to its origin, but for the last hundred years or so. The defiance of Deity, which is really only the converse of the prayer, is a very ancient idea, and the old stories mostly ended in the punishment or death of the person who so rashly defied the Omnipotent. The so-called Atheist who, in the time of the French Revolution, defied God to prevent him drinking his cup of wine, was struck dead to the ground, and the cup was dashed untasted from his lips. Even during this century, as late as 1849 or 1850, the story was told of a wicked soldier who rode out of the ranks, and turning his horse's head, faced his companions, exclaiming, "If there be a God, let Him now prove it by striking me dead before you." In a few minutes this rash young man was a corpse—a victim to the wrath of an outraged Deity and a solemn warning to his comrades.

When this fable is related, not of vague personalities such as the "Atheist" or the "wicked soldier," but of actual living persons, the termination has to be amended,* and the moral loses

* As late as January 1884, however, Mr Bradlaugh noted a case reported in several newspapers of a private in the Hampshire Regiment, who cried, "God strike me blind!" and who thereupon "felt drowsy, and stretched

something of its point. The first time that it was told of Mr Bradlaugh was, as far as I can trace, in the year 1867. There was at that time a certain Conservative journal called the *British Monarchy*, the editor of which, desiring to damage the Reform League, expressed his opinion in choice and elegant language that the meetings of the League gave

"An opportunity to the roughs of the Metropolis to sack the shops, ... goaded on by the fool who says in his heart there is 'no God,' which reminds us," he went on, "of a fact related of a resigned leading member of the Reform League, and the supposed projector of the 'Good Friday meeting'* of this year. This would-be lawgiver and law-maker, travelling on the Great Eastern Railway, was as usual endeavouring to propagate his hateful opinions. He had the presumption to offer, it is said, as a proof of his assertion that 'there is no God,' the fact that if, on taking out his watch from his pocket, he held it in his hand for some minutes and was not struck dead, it would be conclusive evidence of the truth of his opinions. He was not struck dead because of God's long-suffering mercy. He reminds us of Pharaoh ; may he escape his fate.!"

Mr Bradlaugh never by any chance sought to propagate his opinions in a railway carriage, nor was he ever guilty of "such ridiculous folly," as he contemptuously termed it, as that attributed to him by the *British Monarchy*. Long before this story was attached to Mr Bradlaugh's name it was told of Abner Kneeland, the Pantheist and abolitionist in America ; indeed, the defiance of Deity in this particular manner is said to have originated in a story told by an American of Abner Kneeland.† It was ascribed to Mrs Emma Martin,‡ a Freethought speaker in England, who

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himself on his bed, but when he attempted to open his eyes, he found he could not do so, and he has since been wholly deprived of the use of his eyes. He was conveyed to the Haslar Military Hospital, where he remains." As this was tolerably definite, inquiries were made at the Hospital. In answer to these, the principal wrote: "There is no truth whatever in the statement, and the lad who is supposed to have sworn never swore at all. He has a weak right eye ; it was slightly inflamed—the result of a cold—but he is now quite well. He is very indignant and hurt at the statement, and, if he did swear, he is not blind."

* Mr Bradlaugh was neither the projector nor the advocate of the Good Friday promenade.

† Kneeland died in 1844. The tale was repeatedly contradicted.

‡ Emma Martin died in 1857. In her case also it was contradicted.

was eulogised by Mr G. J. Holyoake as "beautiful in expression, quick in wit, strong in will, eloquent in speech, coherent in connection, and of a stainless character, she was incomparable among public women." It was related again and again of Mr G. J. Holyoake, who wrote a denial of it as early as January 1854. Many times also was the challenge ascribed to Mrs Harriet Law, a lecturer on the Freethought platform thirty years ago; and later, when Mrs Besant came into the movement, she was made to play the part of heroine in this affecting drama, although, as she herself pointed out, "there is one very queer thing about the story; it never appears in any report given at the time of any lecture, and no one speaks of having heard the challenge the day, week, or month, or year after it was done. The pious Christian always heard it about twenty years ago, and has kept it locked in his bosom ever since." *

From 1867, when the *British Monarchy* first associated this story with Mr Bradlaugh's name, down to 1880, when my father commenced a prosecution against a man named Edgcumbe, not a single year passed without some repetition of it. Since this prosecution, although it still occasionally shows signs of life, it is not nearly so vigorous. The story was circulated, not merely by vulgar and irresponsible purveyors of slander, but even by persons whose position gave an air of unimpeachable veracity to anything they might choose to say.

The first person to relate the "watch" story orally of Mr Bradlaugh was Mr Charles Capper, M.P., who, as it may be remembered, told it with some detail at a public meeting at Sandwich during the general election of 1868, giving the name of Mr Charles Gilpin as his authority.† My father at once wrote to Mr Capper that he had read his speech "with indignation, but without surprise, for no inventions on the part of my enemies would now surprise me." He had, he said, "seen Mr Charles Gilpin, and so far as he is concerned, I have his distinct authority to entirely deny that he ever told you anything of the kind, and I have therefore to apply to you for an immediate retraction of and apology for your cowardly falsehood, which has been industriously circulated in Northampton, and which could only have

* *National Reformer*, June 6th, 1880.

† *Deal and Sandwich Mercury*, Sept. 26.

been uttered with the view of doing me injury in my candidature in that borough. Permit me to add, that I never in my life (either in Northampton or any other place) have uttered any phrase affording a colour of justification for the monstrous words you put in my mouth."

But Mr Charles Capper would not retract, and would not apologise, so Mr Bradlaugh, who felt all the more incensed about this, because of the dragging in of Mr Gilpin's name as authority for the slander, brought an action against him. Before it could be brought into Court, however, Mr Capper died.

In the December of the same year, during the hearing of the proceedings in the *Razor* libel case, the counsel for the defendant Brooks asked Mr Bradlaugh, in cross-examination, "Did you not once at a public lecture take out your watch and defy the Deity, if he had an existence, to strike you dead in a certain number of minutes?" "Never. Such a suggestion is utterly unjustifiable," was my father's indignant answer.

In the winter of 1869, the Rev. P. R. Jones, M.A., of Trinity Church, Huddersfield, added the weight of his authority to the slander. The municipal elections were about to take place, and the cry of "infidel" had been raised against one of the candidates for the West Ward. Hence, on the Sunday immediately before the election, Mr Jones preached a sermon against "infidels" and "infidelity," and, as an "apt illustration of his subject," he charged Mr Bradlaugh with the watch episode. When this came to the ears of the Huddersfield Secular Society, they lost no time in writing to ask Mr Jones whether he had indeed made such a statement concerning Mr Bradlaugh. This, said the *Huddersfield Examiner*, the reverend gentleman had not "the manliness to admit . . . nor even the courtesy to acknowledge the receipt of the secretary's letter." The Committee of the local Secular Society waited for seven days, and then appointed a deputation to wait upon the Rev. Mr Jones. The editor of the *Examiner* observed that the explanation then given by that gentleman was "not very satisfactory, and I do not wonder he was so tardy about making it. He had heard the absurd story some years ago, but the person who told it to him had left Huddersfield; and on such slender authority as this he brought a charge of using sense-

less and blasphemous words against Mr Bradlaugh." The Rev. P. R. Jones, M.A., in the course of his duties must have preached obedience to the ninth commandment, but he evidently did not always enforce his teachings by a personal example.

Just about the same time another clergyman, the Rev. Dr Harrison of St James's Church, Latchford, in a sermon preached upon that favourite but not very polite text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," was reported* to have told the story, with a slight variation, of some unnamed person.

"What did they think of a man at Manchester," he asked, "standing up at a public assembly and opening the Bible in the presence of the people, and saying if the Bible was true he hoped God would strike him dead? That was in the newspapers not long ago. A creature, a worm, a being dependent upon the Almighty, raising his puny arm against the Deity, asking God to strike him dead if the Bible were true. It would not have been a wonder if God had struck him dead; the wonder was that God should be so merciful as to let him live."

When the Rev. Dr Harrison was challenged as to the name of the man, the time, and place of the occurrence, and the names of the newspapers which reported it, he could of course give no satisfactory authority for his statements.

In the summer of 1870 the *Christian*, in a tirade against infidelity, stated that "the well-known Atheist Bradlaugh, at a public meeting in London, is reported to have taken out his watch, with these words, 'If there be a God in heaven, I give Him five minutes to strike me dead.'" Upon this being brought under his notice, my father said that he was "really weary with contradicting this monstrous lie."

The *Liverpool Porcupine* in the same year gave a startling variation on the ordinary version. A certain unnamed person—by implication, Mr Bradlaugh—"called on the Almighty, if he had any existence, to strike dead *some relative*, and thus prove his power." The *Porcupine* forgot that it is the Christian creed which teaches the doctrine of the scapegoat, and even the sacrifice of a relative. It forms no part whatever of Atheistic teachings.

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* *Crewe Guardian.*

The Rev. R. S. Cathcart, agent to the Religious Tract Society, in addressing a meeting in the Corn Exchange, Gloucester, in the autumn of 1871, lamented the spread of infidelity in the north of England, where, he said, it was encouraged by a "blatant orator, Bradlaugh, from London." He added that there was even "one poor benighted woman" who "had actually produced her watch and challenged God, if, she said, there be one, to appear before them on the platform at a given time." Mr Cathcart, on being asked as to the when, and where, and the woman, failed to make reply.

The next carrier of the slander was an important one. The *Financial Reformer* for the December of the same year (1871) described Mr Bradlaugh as "the superenlightened gentleman who pulled out his watch at an open-air meeting and challenged Almighty God to strike him dead within five minutes, if God there were." My father was becoming somewhat accustomed to having this accusation made by persons who wished to make out a case against the "infidel," but to find it in the *Financial Reformer* was an unexpected blow. He wrote a courteous letter to the editor, but the editor made no reply; he wrote to Mr Robertson Gladstone, the president of the council publishing the paper, but Mr Robertson Gladstone left the letter without notice. At length, thoroughly angry, he wrote to the printers, threatening legal proceedings. A proof of an "apology" already in type was sent him, but it was not such as he felt he could accept, and he wrote to the printer to that effect. The apology was then somewhat amended, and with the copy of the *Financial Reformer* containing it the editor sent a letter to Mr Bradlaugh, conveying a frank and full expression of his regret. Upon receiving this my father forgave not only the offence, but the tardiness of the acknowledgment, and, moreover, expressed his sense of indebtedness to the editor for his apology.

The *Stourbridge Observer* of about the same date also repeated the watch story of "Bradlaugh," and, with incredible coarseness, added that "he has been known on another occasion to stop a lame man in the streets, and tell him that he would spit upon such a God as his that would allow him to remain in that deplorable condition." Mr Bradlaugh, at the request of his Stourbridge

friends, specifically contradicted both these stories; but, he added, it was too much to expect him to continually contradict every scandalous calumny to which the press gave ready circulation against him.

One of the next places in which the story appeared was Dudley, where, in the winter of 1873, during my father's absence in America, it was related by the Rev. B. M. Kitson, who apparently introduced it into a speech for the benefit of the Additional Curates' Aid Society. He located the episode at the Hall of Science in Old Street, City Road. As soon as Mr Bradlaugh could obtain the reverend gentleman's address after his return to England, he wrote requesting Mr Kitson to retract, or to furnish him with the name of his solicitor. Mr Kitson retracted the statement, and expressed his regret for having made it.

In the spring of 1874, the Rev. Mr Herring related the tale to some school children at a school near Goswell Road, and in the following August the Rev. Edgar N. Thwaites, of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, carried it to Salisbury.

A month later, the *Weekly News*, in referring to the Northampton election, remarked that Northampton was specially prominent, "because Mr Bradlaugh, the Radical orator who challenged the Almighty to strike him dead, has appeared in person." Anything is fair in war or elections, some people seem to think.

In the following year the Rev. Mr Cripps, of the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Thetford, started a new variation on the old theme. At the end of one of Mr Bradlaugh's lectures, a smith "fresh from work," induced him to go down on one knee (the narrator was extremely precise in unimportant details) and proposed that they should pray to God to "strike him dead in five minutes." This proposal seems to have somewhat disturbed Mr Bradlaugh, for according to Mr Cripps, he "jumped up, picked up his hat, and rushed out of the building." The Rev. Mr Cripps, on being challenged by Mr Bradlaugh, referred him to another minister as his authority—the Rev. M. Normandale, of Downham Market, Norfolk; and, moreover, refusing to accept Mr Bradlaugh's "unsupported denial," adhered to his statement.

The next person to repeat the watch story—but without naming the "infidel"—was, I deeply regret to say, the Rev. Basil Wilberforce, at Southampton. The local Freethinkers were justly indignant, and Mr J. F. Rayner, the Secretary of the Southampton Secular Society, at once flatly contradicted the tale. The only reparation Mr Wilberforce thought it necessary to make was to say that he was "glad to hear it was not true," and this offhand mode of disposing of the matter did not do much to soothe the irritated feeling of the Southampton Freethinkers. The liberality and kindly-heartedness of the late Rev. C. E. Steward, Vicar of St Peter's, in great measure disarmed their anger; and later on Canon Wilberforce himself learned to hold the Freethinkers of the district, as well as Mr Bradlaugh, in respect, and in consequence taught them in turn to respect him.

A man at Longton in 1876, whose name I do not know, brought the story to a finer point. Hitherto it had always been told on the authority of some second person, but this man appears to have deliberately stated that he *saw* Mr Bradlaugh pull out his watch, and *heard* him defy God to strike him dead. This manner of telling the tale in the first person soon found favour, for only a few months later a phrenologist, calling himself Professor Pasquil, was reported to have said that he was present at Huddersfield when Mr Bradlaugh went through the performance before several hundred persons. He must have "the bump of falsehood splendidly developed," commented Mr Bradlaugh. "No such event, or anything to justify it, ever took place anywhere; it is a deliberate untruth." The myth was repeated in the same year at Haughley by a Mr Scarff, and in the following year at Bristol, where there seemed to be some confusion as to whether it was Mr Bradlaugh or Mrs Besant who was the chief actor; Mrs Besant's name being now introduced for the first time. "This story is a deliberate lie," wrote my father in a state of exasperation, "and has been formally contradicted at least one hundred times."

At length, in the spring of 1877, the Rev. Dr Parker, of the City Temple, took the matter into his fostering charge. It left his lips, if the report* of his sermon is to be believed, in a form the

* *Northern Ensign*, May 17.

coarseness of which quite equalled, if it did not transcend, all that had gone before. Said he—

"There is a woman going up and down the country lecturing, and may be in London city at this moment, and she proudly cries out that there is no God, and she takes out her watch and says, 'Now, if there be a God, I give him five minutes to strike me dead,' and she coolly stands watching the hand of her watch dial, and because she is not struck dead by the time she stipulates, she cries out that there is no God; and working men run after this woman, and pay for listening to this ginger-beer blasphemy, and the ravings of a half-drunken woman."

Mr Bradlaugh offered Dr Parker the use of the columns of the *National Reformer* in which to verify his statement, but, needless to say, Dr Parker did not avail himself of this offer.

In 1878 the fable was told by "H. Clewarth, Esq.," at the Mile End Assembly Hall, of Mrs Besant, and by a revivalist preacher named E. B. Telford of Mrs Harriet Law. Mr Telford also indulged in the effective first person, even mentioning the detail that the watch was a gold one.*

Now we come to a still further development. In June 1879, Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in Huddersfield. He spoke three times on the Sunday, and at the conclusion of his afternoon discourse a man got up, and with the utmost assurance pretended to my father's face that he had heard him defy God to strike him dead in the Philosophical Hall of Huddersfield itself. A Christian gentleman, understood to be the editor of the local *Examiner*, rose and warmly repudiated any complicity in this audacious falsehood. Almost at the same time the story, with variations, was repeated by a preacher of Aberdeen named Marr. He gave as his authority a certain unknown person, John Kinch, who, it was asserted, had been actually present when Mr Bradlaugh thus defied God.

I have been able to note here only recorded instances of the telling of this story, but they will serve to show the astounding vitality of a slander, even when it is one so monstrously absurd as this. It will be seen how people of all kinds lent themselves to its circulation, and how reluctant they were to apologise when convicted of error. I am far from asserting that they all uttered the

* This person was still telling this story in December 1883.

calumny knowing it to be a calumny; that, in the case of such a man as the Rev. Basil Wilberforce, would be unthinkable; but I do say that they did not take reasonable pains to satisfy themselves of the truth of a story which, on the face of it, was in the highest degree improbable and absurd.

When Mr Bradlaugh was elected to Parliament in 1880 the wildest tales were told about him, and, of course, amongst others the old "watch" story came up. A Leicester paper which published it retracted and apologised; but another, the *British Empire*, was less ready; my father, provoked beyond endurance, went to Bow Street and asked for a summons against S. C. Lister, a director, and J. Edgcumbe (or Edgcome), secretary to the *British Empire* Company. Edgcumbe was also the writer of the paragraph in which the episode was dramatically described. Mr Bradlaugh would have proceeded against the author only, but the libel was repeated in the paper on a later date, and therefore he felt that he could not excuse the directors. The summons was granted, and when the case came before the magistrate, after Mr Bradlaugh had made his opening statement, he went into the witness-box to declare there was not a word of truth in the paragraph. In the course of the cross-examination a rather amusing theological discussion arose between magistrate, counsel, and witness, in which the two former seemed quite unable to follow Mr Bradlaugh's reasoning. "One existence," Mr Vaughan thought, must mean "supreme existence;" failing that, counsel asked was it "mere actual physical existence"? My father was examined as to a number of places where the "watch" episode was alleged to have occurred, and about a man, John Field, then in court, who, induced by Mr Bradlaugh, was supposed to have prayed on his knees to God to strike him (Mr Bradlaugh) dead, whilst my father timed him, watch in hand. When, however, John Field, who called himself a Baptist minister, was in the witness-box, his replies were such that the magistrate said that he had better be withdrawn, as he could not possibly receive his evidence. A witness (Bridge) swore to having heard my father defy God in the manner alleged at Tavistock in 1853; but at the adjourned hearing, when he was wanted for cross-examination, he was not to be found. Amongst the witnesses were three from Northampton, who all swore they had heard my father make the challenge at various

times and places in Northampton. Two had travelled to London together, having their tickets taken for them by a local missionary; but at first they swore they knew nothing of each other, and the facts only came out gradually under cross-examination. At the end of the second day's hearing the defendants were committed for trial.* Mr Vaughan suggested that the charge should be withdrawn against Lister, as he was only a director. Mr Bradlaugh said, if Mr Lister would give his assurance that he knew nothing of the first or subsequent publications of the libel, he would be content to drop the charge against him. Mr Lister protested that he knew nothing of the matter, and Mr Bradlaugh was about to withdraw the charge when the defendants' counsel coolly asked that it should be dismissed with costs. I imagine, however, that at a later stage my father consented to withdraw the case against Lister, for the name of Edgcumbe only figures in the further proceedings.

The trial, which was removed by the defendants by *certiorari* to the Court of Queen's Bench, was expected to take place at the end of June, and, since prosecutors in Crown cases cannot personally address the jury or argue points of law, my father had to employ solicitors (Messrs Lewis) and counsel (Mr Charles Russell, Q.C., M.P., and Mr Moloney); Sir Hardinge Giffard was briefed to appear for Edgcumbe. After some delays, Edgcumbe was ordered to deliver his pleas within a certain time, so that the trial might come on in November. In these

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* The editor of the *Huddersfield Examiner*, commenting on the evidence, said: "We do not believe it, as we do not think Mr Bradlaugh such a fool as to make such a silly exhibition of himself; and because we know that similar things have been affirmed of him in Huddersfield. For instance, a person called at our office last week, stating that he had heard Mr Bradlaugh utter such a challenge, and saw him pull out his watch in the manner stated in the course of the debate with the Rev. Mr M'Cann in Huddersfield. To our certain knowledge no such occurrence ever took place, and yet the man making the statement appeared to be fully convinced that he had heard and seen what he described as having taken place, and he was prepared to give evidence on the subject if called upon to do so. . . . Imagination and feeling play a much larger part than reason in the mental operations of not a few well-meaning persons and allowance must be made for this when we hear such charges as that now made against Mr Bradlaugh. Strong dislike is felt by many against both the man and his opinions on religious subjects, and this exposes him to misrepresentation and injustice."

pleadings the episode was alleged to have taken place at The Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield, about 1860 or 1861; The Theatre, Northampton, 1860, 1862, 1863, 1865, or 1866; The Woolpack Inn, Northampton, 1859; The Corn Exchange, Northampton, 1865 or 1866; The Hall of Science, London, 1879 or 1880; The Cleveland Hall, London, 1865 or 1866; The Nelson Street Lecture Hall, Newcastle, 1875; Tavistock, 1853, 1854, or 1860; St George's Hall, Southwark, 1862 or 1863; St James' Hall, Plymouth, 1870; Duke of York Public House, Cardiff, 1868.

As the vagueness of these dates made it almost impossible to get rebutting evidence, Mr Bradlaugh demurred to the plea on this ground, and in March 1881 his demurrer was heard by Mr Justice Grove and Mr Justice Lindley. Mr Moloney argued for Mr Bradlaugh that the plea was not sufficiently particular: it was only necessary to prove one occasion to justify the libel, hence evidence had to be brought to negative every case, and Mr Justice Grove, intervening, said, "If this plea is good, what is to prevent a party from pleading a volume of instances all possibly untrue, and at all events putting it upon the prosecutor to discover the particular instance really intended to be relied upon?" Sir H. Giffard argued that the plea was sufficient, but the Court did not agree with him. It held that the plea was bad, and Mr Justice Lindley further said it was embarrassing and unfair. After some discussion the Court gave the defendant leave to amend within three weeks on payment of costs; otherwise judgment would be given for the Crown.

Edgcumbe now gave a series of more or less specific dates on which he alleged that Mr Bradlaugh had defied God. He also abandoned five of his former cases and introduced new ones at Bristol, Keighley, Leeds, and Stourbridge. He further stated that on two occasions, at the theatre at Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh had cast a Bible upon the ground and stamped upon it. My father was put to tremendous trouble in procuring witnesses from the different places, but he received help which he greatly appreciated from unexpected quarters—from Christians who had been present on some of the alleged occasions.

When, however, the time came, the defendant did not proceed to trial, as he was bound to under his recognisances. My father might have taken proceedings to estreat the recognisances; but as

the *British Empire* had ceased to exist, and the editor had already been heavily fined by having to pay the costs of the demurrer, he was advised to let the matter rest. This course he was perhaps the more inclined to, as he was himself so terribly harassed by the litigation and trouble arising out of the Parliamentary struggle.

He was rewarded for his forbearance by having the "watch" story again repeated of him—notably by Mr Grantham, Q.C., M.P.,*—with the addition that he had "not dared to go on with his action."

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* At Selhurst, in June 1885.

[*Note.*—Where exact references are not given in this chapter, the *National Reformer* is cited.]

CHAPTER IX.

OTHER FABLES.

THERE are other fables told about my father which have enjoyed a popularity almost equal to that of the famous watch episode. There is the allegation—referred to elsewhere—that he compared God with a monkey with three tails. This was started by the *Saturday Review* in 1867, and was for years continually reappearing in all sorts of unexpected quarters. Indeed, it was repeated as late as 1893 in a book published by Messrs Macmillan.* Perhaps next in order should come two, which have seen considerable service as arguments in favour of Christianity. One, which I will call the "cob of coal" story, appeared for the first time, as far as I am aware, in a Leeds paper in 1870 in the following form :—

"Some time ago I heard an amusing story about Mr Bradlaugh and one of his audience at Wigan. After concluding his lecture, Mr Bradlaugh called upon any of them to reply to any of his arguments. Lancashire produces a rare crop of shrewd, intelligent working men, and one of these, a collier, rose and spoke somewhat as follows: 'Maister Bradlaugh, me and my mate Jim were both Methodys till one of these infidel chaps cam' this way. Jim turned infidel, and used to badger me about attending class-meetings and prayer-meetings, but one day in the pit a large cob of coal came down on Jim's 'yead.' Jim thought he was killed, and ah! man, but he did holler.' Then turning to Mr Bradlaugh, with a very whimsical, knowing look, he said, 'Young man, there's nowt like cobs of coal for knocking infidelity out of a man.' We need hardly say that the collier carried the audience with him."

This was copied into some London papers, and in the course of a couple of years found its way to Belfast; but the scene of action had now become changed from Wigan to Manchester. Two years later still it appeared at Hereford, under the auspices of the Rev.

* "National Life and Character," by C. H. Pearson.

J. W. Bardsley. The "some time ago" of 1870 had contracted to "recently" by 1874, and there were other small alterations of detail. By 1882, my father said he had contradicted this anecdote fifty times at least. It never had the slightest foundation in fact; it is unadulterated fiction from beginning to end; it is absurdly improbable; and yet there are people so credulous that it has been repeated year after year, and even since my father's death. Indeed, the more childish this class of story, the better it has seemed to satisfy those to whom it was addressed—at least, if we may judge of its success by the number of its repetitions.

The next is the "old woman" anecdote, which I find first in the *Christian Age* for November 1871, put in this way:—

"The other day Mr Bradlaugh was lecturing in a village in the north of England, and at the close he challenged discussion. Who should accept the challenge but an old, bent woman, in most antiquated attire, who went up to the lecturer and said, 'Sir, I have a question to put to you.' 'Well, my good woman, what is it?' 'Ten years ago,' she said, 'I was left a widow with eight children utterly unprovided for, and nothing to call my own but this Bible. By its direction, and looking to God for strength, I have been enabled to feed myself and family. I am now tottering to the grave; but I am perfectly happy, because I look forward to a life of immortality with Jesus in heaven. That's what my religion has done for me: what has your way of thinking done for you?' 'Well, my good lady,' rejoined the lecturer, 'I don't want to disturb your comfort, but—' 'Oh! that's not the question,' interrupted the woman, 'keep to the point, sir; what has your way of thinking done for you?'

"The infidel endeavoured to shirk the matter again; the feeling of the meeting gave vent to uproarious applause, and Mr Bradlaugh had to go away discomfited by an old woman."

This pious fiction is said to have originated with the Rev. Mr Bradbury, of Openshaw, in the early part of 1871; but then it was Mr Charles Watts who was the "discomfited infidel," and not Mr Bradlaugh. From the *Christian Age* the story was passed on, evidently without the slightest examination or care for its accuracy. In 1872 it was repeated in large type by the *Methodist Visitor*, word for word, "the other day" included. Mr Bradlaugh contradicted this idiotic story again and again; no such incident ever occurred at any of his lectures. In spite of all contradiction, however, the "old woman" remained as lively as ever, and my father

was confronted with her year after year, until I almost wonder he had patience left to write a civil denial of her existence.

An anecdote, reported* to have been told by the Rev. H. W. Webb-Peploe at a meeting of the Bible Society at Stroud in 1875, has at least the merit of being amusing, and certainly came as news to no one more than to the persons chiefly concerned. It was said that Spurgeon "went to Bradlaugh's Hall to reply to the Infidel," and to that end "read two or three texts from the Scriptures. . . . This seems to have astonished Bradlaugh, for he arose, and as he went out of the room, he said, 'What the devil is to be done with that man? he is in earnest.'" If the Rev. Charles Spurgeon ever, by any chance, *did* go to "Bradlaugh's Hall," he carefully concealed his visit from "Bradlaugh."

Fictions concerning my father's treatment of various members of his family have been very common. By a painful coincidence, my little brother had only been a few days in his grave when my father was asked to contradict a statement that he had "about twelve months ago deserted his wife and children." Six months after, the story ran that he had "caused his mother to die of a broken heart," had been "drummed out of the army," and was "a man whose morality is of no higher stamp than to suffer himself to be the father of an illegitimate child." It is an interesting point in the study of the evolution of slanders, that this most persistent one of Mr Bradlaugh having caused his mother to die of a broken heart should have been started during his mother's lifetime.† The allegation of deserting his children, and throwing them upon the parish, was published by Mr Edmund Yates in the *World* in 1875. A little later Mr Yates announced that Mr Bradlaugh had written him contradicting this, and suggesting that if on inquiry Mr Yates found his allegation untrue, he should contribute £5 to the Masonic Boys' School. The editor of the *World* formally expressed his regret, "unreservedly" withdrew his accusation, and contributed the £5. The suggestion was really the result of the intervention of a mutual friend, as Mr Yates himself acknowledged in 1891, at the same time admitting that the paragraph complained of would have afforded Mr Bradlaugh "ample grounds for appeal-

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* *Stroud News*, May 28. † Mrs Bradlaugh died in April 1871.

ing to the law, with the likelihood of recovering a large amount in damages."

But the slander thus floated by the *World* could not be effaced from the public mind, even by Mr Yates' "unreserved withdrawal," and later in the same year it turned up in full vigour at Oxford. A Mr Bendall went to the shop of a grocer and town councillor named Laker to make some purchases, and in the course of conversation he mentioned that he was going to London. Mr Laker asked if he was going to hear Moody and Sankey, but Mr Bendall said that he was not; he was going to hear Mr Bradlaugh. The man Laker then said, "Bradlaugh! he was had up for neglecting his family, and leaving them chargeable to the Union. I read it in the *Daily Telegraph*." Mr Bendall denied this, and bet Laker £50 to 5s. that it was not true. Laker took the bet, and Mr Bendall then wrote out the statement, which they both signed. The paper was sent to Mr Bradlaugh, who eventually brought an action against Mr Laker. *

The defendant pleaded "Not guilty," but did not attempt to justify his statement or to offer any apology, although Mr Bradlaugh said that, if during the course of the trial an apology had been offered, he should have been quite content.

Mr Grantham, the counsel for the defence, was very coarse in his remarks. He scouted the idea that "Bradlaugh" could be injured by any slander, and told the jury that, if they did give him a verdict, a farthing damages would be "far too much" at which to estimate the damage "Bradlaugh" had sustained. As usual, an endeavour was made to play upon the religious feelings of the jury, and when Mr Bendall was in the witness-box he was questioned as to his belief in Christianity, the Bible, and Jesus Christ, until Mr Justice Field, who heard the case, interfered and reproved the counsel for importing these questions into the case. Mr Grantham suggested the whole thing was a "plant," but this accusation, the judge later on pointed out, might rightfully increase the damages awarded.

Mr Justice Field, in summing up, complimented Mr Bradlaugh on the temperate manner in which he had stated his case, and warned the jury not to allow their judgments to be warped by

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* Tried 25th April 1876 at Nisi Prius, before Mr Justice Field and a special jury.

topics of prejudice which had been introduced into the defendant's case. The jury returned a verdict for Mr Bradlaugh, with £40 damages, which my father at once handed over to a charity.

But even this did not quite kill the slander, and a few years later it began again to show signs of life.

There was no limit of any kind to the fictions circulated about my father, nothing was too vile, nothing too absurd, and nothing too wildly impossible to say about him. As an example of the last, I think it would be difficult to find anything to compare with one written by the London correspondent of the *New York Herald*, during the illness of the Prince of Wales from typhoid fever. I discovered an allusion to this story in looking over a file of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* for 1872; reference was made to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, from which I learned that the London correspondent of the *New York Herald* professed that he had been informed by a mysterious person "well posted" as to the doing of the different European Secret Societies, that "a certain leader of the English Revolutionists whom he designated 'The English Delescluze,' has over and over again declared from public platforms that the Prince should never sit on the throne, and that lately, when Queen Victoria was seriously ill, the same man had said in an interview with the reporter for a London paper, that although the event of the Sovereign's death occurring just then would without any doubt find the Society not quite prepared to act, yet that they could never lose such an opportunity to advance their cause." "This," commented the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "is, of course, an atrocious libel on Mr Bradlaugh." "The poison," continued the informant to his gaping listener, the *Herald's* London correspondent, "was a new and most subtle one. How the Prince was actually dosed he did not pretend to know. The emissary of the International charged with the execution of the sentence of death was left to himself, and was simply bidden to take as few innocent lives in carrying it out as possible; but it was suggested to him to mix the poison with the contents of the Prince's pocket flask, and this it was probable he had succeeded in doing." This marvellous story was received in England with the condemnation and ridicule it deserved, and I only give it here now to show to what lengths prejudice and a disordered imagination will lead a man.

I suppose it is only in the natural course of things that an Irish paper* should have the funniest story, and one too that seems really original. This journal discovered that in the summer, when Republican agitation was slack, Mr Bradlaugh took up "the more useful—if less profitable—occupation of a bagman." Presumably this was intended to be severely sarcastic; it was only ridiculous and untrue.

At intervals throughout my father's career he has, of course, been constantly accused of being in the pay of some one or other. This kind of accusation is common to most public men, so it was not likely that he would escape. In 1872, when it was asserted that "Bradlaugh and Odger" were sold to "Gladstone and Morley," the *Saturday Review* thought it no shame to suggest that "perhaps after all there is some truth in the story."† A few months before, said my father, it was "Bradlaugh was sold to the Tories, now it is the Whigs who have made the purchase;" and he mockingly regretted "that neither party have even paid a deposit." At other times he was charged with being in the pay of the Prince Napoleon, of the Commune, of Sir Charles Dilke, of the Carlists, and, last of all, in that of the Maharajah of Cashmere. This was so much believed in, that a gentleman belonging to a prominent Liberal Club actually told me that it was a good thing my father died poor and in debt, as it, at least, discredited that rumour.

I do not profess to have by any means exhausted the list of fables associated with Mr Bradlaugh's name. I have merely taken a few of the more persistent or more remarkable as examples of the whole.

To expose the misstatements and the travesties of Mr Bradlaugh's opinions would require a whole volume. What he thought and what he taught on theological, political, and social questions will be found in his own writings, and his own words must necessarily be the most effective contradiction or confirmation of the "hearsays" of prejudice.

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* *Belfast Times*, April 8, 1872.

† *Saturday Review*, September 14, 1872.

CHAPTER X.

PEACE DEMONSTRATIONS, 1878.

DURING the Russo-Turkish War great anxiety was shown by the Tories to drag England into the struggle; war songs were sung in the music halls; the old hatred of Russia was fanned into a blaze, and the new love of Turkey nourished into some sort of enthusiasm. The "Jingo" fever ran high, and the more peacefully-disposed seemed quite overwhelmed by the noise and clamour of the war party. Some of the working men of London, however, determined to make a public protest in favour of peace, and against those who were seeking to increase the burdens of the nation at a time when there were people dying of starvation in Wales, in Sheffield, and in the Forest of Dean. A meeting was consequently held on the afternoon of February 24th, in Hyde Park, in response to a general appeal made by the Hon. Auberon Herbert, Mr Ackrill, and Mr Bradlaugh on behalf of the working men's committee to the working men of the metropolis to resist the effort then being made to drag the country into an Eastern war.

There had been so much rowdyism at former meetings on this subject, that it was resolved to enrol a special force to prevent this one from being broken up by ruffianism. Mr Bradlaugh's special contingent was to consist of fifty marshals and five hundred deputy marshals, who wore his Northampton colours, and were furnished with "wands of office." It was not thought right to ask unarmed men to confront the brutality of the war-at-any-price men, who came armed with all manner of weapons; yet it was not desired to provoke an attack by any show of force, so after some deliberation it was decided that the marshals should be armed with short staves similar to the constables' truncheon. These the men were instructed to keep concealed, unless they were required for purposes of defence. Mr Herbert's special adherents were similarly armed, and wore a green favour.

Fearing a fight, my father would not allow us to go with him to the meeting, and would not be happy about our going at all, until we had promised not to get into the crowd. So we went to the Park early to watch the great masses of men gathering quietly together, with neither bands, banners, nor procession, unless the clubs coming up in bodies could be called coming in procession. The mauve, white, and green rosettes—which we with a committee of ladies had so lately made—were soon conspicuous by their number; above them were smiling holiday faces, while below lay the formidable staves which we had helped to serve out that very morning, but of which not a sign could be seen, although we, who knew they were there, looked attentively for them. The platform was set up, surrounded by a ring of men with locked arms three or four deep. By and by groups of young men passed us armed with sticks, long and thick; these joined together in gangs, and amused themselves by making a series of brutal rushes, after the stupid aimless fashion of the "roughs" on Lord Mayor's Day. But these medical students—for the hospitals had been whipped up to turn out in aid of the Tory and the Turk—unlike their honoured exemplars, deliberately intended to injure.

The meeting was tremendous, orderly and quiet at first, and the applause which greeted Mr Herbert when he rose to preside showed that the majority were favourable to peace. Every facility had been given to the war-party to move an amendment; every courtesy had been shown them, and everything possible done to avoid a pretext for disturbance. But no pretext was necessary. Mr Herbert had barely begun to speak when an attack was made simultaneously on three sides of the ring; sticks flashed in the air, and staff replied to stick with such energy that the attack on two sides was repelled; that at the back, however, was successful, the ring was broken through, and the platform destroyed. In spite of all this, Mr Bradlaugh succeeded in putting the resolution, and all those within hearing voted for it; but the tumult was so great that it was impossible to guess how much was heard or understood.

My sister and I stood by the water breathlessly watching a dense mass of men with sticks in air struggling slowly towards the gate, feeling sure that Mr Bradlaugh must be the centre of great a display of enmity; and people even cried to us, "Your father is there. He will be killed! he will be killed!" And

while we were watching, we ourselves nearly became involved in a rush of the war-party from another direction. Frantic cries of "Duck him! The water! Duck him!" made us glance round, and we found we had only just time to escape. When we had reached a place of safety, and were able to look round again, the fighting mass was broken up; and learning from some one, whom my father had told to seek us, that he was unhurt and had gone home, we also hastened to make the best of our way back. We learned that none of our own friends were seriously hurt; and the hearty and repeated bursts of cheering at my father's appearance where he lectured that night marked the relief felt at seeing him safe and unhurt.

Mr Bradlaugh had held many meetings in Hyde Park, but he had never had one broken up. He had had a magnificent gathering in 1875 to protest against the grant of £142,000 to the Prince of Wales for his journey to India, but all had been quiet and orderly. Now, neither he nor those with whom he was acting liked the idea of their demonstration for peace ending in this way, so it was determined to make another attempt. The war party, however, who stood at nothing, determined to break up this meeting also. An assault upon the leaders of the Peace movement was deliberately planned, and Mr Bradlaugh afterwards obtained the names of certain Tories who had paid and instigated the assailants. On this occasion—Sunday, the 10th of March—no attempt was made to set up a proper platform, but there were human volunteers for a living one—no light matter when it came to bearing a man of Mr Bradlaugh's inches. Mr Herbert briefly stated the object of the meeting, and called upon my father to move the resolution, and from the shoulders of his living platform he moved "that the meeting declares in favour of peace," and the resolution was forthwith seconded, formally put, and voted upon with but few dissentients. So far all was well, and the meeting was dissolved. Upon this, however, there immediately began a series of regularly-organised attacks by paid roughs, militia-men, medical students, and "gentlemen." Armed with sticks, pieces of twisted gas-piping, sharpened iron, loaded bludgeons, and other weapons, they were a truly gallant company. Some of the defending staves were ominously cut and dug into by the sharp and pointed instruments used by the attacking party. For a few minutes the fighting was severe; my father for an instant was taken off his

feet in the struggle, and his upraised arm caught the murderous rain of blows intended for his head. Up again almost at once, and having the fight thus forced upon him, he struck five blows in reply, which were said to have sent as many men to St George's Hospital. Those were the only blows he struck that day, the rest of the time he merely warded off any aimed at himself. One man attacked his head with some sharp iron instrument fastened to a long stick, which cut his silk hat through from crown to rim. A brave little party of "swells" attacked him at the back, but these were attended to by his working-men friends. This assault by the war party was as wanton as it was vicious, because the meeting was over, and had already began to quietly disperse.

A few weeks later stories were current that Mr Bradlaugh's staff was taken from him by a young man "half his size;" and a couple of Scotch papers seriously reported that he had had to pay £72, 11s. for breaking the head of another young man. He never heard of any one who had persuaded a court to value his broken head even at the odd 11s.; and as for the staff, Mr Bradlaugh gave it to us after the meetings, and I have it now, together with a number of torn Jingo flags and broken Jingo sticks that were brought to us as trophies of the fight.

The blows showered down upon Mr Bradlaugh's arm had injured it very severely; a dangerous attack of erysipelas set in; he was very ill, and for sixteen days he was confined to the house. Even then he went to the Old Bailey in Mr Truelove's case before he ought to have gone out. He was ill and depressed; the nation seemed so eager for war; the wanton ferocity exhibited and encouraged in Hyde Park in the cause of war made him for the moment almost hopeless. He looked on "in sadness while the people suffer a Tory Government to create the possibilities of debt, dishonour, and disgraceful defeat, or still more disgraceful victory;" and once more he raised his personal protest in favour of peace. Although, as matters fell out, we did not go to war, we nevertheless decided upon having the pleasure of paying for it. As it was aptly put, the game as determined upon by Lord Beaconsfield was "Pay first; fight next; afterwards, if you have time, you can fix upon the object to be attained."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

I AM now closely approaching the end of my task, and as yet I have only mentioned the National Secular Society incidentally. To leave it without further notice would be doing scant justice both to my father and to the association with which he worked so actively, and with which his name must ever remain connected, whatever its future history may be.

The National Secular Society has sometimes been confounded with the London Secular Society, of which Mr George Jacob Holyoake and Mr Bradlaugh were successively presidents; but that was merely a London Society, and not a general association. Indeed, I believe there had never been any general association of the Freethinkers of Great Britain until 1866, when it was felt that some endeavour should be made to organise them. There were local secular Societies all over the kingdom, there were isolated Freethinkers to be found everywhere, but hitherto there had been no attempt to unite them into one general federation. Without organisation much propagandist work had been done: in a single year, for instance, 250,000 tracts were distributed; with organisation it was believed that much more might be accomplished. But propaganda was by no means the only object to be gained by uniting Freethinkers in one general society. In September a provisional programme for the proposed National Secular Society was put forward. Mr Bradlaugh by consent assumed the office of President of the Society until the first Conference. In the programme it was stated that the objects of the Society would be:—

To form an Association for mutual help for all the Freethinkers of Great Britain.

To conduct in the United Kingdom a more vigorous Freethought propaganda, especially in districts where Freethinkers are few, and Freethought lectures rare.

To establish a fund for the assistance of aged or distressed Freethinkers.

To promote Parliamentary and other action in order to remove all disabilities on account of religious opinions.

To establish secular schools and adult instruction classes in connection with every local society having members enough to support such schools or classes.

The idea of a National Society was well taken up, and members were enrolled in all directions. It was intended to hold a Conference early in the following year, but this was postponed, partly on account of Mr Bradlaugh's ill-health, and did not actually take place until the end of November, when it was found that the Society had made a very successful start in life—a success which was fully confirmed by the time the Conference met again a year later. A special Lecturing Fund was established in 1867, and by the aid of this the accredited lecturers of the Society went into places where the Freethinkers were too poor and too few to themselves bear the whole expenses of a meeting; and in this way towns and villages were visited by a Freethought lecturer where before Freethought was almost unheard of. The provisional statement of the principles and objects of the Society was very soon amended in some minor details, and ten or twelve years later a Revision Committee was appointed and the rules newly stated.

In 1869 the Society brought out the first Secular almanack ever published. It was edited by "Charles Bradlaugh and Austin Holyoake," and met with an immediate and complete success, transcending even the hopes of its promoters, the first edition being sold out in one day. This almanack has been continued without intermission until the present time. At Mr Austin Holyoake's death, Mr Charles Watts became co-editor with Mr Bradlaugh, and in 1878 he was superseded by Mrs Annie Besant. When Mr Bradlaugh resigned his office as President of the National Secular Society—in 1890, after his serious illness of the previous winter—the new President, Mr G. W. Foote, became editor of the almanack in conjunction with Mr J. M. Wheeler.

With the exception of the year 1872, when Mr Arthur Trevelyan, J.P., was elected President, Mr Bradlaugh held the chief office of the Society from the time of its foundation until his resignation, and it was always a source of immense pride to him

that he was chosen representative of the Freethinkers of Great Britain and Ireland. He laboured untiringly for the Society; not merely for the organisation as a whole, but for the separate branches and for the individuals which comprised it. "During thirty years," he said on the day he resigned, "I think I may say I have never refused any help to any branch that I thought was justified in asking for help."

He never held any paid office, but on the contrary often paid money out of his own pocket for the purposes of the Association. He estimated that the sum he had earned and given in actual cash to the Society and its branches during the time he was connected with it amounted to £3000. The Society, on its side, released him and Mrs Besant from a payment of £420* due to it at the time of his resignation.

His yearly Conference reports, although they make no pretence at being detailed records, are yet landmarks, as it were, of the work accomplished by the Society; his yearly Conference speeches † often give the most vivid glimpses of himself, of his pride in work accomplished, and his aspirations for work yet undone. Often, too, their terse and moving language reveals the truest, most unstudied eloquence.

The National Secular Society proved itself an organisation of the utmost value, not merely as a propagandist association, but in all cases in any degree connected with the Freethought movement where combined action was required. When Mrs Besant was deprived of her child; at the time of Mr Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle, with its countless phases; during the prosecutions for blasphemy, and on many other occasions, meetings were held or petitions were got up simultaneously all over the country. The members of the Society were and are nearly all poor men and women; but what they have lacked in riches they have made up in energy; what they could not contribute in money, they have given eagerly and cheerfully in work.

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* At his death in 1879 Mr William Thomson of Montrose left £1000 to Mr Bradlaugh as President of the National Secular Society, which sum he was at liberty to invest in the Freethought Publishing Company, on condition that he paid the Society £5 a month while it lasted. This he did regularly from 1879 until February 1890, when the Society generously released him from the remainder.

† See Speeches by Charles Bradlaugh.

Many people misconstrued Mr Bradlaugh's reason for resigning his office as President of the National Secular Society. Some said he made a choice between his Freethought and his Parliamentary work, and selected the latter; others said he had long been gradually subordinating his anti-theological work to his political work, with a view to dropping the former; others, that his action was entirely due to a modification in his heretical opinions; and others again said that he was not in harmony with the members of the Society. The truth was so obvious and so simple that all seemed loth to accept it, and searched for complicated motives under the plain facts. At the special Conference summoned to receive his resignation, Mr Bradlaugh gave his reasons in a voice which was low and faltering, as much from the feelings which overcame him as from his recent illness.

"With very slight break," he said, "I have led in this movement for over thirty years—a fairly long period in any life. I have been President of the Society, with the same slight break, since the Society began, and I am very sorry, very sorry, to resign office this morning. Unfortunately, while the work was never easy, it has become much harder since 1880, with the Parliamentary struggle and the litigation in which the struggle involved me. I have felt for the past three or four years—and I think I have conveyed that feeling to you in my annual speeches—that the pressure must sooner or later bring a breakdown. Last October that breakdown came, and the wonder is that I am here to tender you my resignation at all. I was then brought face to face with the difficulty that I could no longer do all the work I had done. . . . No resource is then open to me but to resign. Some kind friends have suggested that I might hold the office nominally. . . . But I could not do that; I must be a real President or none. My fault has been that I have sometimes been too real a one, but it is no easy matter to lead such a voluntary movement as ours. . . . I don't want to leave you. I could not take any other office in the Society after having been so long your President; but if you thought it right to elect me a member for life, I should be grateful to you for doing it."

In this statement from Mr Bradlaugh's own lips is contained the whole and sole reason for his resignation. To be a "real" President of the National Secular Society involved the performance

of a vast amount of labour, the greater part of which was unrecognised and unseen. This he felt had become beyond his powers; it was not in him to bear the name and let others do the work; in giving up the duties of his position he must also give up its honours. Only those who knew the pride he had always felt in holding this office of President of the associated Freethinkers of the nation knew the pain it cost him to lay that office down.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

The year 1880 saw the last of the long struggle in Northampton and the beginning of that in the House of Commons. For twelve years my father fought prejudice and misrepresentation in Northampton, for six years longer he had to fight prejudice and misrepresentation in the House of Commons. But the shorter fight was the harder one; it was carried on incessantly, without the slightest intermission. It was a terrible six years. The litigation alone is something appalling; in that time eight suits were begun and ended.

First there was the libel suit against Edgcumbe, which dragged on for more than a year, and ended in nothing.

Second came Clarke *v.* Bradlaugh. This was an action for penalties against Mr Bradlaugh for having sat and voted without taking the oath. Commenced in July 1880, it came before the judges six times, and was ultimately decided in favour of Mr Bradlaugh in April 1883.

Third—Bradlaugh *v.* Newdegate. An action for maintenance brought by Mr Bradlaugh against Mr Newdegate, and decided in favour of the former in April 1883.

Fourth—The Queen (Sir Henry Tyler) *v.* Bradlaugh, Foote, and Ramsey. An action for blasphemy, decided in Mr Bradlaugh's favour in April 1883.*

Fifth—Bradlaugh *v.* Erskine. An action against the Deputy-Sergeant-at-Arms for assault, in removing Mr Bradlaugh from the lobby of the House of Commons on August 3, 1881.† Com-

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* In the case against Foote and Ramsey the jury disagreed. The prosecution then entered a *nolle prosequi*.

† Mr Bradlaugh applied for a summons against Inspector Denning, but this application was refused.

menced in April 1882, this suit was decided against Mr Bradlaugh in January 1883. In March the Government enforced their claim for costs against him.

Sixth—Gurney *v.* Bradlaugh. A suit entered upon by Mr Gurney of Northampton, to try the validity of the conduct of the majority of the House in preventing Mr Bradlaugh from taking the oath and his seat in the House. Mr Justice Mathew discharged the jury, refusing to hear the case on the ground that it was a collusive action.

Seventh—Bradlaugh *v.* Gossett. In July 1883 Mr Bradlaugh applied for an injunction to restrain the Sergeant-at-Arms from using physical force to prevent him from entering the House. Decided against Mr Bradlaugh in the February of the following year.

Eighth—Attorney-General *v.* Bradlaugh. An action for penalties against Mr Bradlaugh for having sat and voted without having subscribed the oath. This case was heard at bar, and judgment given for the Attorney-General. This was appealed against, and the matter settled in October 1886; Mr Bradlaugh paid his own costs, but nothing further.*

All these lawsuits, each involving the discussion of points of the greatest intricacy, and in which my father's brain was pitted against those of some of the greatest lawyers in England, would have been enough to tax the powers of any ordinary man, even if he had had no other struggles. But in these six years there were many other struggles; there were six elections, most of which were carried on under extremely harrassing conditions. It was one constant battle within the walls of the House and without, and in the blind fury of their rage his antagonists spared neither my father nor any one whose name was associated with his. Sir Henry Tyler proceeded against Mr Foote and Mr Ramsay for blasphemy, only because along with them he hoped to be able to drag Mr Bradlaugh down. Sir Henry Tyler tried to deprive my sister and myself, as well as Mrs Besant and Dr Aveling, of our right to teach under the Science and Art Department, only because he hoped to wound Mr Bradlaugh by an attack upon his

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* These proceedings—except the libel case, which has been already noticed—will be found fully dealt with by Mr J. M. Robertson in Part II., in his account of Mr Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle.

daughters * and his friends. The Somerville Club (at the instigation of Miss Eliza Orme) refused to accept the daughters of Charles Bradlaugh as members.† University College would not permit my sister Alice—a woman of stainless honour and of the highest character—and Mrs Besant to study botany within its walls;‡ the National Liberal Club, having actually invited Mr Bradlaugh to become a member, insulted him by refusing to elect him.§

The country was flooded with literature making the most infamous charges against him, and in the name of religion men went from town to town to preach against him. Even Cardinal Manning, a prince of the greatest Church in Christendom, was not too exalted to stoop to cast his stone at the despised Atheist. Within the precincts of the great Commons House itself he had to sit in silence, with no right of reply, whilst he heard his character assailed, and those who worked with him basely slandered. Within those same historic walls he was set upon and

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* This attack upon Mr Bradlaugh through his daughters, insignificant and inoffensive though we were, was no new idea. In 1877 an attempt was made to introduce female students into the classes of the City of London College. At my father's suggestion my sister and I, who at that time took little interest in the matter, joined Mr Levy's Class on Political Economy. I went up for the examination at the end of the term, and, to my surprise and my father's delight, I took a second-class certificate. But the City of London College were divided upon the subject of the admission of female students, and, after much acrimonious discussion, Mr Armytage Bakewell, a member of the Council, carried his intolerance so far as to turn the dispute upon the admission of my sister and myself. He wrote to the *City Press* that "though the ostensible subject of controversy has been whether females should attend the young men's classes or not, there was well known to be a wider divergence," and that was "best indicated by the fact that Mr Bradlaugh's daughters attended Mr Levy's classes." It is only just to the City of London College to add that the Council, while repudiating any responsibility for Mr Bakewell's conduct, expressed "their regret that any allusion had been made to Mr Bradlaugh's daughters" in the letter alluded to. The City of London College decided against the further admission of women, and within a few days of their decision had to listen to Lord Houghton's congratulations upon their liberality in admitting women when he presented me with my certificate! He had not been informed that the College had just come to the contrary resolution.

† March 1883. ‡ May 1883.

§ 1884. Five years later the National Liberal Club spontaneously elected Mr Bradlaugh, without his knowledge, a member paying his first year's subscription.

terribly ill-used by officials, ordered to their work by gentlemen claiming to represent the nation. I was at Westminster on the day which witnessed this strange example of the boasted "English love of fair play." I tremble as I recall it.

We went to Westminster by train, my sister and I, with Mrs Besant and some friends of hers. The sight which met our eyes as we came out of the station was one not to be readily forgotten; immense masses of orderly men and women kept easily within certain limits by a thin line of police. There was a quick recognition of us as we passed along by friends from all parts of the country, who gave us grave and serious greeting. At the gates of Palace Yard we were challenged by the police, but allowed to pass on presenting our petition, and going on to Westminster Hall we found it occupied by little groups of men from all corners of England.* These groups grew and grew, until the great hall seemed full, and voices were heard on all sides crying, "Petition," "Petition." At the head of the steps near the door leading to the lobby we took up our position. By-and-by an agonising rumour flew through the Hall, "They are killing him; they are killing him!" and swift on the heels of this came the angry cry, again and again repeated, "To the House!" and with this, the surging forward of the crowd. So few police had been spared to guard this entrance that they would have been absolutely powerless to resist these men—not London "roughs," but the pick of the London clubs, and, more formidable still, men from many a Midland town, and from many a North country pit and factory, whose hearts were bound up in my father, and who had come to London that day to petition for justice. The police command, "Keep back!" fell upon deaf ears. My sister and I involuntarily put ourselves in front of the doors, facing the crowd. Mrs Besant sprang forward, and in a few impassioned words she begged them to consider what Mr Bradlaugh's wishes would be. The effect was instantaneous. The foremost fell back, and kept others back till all were self-controlled once more; but the white, set faces told of the struggle in their hearts. "But we *can't* stay here and know he is being murdered, and do nothing to help him," said one in a choking voice. Some terrible minutes passed, but there was no further attempt to pass through the doors. By-

* Seven persons were allowed to enter with each petition.

and-by a message reached us from my father that he was gone to Stonecutter Street, and that we were to join him there. At Stonecutter Street we found him quite calm and self-possessed, but his coat hanging in rents, his ashen face and still quivering flesh telling the tale of the struggle he had just passed through.

In a few days he fell very ill. The small muscles of both arms were ruptured; erysipelas supervened, and the left arm was very bad indeed, needing constant attention by day and night. All day long from early morning to the small hours of the next day there were people calling, some friendly and some very much otherwise, besides press men and persons on business. My father had no rest, and one day the physician said, "You will never get well, Mr Bradlaugh, if you don't get out of this room."

"You wish me to go away?" asked my father.

"Yes."

"When?"

"At once."

"I will go to-day," was the characteristic reply.

I packed up the necessary baggage, a fly was ordered to take us to the station, and at Mrs Besant's suggestion it was decided to go to Eastbourne. I was nursing my father, so I went with him, while for a day or so my sister remained behind to attend to things at home. Mrs Besant accompanied us. On the way to the station my father, who was feeling very ill and very depressed, said he did not care to go to Eastbourne—it was too fashionable; so I took the map from the railway guide and called over the names of places on the South Coast until he stopped me at Worthing, and then we turned about to go to there instead of to Eastbourne. My father had both arms in slings, and at the station Mrs Besant and I had to walk one each side of him to protect them from the impertinent and the unfeeling who crowded round to stare at him. Arrived at Worthing, we got into a cab, asking the driver if he could recommend us to a quiet hotel; he looked compassionately at the only too evidently sick man, and said he thought West Worthing would suit us best. Whilst he was getting the luggage, a clergyman whom we had seen inside the station came out, and walking up to the open cab stared rudely at my father, and as he turned away said loudly, for us to hear, "That's Bradlaugh; I hope they'll make it warm for him yet."

West Worthing did suit us, as the cabman surmised; my

father's health daily improved, and indeed there is little doubt that his timely removal to this quiet spot saved his life for the time. After a few days my sister joined us, and we all felt the better for the change, as much from the momentary respite as from the fresh air and sea breeze.

The expenses of the litigation and the various elections were enormous, both directly and indirectly. Although eventually Mr Newdegate had to bear the whole of the costs in the suit which he brought against Mr Bradlaugh, yet the latter had to find several hundred pounds—about £725 in all—to pay into court at different times. These sums were ultimately repaid to him, but liabilities had to be incurred to produce them at the required moments. The shorthand notes in the three days' appeal from the trial at bar alone cost him £50. In the case of Bradlaugh *v.* Erskine, in which the House of Commons defended its officer, the Government made Mr Bradlaugh pay the costs, under the circumstances a very harsh and unusual proceeding. Very little time was allowed to elapse before the claim was insisted upon, and to find the money my father had to choose between more borrowing and selling his library. Yet if the motion carried unanimously and "amid cheers" on the 27th January 1891 means anything, it is an acknowledgment that the House was in the wrong when it instructed its officer to prevent Mr Bradlaugh by force from obeying the law. It was not merely the direct cost, however; there were the indirect penalties also. For instance, in February 1885, after the appeal from the trial at bar (which, with its subsequent proceedings alone covered thirteen days), my father spoke of the worry and uncertainty which had "for months arrested nearly all my means of earning money." People were always subscribing in an endeavour to pay for him the expenses they knew of, and many were the sacrifices some of them made in their eager desire to help. One old Yorkshire miner, who had been sorely troubled that times were so hard with him that he could spare nothing, one day came triumphantly to his friend saying, "I have made it all right; I will go without the half pint for a week, and send it to the lad."* Many cut down their usual allowance of tobacco, and some went altogether without. One poor man sent his silver watch, the only thing of value which

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* *National Reformer*, April 27, 1884.

he possessed; some people in London, touched at hearing of this sacrifice, offered to join together to buy him a gold one in acknowledgment of it, but he would not hear of it. Several times I have known a cabman refuse to take his fare.* Many poor people sent their small subscriptions weekly or monthly. But my father always worried about these funds; he could not bear the thought of his poor friends denying themselves their little luxuries, or even perhaps their necessaries, and he always promptly closed a fund when it had been open some fixed time or directly the specific sum was reached.

A constant accusation brought against Mr Bradlaugh was that of living in aristocratic style,† and of having a most enormous income.‡ As a matter of fact, he had no income other than what he earned from day to day, and his habits and mode of life at Circus Road were of the simplest possible kind. His bedroom was very small, about 10 feet by 9 feet, with just room for his bedstead, chest of drawers, wash-stand, and a couple of chairs. His library, on the first floor after 1880, was a very large room with five windows to it; but spacious as it was, it was by no means too large for his books. The room was shelved all round to the very edges of the windows, except just over the fireplace; and there were also three sets of movable shelves on the floor of the room. The furniture was quite simple—just a desk, writing-tables, cane-seated chairs, my father's two old oaken arm-chairs from Tottenham, and an easy chair, which was bought specially for him one time when he was not well. There was no other "easy" chair in the house, and only one small sofa—really a bedroom lounge—which my sister bought for me one morning when I was ailing. I doubt whether the whole of my father's furniture would have fetched five-and-twenty pounds at a sale. Our meals we had downstairs in a very dark

* I have lately heard a touching story of a cabman who drove Mr Bradlaugh several times. He greatly admired my father, but was too shy to speak to him. Every time he took a fare from him he gave it away to some charitable object. He said he could not spend Mr Bradlaugh's money on himself, he felt that "he must do some good with it."

† The *Plymouth and Exeter Gazette* (April 1878) reproved Mr Bradlaugh for the glaring inconsistency of his practice with his democratic principles, "by living in the most aristocratic style."

‡ The *Leeds Daily News* (July 1883) said his income was £12,000 a year.

basement room under our landlord's music shop, and here the blue books were also stored.

My father's habits were as simple as his surroundings. He was an early riser, and at whatever time he got home at night he was in his study soon after seven in the morning. Even when he was not home from the House of Commons till four o'clock in the morning, it was seldom he lay in bed after eight. He had a cup of tea as soon as he was down, and he worked at his desk until breakfast-time, which he liked punctually at eight. If he was more than usually busy or worried, he asked for his breakfast to be brought to his study, and he would take it as he worked; but my sister and I always affected to be vexed if he did this, because we liked to get him away from his work and into another room for his meals. About the middle of 1877 his ever-increasing correspondence obliged him to have regular clerical assistance, and his secretary came at nine. He was in to callers until ten or half-past. This was the time he saw people who wanted to consult him on legal or private matters: he listened patiently to their troubles, and often gave them most helpful advice how to get out of them. All sorts of difficulties were confided to him—family troubles, dissensions between husband and wife, between employer and employed; great troubles and small were brought to him, and those who brought them were sure of a sympathetic and patient listener, and a confidant to whom they could unreservedly open their hearts.

If Mr Bradlaugh did not have to attend a Committee of the House he would have his dinner (or "lunch," as it was indifferently called) at half-past twelve, and this was followed by a cup of tea in his library; if he were in all day, he had his afternoon tea (just a cup of tea and a crust of bread and butter) at four, and his supper about seven or half-past seven. At his dinner and supper he drank hock or burgundy.* Often after supper there would be a little pleasant chat, sometimes a game of chess, and, more rarely, whist with a dummy. If my father was too tired or too worried for any of these, he would go to bed as early as half-past eight or nine, lie and read for a while, and then sleep soundly until morning. Of course it was not often he could do this, for his even-

* He was frequently charged with drinking expensive wines, but the hock he had straight from Bensheim at a cost of 1s. 3d. per bottle (including carriage and duty); the burgundy came direct from Beaune, and cost a trifle more.

ings were usually spent in lecturing or at the House of Commons.* The only time during the session which he could rely upon for seeing callers, answering letters,† and earning his living, was from seven A.M. until the time he left for the House. Saturday evening and Sundays were generally employed in lecturing. Until 1884 his holidays were of the rarest and the shortest. In that year he first went fishing at Loch Long. At the suggestion of some Scotch friends, a cottage was taken for a month that summer at Portincaple, a lovely and secluded spot just opposite Loch Goil. My sister and I and a Scotch lady, Miss Lees, stayed the whole time; different friends came and went, and my father spent a week fishing. The cottage belonged to Finlay M'Nab, fisherman and ferryman, and had belonged to his father and grandfather before him. On nearly all Mr Bradlaugh's fishing expeditions Finlay M'Nab was his boatman. They would go off just after breakfast, or sometimes even earlier, get dinner at Carrick Castle or Ardentinny, and come home at sunset with a big bag of fish. After 1884 we went to Portincaple several summers in succession, and then Mr Bradlaugh took to going there in the Easter and Whitsun recess, and for a few days after Parliament rose. On these occasions he went alone, but Mrs M'Nab attended to all his comforts indoors as though he were at home, and outdoors her husband looked after the bait and the boat—except on Sundays; then, my father had to content himself with the dangerous amusement of fishing from the rocks, whilst Finlay looked wistfully on.

Mr Bradlaugh was a very even-tempered man, and those who waited on him usually served him eagerly. He never found fault unnecessarily, and provided an attempt was well meant, it mattered little, as far as his behaviour went, if the result was not equal to the intention. He was most generous and tender-hearted, except to those who had wantonly taken advantage of the confidence he reposed in them to deceive him. Such persons called him hard and unrelenting, for even if he forgave them they never again held quite the same place in his esteem. Some critics have said he was a man of unrestrained passions; others have said he was absolutely

* During the time he was not allowed to take his seat he attended the House constantly, sitting under the gallery in a seat technically outside the House.

† One year he calculated that he had written 1200 letters of advice in the twelvemonth—this, of course, in addition to general correspondence.

passionless. Neither is right. He was a man of very strong feelings, but he had an iron will. At a critical moment in his life, when he was greatly tempted to follow a certain course, a friend urged upon him that if he did he would injure the work he had at heart. My father replied by stretching out his arm, and closing his fingers over an imagined object. "I have not a passion," he said, "that I could not crush as easily as an egg within my hand if it were necessary for the good of the cause I love." And he was true to his word.

In 1877 when Mr Bradlaugh severed his business connection with Mr C. Watts, he started, as I have said, a publishing business in connection with Mrs Annie Besant, under the style of the Freethought Publishing Company. The business premises were at Stonecutter Street, E.C., and here, with small premises, a small staff, and a small rent, the Company did fairly well. In 1882, however, my father was induced against his better judgment to lease a shop at the corner of Fleet Street and Bouverie Street (now occupied by the Black and White Company). Here the premises were large and the rent heavy. To make matters worse, about a couple of years later, owing to the financial difficulties of his landlord, he was reluctantly obliged to take up the remainder of the lease of the whole building, and thus he became saddled with the rent and taxes—amounting to more than seven hundred per annum—and the responsibility of a great house in the city. In order to raise the capital required to meet these expenses, Mr Bradlaugh with Mrs Besant issued debenture stock to the amount of four or five thousand pounds, the interest on which was paid with unfailing regularity until my father's death.

But as he had feared, the business at Fleet Street did not thrive sufficiently to support so large an establishment; the greater part of it had always been, and was then, a postal business, hence it could be carried on as well in a little shop in a side street as in a large corner shop in such a thoroughfare. The details of the managership of the publishing department were in the hands of Mrs Besant and my sister Alice, but as both were without the least experience in business, my father was the final referee on all matters, and it was he of course who had to provide for quarter-day with its heavy rent, taxes, and debenture interest.

In 1884, unable to let the upper portion of the building, Mr

Bradlaugh decided to utilise it himself by setting up a printing-office, and doing his own printing. This department was put under the control of Mr Bonner, to whom I was then engaged to be married. As my husband was already familiar with the management of a printing-office, Mr Bradlaugh's only trouble with this branch of his business was in finding the money, and this was not a great anxiety, as it paid for itself from the very first. It is true the profits were never great, for the prejudice against giving work to any establishment connected with the name of Bradlaugh at first limited the work almost to the printing of his own publications. My father was very glad to be saved responsibility, even in this small matter for, as he often said, he had never intended to become a publisher, and he had never intended to become a printer; he had so many things on his hands that he had time neither for one nor the other; he had, in fact, no inclination for commercial pursuits: they had always been forced upon him by circumstances.

When it was known that I was going to attempt some story of my father's life, there were many things I was told that I must not fail to mention. Amongst others, one friend said: "You must not fail to notice that Mr Bradlaugh was an essentially grateful man; he never forgot the smallest favour or the smallest kindness that was shown him." That is absolutely true; he could forget most injuries, "his heart was as great as the world," but it was not large enough "to hold the memory of a wrong;" a kindness he never forgot.* When John Bright pledged himself in the

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* The following extracts, taken at hazard from New Year's addresses to his friends in the *National Reformer*, will show how grateful he was to them for their help and what support he found in their love and trust:—

"Women and men, I have great need of your strength to make me strong, of your courage to make me brave. I am in a breach where I must fall fighting or go through. I will not turn, but I could not win if I had to fight alone" (1st January 1882).

"1883 has freed me from some troubles and cleared me of some peril, but it leaves me in 1884 a legacy of unfinished fighting. I thank the friends of the dead year, without whose help I, too, must have been nearly as dead as the old year itself. . . . I have had more kindnesses shown me than my deservings warrant, more love than I have yet earned, and I open the gate of 1884 most hopefully because I know how many hundred kindly hearts there are to cheer me if my uphill road should prove even harder to climb than in the years of yesterday" (6th January 1884).

"The present greeting is first to our old friends; some poor folk who early

House of Commons for my father, the latter was greatly affected, and speaking to us in private about it was quite overcome. He had disagreed often with John Bright, and had sometimes spoken his disagreement with the utmost frankness; later on they were opposed upon the subject of Home Rule, but after the day when that lion-hearted old man so unexpectedly and so courageously spoke on his behalf, Mr Bradlaugh never mentioned his name save with the most profound respect and gratitude. And yet this trait of gratitude, so strong in himself, he never seemed to expect in others; or at least he seldom showed surprise at its absence. He once helped to Baltimore a Russian prisoner, escaped from Siberia, who had come to him with letters from Continental friends. The months rolled by, and nothing further was heard of the man. A great deal had been done for him, and one day I expressed myself very strongly on his ingratitude. My father stopped me by quietly saying that I must learn to do a right thing just because it was right, and not because I expected gratitude or any other reward for what I did. I felt the rebuke keenly, but I had nothing to say, for I instantly realised that he preached to me no more than he himself practised.

It is remarkable how quickly Mr Bradlaugh made his personality felt when once he was allowed to sit quietly in Parliament. Some persons had sneeringly said that he would "soon find his level," or that he would "soon sink into obscurity," but he rapidly proved that he at least did not regard the House of Commons merely as "the best club in England." His patience in mastering details, his perseverance and persistence in what he undertook, and the work he accomplished, were all so notable that he had sat in the House barely one year when the possibility of a seat for him in the next Radical ministry began to be discussed.* His constant attendance at the House and at Committees—and he was rarely absent—interfered greatly with his lecturing in the provinces during the session, although almost every available evening was utilised for London and suburban lectures, many of

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in 1860 took No. 1 [of the *National Reformer*], and have through good and ill report kept steadily with us through the more than a quarter of a century struggle for existence" (3rd January 1886).

* *Bognor Observer*, February 1887.

which were given away.* In consequence of this he was driven more and more to rely upon his pen as a means of earning money. It was always easier to him to speak than to write upon a subject. His style was terse and direct; his thoughts and his words came so fast that a verbatim report of an hour's speech filled several newspaper columns. His gestures, his expression, the modulation of his voice, pointed and explained his spoken words. But it nearly always irked him to write long upon a subject; his letters were for the most part models of brevity, and he tended to make his articles brief also. If a magazine editor asked him to write an article of six thousand words, and he had said all he wanted to say at that moment in four or five thousand, he hated to add to it, and often, indeed, he would not.

By incessant labour my father earned a fair income, but he could not keep pace with his heavy expenses, and the burden of his debts each year weighed upon him more and more heavily. He would sigh regretfully that he was not so young as he used to be, and these things troubled him more than formerly. At the end of August 1888, writing his "Rough Notes" in the *National Reformer*, he said: "Many folks write me as though now Parliament stood adjourned, I could be easily taking holiday and rest. I wish this were possible, but in truth I have to work very hard to reduce my debts and live. I shall, I hope, have four and a half days' fishing in Loch Long from mid-day on Monday, September 3rd, to the morning of Saturday the 8th, but this short holiday is more than counterbalanced by the heavy lecturing work of the recess. This week, for example, I address seven meetings; next week eight. Many write to me to give lectures in aid of branches, clubs, and associations, and I do help very often, but surely it is not necessary for me to constantly repeat that my only means are those I earn from day to day by tongue and pen. My great trouble now is lest I should be unable to earn enough to meet my many heavy obligations, in which case I should be most reluctantly obliged to relinquish my Parliamentary career."

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* One at the Shoreditch Town Hall in May 1884, on behalf of the Hackney United Radical Club, realised as much as £40. The hall was packed in every corner, and hundreds were unable to gain admittance.

This "Note" had a most unexpected result; it was reproduced with generous comments in the press, and a committee was formed to raise a fund to clear off the balance of £1500 of debt still remaining from the six years' Parliamentary struggle. This fund was only open one month, until October 1st;* and in that short time £2490 was subscribed in sums varying from 1d. to £200. Now at last my father seemed to be getting into smooth waters; the only financial burdens left upon him were in connection with his business, and these he hoped to gradually lighten. But within a few weeks he had to face a new trouble. On the 16th November my sister Alice was taken very ill with typhoid fever at Circus Road; for the sake of greater quiet, we moved her to my rooms at 19 Avenue Road, where, meningitis having supervened, she died on 2nd December. She expressly asked that in the case of her death she should be cremated, and we were most anxious to carry out her wishes, but the Woking Crematorium was then undergoing structural alterations, and it was not possible to do so. This short and unexpected illness, with its fatal termination, was a great shock to Mr Bradlaugh, and I went to him at Circus Road the next morning as soon as I could get away. I found him terribly depressed, working in his room in a bad atmosphere, with the gas alight and all the blinds down. Knowing how he ordinarily shrank from any outward display of his feelings, and especially how much he disliked mere form, I said, "Why, how is this? Why have you pulled all the blinds down?" He said brokenly, "They [the servants] did it; I thought it might be your wish." I put out the gas, drew up the blinds, and opened a window for a few moments to let in a little fresh air. He was himself out of health, and I did not like to see him sitting there in that close and heated atmosphere. I asked if he was going to the House? No; he did not think he should, he replied. I urged him to go, believing it was the best thing he could do. He did go, but he could not stay long; somehow an announcement of my sister's death had got into the papers, and Members sympathised with him in his sorrow in such kindly fashion that he was obliged to come away lest he should break down. A night or two later he made his speech in reply to

* Mr Bradlaugh asked for it to be closed on 26th September.

Mr Broadhurst on the Employers' Liability Bill, and if his words had in them somewhat more of acerbity than usual, I often think that it was in a measure due to the biting pain of his own grief.

On the 5th my sister was buried at the Brookwood Necropolis, where already some members of our family lay. Many who had known her, and whose lives had been helped by hers, begged that there might be a public funeral; but my father shrank from exposing his sorrow even to the most sympathetic of friends, and we quietly and silently laid her in her last resting-place, where, alas! she was so soon to be joined by her stricken father. Her death was not allowed to pass without the Christian commonplaces as to "the miserable barrenness of the sceptic's theories" in the presence of domestic calamities; and Mr Bradlaugh asked what would be thought of him if at a similar hour he should obtrude upon some Christian some mocking word upon the horrors of the theory that "many are called and few are chosen"?

My husband and I now went to live at Circus Road, and as my father was suddenly without a secretary, I filled the post while he was seeking a fresh one. I had given up the class teaching, in which I had been for many years associated with my sister, having thus a certain amount of leisure, and finding I could manage all that was wanted, I begged him to let me continue his work. I liked to feel I was helping him, if only in the mechanical way of writing at his dictation.

During the later years of his life, Mr Bradlaugh was often out of health and suffered a great deal, especially in the arm so badly injured on the 3rd August 1881. The strain—mental as well as physical—of the six years 1880–85 had been tremendous.* But a week at Loch Long with Finlay M'Nab and his rod and line seemed to restore him to health again; we never thought of anything serious, he appeared so big and strong. In October 1889, however, he fell ill—so ill that for some time it seemed doubtful whether he would recover, but thanks to the skill of his old physician Dr Ramskill, and the assiduous care of his friend and

* This I think has been recognised by most people. In December 1884 the *Weekly Dispatch* spoke of the "great strain" put upon Mr Bradlaugh, "under which a man less vigorous in mind and body would long ere this have broken down."

colleague on the Vaccination Commission, Dr W. J. Collins, he gradually struggled back to life once more. It was thought that his health would be greatly benefited by a voyage to India, and therefore he decided to attend the Fifth National Congress in Bombay. Mr M'Ewan, M.P., who was then enjoying a holiday abroad, sent Mr Bradlaugh a cheque for £200 so that money difficulties should not hinder him from following the doctor's advice; and with the cheque, Mr M'Ewan sent a most delicately worded letter, which touched the sick man to the heart.

The shadows of death lay very close to him, and he had a hard fight back to the light again, but he longed ardently to live. There was so much that he had put his hand to, which the position he had now won in the House would enable him to do with comparative ease. As he lay in his bed in his study* he turned over and over in his mind plans by which he might economise his strength in the future. It was quite clear that he must do less lecturing, and must depend more and more on his pen. He resolved to try and sell the remainder of the Fleet Street lease, and to give up his publishing business; he also planned to gradually pay off the debenture-holders, and when it was free from all money entanglements, to hand over the printing plant to my husband to carry on the business in his own name and on his own responsibility. One thing he felt he could do immediately. After he had been lying very quiet for some time, he startled me one day by suddenly saying that he had determined to resign the Presidency of the National Secular Society, and he bade me get pen and paper, and take his instructions for a letter to the Secretary. I tried to argue the matter with him and begged him to reflect upon it, to do nothing hastily, and reminded him that people would say if he resigned then, in his illness, that he had recanted. His face, which all along had been set and stern, darkened as I said this. People must think what they choose, he said, he could no longer do everything; something must go; the Presidency entailed a great deal of work, and he must give it up. I tried to say something more, but he stopped me, saying sharply that he had made up his mind. I was disconcerted

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* The doctors would not allow Mr Bradlaugh to remain in his bedroom; one of them told him indignantly—albeit with some exaggeration—that he would have better accommodation in the workhouse!

by the tone and manner, so unusual from him to me, and left the room a moment to recover my equanimity. I was back almost immediately, and went to the desk to get the note-book to take down the letter to Mr Forder (the Secretary). I heard my name spoken gently, and turning, saw my father holding out his hand to me. I went to the bedside. "Now, my daughter," he said affectionately, "I want you to tell me what you were going to say just now." He listened patiently whilst I urged upon him that, although he was strong enough to despise the misrepresentation that would surely follow the abrupt and unexplained announcement of his resignation, it was hardly fair to his friends who would have to bear taunt and sneer, and would be unable to quote a word out of his mouth in reply. He replied that the reason for his immediate resignation was that he could not be a President in name only, and, without himself taking part in the work, be held responsible for the sayings and doings of others—with whom he might or might not agree—on behalf of the Society. He thought, however, he might leave his formal resignation until his return from India, although he would at once intimate his intention. He added with a tender smile, "I promise you that I will make a statement which shall not leave any one in doubt as to my opinions." The religious question troubled him so little that he had not even thought about it until I spoke of the possibility of misconstruction. The severity and sternness of his demeanour in making the announcement of his resolve was due solely to the pain it had cost him to give up an office he valued so highly, and which he had hoped to retain until the laws relating to Blasphemy were erased from the Statute Book.

It was generously offered to pay my passage to Brindisi so that I might care for my father during the first days of his journey, but my own health did not permit me to accept so delightful an offer. He seemed really too ill to go alone, and the memory of his face, so haggard and so grey, as I last saw it at the vessel's side, was an abiding pain. He sent back a pencilled note by the pilot, and a letter from every port, to tell how he was gaining strength each day. On board the steamer every one was kind to him. At Bombay every one was more than kind; all seemed to vie with each other in showing him attentions—Indians and English residents alike. A house and attendants were put at the disposal of himself and Sir William Wedderburn, President of the

Congress, and the latter made things easy for the invalid by many a courteous act. Although it had been announced that Mr Bradlaugh could not stay long enough in Bombay to receive addresses, yet a large number were presented to him, of which about twenty were in caskets or cases of worked silver, carved sandal wood, inlaid ivory, and other beautiful specimens of native work. The duty alone on these amounted to about £19, and was paid by the Congress Committee.

Mr Bradlaugh's interest in Indian affairs, and his comprehension of the needs of the people, were recognised both at home and in India. In India he was joyfully called the "Member for India," and at home his views on Indian matters were listened to with growing respect. Lord Dufferin sought an interview, and afterwards had considerable correspondence with him, and before Lord Harris set out for Bombay he also made a point of seeing the acknowledged representative in Parliament of the Indian people.

Mr Bradlaugh returned from Bombay at the end of January (1890), much better in health than we had dared to hope, and we now quite believed that with care he would become thoroughly strong again. The birth of my little son in the April of this year prevented me from attending to my father's correspondence, and at my request, my place was filled by a friend of mine and of my sister's, Mrs Mary Reed. My father soon grew very fond of my little boy, and would now and then put aside his writing and take him on his knee, protesting that he had never before left his work to nurse a baby, and sometimes wondering whether, when the boy grew up, he would go fishing with him.

The advent of the baby and all his paraphernalia made us feel more crowded for space than ever, and as the music publishers had a room on the first floor which they used as a stock-room, my husband arranged to rent this, and we furnished it as a sitting-room. We made it look as pretty as we could, and it was ready for us at the end of September. On my father's birthday (the 26th) I persuaded him to take us to the theatre, and we went to the Lyceum to see *Ravenswood*. On coming home we had supper in the bright new room instead of the dark place underground, and many were my father's jokes about the unwonted splendour of his surroundings. Alas! it seemed that that room was furnished only for him to die in three months later.

The winter of 1890 set in early and severely. In November

it began to snow, and snow and fog continued well into the new year. With the cold weather my father began to feel ill again. He thought of going to Paris to spend the New Year, but he could not afford it. I was sorry he could not go, for he always came back the better for a few days in Paris. He was a welcome visitor to the French capital; he had never been made to feel himself an outcast from society there. Coming home with him one fearfully foggy night in December* from a lecture he had been delivering at the Hall of Science on behalf of a testimonial to Mr Forder, the Secretary of the National Secular Society, the conversation turned upon the value of his books, and he mentioned two or three which he thought—erroneously, as it turned out—very valuable. I asked him if he would not sell them; if he could get a holiday and health with the money they would fetch, they would be well worth the exchange. "Ah, my daughter, when I sell my books ——" he began, and his unfinished answer told all the sadness of his thought. Twice he would have had to sell them if friends had not come to his aid—once, as I have said, to pay the Government costs in Bradlaugh *v.* Erskine, and next in the Peters and Kelly case. He loved his books; to part with them seemed like parting with his heart's blood.

On the 10th January my father went out in the afternoon; it was densely foggy and bitterly cold. When he returned a few hours later I ran down to him as usual, and was horrified to see his face—it was the same face that I had seen in the worst of his sickness of the previous winter. This was the first attack of the spasms of the heart, although we did not then know it; it was comparatively slight,* and after a little my father seemed himself again. The improvement, however, was more apparent than

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* Wednesday, 10th December. This was the last lecture Mr Bradlaugh ever delivered. The subject was "The Evidence for the Gospels," in criticism of Dr Watkin's Bampton lectures.

† A person writing in the *Swansea Journal* for 7th February 1891 said that some time previously Mr Bradlaugh *had told him* of his sufferings from *angina pectoris*. This is utterly untrue; my father never suffered from this complaint, nor until his fatal illness was he ever conscious that he had anything wrong with his heart. In a private letter to a friend written on the 14th—almost the last written with his own hand—he says distinctly, "I have never suffered from heart or lungs before." The mania for invention is extraordinary.

real; in less than a week from that day he was compelled to keep his bed, and in less than a month he lay in his grave. He died on the 30th January, firm in the convictions in which he had lived, and was buried on the 3rd of February, next my sister in the Brookwood Necropolis. The funeral was a silent one, without speeches and without display,* but people attended it from all parts of England—one miner even came from Scotland. People of all sorts and all conditions travelled to this remote spot to show their respect for the man who had given his life in the service of his fellows.

At Mr Bradlaugh's death his assets were not nearly sufficient to meet his liabilities, but amongst these liabilities there was not a single personal item; they were every one in connection with the Fleet Street business. Most of the creditors cheerfully agreed to accept a composition of ten shillings in the pound; of this £1700 was raised by public subscription, and the remainder was furnished by the sale of the library,† Indian presents,‡ and the lease of 63 Fleet Street. It was a wonderful testimony to the regard in which my father was held that people should join together to help in paying his debts after his death. Four other memorials to him have been projected, of which three are now complete. The first to be finished was the monument at Brookwood. It consists of a bronze bust of Mr Bradlaugh, by Mr F. Verheyden, on a red granite pedestal. It was erected at a cost of £225; and the money was subscribed absolutely spontaneously, without a single appeal or one word of request. Then came the statue of Mr Bradlaugh erected by his constituents in Abington Square, Northampton, and unveiled on the 25th of June 1894, in the presence of the greatest crowd ever assembled in that town.

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* This was exactly in accordance with Mr Bradlaugh's wishes. In a will dated 1884 he said: "I direct that my body shall be buried as cheaply as possible, and that no speeches be permitted at my funeral." His last will, which consisted of a few lines only, contained no directions on this matter.

† The library included some 7000 volumes, in addition to about 3000 Blue Books, and a large number of unbound pamphlets. The books were sold by post from the catalogue, and went to all parts of the world. They realised £550 after all expenses were paid, and about 1000 volumes remained unsold.

‡ Through the generosity of "Edna Lyall," I was able to buy these for myself.

Lastly, there is the memorial which was organised in the House of Commons, and energetically promoted by the daughters of Richard Cobden, one of our country's noblest men. This took the form of making some provision for myself, and to that end a house has been bought with the money subscribed.

There is one other memorial which from its nature is not likely to be completed for some years. It is a project to build a hall, to be called the "Bradlaugh Memorial Hall," to be used for the purposes of promoting the great causes with which Mr Bradlaugh was identified. It took close upon a hundred years to build a Memorial Hall to Thomas Paine; it remains to be seen how long it will take to erect one to the memory of Charles Bradlaugh.

PART II.

BY

JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

CHAPTER I.

PHILOSOPHY AND SECULARIST PROPAGANDA.

It may here be well to give a general view of Bradlaugh's teaching on the great open questions of opinion and action, taking separately the old provinces of religion and politics. When he came most prominently before his countrymen he had a very definite repute on both heads, having spoken on them in nearly every town of any size in the country; but neither then nor later could it be said that anything like the majority of the public had a just or accurate idea of his position. The obstacle was and is partly prejudice, partly incapacity.

§ 1

To begin with, even the distinct title of "Atheist" may mean any number of things for any number of persons. Ill-informed and even some well-informed people commonly describe an Atheist as one who says "There is no God," and that "Things happen by chance." To say to such persons—as has been said a thousand times—that for an Atheist both phrases are meaningless, seems to give no help: we must begin at the beginning, and show how the dispute arose. And it is useful to keep in view that Bradlaugh's Atheism, in the evolution of English Freethought, is only a generation removed from the Deism of Thomas Paine, which is much the same as the Deism of Voltaire. Deism or Theism is to-day reckoned a quite "religious" frame of mind; but it was the frame of mind of men who in their day were hated and vilified by Christians as much as Bradlaugh in his. Explicit Atheism is only in our own day become at all a common opinion. The men so described in former ages, so far as we know (if we set aside the remarkable developments of the Italian Renaissance), have nearly always been Deists or Pantheists, of whom the latter of course tend logically to coalesce with Atheism, but who have in their own names alike professed to repudiate Atheism. Thus Hobbes

and Spinoza, who last century were constantly called Atheists by Christians, always professed to have a God-idea; and the Freethinkers who showed head in England in the first half of the eighteenth century were all professing Deists. Systematic Atheism began to arise among the more penetrating or more trained thinkers of the latter half of the century. Thus Hume, after professing Deism throughout his life, left for posthumous publication his "Dialogues concerning Natural Religion," which amount to the surrender of all forms of Theism. Of Voltaire in his latter years, when he strongly attacked the Atheism of Holbach, it was said by the more high-flying talkers of the Paris drawing-rooms: "Why, he is a bigot; he is a Deist." But even Voltaire, as Mr Morley has shown, was somewhat less of a Deist after the earthquake of Lisbon; and "Candide" is not a good Theistic tract.* Diderot, again, reached explicit Atheism; and his friend Holbach wrote, in the "Système de la Nature," the first systematic and straightforward Atheistic treatise of modern times.† In England the movement was less rapid. Bolingbroke went pretty far towards a Lucretian or Agnostic Theism; and the upper-class Deism which on his lines held out against the opportunist orthodoxy of Butler, necessarily tended to make its Deity a very remote and inaccessible Power. But Freethought, to get any hold on the general mind in the thickening populations of the latter half of last century and the first half of this, had to begin

* This is all that can be pleaded in favour of the deliberate representation of Voltaire as an Atheist by the late Archbishop Thomson, at the Church Congress of 1881. But the ignorance of the upper English clergy in general on such matters is amazing. In January 1881, Archdeacon (then Canon) Farrar, preaching in Westminster Abbey, represented Robespierre's Reign of Terror as a "reign of avowed Atheism;" identified the Deistic cult of the "Supreme Being" with that of the "goddess of Reason;" and accounted for the fall of Robespierre by the statement that, "God *awoke once more*, and with one thunderclap smote the sanhedrim of the insurrection, prostrated the apostate race." This orator once expressed horror at the thought that Disestablishment might enable Bradlaugh to speak in St Paul's. Bradlaugh might have remarked on what the Establishment permitted at Westminster Abbey.

† The English translation, in the original issue, is in parts completely perverted to the language of Theism, whether out of fear or of Deistic prejudice on the part of the translator. Even the edition prefaced by Bradlaugh—who did not think of checking the text—preserves the perversions of the first translator

again, and more effectively, on the lines of the first Deists. The incredibility of the sacred books had to be made clear before more abstract issues could be settled. In this task Voltaire, the pupil of the English Deists, was the great performer for all Europe. It was Paine however who first, in the turmoil of the Revolution, brought home to thousands of English artizans and other plain men the incredibility of what had so long passed as divinely-revealed truth. He could do this the better because of the power and fame of his work in politics, and because of his constant profession of a devout belief in a beneficent God, on whom he declared the Bible narratives to be a libel. It probably needed this element of popular religion to keep up any continuous current of popular Free-thinking in England throughout the great reaction which followed on the French Revolution. But the argument of Butler held good against Paine as against the earlier Deists. If the Bible stories were irreconcilable with the idea of a "good," omnipotent God, equally so are the operations of Nature. And though there are many people who can be led by that argument to believe or make-believe in the Bible (though it makes no more for the Bible than for the Koran), there were others who felt bound to take the logical alternative, and decide that the "good God" of popular half-faith is a dream.

Such progress is a question of time. Atheism in a psychological sense began with the beginning of physical science. Pure Theism, in its early form of polytheism, saw in all natural movements and forces the expression of a personal power or powers, analogous to man; and its gods were and are simply magnified projections of humanity. Thus the sun, moon, and planets, the winds, the thunder, the lightning, the rivers, the fountains, the seas, were all figured as ruled and moved by personal deities. As soon, however, as astronomy made certain the perfectly regular movements of the sun and stars, Theism was to that extent logically limited, and Atheism to that extent logically possible. Astronomy was strictly godless in so far as it showed the universe to move by undeviating law. Of course this perception is but a small part of human consciousness and daily life; and the habit of theising, so to speak, easily overrode the habit of atheising. But every advance in exact knowledge of Nature, and in the capacity for exact thought, tended to encourage the atheistic view, and to discredit the theistic. Hence the spread of Atheism and Agnosticism among the Greeks

in their progressive and scientific period. It needed the constant reform and modification of theistic doctrine, and later the complete arrest of all scientific thought, to keep the theistic view of things in power and place. And there had to be a revival of science and exact thinking before there could again be talk of Atheism.

It follows, however, that all early Atheism, so-called, was only the rejection of theistic ideas from some part of the business of life. The Christians were "Atheists" for the Pagan multitude, because they rejected the only God-ideas which the Pagan multitude harboured. In the same way the Christians who later scouted the worship of images of God (as Persians and Jews had done long before) were Atheists for those Christians who could only conceive of an imaged God. Prejudice has its own logic. When again medical men rested more and more on inductive method and rational (even if mistaken) procedure, and less and less on sorcery and invocation, they were naturally called Atheists, because they excluded "God" from an important and perilous province of action. Logically, the more a man is a Theist, the more of "God's" intervention he sees in life. No man is a Theist in all things; but in the ages of ignorance men were theistic in most matters. The kingdom of God, in a practical sense, is a sphere in which man is confessedly ignorant or impotent. "God's will" is the name for the forces which man cannot control, and does not understand. It covers a storm, a pestilence, a good or bad harvest, a stroke of luck, but not an indigestion, or the breaking of coal when struck by a hammer. Thus it is that every new advance of science, every new explanation of a body of facts in terms of law and innate tendency, is at first denounced as Atheistic. After the physicians came the physicists. The great Kepler, in keeping with his idealistic method, was so steeped in Theism as to fancy that the planets were kept up to time by guiding angels. Newton, however, was flatly accused of Atheism for explaining the universe in terms of the law of gravitation. He had driven God out of the world, it was said; and so far as his physics went, it was true. Yet he himself was an ardent Theist; and he even sought to make good his Theism by the theory that "matter" was first without gravitation, and that God added the attribute. With or without this safeguard, however, Newton's generalisation was sufficiently abstract to leave popular religion intact; and practical Theism even assimilated and gained by his

science. It was not till geologists began to explain the formation of the earth in terms of law and tendency that the great shock came. God had hitherto been generally conceived as shaping the earth, were it only because there was no other explanation at hand; and, above all, geology clashed with Genesis. Hence a much more serious resistance, and a much more general imputation of Atheism; though the first geologists were mostly Deists, and believers in the special creation of animal life. The next and the most serious shock was that given by Darwinism, which removed "the divine idea" from biology. Over this came the loudest outcry of all; and the odium would have been overwhelming were it not for the number of naturalists who took up the new doctrine as a matter of special science. "God" is now for scientific people practically removed from the sphere of all the "natural" sciences; and the results attained in this connection by educated people are slowly being attained by the ill-educated; the mass of the clergy having gradually assimilated the conclusions of biology as their predecessors did those of geology and physics.

The inevitable next step is the reduction to scientific order of the lore of human affairs. This step was taken in a large part by Buckle, somewhat out of the due order of time, just before Darwin issued the "Origin of Species;" and Buckle has had on the whole more of religious enmity than even Darwin, though, significantly enough, he expressly insisted on Theism while Darwin kept it vaguely in the background. Buckle's Theism so plainly leaves his Deity nothing to do in human affairs that his belief, however fervid, could avail nothing to propitiate the class whose function is to explain history in terms of divine interference. Buckle, a professed Theist, is for all practical purposes in the position of an Atheist, save in respect of his personal and emotional belief in a future state. A God who in no way comes in contact with men, for good or for ill, is too thin a conception to count for much.

Atheism, then, is only a development of a process of thought that began ages ago under Polytheism. It has been reached in the past by isolated thinkers; there seem to have been Atheists at the time of composition of parts of the Vedas; and each one of the great steps of scientific generalisation has been anticipated by men who were not able to bring the idea home to their own age. It is the giving the step its name that creates the greatest shock. And when a reformer does not even wait to have his position

named for him, does not merely undermine Theism by a new scientific treatment of a province of fact, but goes to the logical root of the matter and declares that the latest Theism is at bottom no more true than the oldest, though stripped of certain crudities—then it is that the maximum of odium is evoked. The Atheist, in reality, does but carry negation a step further than does the Theist himself. As Bradlaugh used to point out, the modern Theist denies the existence of any type of "God" save his own. Whatever he may see fit to argue about the folly of denying the possibilities of the unknown, he is quite confident that there is in the universe no Being even remotely resembling the fabled Zeus, or Moloch, or Osiris, or Venus, or Huitzlipochtli. He is sure that these are only imaginary existences. Similarly, he begins in these days to be sure that the conception of Jahweh is as purely a dream as that of Bacchus—the mere projection of man's own image (however magnified or even idealised) on the background of nescience. Nay, the latter-day Theist begins to repudiate the conceptions of the "Deists" of last century: he will have no "Great Artificer," no "Overruling Providence." The latest treatises expressly reject the arguments of the earlier for proving the "existence of God." Thus the Theist himself "denies the existence" of a thousand Gods.* The Atheist, as Mr Bradlaugh put it, merely denies a thousand and one.† He argues that the most advanced Theism (as distinguished from mere Pantheism) is only a modified form of the oldest; merely a civilised fancy instead of an uncivilised; it is always a male person in the image of man, with passions, emotions, limitations, qualities; loving, hating, planning, punishing, rewarding; always the "magnified non-natural man" of the primeval worshipper: a conception flatly and absurdly opposed to the first philosophic requirements of the very doctrine which

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* This fact is entirely ignored by Professor Flint in his defence of the old plea of Foster and Chalmers against Mr Holyoake in "Anti-Theistic Theories," App. ii.

† John Mill, after stating that his father held that "concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known," remarks that "Dogmatic Atheism he looked upon as absurd; as most of those whom the world has considered Atheists have always done" ("Autobiography," p. 39). It is difficult to guess what is here meant by "dogmatic Atheism;" but certainly no statement made above is more "dogmatic" than the proposition cited from Mill, senior. It clearly involves rejection of all Theism,

embodies it. The God of Theism must always be the analogue of the Theist. Hume, passing out of Theism, concluded that the "Power" of the universe could only have a faint and remote analogy to human personality. Further reasoning forces the conclusion that it can have no conceivable analogy.

This very conclusion has actually been reached by many professed Theists and professed Christians. Professor Max Müller has collected instances in his lectures on "Anthropological Religion." But those thinkers, like Dr Müller himself, have always in practice relapsed into the personal conception which they philosophically affect to repudiate. As Dr Müller puts it, the abstract Theism which allows to Deity no human attributes whatever is too "cold" for popularity; and Dr Müller is not ashamed, after smoothing the way with a trivial fallacy, to recur to the doctrine and terminology of the multitude, giving the Deity male sex because "we" cannot think of "Him" otherwise than as male. The Atheist simply stands honestly to the conclusions which such Theists have avowedly come to and then feebly let go.

This is so obvious to steady-minded people that in all philosophic ages there have been some who, shunning the name rather than the reality of Atheism, have formulated the doctrine and name of Pantheism. Between *logical* Pantheism and Atheism, however, it cannot be too strongly affirmed, there is no difference save in name. An Atheist believes in a "going" and infinite universe, the totality of which he cannot pretend to understand; and which he flatly refuses to pretend to explain by the primitive hypothesis of a personal "Spirit." He calls the universe "infinite" by way of avowing that he cannot conceive of its coming to an end, in extension or in duration. This recognition of endlessness represents for him the limit of thought: and he declines to proceed to give further attributes to that, the very naming of which leads him to the verge of the capacities of rational speech. He declines to give to the going universe the name of "God," because that name has always been associated by nearly all men with the primitive conception of a Personal Being, and it is a mere verbal stratagem to make it identical with Universe. So irresistible is the effect of the immemorial association of the name that it serves to carry nearly every professing Pantheist back chronically into mere Theism and Deism, even if he so formulates his Pantheism to begin with as to make it answer to the name. A

logically consistent Pantheist, using the name, would be hard to find. Hence the necessity, on all grounds, of repudiating Pantheism as distinctly as Theism. The only consistent course is to use the privative "*a*," and stand to the term which means "without Theos, without God-idea."

§ 2.

This preamble, it is to be hoped, may make it easier to appreciate the technicalities of Bradlaugh's doctrine. He was not the untrained Atheist of the theistic imagination, who may be confounded with a quotation from Kant by one of the personages of Mrs Ward's religious vaudevilles. He knew that Kant, reduced to plain language, gives the whole answer to Kant. Beginning as a boy to defend his Theism in debate, he saw it demolished by one of those born debaters who are found every now and then among the working class, men far superior in native power and intellectual sincerity to those cultured acceptors of other men obscurities who look down on them.* But he did not trust to "mother-wit," his own or another's. He read all the philosophic literature he could lay hands on; in particular he became a close student of Spinoza. A clergyman of my acquaintance maintains that to the end he was a Spinozist. It would be less misleading to say that he employed much of the method of Spinoza to establish the Atheism to which Spinoza's doctrine practically leads,† while always scrupulously recognising that Spinoza formulated Pantheism and professed only to modify the God-idea. Here are Bradlaugh's own words :—

"The logic of Spinoza was directed to the demonstration of one substance with infinite attributes, for which one substance with infinite attributes he had as equivalent the name of 'God.' Some who have

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* One of the most capable metaphysicians I have personally known was an inferior stone-mason.

† It was not merely the orthodoxy of past ages that saw virtual Atheism in the position of Spinoza. Jacobi expressly and constantly maintained that Spinozism and Atheism came to the same thing. A God who is not outside the world, he argued, is as good as no God. At the same time, he admitted that the understanding had no escape from the logical demonstration of the impossibility of a personal God; and that the Theist must throw himself "overhead into the depths of faith." See Pünjer's "History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion," Eng. tr., p. 632.

since followed Spinoza, have agreed in his one substance, but have denied the possibility of infinite attributes. Attributes or qualities, they urge, are attributes of the finite or conditioned, and you cannot have attributes of substance except as attributes of its modes. You have in this distinction the division line between Spinozism and Atheism. Spinoza recognises infinite intelligence; but Atheism cannot conceive intelligence except in relation, as quality of the conditioned, and not as the essence of the absolute. Spinoza, however, denied the doctrine of freewill, as with him all phenomena are of God; so he rejects the ordinary notions of good and evil." *

The position here taken up is frequently met by an outcry against the "denial of intelligence" to the highest power in the universe. The protest is pure irrelevance. Atheism "denies intelligence" to an infinite existence simply as it denies it whiskers and dyspepsia. The point is that intelligence cannot be conceived save as a finite attribute; every process of intelligence implying limitation and ignorance.† Infinitude must transcend the state of "intelligence." The "intelligence" of "omniscience" is a chimæra. And when the Atheist is accused of making himself the highest thing in the universe, the plain answer is that it is precisely the Theist, and nobody else, who does so. That is to say, the Theist makes his own mind and personality the type and analogue of an Infinite and Eternal Power. The Atheist admits that he can form no conception whatever of Infinite and Eternal Power. The Theist rushes in where the Atheist declines to tread. And nothing is more remarkable in the modern history of religion than the retreat of all theistic argument to some form of the sub-rational position so laboriously formulated by Kant—that the God-idea is established, not by any form of reasonable inference from knowledge, but by the moral needs and constitution of human nature. That doctrine is not only the formal bankruptcy of all philosophy, logical and psychological, but is the stultification of every religious system

* Pamphlet on "Heresy: its Utility and Morality. A Plea and a Justification," 3rd. ed. p. 35.

† It is unnecessary here to put the further argument that if we infer intelligence behind the universe by human analogy, we are bound in consistency to infer organism for the intelligence. Dr Martineau in his "Modern Materialism," takes refuge from this argument in declamation, treating the demand for consistency as if it had been a substantive plea.

which adopts it, inasmuch as it is equally valid for each against all the rest, besides being finally annihilated by the simple fact of persistent scientific Atheism, which proves that human nature does *not* need the sustenance of a God-idea, whether in ethics, in politics, or in natural science. The only resource of neo-Kantism against the Atheist is the *argumentum ad hominem* of imputing to him "atrophy" of the "spiritual" sense; an argument which —not to employ a simple *tu quoque* — may be sufficiently met either by the answer that the "spiritual sense" which maintains Theism is merely the carnal and self-excited appetite for mental opium, and that the Hindu and the devout Catholic have it in a much higher degree than the mere Theist; or by the reminder that even if there were special intellectual defect behind Atheism, it is, on the Theistic hypothesis, a defect foreordained by Theos, and is as much part of human nature as the docility of the Theist.

All the psychological line of argument, as put by Kant and his adaptors, is fully and patiently met by Bradlaugh in his section of the "Freethinker's Text-Book," which deals in turn with all the main pleas of orthodoxy. At the close of the examination of Kant he writes, with great caution and moderation:—

"We do not feel sure that we have either fairly stated Kant's position or efficiently replied to as much as we have stated. In condensing within the limits of this Text-Book the views of a writer so involved in his expressions as is Immanuel Kant, we may have failed both in exposition and answer, but have the consolation that we at any rate place before our readers the sources of completer knowledge."

But the modest deprecation was unnecessary, the main theses of Kant having really been sufficiently stated and met; and the Text-Book goes on to cite and answer the arguments of an able neo-Kantian Theist, who had confessedly found Kant unsatisfying, but who offered in his turn only the vague emotional plea as against Kant's moral plea, backing it up with the old paralogism of the "spiritual sense." That is the best that modern Theism can say for itself; and the argument will never convince anybody who had needed convincing.* It is further repudiated by the

* See an examination of the positions of Knight, Davidson, and Kaftan, in the *Free Review*, August, 1894.

orthodox Theism which claims to stand on revelation, and which in turn is dismissed as ill-founded by more philosophic Theism.

The orthodox Theism is in this country represented by Professor Flint, who when challenged by Bradlaugh to defend his position philosophically, took the line of answering that, "for a person possessed of a typically English intellect, Mr Bradlaugh shows, in dealing with Theism, a curious predilection for metaphysical conundrums,"* and proceeded to meet the said "conundrums" in the spirit of a joker dealing with a joke. The argument, "Unless it be nonsense to affirm infinity and Mr Bradlaugh added to it, why should it be nonsense to affirm infinity and the universe added to it?" is a sample of the reasoning with which Dr Flint satisfies the pious, in answer to the Atheistic doctrine that human beings are only forms of the infinite existence. Another of the Professor's expedients is to say that God has reason but does not reason. "No intelligent man thinks or speaks of God as reasoning;" which is a severe attack, from a Scotch Professor of Divinity, on the author of Isaiah i. 18. But more than passing notice is here due to one of the Professor's remarks †:—

"There is an impression in some quarters that Atheism is advocated in a weak and unskilful manner by the chiefs of Secularism. It is an impression which I do not share. Most of the writers who are striving to diffuse Atheism in literary circles are not to be compared in intellectual strength with either Mr Holyoake or Mr Bradlaugh."

Such a testimony, from such a source, counts for rather more than the arguments emanating thence.

As to the assertion, again, that Atheists say "there is no God" —an assertion made with surprising frequency by professed Agnostics—it was constantly met by Bradlaugh with the answer that the phrase has no meaning.

"The initial difficulty is in defining the word 'God.' It is equally impossible to intelligently affirm or deny any proposition unless there is at least an understanding, on the part of the affirmer or denier, of the meaning of every word used in the proposition. To me the word 'God' standing alone is a word without meaning."‡

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* "Anti-Theistic Theories," 4th ed. p. 517.

† *Id.*, pp. 518, 519.

‡ Pamphlet, "Is there a God?" p. 1.

It would have been more exact to say that it has too many meanings to stand for any one in particular. Once defined, the alleged existence can be rationally denied, as may the existence of a race of centaurs, half men half horses, or of dragons who breathe fire, or of a being answering to the description of Neptune, driving a chariot on the sea, or of Apollo, driving the sun. All definitions of God which affirm personality or human attributes are open to immediate stultification by argument. "I have never yet heard," wrote Bradlaugh, "a definition of God from any living man, nor have I read a definition by dead or living man, that was not self-contradictory. . . . But the moment you tell me you mean the God of the Bible, or the God of the Koran, or the God of any particular Church, I am prepared to tell you that I deny that God." * The person who says we have no right to deny the existence of his imagined God until we have been all through the universe, has on his own showing no right to deny the existence of such Gods as are described in the stories of Saturn and Thor. The most paralytic Agnosticism, however, like the most devout Theism, seems content to be as sure that these are imaginary existences, as that Julius Cæsar was never in America.

The relation of Atheism to Agnosticism is thus wholly misconceived by most people who differentiate them. That is to say, the logical form of Agnosticism—by which is not meant the self-styled Agnosticism which resorts to the use of the name "God"—comes to the same thing as Atheism, since it argues that the current God-idea is a mere reflex of humanity, like those which preceded it. Bradlaugh sometimes grew impatient (and small wonder) with people who wrote to him to point out that Atheism was wrong, and Agnosticism right. They never took the trouble to try to understand what he meant by Atheism; and it must with regret be said that more competent Agnostics often make the same omission. The simple-minded Agnostic who candidly remarks, "I do not say there is no God, but I haven't seen any evidence for one," is kept in countenance by the more learned Agnosticism which excludes from its learning the literature of modern Atheism. Bradlaugh had seen the new name readily adopted by men who not only shunned the old but helped to heap on it an ignorant odium. He had seen Atheism strangely mis-

* Second reply to Bishop Magee, p. 35.

represented by Mr Spencer in "First Principles;"* he pointed out that a mere avowal of ignorance is not worth making, and that Agnosticism is not a philosophy at all, unless it says, not merely, "I do not know of the thing you assert," but "you do not know either"—which are just the statements of Atheism. He might have added that while "Atheist," though a term much abused by Theists, is a good word, and a real doctrine-name, "Agnostic" is a bad word, and in itself no doctrine-name at all, since it says "Don't know," without hinting what it is that is not known. The present writer has heard a Christian Evidence lecturer, a Master of Arts, delight a Christian audience by saying that the nearest English equivalent to "Agnostic" is "Ignoramus." His strategy was characteristic of his cause, but he was dialectically within his rights.

The best argument for the use of the name Agnostic is simply that the word Atheist has been so long covered with all manner of ignorant calumny that it is expedient to use a new term which, though in some respects faulty, has a fair start, and will in time have a recognised meaning. The case, so stated, is reasonable; but there is the *per contra* that, whatever the motive with which the name is used, it is now tacked to half a dozen conflicting forms of doctrine, varying loosely between Theism and Pantheism. The name of Atheist escapes that drawback. Its unpopularity has saved it from half-hearted and half-minded patronage.

§ 3.

Another obstinate misunderstanding arises over the word "Materialism." Bradlaugh did not willingly or often resort to that name. He seems to have preferred the more philosophic term "Monist," or the useful word "Naturist," which latter, however, he did not seek to force into common use.† But he was of course a "Materialist" in the sense in which alone the word is used by those who so name themselves—a sense sufficiently

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* Mr Spencer (p. 31) represents the "Atheistic theory" as professing to "conceive" an infinite and eternal universe, and thereby to "explain" it, when the very essence of Atheism is to insist (as does Mr Spencer) that infinity is only the negation of conceptions, and that an infinite universe cannot be "explained."

† "Naturalist" seems first to have been used in this sense by Holbach.

different from those put upon it by most of the writers who assail them, rationalists and supernaturalists alike. The former assailants, of course, do the more harm. Philosophy has in England suffered peculiarly from the tendency of professed thinkers to dissociate themselves anxiously from certain doctrine-names that are ill spoken of, and to join in the vulgar outcry against them, rather than try judicially to estimate their significance and value. Of such bourgeois prudence we have examples in some of our leading modern philosophers. And there is the other trouble that some men with great powers of a certain sort lack the capacity to see or grasp all the parts of a broad problem at once or in relation, and must needs cramply lift and handle only one at a time. Rationalists of this kind do immense harm to the cause of rationalism, as pietists of the same stamp do to the cause of their creed, by elevating a small or verbal difference into a sectarian issue, and representing other rationalists as opposed to them when there is no fundamental difference in the case. When this want of sense of proportion in an able man goes with intellectual vacillation or discontinuity, it works the maximum of frustration. We have a prominent instance in Professor Huxley, who has given countenance to contradictory conclusions on half-a-dozen main questions. He has gratuitously encouraged the enforced use of the Bible in public schools, and he has wearied Freethinkers by tediously strategic combats on worn-out topics with those who hold the very beliefs that the Bible sets up in minds which reverence it. On the question of Materialism he has reinforced reaction by contemptuous language towards men whose teaching is identical with his own so far as that is sound; and on the other hand he has obstructed the spread of logical Materialism by stating crudely and without verbal circumspection a strictly materialistic doctrine.* What is worse, he has written on Materialism as did Lewes—without treating the term historically; and he has at times contemned Materialists in general without specifying any one man's teaching in detail. Another writer in the same category, of whom better things might be expected, is Professor Karl Pearson. That gentleman, after the fashion of Professor Huxley,

* "What we call the operations of the mind are functions of the brain and the *materials of consciousness* are products of cerebral activity" ("Hume,' p. 80). Mr Huxley goes on, "It is hardly necessary to point out that the doctrine just laid down is what is commonly called Materialism."

has at one time pooh-poohed the criticism of theology as an attack on a ruin, and at another has furiously cannonaded the bones of a dead theologian. And recently he has gone out of his way, in his "Grammar of Science" so-called, to asperse Materialism, while teaching practically nothing else of a positive nature. Mr Pearson's account of the Materialism of Büchner and Bradlaugh, superciliously given in a footnote, is in the circumstances the worst misrepresentation of the matter now before the public. He speaks of "the Materialist" and "modern Materialists" as substituting force for the will or spirit of the Spiritists as a "cause" of motion, and goes on to confuse the already much-confused question of "necessity" by playing the bull in that philosophic china-shop.

"The idea of enforcement," he writes, "of some necessity in the order of a sequence, remains deeply rooted in men's minds, as a fossil from the spiritualistic explanation of will as the cause of motion. This idea is preserved in association with the scientific description of motion; and in the Materialist's notion of force as that which *necessitates* certain changes or sequences of motion, we have the ghost of the old Spiritualism. The force of the Materialist is the will of the old Spiritualist separated from consciousness. Both carry us into the region beyond our sense-impressions; both are therefore *metaphysical;* but perhaps the inference of the old Spiritualist was, if illegitimate, less absurdly so than that of the modern Materialist, *for the Spiritualist did not infer will to exist beyond the sphere of consciousness with which he had always found will associated.*"

This passage, fallacious from its first clause—being but an empirical attack on empiricism—becomes in the last, with its "for," a mere misstatement. The Spiritualist did most emphatically infer will outside the sphere of consciousness with which he had always found will associated, since he expressly assumed a consciousness without organisation—a thing he never met with. It is further quite unjustifiable to assert that "modern Materialists" carry outside the sphere of consciousness ideas either of "will" or of "enforcement," which they have always found associated with consciousness. Professor Pearson is confused by words, which are apt to be even for wise men at times what Hobbes said they were for fools. The task of philosophy is a perpetual struggle with the mazes of language; and it is worse than idle to discuss such problems as Mr Pearson here gratuitously raises, without analysing the terms which commonly contain them. He uses the word

"necessitates" as if there were no ambiguity or obscurity about its sense; just as he constantly speaks of our not knowing the "why" of things, without making a single philosophical attempt to analyse the psychological force of that profoundly important syllable. What do we mean by "why," apart from matters of volition? It is the old story of regarding the leaf as "a flat green object which we know all about already." Professor Pearson goes about to analyse the leaves of physics, but too often takes for granted the leaves of language. He has needlessly approached his task in such a fashion that it becomes much more a matter of psychology and logic than of physical science; yet his psychology is little better than a hand-to-mouth criticism, the mere business psychology of a physicist. His distinction between philosophical and physicist doctrine (pp. 93, 94), to the effect that one appeals to temperament but the other not, is a sample of amateur psychology grievous to consider. And while discrediting certain doctrines in physics, real or imaginary, on the bare ground that they are metaphysical, he yet rounds the whole of his own doctrine to an expressly metaphysical account of the nature of scientific knowledge. There is, of course, no real dividing-line between metaphysics and sense-knowledge; what the physicists rightly protest against is just bad metaphysic, spiritist metaphysic. But when a physicist himself plunges at every page of his book into more or less gratuitous metaphysic, and yet assumes to dispose of other men's doctrine (falsified at that) by calling it metaphysical, he goes beyond fallacy into what has been considerately described, in a factious politician, as "moral paradox."

As to the charge against the Materialists—whom Mr Pearson in another passage typifies by Büchner and Bradlaugh—it is practically untrue on one head, that of force being the "cause" of motion; and quite inconclusive on another, that of "enforcement" and "necessity." Mr Pearson is uncandid enough to cite no passage on either head, and I know not whether the latter is not as inaccurate as the other. Even if, however, a Materialist should talk of motion as a "necessity" of matter, it would amount to nothing to impugn him without showing what he conceives "necessity" to be. The word is a plexus of connotations; and to identify it out-of-hand with the conceptions of spiritists is a course more worthy of a theologian than of a man of science. Mr Pearson's way of talking of "enforcement," as if the word con-

veyed any fixed scientific sense whatever, is a commission of the very offence he unjustly charges on the school of Büchner. But as to the statement that Büchner and Bradlaugh are wont to speak of force as the "cause" of motion, it is really not true. Büchner in his typical work, "Force and Matter," does in one passage write somewhat unguardedly of the "force inherent in matter"—*i.e.* in the "something" empirically known "which we call matter"—as being the cause (*Ursache*) of the activities which are the phenomena of the said matter;* but this momentary verbal laxity is not at all the burden of his treatise. It is in any case much more pardonable than the gross contradictions which Mr Pearson quotes from the writings of Professors Thomson and Tait, collaborators in special physics; it is paralleled by phrases which he cites from Huxley, Nägeli, Spencer, and Weismann; and it is much less serious than the inconsistencies and fallacies into which Mr Pearson himself repeatedly falls. Even while repudiating the notion above cited as to "cause" (which he does without reference to the well-known discussions, from Hume onward, as to the force of the term), he writes (p. 352): " . . . . We still shall not find in 'force,' *as* either the cause of motion, or the cause of change in motion, *anything more* than that routine of perceptions which . . . is the scientific definition of causation." With this account of causation Büchner and Bradlaugh, and everybody else who has appreciated the effect of Hume's reasoning, would agree, save in so far as the phrasing falls into the very crudities of expression which mar Hume's pioneer argument. Mr Pearson writes that we "sadly need separate terms for the routine of sense-impressions," yet he never hesitates either to use a general term loosely or to disparage an unpopular man for doing the same thing. He says of material particles (p. 327): "All we can scientifically say is, that the *cause* of their motion is their relative position; but this is no explanation of why they move in that position." This use of "cause" is really looser than Büchner's, and is not "scientific" at all. The use of "why"—as if we had a clear conception of physical "why" as distinct from that of "cause"—is mere verbal bungling.

Again, in finally formulating the first general law of motion, Mr Pearson writes (p. 342): "Every corpuscle, whether of ether or

* Section on "The Value of Matter" (*Werth des Stoffs*), Eng. tr., p. 68.

gross 'matter,' *influences the motion* of the adjacent ether corpuscles." Here the word "influences" raises (as he elsewhere admits by implication) the same problem as the word "causes," so that his own most deliberate phraseology incurs the objection he makes to another man's incidental expression.

As to essentials, Mr Pearson says what Büchner does. He ostensibly regards matter as "*that which moves*," confusing the definition, however, by saying that we can conceive "forms of motion" as *also* moving. This is really going far to set up a dualistic notion analogous to that which he imputes to Materialists; and he will probably see on reflection that his idea needs careful re-statement. The essential thing is that the scientific conception of matter excludes the idea of a primary dissociation between force (or life) and matter, and their union at a point of time by a "spiritual" Creator's volition. The old dualistic doctrine of *inertia*, which is so re-stated by Mr Pearson (p. 344) as to entirely alter its meaning, is still commonly cited as establishing the dualistic or spiritualistic position. The dualistic doctrine as to matter is put and maintained by the Rev. Mr Westerby in his debate with Bradlaugh (p. 27) thus: "*Force is always external to the matter that is moved.*" The effect of Mr Pearson's account of Materialism is to assert that that is virtually the teaching of Materialists so-called. But it certainly is not. The slipperiness and elasticity of language are such that a single word may set up a fallacious implication; and the word "cause" is as slippery and elastic as any. But the obvious and avowed purpose of Büchner's book is to repudiate and overthrow the dualistic notion of the universe. He expressly and repeatedly affirms that matter and motion, matter and force, are inseparable in thought. "The conception of dead matter," he writes, "is a mere abstraction." "The investigation of motion is the peculiar task of modern science, and her province embraces everything that can be traced back to motion. Matter in motion or capable of motion is or must be her first and last word."* Further, Büchner neither prefers to call himself a Materialist nor represents science as propagandist. "Science," he writes, "is not idealistic, nor spiritualistic, nor materialistic, but simply natural."†

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* Section on "Motion," *end.*

† Section on the "Value of Matter" (*Werth des Stoffs*), *end.*

As to the term "Materialist," he remarks that "since the first publication of this book, the term has become to some extent current, and at every fitting and unfitting opportunity the designation has been dragged in neck and heels, *unsuited though it is to the defenders of a philosophy which regards matter, force, and mind, not as separate entities, but only as different sides or various phenomenal modes of the same primal or basic principle.*"* Similarly Bradlaugh invariably spoke of "one existence, of which all phenomena are modes," expressly declaring that we can only know phenomena; which was his way of saying that we can never "know why" in the sense in which theologians claim to do so. At no time did he speak of "force" as a separate entity "causing motion."

After speaking of Materialists as habitually calling force the "cause of motion," Mr Pearson loosely represents Büchner and the followers of Bradlaugh as finding "mechanical *laws* inherent in the things themselves;" and he declares that this materialism "collapses under the slightest pressure of logical criticism." He has in reality passed upon it no logical criticism whatever, his frequent lack of lucidity becoming at this place sheer darkness. What he has said on the point has been wholly metaphysical; but his metaphysic, ill done as it is, perfectly justifies the doctrine he finally and irrelevantly contemns. "In the necessarily limited verifiable correspondence of our perceptual experience with our conceptual model," he writes (p. 353), "lies the basis of our mechanical description of the universe." "A shorthand *résumé* of our conceptual experience" is repeatedly specified by him as the gist or purpose of science; but when he wants to discredit anybody else's doctrine, it suffices him to call it just such a shorthand *résumé* or dismiss it as metaphysical. And the arbitrariness of his verdicts becomes apparent once for all when he writes: "It is perhaps needless to add that the gifted lady who speaks of secularists as holding the 'creed of Clifford and Charles Bradlaugh' has failed to see the irreconcilable divergence between the inventor of 'mind-stuff' and the follower of Büchner." That is to say, Mr Pearson applauds or distinguishes Clifford for perhaps the loosest formula ever put forward in the name of Materialism, but still a formula not contradictory of Büchner's and Bradlaugh's monism,

* Section on the "Value of Matter" (*Werth des Stoffs*), *end.*

while disparaging Büchner and Bradlaugh for their Materialism. It will be clear to a logical reader that the conception of "mind-stuff" ("shorthand" with a vengeance!) is only a random materialistic suggestion—not an infrequent thing with Clifford—but still a suggestion quite reconcilable with materialistic monism. Büchner writes that "all yet future forms, including reasoning beings, potentially or in capacity, must have been contained in that primal world-mist out of which our solar system was gradually evolved."* Bradlaugh always defined his "one existence" as including "all that is necessary for the happening of all phenomena." Mr Huxley—whom Mr Pearson does not asperse as a "Materialist"—has expressed himself in terms almost identical with Buchner's.† To speak of "mind-stuff" as being part of the "primal world-mist" is merely to suggest a hopeless "conceptual mode" of thought over and above the most exact "shorthand" to which words can well reduce the inferences of science as to cosmic history. That Clifford would have approved of either the tone or the judgment of his successor in the matter one may take leave to doubt. His "temperament" was different from that of Mr Pearson, who supplies in his own person the disproof of his own primitive doctrine that scientific opinions have nothing to do with temperament.

The unpleasing fact is that personal interest and prejudice have been the main factors in establishing the ill-repute of the term "Materialist." It arose very much as the term "Freethinker" arose, by way of broadly marking off a new tendency in active thought. The Freethinkers, so-called, simply claimed to follow their reason freely, where religious people were tied down to their traditional creed. The Materialists simply emphasized the new and spreading conception—at once Pantheistic and Atheistic—that the laws of things were to be looked for in the constitution of things, and not in any "spiritual" volition of a superior being or beings. They opposed the notion of a primal distinction between matter and the energies and activities thereof. Spiritism was for them the sum-total of all the guesses and hallucinations of ignorance; and their contrasted Materialism was imputed to them as a vileness by the types of mind which found elevation in the

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* Section on the "Value of Matter" (*Werth des Stoffs*), *end.*

† See his "Critiques and Addresses," p. 306.

doctrine of blood sacrifice and ritual theophagy. Scientific disinterestedness was bracketed with grossness of life, and this often by pietists as gross in life as in thought. Every Spiritist who went a certain way in Materialism was libelled in turn; but the semi-Materialist could always indemnify himself by libelling those who went further.* Newton's theistic theory of matter is as absurd a one as any man of science ever framed; but he has earned by it the tenderness of later theists, while his fame secures the lenity of later physicists. Thus some guarded rationalists who pounce like weasels on every slip, real or fancied, of professed Freethinkers, honey their voices to speak of halfway thinkers whose slips are gross, open, palpable. They have their social reward. Bradlaugh and Büchner have taken a different course. Finding the term "Materialism" in itself unphilosophic, they have still looked to the essential point of its broad historic significance. It marks on the side of physical science, from La Mettrie onwards, the repudiation of theological methods; and though they would not have coined the name for themselves, they have not repudiated it, but have instead sought to free the doctrine behind it from the laxities and crudities which belong to all new departures of thought, and which abound in the writings alike of Idealists and of some critical pragmatists in a greater degree than in those of the pioneers they attack. Büchner and Bradlaugh knew that by accepting an unpopular name they incurred the hostility alike of blockheads, of zealots, and of the scientists who look anxiously to their status; but they took their risks. Bradlaugh had constantly to explain that by "matter"—if he used the term at all, which he preferred not to do—he meant simply total existence: all that is necessary for the happening of all phenomena. Yet men still speak of him as saying that "dead matter" gives rise to life and mind. It will become clear to a thoughtful reader, after a little reflection, that under Bradlaugh's definition there is no assertion of the cosmic priority of any one mode of existence. He merely insisted that there should be an end of the fantasy of "mind" or "spirit" or "will" calling a tangible universe into

* A refinement on the old simplicity is reached when we find Mr Huxley sneering at Materialists whose teaching is really more circumspect than his own, and Mr Harrison in turn execrating in the name of "religion" the medical materialism of Mr Huxley, where the latter is simply putting forward as an original speculation a well-established pathological fact.

existence—a fantasy into which anti-Materialists are always relapsing. Philosophically speaking, out-and-out Spiritism* and strict Materialism come to exactly the same thing, since each predicates a going, infinite universe, with one pervading infinite energy; an energy which one side chooses to call by the primitive name of spirit. As Büchner writes: "The whole struggle yet proceeding between Materialism and Spiritualism, still more that between Materialism and Idealism, must appear futile and groundless to him who has once attained to the knowledge of the untenability of the *dualistic* theory which always underlies it." In the same way, as we have seen, strict Pantheism—which is the inevitable end of rational Theism—comes logically to the same thing as strict Atheism, the only difference being the verbal one set up by the Pantheist's adherence to the primitive name of Theos.

In this connection it is difficult to deal with the position taken up by Mrs Besant, the valued friend of Bradlaugh and of the present writer. Mrs Besant has greatly perplexed her old friends by professing to repudiate the Materialism she formerly taught, on the score that it gives "dead matter" as the source of life and mind. They can only conclude that she has undergone a psychological change which affects her knowledge of her former positions. We have seen that Bradlaugh's and Büchner's teaching was fundamentally different from what she represents materialism to be; and there is no other school of Materialism in question. The strange thing is that Mrs Besant herself translated from the German, carefully and well, Büchner's "Force and Matter" (as also his "Mind in Animals"), in which the doctrine is flatly contrary to her present account of it. Büchner even uses unguarded language—as it is very difficult to avoid doing—in insisting on the perpetual activity of matter. "Matter," he writes, "is not dead, inanimate, or lifeless, but is in motion everywhere, and is full of most active life." Bradlaugh more warily pointed to the danger of giving ambiguity to the term "life," which is properly the name for the broad classes of the phenomena of plants and animals. But he never taught or

* This is, of course, a widely different doctrine from what is commonly known as Spiritualism: the belief in the perpetuity of human personalities, in a bodily form, without other bodily qualities.

fancied that certain of the mere forms of existence in themselves originated other forms of existence. By "matter" he did not mean to specialise rocks any more than protoplasm or ether.

A more defensible argument has been used by Mrs Besant and others against Materialism: the argument, namely, that it is impossible to think of a transition from physical action to the phenomenon of thought. A number of physicists—among them Tyndall—can be quoted as declaring that there is a "great gulf fixed" between molecular motion and the state of consciousness. Tyndall once laid it down that the demand for "logical continuity between molecular forces and the phenomena of consciousness" is "a rock on which Materialism must inevitably split whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of the human mind." But this loud-sounding affirmation on analysis resolves itself into the popular rhetoric to which Tyndall was too much given. What is meant by a "complete philosophy of the human mind"? If Materialism asserts that certain constant correlations remain nevertheless "mysterious," it does not thereby cease to be a complete philosophy of the human mind. The statement that our whole knowledge of causation is just a knowledge of correlation is *part* of the complete philosophy of the human mind—that is, of the systematic and exact statement of our tested knowledge. To say that human faculty is strictly limited is not an avowal of incompleteness in the philosophy which says it. And as a matter of fact, the statement as to the "discontinuity" between "molecular forces" and the "phenomena of consciousness" is a statement which, so far as it has any meaning, stands to be made of all other correlations of phenomena. When I strike a match on the box, I evoke the phenomena of light and heat. In scientific terms, I set up by friction a chemical action quite "discontinuous" with motion in mass, and this in turn sets up a wave-motion in the hypothetical ether (of which I can form no conception) representing light. Materialism no more "splits" on the one "rock" than on the other.* The one special difficulty as to

* Tyndall answered to this argument that the flash of light from the union of oxygen and hydrogen "is an affair of consciousness, the objective counterpart of which is a vibration. It is a flash only by our interpretation." But that is no answer at all. Tyndall never went into the psychological problem fully.

consciousness is a difficulty that affects all philosophies alike: the difficulty that it is consciousness that must analyse consciousness. Neither by predicating "mind-stuff" nor by alleging "soul" is that difficulty evaded. There still remains the admitted correlation between brain-and-nerve action and thought; and that correlation is on all-fours with those of physics so-called. As the case is put by Dr John Drysdale (after reasonings to an apparently different effect), "It may be held proved in physiology that for every feeling, every thought, every volition, a correlative change takes place in the nerve matter;" and it is scientific to say with him that the phenomena of mind as a function "require no further explanation" than the conditions of those changes. When Dr Ferrier writes that "no purely physiological explanation can *explain* the phenomena of consciousness," unless he simply means that there a psychological or logical element (not Spiritism) must enter into the explanation, he is merely stumbling in the old way over the word "explain." What is "explanation"? As Professor Pearson laboriously shows, and as Hume showed long ago, all that takes place in our explanations of physical phenomena is recognition of a routine of sense experience. The theological habit has given men a pseudo-conception of "explanation;" and though they have learned to dispense with that process in physics, they still confusedly demand it in biology and psychology. But the very men who at one time talk of "mystery" and "gulf" between matter and mind, at other times recognise that the mystery is no more and no less in one correlation than in another. Thus Tyndall, who elsewhere verbalises against "Materialism," after describing the development of the human organism from the egg, writes: "Matter I define as that mysterious thing by which all that is accomplished." Well, that is "modern Materialism" or nothing; the Materialism of Büchner and of Bradlaugh. The mere doctrinal or pragmatic expressions of single physicists count for nothing. As Bradlaugh put it in his debate with the Rev. Mr Westerby, it is the cases of Ferrier that count, not his opinions. The best observer is not the best formulator or thinker; and the art or science of logical speech is not gratuitously thrown in with either mathematical or artistic faculty. To turn the data of science into philosophy is a specialist's work.

Any one who desires to obtain in a short time by dint of close attention a notion of the difficulty and complexity of the argument as between monism and dualism cannot do better than read the report of the debate between Bradlaugh and the Rev. Mr Westerby on the notion of Soul. Mr Westerby, though he wrote some of his papers in advance instead of meeting his opponent's case, was decidedly the ablest of the clerics with whom Bradlaugh debated; and in his hands the orthodox cause suffered as little as might be. The reader may or may not in the end decide to stand with Bradlaugh, but he will certainly have learned to see the folly of the cheap journalistic dismissal of an undefined "Materialism" as "exploded," and the error of the notion that Bradlaugh was unqualified to handle philosophic and scientific issues, or that he was a mere public speaker, unskilled in dialectic.

Finally, as to the meaningless expression that "things happen by chance," he of course never used it. Of any person who puts this phrase in the mouths of Atheists, it may be said at once that he is unfit to discuss a philosophical question. He either does not understand what he discusses, or is wilfully untruthful. The phrase "happens by chance"—as was long ago recognised by Hume, after he had himself fallen into the ordinary meaningless use of the term—only means either "happens without our intending it," or "happens without our being able to trace the cause." It is significant only for everyday purposes, and in philosophy can only serve to set up a chimera. All events must be conceived as having a "cause," in the ordinary sense of the term. The Atheist certainly avows that he can only trace causation a small way in the universe; but he does not for a moment suppose that he would be giving an explanation of any event if he referred it to "Chance." His doctrine is that the universe and its total energy must be conceived as infinite and eternal; that in physics the question "Why?" resolves itself into the question "How?" and that the business of science is just to give the answer as fully as may be.

§ 4.

While Bradlaugh was thus an exact thinker and reasoner, he distinguished himself above all the rationalists of his time by the energy and persistence with which he sought to bring his philosophy home to the popular mind. He was fundamentally

a reformer, and he could not consent, as so many do, to keep silence on errors of creed, so called, and resist merely errors of action. For him, creed was action, and action creed. He was so thoroughly a man of action that he must needs act on his conviction in matters of opinion, so called, as in anything else.

It was no doubt the record and the result of the French Revolution that moved the majority of political reformers for two generations to keep their own counsel on religious matters. Paine has been expressly charged with hindering the cause of democratic politics by identifying himself also with the cause of Freethinking. To a man like Bradlaugh such an objection counted for nothing. It was not merely that he saw how profoundly religion reacts on life, how creed shapes conduct, and how the current religion must always tend to support old political doctrine as against new. He took his course instinctively as well as reasoningly. That a doctrine is false was to him a reason for exposing it as such; and though as a utilitarian he held that truth is the best policy, he did not wait for the demonstration before choosing his course. He had in fact that love of truth for its own sake which is the inspiration of all scientific progress; but he had it without restriction, or at least with as little restriction as can well be. No man can be equally interested in all inquiries; and none can help thinking some unprofitable; but Bradlaugh was limited only by his tastes, never by the common opinion that the spread of truth is inexpedient. He would give facilities for all conscientious truth-seeking whatever, barring only random disclosures of sensational facts with no better motive than sensation, or with no likelihood of edification to balance the likelihood of the reverse. As to the great themes of belief and discussion in all ages, he simply could not think that human welfare is promoted by maintaining beliefs known to be false. He was a democrat in religion as in politics. If truth was good for him, it must be equally good for the multitude, so far as it was possible to enlighten them. They must needs be enlightened by language within reach of their capacity; but while he would make matters plain for them, he would in no wise consent to garble and conceal what he held to be the truth. With the many people who either care nothing whether current beliefs are false or true, or think it desirable that they should be false, he had no sympathy. It seemed to him that if anything was worth investigating, the most

serious beliefs of the mass of the human race must be; and the idea that the mass could be helped or raised by keeping them deluded was to him morally repugnant and sociologically false. "My object," he writes in his pamphlet on Heresy, "is to show that the civilisation of the mass is in proportion to the spread of heresy amongst them; that its effect is seen in an exhibition of manly dignity and self-reliant effort which is utterly unattainable amongst a superstitious people." And all acts of prayer and religious propitiation were to him survivals of superstition.

"My plea is," he went on, "that modern heresy, from Spinoza to Mill, has given brain-strength and dignity to every one it has permeated—that the popular propagandists of this heresy, from Bruno to Carlile, have been the true redeemers and saviours, the true educators of the people. The redemption is yet only at its commencement, the education only lately begun, but the change is traceable already; as witness the power to speak and write, and the ability to listen and read, which have grown amongst the masses during the last hundred years."

Against the popular thesis that "Christianity" has achieved these things, he brought to bear in debate and journalism not only his knowledge of Christian and Church history in general, but his constant experience of the influence of orthodoxy in checking betterment in England. The State Church has been an invaluable object-lesson for Freethinkers. As regards the claim for Christian Nonconformity, the answer might run: If a mainly ecclesiastical or sectarian Dissent has had so much good political result, what political, social, and intellectual results might not come of a thoroughgoing rationalist Dissent? It would take too long to set forth even the gist of Bradlaugh's polemic against the Christian claim that the Christian creed has been a force for progress; but those who care to know his method and his case may find it tersely set forth in the latter sections of his "Notes on Christian Evidences" in criticism of "The Oxford House Papers," his pamphlet on "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief," and his debate with the Rev. Marsden Gibson on that thesis. These are late statements of the case he put forward during the whole of his public life; and it was on the strength of such arguments, and of his theoretic Atheism, that he was able to create in England an energetic and intelligent party, the active adherents of which were and are mostly working-men.

"Secularism" is the not inappropriate name, for general purposes, of the general doctrine of Bradlaugh and his adherents. That name, however, is attended by the drawback that the man who first employed it, Mr George Jacob Holyoake, is wont so to define it as to deprive it of specific meaning for the propagandists of Freethought, while showing no reason why it should be adopted by anybody else. Mr Holyoake—himself an Atheist— argues, in effect, that Secularism properly consists in simply attending to secular things; and that it is not committed to any hostile attitude towards theology. On that view, every political club is a secular organisation and an exponent of Secular*ism*. Bradlaugh always argued, and nearly all Secularists have always held with him, that this use of the term reduces it to nullity, since it makes every Christian a Secularist in so far as he attends to secular affairs on "business principles." There is, of course, an important truth implied in this way of speaking; but it is a truth irrelevant to the issue. If we are merely to discuss secular things, there is no need for any "Secular*ist*" organisation. Secularists commonly act freely—or as freely as they are allowed to—with their religious neighbours in political and other public matters. But if a distinct doctrine of the uselessness of "sacred" machinery and theory is to be maintained; if it is to be shown that secular action is properly co-extensive with human affairs, then these views must be upheld by showing that all theology is delusive. A man who believes in the existence of a personal and governing God, broadly speaking, cannot be induced to keep theological procedure out of his life. There may be many Indifferentists who act as Secularists without caring at all to discuss the religious question; and there may even be a few of the "Lucretian Theists" assumed by Mr Holyoake; but none of the Indifferentists and not many of the Lucretian Theists will be induced to join in a Secularist propaganda, even on Mr Holyoake's lines. Bradlaugh fully recognised that the formulated principles of Secularism do not directly commit the subscriber to Atheism. "I think," he avowed, "that the consequence of Secularism is Atheism, and I have always said so"; but he added that "clearly all Secularists are not Atheists."* The tendency has inevitably been, however, to identify Secularism with Atheism. And as Mr Holyoake has himself all along lectured on anti-theo-

* Debate with Dr M'Cann, p.17.

logical lines, his definition has commonly seemed to Secularists to be wholly in the air, though his personal merits and practical services to Freethought are felt to outweigh minor infirmities of reasoning and judgment. Whether the name, thus capriciously defined by its framer, will continue to be employed by those who repudiate that definition, remains to be seen. It is not unlikely that new Freethought organisations, finding the word "Secularism" defined in cyclopædias on the authority and in the language of Mr Holyoake, will seek some other label. But the label in itself was a good one; and the propaganda of Bradlaugh recommended it to many thousands of his countrymen.

That his open adherents were chiefly working-men, was a result of the economic situation, which determines so many of the phases of culture-history. It is notorious that among the upper and middle classes there is a great amount of disbelief in the current religion; but among the upper and middle classes there is almost no organised effort to discredit the creed of the Churches. The small societies which muster under the banner of "Ethical Culture," little as they are given to speaking out on matters of creed, receive little support. It is often said, with idle malice, that Bradlaugh's adherents were mostly working-men because he was not qualified to appeal to educated people; but even if that were true, it would not explain how it comes about that other and better-educated rationalists have not set up an organisation of middle-class and upper-class people. The explanation is mainly economic. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh had hundreds of "educated" admirers among the middle and even some among the upper classes; and in France and elsewhere he was popular among the "classes," as at home among the masses. But the open avowal of "unbelief" in Great Britain has always meant, and will long mean, for one thing, a certainty of pecuniary loss, and a certain measure of ostracism to professional men and men of business. Let a merchant, or doctor, or shopkeeper, declare himself an active Atheist, and he will find it appreciably harder to get customers or clients. A man of established position and personal popularity may fairly hold his own while avowing scepticism in general intercourse; but even he will incur calumny and loss if he takes trouble to spread his opinions. Men in a small way of business are almost sure to suffer heavily; and it is still no uncommon thing for clerks and others to lose their situations on the simple ground of so-called

"infidelity." In the more bigoted districts the risk is overwhelming. A shopkeeper in Belfast told the present writer that when he joined the Secularists there, his business, formerly brisk, fell off so rapidly and so ruinously that in a short time he had to give it up. Nothing, apparently, can make the majority of Christians, who claim that theirs is a "religion of love," realise that to seek to injure an Atheist for his opinions is an unworthy course. Mere Nonconformity has incurred, and still incurs, a certain measure of penalty. But Nonconformists seem none the less ready to inflict it in turn on others. Obviously, the number of middle-class people who can defy these risks is small. It is only among workmen, employed in large numbers by capitalists who do not take the trouble to inquire about their opinions, that the avowal of Secularism is safe. Even workmen, of course, are sometimes made to suffer in pocket, and often from slander in their own class; but they suffer less than the trading and professional classes. Hence it is that straightforwardness and sincerity abound more among them. It is not that "the poor" have from birth any occult virtues denied to the rich, but that the economic conditions make for sincerity and openness among wage-earners more than among earners of fees and profits. It is difficult to guess what John Mill meant when he said that the workers in this country, though they esteemed truthfulness, are not as a body truthful. If he meant that they are capable of garbling facts in their own interest in matters of industry, he was only charging them with what may be charged equally against shopkeepers, stockbrokers, commission agents, traders, doctors, lawyers, politicians, and clergymen. It belongs to the nature of the case that in the important matter of loyalty to conviction, the workers are by reason of circumstances superior to the other classes. The upper classes, though, like each of the others, they include candid and sincere men and women, are as much coerced by social as are the middle classes by commercial considerations. The fear of being charged with "bad form," and of being cold-shouldered, does among the rich what fear of money loss and calumny does elsewhere. Idle men and women, whose main occupation is an artificial social intercourse, are little likely to battle for heretical opinions, even if they have been thoughtful enough to form any. Dissimulation and conformity are too much in the way of their daily life.

The business of systematic Freethought propaganda has thus

been mainly left to the class with least leisure and least money; and the newspaper press naturally reflects the balance of property and status. Newspapers are produced in the way of business, and only "paying" doctrine is put forward by them. It is notorious that the majority of journalists are unbelievers; but capital buys pens as it buys hands and goods; and many pressmen have disparaged Bradlaugh's opinions as "peculiar," or worse, who themselves held these opinions, and privately regarded the current orthodoxy as folly. Secularism in general has thus been boycotted, and a common repute of vulgarity and illiteracy has been cast upon it, often by people who ostentatiously applaud the Salvation Army, with its incredible buffooneries and its reliance on the most abject ignorance.

Bradlaugh's artisan followers, as a matter of fact, have for the most part been the pick of their class for intelligence and energy. That their culture was not equal to their zeal and their sincerity was no reproach to them. They did their honest best; and from Bradlaugh they always had his. Himself a careful student of all the questions involved in the general issue between rationalism and orthodoxy, he constantly urged on his followers the necessity of keeping their minds open and their judgment active. Mrs Besant has told in her "Autobiography" how earnestly he impressed on her the need of the most thoroughgoing and ever-renewed preparation for the great work of instructing the people. But inasmuch as the people in the mass can only begin with the main or fundamental questions of religion—those of "revelation" and "inspiration," "God," "Providence," "prayer," "miracles," "morality," "atonement," and "immortality"—his platform work as a Freethinker dealt mainly with these topics. And inasmuch as the mass of the people are at once more sincere and more logical in their relation of opinion to conduct than most of the specialists who occupy themselves with the literary analysis of the Old and New Testaments, Bradlaugh's work struck at the roots of orthodoxy wherever he went. He argued that if the Old Testament be demonstrably false in its history and barbarous in its morals, the idea of "inspiration" in the theological sense disappears, and the Hebrew books become mere ancient literature, forged or otherwise, and wholly disentitled to be made a textbook for mankind. Though a good Hebrew scholar, he did not profess to rest his case on the textual analysis of the "higher criticism." For him the

"sacred book" was discredited as such by its own contents, however composed; and he made it his business to attack them as an imposition on human ignorance and credulity. His standpoint was thus put by himself:—

"There is no great honour or pleasure, although there is much wearisome toil, in gathering the materials for proving that Genesis nearly always blunders in its attempts at statements of fact; that it is repeatedly chronologically incorrect, and in the chronologies of its principal versions utterly irreconcilable; that copyists, through ignorance, carelessness, or design, have in many places incorrectly transcribed the text; that the translators, according to their respective creeds, vary in their interpretations of different momentous passages; that the Hebrew language itself has been altered by the addition of vowel points, by means of which a sense is often given entirely different from the original intention; and that the majority of the ancient versions contain different and contradictory readings of various important verses. But it is absolutely necessary to do all this in a form accessible to the general reader so long as the Church persists, under statutory sanction and indorsement, in its teaching to the people from their early childhood, that this Bible is God's Word, free from blemish. Genesis is forced upon the child's brain as God's Word by nurse and pedagogue, and the mode of thinking of the scholar is in consequence utterly warped in favour of the divinity of the book before his reason has opportunity to mature for its examination. If the book only had claimed for it that which may be claimed for all books—namely, in part or whole to represent the genius, education, and manners of the people and the times from whom and which it issued, then it might fairly be objected by supporters of the Bible that the tone of criticism here adopted is not of the highest order, and that the petty cavillings about misplaced names, misspelled words, incorrect dates and numbers, and geographical errors, etc., are hardly worthy the attention of a serious student. But as the Bible is declared to be the revelation and representative of perfect intelligence to the whole human family; as it is placed by the whole of its preachers immeasurably above all other books, with a claim to dominate, and if necessary to overturn, the teachings of all other books; as it is alleged that the Bible is free from the errors of thought and fact more or less found in every other book; and as it is by Act of Parliament declared to be a criminal offence in this country for any person to deny this book to be God's Holy Word, it is not only a right, but it becomes an unavoidable duty on the part of a Freethinking critic to present as plainly as possible to the notice of the people every weakness of the text, however trivial, that may serve to show that the Bible, or any portion of it, is fallible, that it is

imperfect, that so far from being above all books, it is often below them as a mere literary production." *

To such a declaration as this all protests against "Bible-smashing" are irrelevant, by whomsoever made. Made by literary humanists, they ignore the practical situation. It is one thing to recognise that the Bible is a profoundly interesting body of ancient literature, illustrating for all time the manner of growth of a cult; it is another thing to deal with the pretensions of that cult to retain to-day the status secured for it by all manner of sinister means in bygone ages. Coming from clergymen, the protest is worse than irrelevant. The most advanced of them are still, from the rationalist point of view, in the position of using the Bible as a fetish; and men who as public teachers regularly resort to a primitive priestly literature for sanctions and cues to current conduct have no right whatever to protest against those who show the people what the sacrosanct literature really is. Bible-smashing is the necessary checkmate to Bible-worship. When the literary humanists get the clergy to stop cultivating and trading on Bibliolatry, it will be time for them to object to the exposure of the Bible. But by that time there will be no occasion for the objection. Bradlaugh did not go about lecturing against witch-burning or the Koran. He attacked an aggressive and endowed superstition; and to asperse him as being himself aggressive is about as idle as to charge Mr Gladstone with aggressiveness against Beaconsfield's foreign policy, or to denounce Home Rulers for being aggressive against the Union. It speaks volumes for the state of average English opinion that the adjective "aggressive" is still held to be a damaging epithet against Freethought; as if zeal were a good and great thing on one side of a dispute, but wrong and vulgar on the other. Churchmen whose bells set up pandemonium every Sunday count it an aggression to other people to meet by summons of a handbill to discuss whether church-going is reasonable. And they are kept in countenance, unluckily, by the mass of easy-going or timid unbelievers, who, not caring or daring to act on their own convictions, keep up their self-esteem by speaking ill of those who do so.

In the mouths of some people, of course, "aggressive" means

* Preface to "The Bible: What it is," 1865.

"rude" or "offensive;" and it is still common to say that Bradlaugh was a coarse assailant of other men's convictions. The charge was early brought against him. Lecturing on Malthusianism in 1862, after alluding to the abuse levelled at him in that connection by the Unitarian organ, he said:—

"I did not consider it necessary to make much justification when I was attacked some months ago by a person who is rather famous for the vehemence of his criticism than for the soundness of his logic; but . . . . it may be perhaps not out of place to notice the way in which that sort of criticism has been circulated throughout the country. I have taken up Irish journals; I have taken up Scotch journals; and I have found myself represented as the only advocate of this great party . . . . . who uses in his oratory, who writes for his readers, disregarding all morality, coarse, brutal, and degrading phrases. Now I appeal to you who are here this morning, and there are some who have listened to me from my boyhood, whether in my attack on the theologies of the world I have permitted my tongue to utter any coarse phraseology, whether in attacking or destroying them? (Applause) . . . . I admit that I have been rough and rude in my attacks on what I consider to be wrong and injurious, but I have been always reverent and kindly to every one who has seemed to me to be striving for the benefit of humankind."

How true is this claim can be easily learned by reading his pamphlets, or his book on "Genesis." That volume may be objected to as a dry digest of much learning and discussion, but it certainly cannot be accused either of violence or of flippancy. Its history is worth noting here. In 1856 he issued a Freethinking commentary entitled, "The Bible, What it is," which went as far as Isaiah. This being sold out (it is now so scarce that the present writer has not been able to get a copy),* he issued in 1865 a rewritten edition, covering only the Pentateuch, but larger than the first; and this in turn was sold out. In 1881-82, while fighting his great battle aginst Parliament, he set himself the drudgery and discipline of beginning again with Genesis, enlarging his commentary from his later reading to such an extent that this, the largest volume of the three, only covers the first eleven chapters of

* There is some reason to suspect that there has happened in this country what Bibliophile Jacob, in his preface to his addition of Cyrano de Bergerac, declares to have happened on a large scale in France—a zealous destruction of Freethinking works by pious purchasers. But it lies with these to supply the main evidence.

the first book of the Pentateuch. Some of his followers humorously speculated as to what amount of ground would be covered by a fourth revision, should he undertake it. Whatever may be thought of the method, it is very evidently not that of a man aiming at a popular success of ridicule or rhetoric. Compiled at a time when he was the target for all the bigotry of the nation, the book is eminently dispassionate and judicial. Where most men would have grown more vehement, he grew more calm.

As a lecturer, of course, he was vigorous to the highest degree. Many of those who have heard him at the height of his powers will agree to the verdict that he was by far the most powerful English orator of his time. There was something overwhelming in his force of speech when impassioned; it lifted an audience from its feet like a storm, and raised their intellectual conviction to a white heat of enthusiasm for the truth it conveyed. Other speakers of his day may have been as thrillingly impressive at their best moments; but he had great passages in nearly every speech, and rarely faced an audience without electrifying it. The Rev. Mr Westerby, at the close of his debate with Bradlaugh, testified with some chagrin to the extraordinary effectiveness of his opponent's speaking, and this in a debate full of close and difficult argument, as the verbatim report shows. "I only wish," said the reverend gentleman, "that I, in power of speech, were as powerful as he. Then I might have done honour to my cause. . . . Only by the power of his speech, and by the marvellous energy with which he can endow it, can I understand the impression he has produced upon you." But the reader of the debate can understand it without hearing the delivery. At its highest stress the energy is controlled and intelligized; never is the argument confused or let slip; never does vigour lapse to coarseness. He was certainly not an abusive or even a harsh controversialist; he dealt much less in invective and imputation than most men in his place would have felt justified in doing. One of the strongest of his censures of antagonists in matters of argument is passed on the late Bishop of Peterborough, Dr Magee, who was a sufficiently reckless polemist. The passage occurs in the second of the three (unwritten) lectures he delivered in Norwich, in reply to three sermons by the Bishop:—

"I have now to complain of something still worse than that the Bishop should have forgotten his Bible, entirely ignored the Thirty-Nine

Articles, and occasionally in the hurry of rapid speech contradicted his previous sentences. All these are matters at which, in even an extraordinary man burdened with a bishop's dignity, we need not wonder at all; but when we find him blundering in metaphysics, when we find him making mistakes which a man versed in the merest rudiments of Mill or the Scotch and German metaphysicians would not make—when we find the Bishop so blundering, either wilfully or ignorantly, it puts me in a position of extreme difficulty."

This on Butler is also, for Bradlaugh, exceptionally severe:—

"Bishop Butler's argument on the doctrine of necessity is that which one might expect from a hired *nisi prius* advocate, but which is read with regret coming from a gentleman who ought to be striving to convince his erring brethren by the words of truth alone." *

A writer, in whose anti-religious polemic such perfectly justifiable severities are exceptional, is certainly not to be charged with violence of speech on such matters. To his courtesy in debate there are many testimonies. In his controversy, *e.g.*, with the authors of the "Oxford House Papers," one of them, Dr Paget, writes:—"I trust that you will let me first acknowledge with gratitude and respect the temperate and courteous character of your criticism. Believe me, I sincerely appreciate it." It may not be out of place to remark that the "Oxford House Papers" were in the opinion of some readers inexpressibly poor stuff, respectful comment on which, in a busy world, was an excess of consideration. And this careful courtesy was not at all, as some have supposed, a late development in him. It is a complete error to suppose that he began by being violent, and only acquired suavity after much experience. It has been suggested on this head that he was softened by the generosity with which some Christians, such as Bright, latterly stood by him against the attacks of the bigots. But while it is quite true that he greatly appreciated this, and while it is further true that he found some of his very basest enemies in professed Freethinkers of the "Agnostic" variety, it is not the fact that he had required these experiences to make him a temperate and courteous controversialist. That he was at all times; and he had early cause to know that a Christian may be a gentleman and a Freethinker otherwise, as well as *vice versa*.

* Pamphlet on Heresy, p. 48.

Even when of set purpose ridiculing Scripture narratives in his lighter lectures, Bradlaugh never descends from humour to coarseness; and his jests—in such tracts as the New Lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Jonah—are as perfectly within the limits of rational good taste as those of Mr Spencer, Mr Arnold, and Mr Huxley on more august themes; not to cite Voltaire. An old slander has lately been very carelessly revived by the late Mr C. H. Pearson, who in his book on "National Character" speaks of Bradlaugh as having likened the Trinity to a monkey with three tails. Bradlaugh never did any such thing. A more elaborated figure of that sort appeared in a condensed account once contributed to his journal of an old lecture by a deceased Freethinker, who had satirised human anthropomorphism by making a monkey theologise for monkeys, as Heine makes the bear do in "Atta Troll." In the context the figure was fitting enough; but in any case it was not Bradlaugh's. And in reply to those persons who affect to see vulgarity, or worse, in every jest at Christian beliefs, it may be said once for all that Christians have from the first century onwards put themselves out of court on this head by jealously ridiculing the beliefs of all other believers, as well as of rationalists; that they have not stopped at ridicule, but have in all ages freely resorted to gross calumny; and that they in turn are not very badly used when their beliefs are merely subjected to the satire to which they are confessedly open. Even sheer coarseness is just as reprehensible, no more and no less, when directed against living persons, as when directed against dead or imaginary beings, or particular beliefs concerning them; but those who are readiest to impute the latter offence seem to make small account of the other, when the object of attack is an unbeliever. Bradlaugh was never coarse; yet he was abused with unspeakable scurrility by thousands of Christian people. And if coarseness ever arose in his movement, as it so easily may in a popular movement involving controversy, that movement was in any case a hundred times more sinned against than sinning. Mrs Humphrey Ward has been at pains in two of her novels to represent "crews" of Secularists as either resorting to physical violence against revivalists, or showing a disposition to resent angrily the appearance of a well-behaved clergyman at their meetings. Such slanders would call for very strong comment were they not so nakedly absurd. In no town in England would avowed Secularists dare as such to molest avowed pietists even if they were

inclined to do so; and it has always been their express aim to encourage clerical opposition and debate in their meeting-places. This is a rule without exception. And Bradlaugh, in particular, at all times urged upon his followers—not to abstain from gratuitous violence towards revivalists or clergymen: he never needed to say anything on that head—but to be very careful to give opponents no reasonable pretext for making a disturbance against them.* He counselled not only orderliness but tact; and he sharply rebuked any of his followers who would not listen patiently to even a stupid opponent's speech. Mrs Ward's account of Secularist organisations is an unfortunate proof that the spirit of religiosity does not change with mere modifications of dogma. Even if it were really found that plain, unlettered men, facing a religion they feel to be absurd, spoke out their feeling without due courtesy or refinement, an instructed observer would see in their reaction the measure and correlative of the crudity of the doctrines assailed. But people of Mrs Ward's way of thinking look tenderly on the worst buffooneries of popular faith, and on the most brutal propaganda of hell and blood-redemption, while recoiling sentimentally from the perfectly sincere derision of these things by men on whom they are blatantly thrust. The right spirit, surely, is that which would enlighten the deluded as individuals, neither patronising them nor abusing them. That was the attitude of Bradlaugh as a publicist and as a man. He never talked, in public or in private, with malice, and seldom even with disgust, of fanatics as such. He explained them, and respected their honesty. Of certain employees of the Christian Evidence Society he would on occasion speak publicly in the strongest terms, as "vile things who, in fields and open spaces, where we are not to answer for ourselves, stab our reputation and our children's." But towards honest bigots, however imbecile, he was incapable of feeling the virulent animosity which Mrs Ward seems to feel for the Secularists of her imagination. To speak of him, as some journalists have done, as accounting for all religion by "priestcraft" in the early eighteenth century manner, is to exhibit the ignorance the statement imputes.

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* Thus, when in July or August 1882 an open-air Freethought meeting was attacked by riotous Salvationists, Bradlaugh strongly urged avoidance of provocation, and that, "above all, Freethinkers must avoid being drawn into physical conflict with Salvationists" (*National Reformer*, August 13, 1882).

He carefully studied the anthropological origins of religion, lectured specially on anthropology, and always related his teaching to the anthropological view. Towards priests, as such, he felt no malevolence. In fine, from first to last, the essential manliness and geniality of his nature gave his followers a lead to humanity and chivalry in their warfare with bigotry. If any of them, seeing the kind of reward he received for his self-restraint, have taken satisfaction in barbing their arrows, and in humiliating as well as defeating the enemy, they cannot cite his example.

Once in a long while a gross circumstantial lie would move him to strike with the handle of the dog-whip, so to speak. A case of the kind is set forth in his tract entitled "Lying for the Glory of God: a Letter to the Rev. Canon Fergie, B.D., Vicar of Ince, near Wigan." This dealt with one of the idiotic anecdotes by which the truth of Christianity and the wickedness of Atheism are proved for so many people—anecdotes of which the absurdity and the untruth seem equally apparent, but which find instant credence with thousands of pious persons. Such an anecdote is the "watch story" in its complete form, in which the blasphemer is struck dead, a detail which has to be regretfully withheld from the narrative when it is applied to living sceptics. Such are the endless "infidel deathbed" stories, which still do duty in religious tracts, among them being statements concerning the deaths of Voltaire and Paine, which have been a hundred times circumstantially refuted. Such is the venerable anecdote of the nurse who would never again attend an infidel's deathbed—a story which is told with religious impartiality of Rousseau, Voltaire, Paine, and Hume, and will doubtless be told in due course of Bradlaugh. In recent Christian propaganda, the growing humanity of the age is seen in a disposition to convert the atheist rather than to send him to hell shrieking. But all these anecdotes alike have one quality in common; they are rigorously untrue, though they are never told in the same way by two Christians running. One sample story of seventeen (more or less) "leading Secularists," of whom fourteen came to bad ends, after signing a blasphemous covenant with blood for ink, does not on investigation yield even a grain of fact. In another narrative, sixteen "leaders" are represented as having all re-embraced Christianity. Of the sixteen, over a dozen are unknown to Secularism, and one known convert had been reconverted to Freethought. It was partly the lawyer in Bradlaugh that made him treat these anecdotes with

seriousness and severity, finding the lie circumstantial some degrees worse than the lie conventional or sophistical. He specially detested downright fabrication of facts. But he also had a chivalrous loathing of the tactic which stabbed a doctrine in the back instead of meeting it in face; and for his own part he never used the means he might to assail religion through the scandals of its daily record. He would not stoop to collect the stories of frightful "fidel" deathbeds, which surpass the contrary sort as much in force as in truth; and he never would collect in his journal the frequent stories of clerical misconduct which appear in the ordinary press, though all his life he was being libelled by clerics. He was indeed a dangerous enemy when provoked, but he had little vindictiveness. His interests were too broad, his relation to life too genial, to permit of his being satisfied with the triumphs of feud. He claimed for himself with perfect truth: "I have attacked the Bible, but never the letter alone; the Church, but never have I confined myself to a mere assault on its practices. I have deemed that I attacked theology best in asserting most the fulness of humanity. I have regarded iconoclasticism as a means, not as an end. The work is weary, but the end is well." And this may serve as a compendious answer to the kind of criticism which disposes of Atheism by calling it "cold." It would be much nearer to the truth to say that many Atheists have recoiled from religion because of its very heartlessness and gloom; and because the "warmth" of those who find joy in the evangelical doctrine of salvation strikes a healthy mind as hardly less repulsive than the "warmth" of alcoholism. The assumption that a man who puts aside the doctrine of a future life is cold-hearted, was never more absurd than when applied to the case of Bradlaugh. But its full absurdity is perhaps made most clear by comparing the doctrine of Lessing and Kant as to the nullity of Judaism as a religion, in respect of its lack of an authoritative doctrine of heaven, with the common run of rhetoric about the strength of the Semitic religious feeling.

§ 5.

It ought not to be necessary at this time of day to offer a justification for Bradlaugh's doctrine on the ethical side, his position being simply that of modern science. But just as the avowal of Atheism and Materialism gives rise to endless mis-

representation of those statements of opinion, so the avowal of Atheism and Utilitarianism in morals gives rise to all sorts of moral imputations. On the one hand there is the reasonable criticism which falls to be passed on imperfect or exaggerated expression of the utilitarian principle; on the other hand there are the imputations which ignorant, confused, and other persons cast on any statement of Utilitarianism whatever. Many orthodox people have in this matter the indestructible advantage of being unable to understand the rationalist argument—as may be very clearly seen in the debate between Mr Bradlaugh and the Rev. Dr M'Cann on the morality and philosophy of Secularism. Such opponents go on fervently affirming their consciousness of the obligation to do what they feel to be "right," "irrespective of consequences," and insisting that this is the negation of utilitarianism. It is of course no such thing. The real ground of strife between religious and rational morality lies, or lay, in the old doctrine that the *standard* of right is divinely "revealed," and that we do right in virtue of divine command. That doctrine once abandoned, supernaturalism in morals is a mere matter of words. To admit that we have no certain light or unvarying strength of feeling as to what is right in a given case, and merely to affirm that we have a "divine call" from conscience to do what we think right when our minds are made up, is to surrender the heart of the religious position. This is what was done by Dr M'Cann and the Rev. Mr Armstrong in their debates with Bradlaugh; both clergymen nevertheless supposing themselves to be rebutting utilitarianism. The utilitarian position is of course (1) that the instinct to do "what we feel to be right" is merely organic, and often goes with conduct that is on rational grounds demonstrably wrong; (2) that the business of ethics is to settle what conduct is reasonably to be held right or wrong; and (3) that though the sense of utility is not the primary or conscious motive of all actions, it is the test by which disputed action is to be controlled. Of course it will at times be fallaciously applied, as regarded from the point of view of developed sympathy; but it can never be misapplied as grossly as the religious standard has been, and it remains the final standard of ethical appeal. Even the religionists who argue that utilitarianism is a "pernicious" doctrine virtually admit this in their very choice of epithet. The good of society is even for them the final criterion. They never hesitate, further, to

seek to influence the minds of the young by the primitively utilitarian warning, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Yet they constantly denounce the Secularist doctrine as encouraging men to make primary self-interest the beginning and end of moral principle, when on the face of the case it subjects self-interest to public interest by its working formula of "the greatest good of the greatest number." The religious argument against that formula always ends in putting the fancy case of the starving man with a starving family, who steals a loaf of bread from somebody who does not miss it. The religious implication is that the whole family had better starve than commit such a theft—a doctrine which may be left to the decision of common-sense. It is only to be wished that Christian politics even remotely approached the scrupulosity paraded in this controversy.

As for the point of disinterestedness, the history of Freethought in general, and the life of Bradlaugh in particular, will serve to show whether or not the recognition of utility as the final test of the right or wrong of actions has led men to put the low utility above the high, the near above the far. To do the former would be to abandon the very avowal of the principle, since it always brings odium and injury on the avowers. The very persistence of an unpopular movement is the decisive proof that its promoters have sought higher ends than money gain. What the utilitarian principle has done for Bradlaugh and those like-minded is not to give them the primary impulse to fight for truth and right as they see them, but to give them an enduring support in the battle. The first impulse springs from veracity of character *plus* knowledge; but it is sure to be opposed by bitter criticism, imputing to the straightforward course all manner of evil results. When the reformer is convinced that not only truth and justice but the highest utility itself is on his side, he is thrice armed. And if with some unbelievers the rejection of transcendental moral principles has meant the return to a timid or a base conformity, they are at least no worse guided than before, and the blame of their dissimulation must lie with the religious system which not only counsels but enforces it, not with the doctrine which classes social dissimulation as a vice. Certain it is that under the auspices of the Christian creed England has lived mainly for low and narrow utilities, and not for the high and broad; the transcendental creed availing only to worsen matters by adding to the

forces of evil the element of persecuting bigotry. Rationalism once for all excludes the last factor; and if it ever lends itself to a popular disregard of the great utilities and a pursuit of the small, which are the undoing of the great, it will assuredly not be in virtue of following such a lead as Bradlaugh's.

Of his influence on his followers those can best speak who have mixed with them. Personal and magnetic as it was, it depended for its continuance on the unvarying nobility of his appeal to the best instincts—to courage, honour, justice, and the love of truth. Hundreds of men—men to whom the generality of pulpit sermons are either inane commonplaces or maudlin nonsense—can testify to the fashion in which he stirred them to high sympathies and generous determinations, making life for all of them, however narrow their sphere, a vista of worthy activities and abiding consolations.

It is part of the condemnation of modern orthodoxy that its warfare with Atheism has run mainly to libel--not merely libel on individual Atheists, but sweeping aspersion of the whole movement. The records are embarrassing in the sheer multitude of the samples; and one utterance may serve for a thousand. In the early part of Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle an orthodox periodical named *Social Notes*, of which the Marquis of Townshend was editorial director, made the typical assertion:—

"It is a well-known fact that there is no criminal so fearless in doing evil, so hopelessly bad and beyond chance of recovery, as the Atheist criminal is. Atheism and ignorance commonly create the first step to crime. As Atheism grows in the minds of the lower classes, so crime increases."

The statement can only have come from a writer of a partially criminal type, since it states not merely a gross untruth, but one for which the writer cannot possibly have believed he had any evidence. So far from the fact being as he says, it is perfectly well established that there are almost no Atheist criminals. Readers can satisfy themselves on this head by reading the chapter on "Atheism in Prison" in the "Jottings from Jail" of the Rev. J. W. Horsley,* a writer not at all disposed to say any good of Atheism. But the folly of the statement cited will probably be

* Fisher Unwin.

recognised by most people on simply reflecting that crime was most abundant in the ages when Atheism was practically unknown; that it is common now in countries where there is no anti-religious propaganda whatever among the common people; that the professional brigands of Greece and Italy are faithful children of the Church; and that nearly every murderer executed in this country avows beforehand a confident assurance of being welcomed in Paradise. Only one Secularist, so far as the present writer is aware, has ever been convicted of murder; and he was no typical criminal, but a man congenitally liable to delirious fits of passion. When he knew of their approach he warned the people about him not to thwart him; and only in one of these fits, on intense provocation from a man who had wronged him, did he strike a deadly blow with a chance weapon. He expressly forbade petitions for commutation of his sentence, deliberately preferring to end a marred and maimed life.

Those who really suppose Atheism tends to promote crime know as little of the nature of criminals as of the logic of Atheism. The immense majority of criminals are unintelligent, and as such are immeasurably more likely to be superstitious than to be atheistic. A man of bad character may indeed be an Atheist in virtue of his reasoning powers; but the same powers will tend to withhold him from breach of the criminal law. The recent insinuations of the present Bishop of Manchester as to the effects of secular education in the colony of Victoria will impress no one who is conversant with criminal statistics;* and are repudiated by those qualified to speak in the colony itself. Of similar weight are the clerical assertions that the Anarchist mania in France is a result of the "godless" teaching of the public schools. It has been shown on the contrary that some of the most prominent Anarchist miscreants have had a careful clerical training; while the Anarchists themselves have never produced a criminal to compare with the priest Bruneau. The organised *Libres-Penseurs* of France have made a speciality of ethics, publishing more matter on that head than on any other.

It is not necessary to answer again, but it is edifying to cite, one of the many utterances in which Atheism has been held

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* The matter was dealt with at some length in the *National Reformer* of January 15, 1893.

up to horror as tending to universal bloodshed. Such an utterance was this of Bishop Magee, delivered in his cathedral of Peterborough in June 1880, and thus specially made to bear on the claim of Bradlaugh to sit in Parliament:—

"A nation of Atheists must be a nation of revolutionists; their history must be a history of revolution marked by intervals of grinding, cruel, pitiless, and unreproved slaughter, because for weakness there would be no appeal to the supreme power against present tyranny."

In the rhetoric of religion, folly and frenzy are thus sometimes so mingled that together they make censure shade into derision, and derision into melancholy. Neither reason nor experience can hinder some men from putting the wildest figments in place of the plainest teachings of history. Dr Magee had before him the history of his own faith, which began in bitter and sanguinary schism, and within a few hundred years had raised deadly civil war throughout the civilised world; which has made more pretexts for war throughout its era than could possibly have arisen without it; and which in our own country was the inspiration of some of the worst strifes in our annals. He had before him the judgment of Bacon, unwillingly following on an unreasoned criticism, that "Atheism did never perturb states . . . ; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states." And the Bishop's rant, despicable in itself, was used to excite new Christian malice against a man who had again and again met the verbal violence of pro-revolutionaries with the strongest protests against revolutionary methods; who loved peace and hated war; and who had time and again resisted and denounced the unjust English wars to which the Bishop's Church had given its blessing. Thus is Atheism impugned by piety. At the very time when Dr Magee's rhetoric was being used to keep Bradlaugh out of Parliament, the National Secular Society was on his prompting petitioning strongly against the war waged by the English Government on the Boers in South Africa.*

* In October (?) 1882, the Quaker *Friend* testified to the "melancholy" fact that "with, of course, honourable exceptions, the most inveterate opponents of militarism are to be found among secularists and socialists." Soon afterwards Bishop Ellicott regretfully avowed that unbelief had

The only form of the orthodox imputation which is even decently plausible is the suggestion that the loss of religious belief may leave some men more ready than before to venture on vice that is not legally punishable. This is no doubt theoretically possible; and in cases where boys have had such a religiously bad education that they know of no rational veto on misconduct, harm may sometimes arise on their finding that the religion taught them is incredible. But young men who reason so far are likely to reason further; and in any case a few plain considerations will serve to convince any candid mind that there is no causal connection between scepticism and vice; though it stands to reason that the habit of scepticism will promote the critical discussion on the institution of marriage. On the one hand, the sexual instinct has in all ages gone to the worst excess under the auspices of religions which expressly glorified asceticism; and the facts of the life of the ages of faith in Europe make it clear that, even on the orthodox definition of vice, there cannot possibly be more of it in the future than there has been in the past. On the other hand, the utilitarian arguments against vice, properly so called, are much better fitted to impress than the religious; and they leave no such loophole as the others inevitably do in respect of the Christian doctrine of pardon for sin, to say nothing of the iniquity of the Christian ethic which holds one and the same act ruinous in a woman and venial in a man. Of course, if the celibate life, and marriage without possibility of divorce, be made the standard of virtue, rationalism is likely to give piety plenty of occasion for outcry in matters of morals, as in matters of opinion.

However that may be, it has to be noted that Bradlaugh was not at all "advanced," as things go, on the subject of the marriage institution. Constantly accused of endorsing "Free Love" doctrines, he as constantly repudiated the charge. In 1881 we find him indignantly protesting that not only bad men, but men of whose honesty in other things he was sure, "constantly repeated, as though they were his, views on Socialism which he did not hold, views on marriage which never had an equivalent in

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acquired new and dangerous characteristics, in that it "now was very often found co-existent with what they were bound to speak of as a moral and in many cases a philanthropic life."

his feelings, and declarations on prostitution which were abhorrent to his thought."* The "Free Love" charge was commonly founded on his alleged acceptance of the whole doctrine of the work entitled "The Elements of Social Science." No such acceptance ever occurred. He was the last man to vilify a benevolent and temperate writer for doctrines with which he could not agree; but in the reprint of his pamphlet on "Jesus, Shelley, and Malthus,"† he explicitly wrote of the author in question: "His work well deserves careful study; there are in it many matters of physiology on which I am incompetent to express an opinion, and some points of ethics from which I expressly and strongly dissent." Not only did he thus reject the "advanced" doctrine of sexual freedom: he never committed himself to any such proposition as that of Mill, that the institution of the family needs "more fundamental alterations than remain to be made in any other great social institution," or that of James Mill, cited without disapproval by his son, as to the probable development of freedom in the sexual relation. ‡

It was thus grossly unjust to cast upon the Secularist movement, as did Bishop Fraser of Manchester in the worst stress of Bradlaugh's parliamentary struggle, the imputation of promoting positive cruelty on the part of men towards women. That episode was for many a melancholy proof of the perverting power of bigotry in a naturally conscientious man. The Bishop publicly put it as a natural deduction from Secularist teaching that a man might put away his wife when she grew old and ugly, or "sick, or otherwise disagreeable to him," simply because she thus ceased to please him; and when a Secularist wrote him to point out the injustice of this assertion, and the nature of the ordinary rationalist view of marriage, his Grace disingenuously quoted the state-

* Address at the National Secular Society's Conference.

† Published in 1861. Reprinted 1883.

‡ J. S. Mill's Autobiography, pp. 107, 167. A still more striking illustration of the way in which one rationalist may "steal the horse" while another may not "look over the hedge," is the following passage in Mill's book:—"On these grounds I was not only as ardent as ever for democratic institutions, but earnestly hoped that Owenite, St. Simonian, and all other anti-property doctrines might spread widely among the poorer classes; *not that I thought these doctrines true*, or desired that they should be acted on, but in order that the higher classes *might be made to see that they had far more to fear* from the poor when uneducated than when educated."

ment that Secularists repudiated the "sacredness" of marriage, without adding the explanation which his correspondent had given as to the proper force of that term. The whole outburst was an angry and unscrupulous attempt to put upon Secularist teaching the vice which admittedly flourished in the Bishop's diocese among non-Secularists. All the while, the doctrine he had put upon Secularism lay in his own Bible, and nowhere else :—

"When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then shall it be, if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house" (Deut. xxiv. 1).

These and other doctrines had been made by Bradlaugh part of his indictment of Bible morality. He saw that while women are dependent, power of self-divorce cannot justly be allowed to husbands. He was certainly in favour of greater facilities for divorce; but he took no part in the discussion as to whether marriage is a failure; and he always argued for a legal contract, in the interests of the woman and children, as against informal unions; though, of course, he passed no moral censure on women in a state of economic independence who chose the latter. His own sad experience never made him decry marriage; and he never would have subscribed to the doctrine of Professor Pearson, that "love should have the privilege of his wings," save in so far as he would give freedom of legal divorce. In short, he did not realise the fancy picture of "modern Materialism" painted by religious sentiment, any more than the fancy picture of the pragmatist. He was not even a lover of "realism" in fiction. Like Büchner (whose favourite author is Shakespeare), he could not enjoy Zola; and on Hugo's death he eulogised that poet in express contrast to the new school which had begun to write him down.

But he did not set up to be a literary critic, or an æsthetic person in any sense. His own art was oratory, and of that he was master by dint not of conscious study, but of sincerity, energy, and endless activity. He spoke to persuade, to convince, to crush; and he never spoke save on a conviction. It thus lay in his nature that he should be a politician as earnestly as he was a Freethinker. His Atheism, his logic, his utilitarianism, all combined to make him a strenuous reformer in the field of government, and a full half of his whole activity—more than half in the latter

years—was turned to making life better and saner than it had been under the regimen of religion. The absurd pretence that Atheism makes men pessimistic and supine becomes peculiarly absurd when tested by his career. He was no optimist: he had no delusions about the speedy perfectibility of men, singly or in mass; but no man was less inclined to the new pessimism, which turns its philosophy to the account of commonplace conservatism all round. A clerical opponent, debating with him, protested that Atheists ought to be in a state of black despair at the evil of the world, which the reverend gentleman on his part viewed with serenity, holding that the God who wrought it must intend to put matters right hereafter. A lay study of the problem, however, reveals the fact that hopeful and despairing frames of mind are not as a rule determined by theoretic beliefs one way or the other. Bradlaugh had the good fortune to combine the keenest interest in ideas and the clearest insight into human character with a boundless enthusiasm for action; and he perfectly recognised that a similar temperament in the latter respect might go with what he held to be delusion in philosophy. It is the fashion of conformists without beliefs to speak of propagandist rationalism as "intolerant"—a use of the term which, though it may be at times permissible in common talk, is a complete perversion of its essential purport. Applied to action, the word has no proper force save as implying the wish or attempt to curtail freedom and inflict positive injury on the score of opinion. No such charge can justly be made against Freethinkers in general, or Bradlaugh in particular. The practice of boycotting for opinion's sake he detested and denounced, and never in any way resorted to. He even carried the spirit of "tolerance" to an extreme degree in his own affairs, being careful, as his daughter testifies, to avoid giving his children anything like specific anti-theological teaching, on the ground that the opinions of the young ought not to be stereotyped for them on points which they ought to reconsider for themselves when they grow up. In intercourse with those about him he was equally scrupulous; and all the contributors to his journal can tell how complete was the freedom he gave them to express in its pages opinions from which he dissented. In this he was far superior to many who have aspersed him as overbearing. It was a point of honour with him to give a hearing in his columns to all manner of opposition to his own views; and no man was ever less apt to let his philo-

sophical convictions bias him in his practical or political relations with people of another way of thinking. Hence he was able not only to follow, but to follow with a chivalrous devotion, such a political leader as Mr Gladstone, of whose latter writings on religious matters he found it difficult to speak without a sense of humorous humiliation.* But his political teaching must be separately considered.

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* His comment on Mr Gladstone's reply to Colonel Ingersoll is, however, a model of respectful exposure of a very bad case.

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL DOCTRINE AND WORK.

§ 1.

In combining the propaganda of Freethought with that of Republican Radicalism, Bradlaugh was carrying on the work begun in England by Paine, and continued by Richard Carlile, men whose memory he honoured for those qualities of courage, sincerity, and constancy which were the pith of his own character. The bringing of reason to bear at once on the things of Church and of State, of creed and of conduct, was for him a matter of course, as it has been for the great majority of Atheists, from Holbach onwards, and he held firmly to the old conviction that for free and rational men the only right form of Government is a Republic. He had all Paine's energetic disdain of the monarchic principle in theory and in practice, and, coming to his work in the latter half of the century, he could stand up for Republicanism without incurring the extreme penalties which fell so heavily on the devoted head of Carlile that his hold of his rationalist doctrine gave way under the strain of his struggle, the mind seeking lethargic rest before the body found the final repose. Still the great reaction against the French Revolution, which had made the name of Paine a byword, and the life of Carlile a series of imprisonments, was still far too strong in the fifties and sixties to permit of an avowed Republican and Atheist being regarded without horror by the middle and upper classes. The more famous Carlyle, with all his loud esteem for sincerity and louder repudiation of cant, never dreamt of saying a plain word against the monarchy any more than against the current religion, though his political theories were at all times as far asunder from current monarchism as from democracy. He even went out of his way to speak smoothly of a royalty which did nothing. For a generation to which Carlyle figured as outspoken and veridical, therefore, anything so practical as Republicanism

was wildly revolutionary, and so Bradlaugh figured from the first to the average imagination as a violent politician.

Strictly speaking, he was in a sense more violent in his politics than in his anti-theology, because political strife is necessarily more a matter of attack on living persons than is the doctrinal strife between Atheism and Theism. As a republican he could not avoid discussing the personalities of the Hanoverian dynasty, inasmuch as the practical strength of royalism lies in the hereditary self-abasement of men before the hereditary royal person as such, not in any common hold on a monarchic theory of Government. To people who gloried in living under the Guelphs, an exposure of the Guelphs was the only relevant or intelligible answer. We may indeed say generally of monarchy what Strauss said of dogma, that the true criticism of it is its history. But the practical sanity which in Bradlaugh balanced the fieriest zeal, showed him from the first that Republicanism could only advance by way of culture and reason, never by way of violence. He "spoke" bullets and bayonets, but he never for an instant countenanced their use in English politics; and he had always a mixture of wrath and contempt for those who blustered of carrying by force, or threats of force, any reform in the Constitution. Even while he was delivering in lectures his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," he constantly declared that the mass of the people were not yet qualified to constitute a republican state; and he declared as much when, in 1873, he spoke at the banquet given by the then Republican leaders at Madrid in his honour as delegate from the Republican Conference which had just been held at Birmingham.

The almost entire subsidence of Republican agitation in England within the last twenty years, after the considerable show of Republican feeling which followed on the fall of the Empire in France, is an interesting and instructive fact, worth a little explanation here. It does not mean that the nation is less ready for a Republic; the fact is quite the other way. Recent tests have shown that in the average working-class Liberal and Radical Club, when the question is plainly raised, there is virtually no feeling in favour of the retention of Monarchy. The old devotion to the monarch as such has almost completely passed away among the more intelligent workers, and now subsists only among their weaker brethren, and in the middle and upper classes. Political

movements, however, are made and marred not by pure reasoning but by special stresses of feeling, and there has been little or nothing in the annals of the past twenty years to set up a new stress of feeling against the monarchy in England, while there has been much that has tended to put the republican ideal in the background. It is hardly to the credit of the nation that it lays less store by a great principle or ideal than by concrete points of lower importance; but such is and must long be the fact. The movement which led to the Republican Conference in 1873, to begin with, suffered from the still vivid recollection of the horrors of the Commune. Next it was found that among its adherents were many who were less concerned to set up a British Republic than to further by that means the independence of Ireland. Thus the movement was in itself weakened by want of unity of motive and purpose, and could make little headway against the vast forces of habit and prejudice which buttress the Throne. Even what headway it did make was due largely to the then very common feeling of personal hostility to the Prince of Wales, whose reputed character offended many who would not of their own accord have been likely to raise the question of Monarchy *versus* Republic. Another ground for hostility to the Crown was and is the sufficiently solid one of its cost; but here again the spectacle of the financial corruption in leading Republics has tended to damp down anti-monarchic feeling. It is pretty clear that, barring any new and special cause for outcry against the Throne, its abolition in this country will only result from the slow accumulation of indifference and of educated aversion to the snobbery which cherishes and is cherished by it. This certainly cannot take place during the lifetime of the reigning sovereign, whose age and popularity alike go to silence serious agitation. It may or may not come about during the next generation.

Bradlaugh used to be quoted as saying that he intended that the heir apparent should never come to the Throne. He never said anything so idle, though in his youth he thought it possible that the Republic might be attained in his lifetime. As years went on, his insight into human nature led him to feel that agitation for an ideal form of Government was less directly fruitful than agitation against the abuses of class privilege; and in the last dozen years of his life, his political work went mainly to reforms within the lines of the Constitution. Apart from this

partial change of tactic, his position underwent no change from first to last. His political doctrine may be broadly described as a demand for the fullest admission of the people to the rights of self-government, and further, the application of the powers thus acquired to the removal or reform of all laws framed in the interest of the upper few. This was the ideal he had formed for himself in his youth, and he declined to substitute for it the ideal of Socialism, which had begun to be vaguely popular towards the end of his life. The refusal rested on his experience, and on his character. In his youth he had seen a great impression made by the teaching and the achievement of Robert Owen, whose propaganda came so closely in relation with that of Secularism that in several towns the old halls of the Owenites have been till recent years, or are still, carried on by the surviving followers of Owen, as Secularist meeting-places. For Owen, whom he had met in youth, Bradlaugh had much esteem. "No Socialist myself," he wrote in later life, "I yet cannot but concede that [Owen's] movement had enormous value, if only as a protest against that terrible and inhuman competitive struggle, in which the strong were rewarded for their strength, and no mercy was shown to the weakest."* But he was profoundly impressed by the extravagance of Owen's estimate of the present possibilities of human nature; and the later Socialism, like the earlier, represented for him the optimism of unpractical men, with the difference that the later agitators had at once much less gift for social organisation than Owen, and a far more difficult programme to realise. Thus, where Owen set himself to create a State within the State, Bradlaugh addressed himself to making the political State truly democratic—a course the wisdom of which is admitted by the action of the Socialists, who now adopt it. He was in a general sense the successor of the Chartists; and in that connection it is impossible not to feel that if such a one as he had been in the place of Fergus O'Connor, the political advance of the past half century would have been considerably quickened. As it was, his labours have probably counted more than those of any other single man in his day to rouse the workers in the towns to vigorous political action. Before they had the vote, he not only helped to lead the agitation for their enfranchisement, but appealed to them directly on the

* "Five Dead Men whom I knew," p. 6.

issues which he wanted their suffrage to settle. It is the fashion of the new Socialism to represent that the old Radicalism wrought for political enfranchisement without any notion of what use the vote was to be turned to. Common sense and common candour will put that account of things aside without much trouble. Bradlaugh for one had very definite notions of what he wanted the vote to do. His programme was both positive and negative. He strongly supported the Radical demand for retrenchment of an expenditure which was always tending to benefit, not the many, but the few; and he detested the policy of "safe" foreign aggression which, after being long associated with the name of Palmerston, came to be identified with that of Beaconsfield. The fact that this policy had the support of some who later figured as Socialists, did not increase his esteem for their after-course. His sympathy with the small and weak nationalities whom England selected for attack was rooted in the intense sense of justice which inspired his whole life. After working for struggling Italy and Poland, he refused to stand by in silence while his own country unscrupulously made war on Afghans, on Zulus, and on Egyptians, on pretexts which all Englishmen would have execrated had they been put forward by Russians. And as he never made popularity his guiding principle, he as instantly and resolutely opposed the aggressions of Mr Gladstone's Government as those of the Tories. In none of the sins of modern Liberalism, whether in Africa or in Ireland, was he implicated. But he had a constructive as well as a limitary ideal, a home policy as well as a foreign; and whereas his course on the latter head will now be endorsed by most Liberals, his social doctrine is still in need of exposition and justification.

§ 2.

A notable fact in the history of popular Freethought in England has been its association with the social teaching of Malthus, which first came before the world only a few years after Paine's attack on orthodoxy. There is nothing to show that Paine ever realised what a blow was struck at his optimistic Theism by the essay which his fellow-Theist Malthus wrote to rebut the optimist assumptions on the "Political Justice" of Godwin, a Freethinker who held by the revolutionary optimism in the sphere of politics, while tending away from Deistic optimism in philosophy. Paine,

who was certainly as much bent on construction as on destruction, sketched a socio-political system which will be found by many readers as impressive to-day as it was found by Pitt. He proposed on the one hand a progressive income-tax, which should yield new revenue and break up large estates, and on the other hand a system of stipends to poor families; annuities to decayed tradesmen and others over fifty, increasing after sixty; provision for the education of the children of the poor; donations for births, marriages, and some funerals; and "employment at all times for the casual poor in the cities of London and Westminster." Save as regards the old age pensions, which represent a great improvement on pauper relief, and the education scheme, all of this plan comes under the destructive criticism of Malthus, inasmuch as it does not recognise the fatal tendency of an untaught population to multiply in excess of the economic possibilities of maintenance. The plan of allowancing poor families at so much per head would have quickened immensely the progress towards national bankruptcy which was carried so far under the old Poor Law. It would have bred paupers by the thousand.

The demonstration of Malthus naturally was not relished by the Radicals, to whom it was first addressed; and Godwin in particular met it with indecent acrimony, as did Coleridge, the Conservative. But the next generation of Freethinkers assimilated the argument, and a certain propaganda for the restriction of families was carried on by Richard Carlile. It is a remarkable fact that two Christian priests have laid two corner-stones of the structure of Atheistic polity for modern England. Butler in confuting the Deists wrought as much for Atheism as for orthodoxy; Malthus, in meeting the remaining Deists on the ground of sociology, confuted their optimism on the practical side. Freethought finally accepted both services, rectifying Malthus as it rectified Butler; and under Bradlaugh it made for science all round. Malthusianism in its original form certainly lent itself to Toryism; and no amount of benevolence on the part of Malthus could make his doctrine acceptable to democracy so long as it was tied down to his Christian ethic. The step which reconciled the knowledge of the law of population with energetic Radicalism in politics was taken when rationalists laid it down that the prudential check need not mean prolonged celibacy. Teaching as he did the all-importance of checking the birth-rate, and knowing as he did

the possibility of bringing about the restraint, Bradlaugh had no further cause for misgiving as to political progress than his recognition of the general capacity of human nature to blunder.

He took up the neo-Malthusian position emphatically in his early pamphlet on "Jesus, Shelley, and Malthus," published in 1861, a somewhat youthfully rhetorical, but still a very notable presentment of the three main influences successively brought to bear on the problem of poverty—the spirit of religious submission, the spirit of humanitarian revolt, and the spirit of science. He pleaded for the last. "An acquaintance with political economy," he there declares, "is as necessary to the working man as is a knowledge of navigation to the master of a ship. It is the science of social life, the social science." And he was able in those days of the "orthodox" economics to cite in support of his definition, from the high priest of orthodoxy, a deliverance which may surprise readers whose knowledge of the old economics is not commensurate with their censure of it.

"The object of political economy," says Mr M'Culloch, "is to point out the means by which the industry of man may be rendered most productive of those necessaries, comforts, and enjoyments which constitute wealth; to ascertain the circumstances most favourable for its accumulation, the proportion in which it is divided among the different classes of the community, and the mode in which it may be most advantageously consumed."

And in another early pamphlet on "Poverty and its Effect on the Political Condition of the People," first published in 1863, he put as one of his mottoes, after a more guarded sentence from John Mill, this from Sir James Steuart:—

"The object of political economy is to secure the means of subsistence to all the inhabitants, to obviate every circumstance which might render this precarious, to provide everything necessary for supplying the wants of society, and to employ the inhabitants so as to make their several interests accord with their supplying each other's wants."

But his application of the principle was democratic and Neo-Malthusian, not Collectivist. "Unless," he wrote, "the *necessity* of the preventative or positive checks to population be perceived; unless it be clearly seen that they must operate in one form if not in another, and that, *though individuals may escape them, the race*

cannot, human society is a hopeless and insoluble riddle." And for years before this he had persistently pressed the point in his lectures, steadily defying the odium which his action brought upon him. As early as 1862 we find him temperately replying to denunciation on this head in a lecture on "Malthusianism and its connection with Civil and Religious Liberty," of which a partial report happened to be taken in shorthand. "It may almost seem unwise," he remarked, "to be continually putting this subject before you; but really I find myself so misrepresented, and so liable to be misunderstood, in quarters where one would expect better things, that you must not wonder if I seek to make it clear to you why I persist in this advocacy." He here pressed the law of population as a fundamental datum of political science.

"I shall urge upon you this morning that there can be no permanent civil and religious liberty, no permanent and enduring freedom for humankind, no permanent and enduring equality amongst men and women, no permanent and enduring fraternity, until the subject which Malthus wrote upon is thoroughly examined, and until the working men make that of which Malthus was so able an exponent the science of their everyday life; until, in fact, they grapple with it, and understand that the poverty which they now have to contend against must always produce the present evils which oppress them."

Again:—

"Poverty, so long as it exists, is in fact the impassable barrier between man and civil and religious liberty. You can never have true liberty so long as men are steeped in poverty. So long as men do not comprehend what liberty, what freedom really is, they will be ignorant how to attain it. Ignorance is the necessary sequence of their poverty. Are the people poor? For the poor there are no museums, no pictures, no elevating spheres of life, no grand music, no ennobling poetry. All these phases are closed to them; and why? Because their life is a constant struggle to live. . . . What is the use of preaching to the masses if the masses do not understand the language in which you talk to them? What is the use of your phrases to them when their education compels them not to comprehend the words you say, nay, makes them misunderstand you—for unfortunately *poverty has its education*, and is in this case worse than mere ignorance. There is a miseducation in poverty, which distorts the human mind, destroys self-reliant energy, and is a most effectual barrier in the way of religious liberty. Liberty, equality, fraternity, are words used very often about the Republican institutions of the world; but you can never have liberty, equality, and fraternity as long as there is poverty dividing one class from another."

These words have been echoed since by Socialists and others who represent Bradlaugh as a "Manchester" politician; and who either evade the question of the birth-rate, or deny that it is of any account. Their argument takes two main forms: (1) That to urge prudence on the poor is useless, since they will not listen; while the better workers who do listen are "sterilised;" (2) that there would be no over-population if only wealth were properly distributed. Both arguments are fallacious; the first proceeding upon ignorance of the facts, and the desire to shirk a troublesome question; the second upon non-comprehension of the law of population. In the first case, the objector first implies that it *might* be good to limit families if only people could be got to do so, and then proceeds to say that the limiting of families is harmful when practised. Both of these conflicting views are erroneous in fact. It is *not* difficult to make the majority of poor men and women listen to reason on the subject; with those who say it is, the wish is father to the thought, in that they do not want to try to give the requisite knowledge. Thousands of poor women ignorantly use the most disastrous means to limit their fecundity; and extreme poverty often hampers them even where they have the knowledge. A little money spent by the charitable in helping the very poor in this way would obviate the need for endless alms to relieve the misery which ignorant instinct multiplies. Nor is there the least need to fear the "sterilising" of the more prudent, as the limitation of the family has been unwarrantably termed. Small families do not necessarily mean lessened total population. A man who has only three children and rears them all healthfully, maintains the species more efficiently than a man who has eight, loses six, and perforce rears the two survivors badly, because what might have nourished two or three well was for years spent in merely keeping more alive. The extreme case of France, over which there has been so much superficial talk in France and elsewhere, is no such portent as it is made out, but is in part explicable by the stress of the influenza plague, which heavily affected even the English birth-rate, and is in part a useful reminder to French statesmen that they are pressing too heavily on their country's resources, and need to mend their methods. Withal, the misery in France is far less grinding and pervasive than the misery in England.

As to the argument that it is not over-breeding, but bad dis-

tribution that causes poverty, the answer is that both causes operate, but that over-breeding can work misery under any system of distribution whatever, and is a main support to bad distribution at present. Some Malthusians have supposed that with a proper proportionment of population to the resources of the time being, poverty would wholly disappear. This is over-sanguine; but the case of the United States in the first half of the century, when resources were still far ahead of labour supply, gives abundant support to a more moderate claim. On the other hand, unless the lesson of prudential restraint be learned, the most thorough socialistic system of distribution will simply incur the most complete ruin. People reason that if only the resources of the world were properly utilised, all could be fed and housed comfortably. That is quite true; but they forget that if there be no restraint, the population of the world, being better placed than ever, will double at least every twenty-five years, and will thus soon upset any possible system of housing and feeding, and reduce the general condition to toil and poverty all round. This is so obvious when put, that the optimists are fain to fall back on a theory that population slackens spontaneously under conditions of comfort. Mr George moves nimbly between this theory and one which absolutely negates it. But all such pleas resolve themselves into either an admission that the race *must and will learn to practise prudential restraint*, which is a surrender to Malthusianism, or an assumption of a pre-ordained beneficent harmony in Nature, the old optimism in a new dress, or rather an old dress "turned."

We come back to the common plea of all the antagonists of Neo-Malthusianism—that there is no need to check over-breeding *at present*—a position so crudely unreasonable, so irreconcilable with any knowledge of the great facts of the case, that it is a mystery how it can be taken up by candid and well-informed men. No amount of demonstration that the world *might* feed all its inhabitants can do away with the dreadful fact that myriads of babes *are* actually born into the world every year only to die of the troubles made by poverty; that these babes had much better not have been born; that their birth might have been prevented; and that the survivors suffered from their birth. That men can shut their eyes to these overwhelming facts, and go on arguing, on an "if," that there is no need to restrain the

birth-rate "in the meantime," is one of the darkest anomalies of political science.

Between the obstinacy of the opposing fallacy and the brutality of the resistance of prejudice, many men who recognise the truth have yet been wearied into holding their peace, in a pessimistic conviction that mankind in the mass cannot be enlightened on the matter. Of that attitude Bradlaugh was to the last incapable, though he had more cause than most men to know how tremendous were the odds in the struggle. Later generations will find it hard to credit the facts. A policy which on the face of the case could only be motived by public spirit and zeal for the truth was met by the vilest aspersions, the most malignant imputation of the most preposterously bad intentions. Personal vice was freely charged in explanation of an action which no vicious man would have had the self-denial to undertake. It is the bare truth to say that for many years a main part of the work of the Christian Evidence Society in England has been to employ hirelings to charge Secularism with the promotion of sexual vice —this on the strength partly of Bradlaugh's work for Neo-Malthusianism, and partly of the vogue of the anonymous work entitled "The Elements of Social Science," in which the arguments for family limitation are combined with a perfectly well-intentioned argument for sexual freedom as against celibacy and prostitution, the evils of which are not only exposed, but provided against in the book by careful medical instruction. Of this book, as we have seen, while honouring the moral courage and absolute benevolence of the anonymous writer, Bradlaugh expressly disclaimed the more advanced doctrines; but he has been saddled with them all the same, as if his burden of unpopularity were not already heavy enough.

He had fit though few compensations. He lived to see the rightness of his course more and more widely and openly admitted; and to see some Freethinkers and others who had unworthily attacked him for it come round and follow in his steps. And at his trial with Mrs Besant for selling the Knowlton pamphlet in 1877 he was able to tell the jury of higher sanctions than these. Mill in his "Autobiography," telling how he was attacked for subscribing to Bradlaugh's election fund in 1868, says of him :—

"He had the support of the working-classes; having heard him speak, I knew him to be a man of ability, and he had proved that he

was the reverse of a demagogue, by placing himself in strong opposition to the prevailing opinion of the democratic party on two such important subjects as Malthusianism and Personal Representation. Men of this sort, who, while sharing the democratic feelings of the working classes, judged political questions for themselves, and had courage to assert their individual convictions against popular opposition, were needed, as it seemed to me, in Parliament."

It may here be added that Grote, who was a regular reader of the *National Reformer* and a Neo-Malthusian also, approved even more strongly. The further fact, now established, that Mill was in his youth actually prosecuted for distributing Neo-Malthusian literature, should serve to check the malice of those persons, clerical and other, who still divide Freethinkers into two classes—one of "irreproachable morals," following Mill, the other of "loose and dissolute character," following Bradlaugh.

Some Neo-Malthusians have been charged, despite their rejection of the *non-possumus* of Malthus, with excluding all other reforms in their advocacy of family limitation. If this charge was ever valid, it certainly was not against Bradlaugh. He might much more reasonably be criticised for not keeping the population question to the front in every discussion of main reforms than for unduly obtruding it, or using it to discourage reforms made in disregard of it. After he had thoroughly forced it on the public attention, he trusted more to the quiet dissemination of educative literature on the subject, and the enlistment of individual self-interest in the reform, than to the political handling of it on the platform, where the insistence on it seems still to arouse the resentment of many Socialists and others, who can see no need for any reform save those they themselves propose, and are particularly wroth at the suggestion that working men can be in any degree accountable for their own troubles. The defence of the Knowlton pamphlet, as has been shown in the foregoing pages, was forced on Bradlaugh; and it was the more trying for him in that he was always personally averse to the detailed discussion of sexual topics. At the same time, it was impossible for him to submit to the stupid suppression by the authorities of the only cheap literature that gave to the poor the necessary knowledge for the limitation of their families. He was bound to resist that by every principle he professed; by his doctrine of freedom for the press and his doctrine

of prudence in the family. So resisting, he identified himself once for all with the Neo-Malthusian doctrine in politics, though the resulting special notoriety of the topic was thus the work of the prosecutors themselves, who probably did more by their hostile act for the spread of popular knowledge than Bradlaugh had before been able to do by his years of advocacy.

How important was his introduction of the principle into politics can only be realised by those who know how much the principle means; and it is still in the stage of being vilified by the pious and contemned by the superficial, in which latter class may be included a good many Socialists. The former heap upon avowed Neo-Malthusians an abuse which they withhold from eminent politicians who confess opinions that imply Neo-Malthusianism or nothing. Mr John Morley, for instance, has expressed his regret that "we,"—that is, the Liberal party in general—shirk the population question so much; and Mr Leonard Courtney has laid it down that we may as well build a house in disregard of the law of gravitation as hope to make a community prosper without regard to the law of population. The late Lord Derby spoke to similar effect. Either, then, such politicians mean to urge, with Malthus, that working-men shall postpone marriage until they have saved a good deal of money—that is, till middle or late life—or they approve of early marriage with conjugal prudence. That is the whole matter; for the nature of the prudence is a quite subsidiary question, on which no wise man or doctor will narrowly dogmatise. But nobody, not even the *Times*, denounces or insults Mr Courtney or Mr Morley or the late Lord Derby for saying what each of them has said. As usual, the man who says explicitly what other men say implicitly is singled out for attack, not on the score of taste, but on the score of the plain doctrine, however put.

On the whole, however, the tone of the discussion improves from year to year. In the "Knowlton" trial, the then Solicitor-General, Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord Halsbury), after hearing abundant evidence to show that the details made known in the pamphlet were just such as were made known in a number of other current works never prosecuted, though freely circulated by prominent booksellers; and after himself expressly avowing that "the book, I think it may be said, is carefully guarded from any vulgarity of expression"—nevertheless persisted in coarsely

describing it as "dirty and filthy." Yet he himself was so gratuitously indecent in his own language that in a number of passages it had to be paraphrased or expunged in the report. And though the puzzle-headed jury "entirely exonerated the defendants from any corrupt motives in publishing," they were "unanimously of opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals," and allowed their foreman to present a verdict of guilty under the indictment. Probably no metropolitan jury would now come "unanimously" to the degrading conclusion that to spread specific physiological knowledge is to deprave public morals, even if the members were the "average sensual men" who habitually circulate and gloat upon lewd anecdotes, to say nothing of their acts. It is true that the abominable imputations packed into the indictment of Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant were repeated in the miserable prosecution * which took place at Newcastle in 1892; and that the Recorder who tried that case, Judge Digby Seymour, displayed gross prejudice at every stage of the trial, finally vilifying such a perfectly well-meant and well-done treatise as Dr Allbutt's "Wife's Handbook," and the old "Fruits of Philosophy," as "two of the filthiest works that could be circulated to debauch and demoralise the minds of the people." Odious aspersions of this kind represent merely the fanaticism of ignorant custom, and take no heed of the enormous harm which physiological ignorance breeds. The Solicitor-General in the Knowlton trial flatly refused to deal with any such considerations; and Judge Seymour similarly would listen to no rational argument. But a decisive current of public opinion now begins to set the other way. Even a number of clergymen now admit the frightful evils of overbreeding, and are thus at least in part disentitled to cry out against rational prudence. The Newcastle prosecution, moreover, was strongly condemned in the local press; the accused was liberated; and at a public indignation meeting one speaker declared, with applause, that "the verdict of Judge Digby Seymour was an insult and a libel upon their English manners." And though a Neo-Malthusian student was heavily fined † in London

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* Of Henry Loader, a professed Christian.

† He was fined £40, while two brothel-keepers were fined only £5 each in the same week.

in the previous year for circulating information in a slightly irregular manner, the language of the counsel for the Crown, who declared that "*the only check against immorality in this country is the fear of pregnancy*," excited general indignation, as did the conduct of the magistrate in ruling that decent language was "obscene." This prosecution, too, was repented of; and the most direct journalistic challenge afterwards failed to bring on any prosecution of Neo-Malthusian doctrine as such.

Even the comparatively reasonable attitude of Sir Alexander Cockburn in the "Knowlton" trial would not now recommend itself at all points to educated people. In the hearing of the evidence he thought fit to suggest that only "strong-minded ladies" could acquire medical knowledge without becoming "less pure-minded." Nor would any thoughtful people now agree with him and the Solicitor-General that "no better tribunal can be found in the world to judge of such a question as this than the average sound sense and enlightened judgment which is to be found in English society." These flights of declamation on the Bench are part of the general cant of English society, which can decorously endorse the moral reflections of a judge whose own life is the subject of chronic and much-relished scandal. But Cockburn at least put a new obstacle in the way of legal molestation of honest propaganda by expressing his agreement with the Malthusian doctrine as to over-population; and the later judgment of Judge Windeyer in Victoria, vindicating Mrs Besant's "Law of Population" when it was prosecuted there, marks the turn of the legal tide.

§ 3.

The constructive policy which Bradlaugh joined with his Neo-Malthusian doctrine had for its main item the radical reform of the land laws. He was thus in practical harmony with those individualists who except the land from the operation of the individualist principle, though he did not declare like them for land nationalisation. Nationalisation he considered too vast and difficult a transaction in the present state of political evolution; but progressive interference with the land monopoly he held to be as practicable as it is necessary. Property in land, he held with Mill, "is only valid in so far as the proprietor of the land is its improver; when private property in land is not expedient it is

unjust." And the control of the land, in his opinion, must become the subject of a great and decisive struggle between the people and the landowning class, who may or may not be aided by the rest of the capitalist class. On this subject he felt no less strongly, though he always spoke with more restraint, than do Socialists with regard to capitalism pure and simple.

"It is for the use of air, moisture, and heat," he puts it, "for the varied natural forces, that the cultivator pays; and the receiver talks of the rights of property. We shall have for the future to talk in this country of the rights of life—rights which must be recognised, even if the recognition involves the utter abolition of the present landed aristocracy." *

And he could say of the landed class, what can hardly be said of the labour-employing class in the main, that they had stood in the way of every reform:

"The great rent-takers have been the opponents of progress; they have hindered reform; they kept the taxes on knowledge; they passed combination laws; they enacted long Parliaments; they made the machinery of Parliamentary election costly and complicated, so as to bar out the people. They have prevented education, and then have sneered at the masses for their ignorance. All progress in the producing power of labour has added to the value of land; and yet the landowner, who has often stood worse than idly by while the land has increased in value, now talks of the labourer as of the lower herd which must be checked and restrained."

To carry out in legislation the principle of the common interest in the land was accordingly one of his main aims; and at the time when his illegal exclusion from Parliament forced him to concentrate all his energies in the struggle for bare political life, he had gone far to give effect to it. Early in 1880 he took the leading part in establishing the Land Law Reform League, of which the formulated objects were:—

"1. In case of intestacies, the same law to govern the distribution of real and personal property. This would destroy primogeniture, but to be useful would need to be followed by some limitation of the power of devise, say as in France

* Pamphlet on "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle," fourth ed., p. 8.

"2. Abolition of the right to settle or entail for non-existing lives. It would be far better to abolish all life estates. . . . .

"3. Transfer of land to be made as cheap and easy as the transfer of a ship. Security to be ensured by compulsory registration of all dealings with land. . . . .

"4. Abolition of all preferential rights of landlords over other creditors. . . . .

"5. Abolition of the Game Laws.

"6. Compulsory cultivation of all lands now uncultivated, and not devoted to public purposes, which are cultivable with profit. That is, make it a misdemeanour to hold cultivable lands in an uncultivated state. The penalty on conviction to be dispossession, but with payment to dispossessed landowners of say twenty years' purchase of the average annual value of the land for the seven years prior to the prosecution. The payment to be by bonds of the State bearing the same interest as the Consolidated Debt, and payable to bearer. The land to be State property, and to be let to actual tenant cultivators on terms of tenancy . . . longer or shorter according to the improvement made in the estate. The amount paid as rent to the State to be applied to the payment of the interest and to form a sinking fund for the liquidation of the principal.

"7. Security to the tenant-cultivator for improvements.

"8. Re-valuation of lands for the more equitable imposition of the land-tax.

"9. Land-tax to be levied on a scale so graduated as to press most heavily on excessively large holdings.

"10. One and the same land law for Great Britain and Ireland."

Within a few months this League, numbering among its Vice-Presidents four clergymen, two of them belonging to the State Church, had established a number of strong branches, enrolled members, and affiliated societies representing many thousands more, thus attracting an amount of notice in the press which promised important results. An illustration of the effect produced may be seen in a letter which Mr Ruskin thought worthy of insertion in *Fors Clavigera*:—

"May I take an advantage of this note, and call your attention to a fact of much importance to Englishmen? and it is this. On reference to some Freethought papers—notably the *National Reformer*—I find a movement on foot amongst the Atheists, vigorous and full of life, for the alteration of the Land Laws in our much-loved country. It is a movement of much moment, and likely to lead to great results. The first great move on the part of Charles Bradlaugh, the premier in the

matter, is the calling of a conference to discuss the whole question. The meeting is to be attended by all the National Secular Society's branches throughout the empire; representatives of nearly every Reform Association in England, Scotland, and Ireland; deputations from banded bodies of workmen, colliers, etc.—such as the important band of Durham miners—Trade Unionists, and, in fact, a most mighty representative conference will be gathered together. I am, for many reasons, grieved and shocked to find the cry for Reform coming with *such a heading* to the front. Where are our statesmen—*our clergy?* The terrible crying evils of our land system are coming to the front in our politics without the help of the so-called upper classes; nay, with a deadly hatred of any disturbance in that direction, our very clergy are taking up arms against the popular cry.

"Only a week ago I was spending a few days with a farmer near Chester, and learned to my sorrow and dismay that the Dean and Chapter of that city, who own most of the farms, etc., in the district where my friend resides, refuse now—and only *now*—to accept other than *yearly* tenants for these farms; have raised all the rents to an exorbitant pitch, and only allow the land to be sown with wheat, oats, or whatever else in seed, etc., on a personal inspection by their agent. The consequences of all this is that poverty is prevailing to an alarming extent; the workers all the bitter, hard toil; the clergy, one may say, *all* the profits. It is terrible, heart-breaking; I never longed so much for heart-searching, vivid eloquence, so that I might move men with an irresistible tongue to do the right."

It is vain now to guess what the movement might have done if Bradlaugh, who was its main force, had been left free to carry it on continuously. But, on the one hand, his overwhelming contest with the House of Commons forced him to put aside an undertaking which depended so much on a seat in that House; and on the other hand, to say nothing of the precedence inevitably given to the Irish land question in Parliament, it cannot be questioned that the fall in agricultural land values took much of the wind out of the sails of English land reformers. The phenomenon of land going out of cultivation put a new face on the dispute. When Bradlaugh at length got his seat, he at once showed his continued grasp of the problem by introducing a Bill for the Compulsory Cultivation of Waste Land, the principle of which was, that wherever land of more than one hundred acres lay uncultivated, and not used for public pleasure,* while cul-

* This stipulation was often ignored, and he was accused of wanting to parcel out Hyde Park in allotments.

tivable with profit by a cultivator paying no rent, or a smaller rent than the landlord held necessary to make it worth his while to lease, the Commissioners of Woods and Forests should be empowered to take possession of such land and offer it for tenancy. The keeping of the land uncultivated was to be a misdemeanour; but the dispossessed owner was to receive in compensation an annual payment for twenty-five years of a sum representing the average annual value of the land during the fourteen years prior to his dispossession, whatever that might be. The justification given by Bradlaugh for making it a misdemeanour to hold land idle was that already it was a misdemeanour for a labourer to live as an idle vagrant, and that the law insisted on his utilising his labour power. If labour, then *a fortiori* land. In introducing this measure Bradlaugh emphatically maintained that if the land would not yield the "three profits" of Lord Beaconsfield's formula, it ought not to be allowed to be kept idle and useless by the landlord. So long as a cultivator could make *his* profit, the State was bound to give him the opportunity. Needless to say, the Bill was violently denounced by the Conservative press. The *Times* talked of "downright plunder." The *Spectator* was especially indignant on the score that "great properties in the home counties, *kept waste in the hope that London will build on them*, would be confiscated"; and that and other journals held it a sufficient objection that in cases where land had been worth nothing the landlord would get nothing. Many Liberal members further objected that a Bill of such importance ought not to be introduced by a private member; and generally there was more hostility than help. On its discussion in the House (April 1886) Bradlaugh agreed to withdraw the Bill on the ground that its machinery was insufficient, he having come to the opinion that provision should be made for the lending of money to moneyless men to enable them to cultivate on their own behalf. In 1887, still seeing no hope of carrying a Bill, he took the course of moving a resolution on the motion for going into Committee of Supply, reaffirming the principle that "the right of ownership carries with it the duty of cultivation," and proposing to empower the "local authorities" to act as in the Bill of 1886 he had proposed to make the Commissioners of Woods and Forests act. This time he had considerable support, his resolution getting 101 votes, to 175 against. Not one of the front bench Liberals voted; but the Irish Home Rulers

did so in considerable force, making some amends for old hostility.* Again, in 1888, he moved a modified resolution, proposing to empower local authorities to purchase compulsorily waste lands at the "capital agricultural value." This time, some hours having been lost by a Scotch motion for the adjournment of the House on a point affecting crofters, the discussion came to nothing, the House being counted out while it was in process. Those who were behind the scenes may be able to give the explanation of the apathy of the Liberal and Radical members generally. The passing of an Allotments Act by the Conservative Government may have had something to do with it. Be that as it may, Bradlaugh again in March 1889 gave notice of a resolution on the subject, this time proposing to give local authorities power to levy a "waste and vacant land rate," or in the alternative, to acquire the land by payment either "for a limited term of an annual sum not exceeding the then average net annual actual produce," or of a sum representing the capital agricultural value. This resolution, however, never came to discussion. He again put it down in 1890, immediately after his return from India, but again it failed to reach discussion. In 1891 his work was over.

It will be seen that his land policy was more advanced than any that has yet been put in force by the Liberal party, though the legislation of 1894 has advanced considerably towards the adoption of his principle of compulsion. To that principle later legislators must inevitably come; and as regards land not utilised it has irresistible force. The proper answer to the demands of landlords for protection against the import of cheap corn from land paying no rent in America, is that when land goes out of cultivation here owing to such competition making it fail to yield its old rent, or three profits, the opportunity of cultivating it should pass to the State, which may fitly try the experiment of placing on such land the labourers who are driven to swell the crowd of unemployed in the towns. But this answer has never yet been effectively made in politics.† The doctrine of the nation's ownership of its land needs apparently to be asserted to-day more emphatically than ever.

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* For the details of the case in favour of compulsory cultivation of land, see Bradlaugh's pamphlet on the subject, published 1887.

† It has lately been advanced by a "Unionist" politician, Mr T. W. Russell, in the *New Review*.

Asserting it as he did, Bradlaugh represented a midway position between out-and-out Socialism and out-and-out Individualism. Time will show whether it was on the line to be taken by progressive reform. What is clear is that if energetically adopted it may soon lead to the complete overthrow of that land system which is the foundation of the reactionary party politics of this country. In his pamphlet on "The Land, the People, and the Coming Struggle," Bradlaugh put very clearly the social ideal he had in view. "The enormous estates of the few landed proprietors," he declared, "must not only be prevented from growing larger, they must be broken up. At their own instance, and gradually, if they will meet us with even a semblance of fairness, for the poor and hungry cannot well afford to fight; but at our instance, and rapidly, if they obstinately refuse all legislation." To this end he proposed, as we have seen, re-valuation of all lands, and a graduated land-tax, to press most heavily on the largest holdings. The Budget of 1894, although stopping short of graduation of the annual taxes, has made the first step towards them by graduating the death duties; and the further steps are probably not far off. The broad political problem of the future is the control of wealth distribution, to the end of making the rendering of services a condition of the enjoyment of services for all able-bodied persons; and it seems fairly clear that the easiest of the various possible main steps towards that consummation are the restriction of private property in land and the indirect or direct absorption of "economic rent" by the State, such adaptations being to the socialisation of other means of wealth production as the simple to the complex. And while Bradlaugh, as has been said, stipulated for gradual action even in the regulation of the land, he never refused to contemplate the nationalisation of its rent as an ultimate ideal.

§ 4.

It may now be easily inferred how Bradlaugh came to feel for the popular Socialism of the day a mixture of distrust and aversion. It was for him a flying off at a tangent from the right spiral line of progress. He had counted on seeing the slowly-won political power of the mass of the people turned to the enforcement of fundamental reforms in taxation and land-tenure, so as to better the life-conditions of the people in the mass; and he had trusted to a gradual learning of the lesson of family prudence, with the

result of an immense saving of friction, waste, and misery. When he had got to the front of the political struggle, the needed reforms were still nearly all to make; and the great lesson of conjugal prudence was only beginning to be learned on a large scale. What was wanted, to his mind, was a combination of energy with patience. He had no belief in the possibility of raising the lot of vast masses of people to a high level suddenly by violent legislation for the direct transfer of all property from the "haves" to the "have-nots": he knew how enormously difficult it was to effect even the modifying measures for which he was working. But he believed that with persistent toil and good sense it might so be carried out that the life of the people should in the next generation be greatly improved, and the stress of their life materially lessened. Just at this stage, however, he saw the struggling people suddenly and vociferously appealed to by teachers who taught the uselessness of all gradual action; the futility of all preceding parliamentary effort; the impossibility of any improvement so long as private property in any of the means of production subsisted; the limitation of the alternatives to the whole loaf or no bread; the necessity of subjecting all industrial action whatever to collective control at one sweep; in a word, the absolute necessity of effecting at a stroke, by violence if need be, such a social and moral revolution as the world had never yet seen. Already the folly of all this is recognised by many even of those who resent Bradlaugh's popular exposure of it. Within ten years there has been developed in England a progressive Socialism which repudiates violence, substitutes evolution for revolution, proposes to utilise all the existing political machinery, is glad of gradual advance, is content to urge forward Radicalism, and modifies mathematical politics by biological conceptions. But Bradlaugh had to bear the brunt of the anger not only of the heated crowd who had shouted for the impossible, but of the new sentimental journalists who had patronised them.

First he had been constantly and violently abused, in the early days of his Parliamentary struggle, as being himself a Socialist, by people who knew nothing whatever about his life and doctrine; and his alleged Socialism was one of the pretexts on which some opposed his entry into the House of Commons. The nobleman who then represented the historic name of Percy took that line. A fair sample of the current tone on the subject among the ignor-

ant rich is supplied by their votes *vates sanctissima*, the lady novelist "Ouida," in a letter to the *Fortnightly Review*,* in which she discussed the class politics of Italy. "It is the towns," she explained, "which are the centres of eagerness for unconsidered war, and the foolish credulity of bombastic Radicalism;" and she went on in her best-informed manner to particularise "the 'educated' cad of the Turin or Florence streets, who has heard just enough of Fourier and Bradlaugh to think that society ought to maintain at ease his ugly idleness." The idleness which felt sure of its beauty was naturally resentful. All the while, Bradlaugh was at sharp strife with the Socialists of the moment; and he soon came to be applauded for his course in this matter by the same precious upper-class opinion which had just imputed to him the views he assailed, while new assailants vituperated him as a traitor to principles he had never accepted. It is largely to his destructive criticism that the undefined fashionable Socialism of the present hour owes its comparative rationality;† but there is small thought of acknowledging the service.

Certainly he had struck hard, and this not merely because he was iniquitously and ferociously attacked by Socialists generally.‡ He saw the new doctrine appealing to and applauded by, not the clear-headed and self-controlled workers, but the neurotic, the noisy, the passionate, the riotous. Instead of meetings of men at once earnest and orderly, such as he had gathered and addressed for so many years, meetings at which debate could go on without

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* November 1881, p. 842.

† His longer criticisms of Socialism make a fair volume. They are: (1) Socialism; For and Against: written debate with Mrs Besant, 1887; (2) Will Socialism benefit the English People? debate with Mr Hyndman, 1883; (3) Written debate with Mr Belfort Bax, under same title; (4) "Socialism; its Fallacies and Dangers," article in *North American Review*, January 1887, reprinted as a pamphlet; Pamphlet, "Some objections to Socialism," 1884. See also his articles and debate on the "Eight Hours Question," and his lecture on "Capital and Labour."

‡ I happened to be standing by when, at a Freethought Conference, the late Dr Cæsar de Pæpe, a leading Belgian Socialist and Freethinker, personally and fraternally remonstrated with Bradlaugh on his opposition to Socialism. He vehemently answered that he had found the English Socialists among the most unscrupulous of his enemies, they having not only lied about him freely, but put in his mouth all sorts of things he had never said or thought.

disorder, he saw gatherings of wildly excited men, who could not listen to opposition, who could not sit still in their seats when their view were countered, and who turned a public debate into a public disturbance. Significantly enough, the one town in which the Socialist party, even when pretty numerous, can be trusted to give an opponent a fair hearing, is Northampton, where for so many years he disciplined the workers to orderly activity, and to self-control under extreme provocation. No cause ever needed such discipline more than that of Socialism. It is quite reasonable to plead for consideration for men whose life is hard, and who see idlers at their ease; but extenuating circumstances do not affect the stream of tendency; and no amount of sympathy with the luckless can make up for want of judgment in those who undertake to lead them. And to talk, as so many of the Socialist talkers did a dozen or less years ago, of resorting to physical force, to revolutionise society, was only to expose the luckless to new disaster.

Whether all Bradlaugh's argumentation against Socialist theory will hold good is another question. It is probable that the extreme statements of Socialist doctrine with which he had to deal led him latterly to define his Individualism at times more sharply than before. Not many years before his death he declined to dub himself either Individualist or Socialist. He sought to legislate for an evolving society, conditioned by all sorts of anomalous survivals; and he must prescribe for each juncture or trouble in view of all the facts of the case. As he put it in his pamphlet on "Parliament and the Poor":—

"All progressive legislation in this country is necessarily compromise. It is not possible to legislate on hard and fast lines of principle alone. A state of things has grown up through generations which can only be gradually changed. The expedient has to be considered in all law-making. Legal interpretations of right have received judicial sanction, which have become so much part of our general political and social system that sudden reversal would be attended often with the gravest mischief. Temporary concessions have usually to be made on the one side, to win consent from the other, to a sure step in advance; but no compromise is final."

But the affirmation by Socialists of principles which seemed to make an end of self-reliance and self-determination led him to offer definitions of the sphere of Government; and while his concrete decisions—as in the case of the Eight Hours movement—

will probably be found to be in all cases sagacious, it may be that political science will yet endorse action which he declined to contemplate. His practical justification is that his Socialist adversaries always argued the case *in vacuo*, and demanded the nationalisation of all the means of production, and, by consequence, the State determination of all destinies, at a time when not only is the public in the terms of the case still largely predatory and anti-social in instinct, but the Socialists themselves are divided by incurable animosities. Mr Hyndman chose to debate with him on the issue, "Will Socialism benefit the English People?"—"if resorted to here and now" being implied. Only when it is asked, "Can we evolve up to Socialism?" will Bradlaugh's rebuttal be got rid of.

What may perhaps be urged against him, as against land nationalisers from Mill onwards, is that the theory which makes land the main matter is partly undermined by the economic evolution in which agricultural land values in this country have receded, the food supply being more and more derived from abroad, in return for exported goods. On this head, however, it may here suffice to answer that that is in all likelihood a temporary phase; that in any case, English industry rests on the coal supply, which is a matter of land in the economic sense; and that a Socialism which thinks to maintain a forever increasing population, on the basis of a mere national workshop system, is much more short-sighted than the doctrine which makes the land the fulcrum of all industrial movement.

There is just one criticism of Bradlaugh's politics which the present writer will not undertake to meet, since it raises a point on which he was driven to differ from him. It is the objection to the optimistic assumption that the mass of the people can surmount the trouble of chronic trade-depression by means of thrift. This was perhaps the one touch of uncritical optimism in Bradlaugh's political system. He argued that the workers could acquire all necessary capital for themselves by simple saving. "You can earn it," he tells them, at the close of his lecture on "Capital and Labour,"—"the Rothschilds' wealth, the Overstones' wealth, the Barings' wealth—you, the millions, if you are only loyal to yourselves and to one another, may put all this into your own Savings Banks, and your own friendly societies, and your own trades unions, within a dozen years. You accumulate it

for others: you can do it for yourselves." The answer to this is that the capital in question depends for its continuance on the continuance of industrial production, and of the demand for the product; whereas, if the workers were to stint their consumption to the extent of saving great masses of capital from wages, they would to that extent check their total production, unless, that is, the other classes increase their consumption to a balancing extent; which, however, they could not conceivably do. Even if the birth-rate be so checked as to lessen the nett population, the increasing power of machinery would so far balance the lessened supply of labour that the tactic of parsimony on a large scale would defeat itself. At present the successful savers are so in virtue of the ill-luck of other investors and the non-saving of the mass. Saving all round would neutralise itself, since the saving could only be profitably invested in production to meet increasing demand, whereas in the terms of the case there would be decreasing demand. It is spending that keeps the machine going, not saving.

But supposing this criticism to be valid—and there are still but few who will endorse it—the final estimate of Bradlaugh, as of any politician, must be in terms of comparison; and if he has erred on the theory of thrift, so have all the statesmen of his time; while on other great issues on which they were backward, he was alert and enlightened. Even the Socialists who oppose him, and throw at him the ancient epithet of "Manchester," have in many cases committed themselves to the Manchester school's doctrine of saving, deriding those who contravene it. And on the concrete issues on which they were opposed to him, it is not difficult to show that Manchesterism had the right end of the stick. On the Eight Hours' question, in particular, the Socialist attack on him is not only subversive of other Socialist doctrine, but is a *reductio ad absurdum*. He is accused of inconsistency, because he wrought for State interference with the relations of labour and capital in his Truck Act, but opposed State regulation of working hours. But, on the one hand, the two cases are fundamentally different, since working hours depend on the whole economic situation, while Truck is an arbitrary arrangement of the masters, only possible in peculiar local circumstances; and on the other hand, if the Truck Act logically commits us to interference with working time, then a time law will logically commit us to a wages law, which even the Socialist critic admits to be folly.

That Bradlaugh was no pedantic individualist is shown, not only by his Truck Act, but by his agitation for a Labour Bureau, which was the origin of that institution, though the official Liberal press usually gives all the credit to Mr Mundella, who merely acted on Bradlaugh's urging. And while the latter held that the action of the trade unions was in some cases mistaken, he never ceased to urge their attention to political affairs all round.

"Many of the great trades organisations and friendly societies," he wrote in 1889, "have until recently prided themselves on being non-political. Some of the trades societies and nearly all the friendly societies still so pride themselves. This has been a serious blunder, especially in a country where much legislation has been the work of a very limited class for the conservation of their own privileges." *

His limitary principle was one of sound common-sense, whether or not he recognised the full force of the economic indictment of competitive individualism.

"A good working doctrine for legislatures should be to mould conduct rather by the development of sound public opinion than by the operation of penal laws. Especially should the legislature be careful not to profess to do that for the worker, which it is reasonably possible for him to do for himself without the aid of the law. A duty enforced by others is seldom so well performed as a duty affirmed by the doer."

And these principles, which perhaps serve even some professed Liberals mainly as a ground for doing nothing, were with him a ground for insisting on an act of justice and expediency which such Liberals have been very loth to accede to. Bradlaugh's action in the great test case of recent English politics is a decisive proof of his foresight.

§. 5.

As the story of his life has shown, Bradlaugh had had special opportunities of studying the Irish question from the inside; and from the day when his young blood boiled at the murderous cruelty of an Irish eviction, he steadfastly supported the cause of the misruled Irish people. He never ceased to love England with that touch of pride and faith which is the whole stock-in-

* "Parliament and the Poor."

trade of the average patriot; but, combining it as he did with an intense sense of justice, he could never let that devotion blind him to the wrongs of other peoples at England's hands. And in the first years of his political activity, when he was pleading for rebel Poles and rebel Italians, he seems to have so far recognised the right of Irishmen to use force against the force of England, that he assisted the Fenian conspirators of 1867 to draw up their Republican proclamation, so revising it as to exclude every expression of race hatred and every appeal to religious feeling; "the complete separation of Church and State" being one of its stipulations. The full details of that connection will probably never now be known; but what is quite clear is that Bradlaugh was not only then opposed to the idea of an Irish Republic, but soon ceased to have the least faith in the possibility of a successful or even a well-planned Irish rising; while his invariable opposition to useless violence was emphatic in the case of the Clerkenwell and other outrages. All the more earnestly did he continue his propaganda for Irish reform. Holding as he did that the land question was fundamental in English politics, he could not but see that it was the very heart of the Irish trouble; and to the agitation for Irish land law reform he gave energetic support. But he was always far ahead of the slow movement of average English opinion; and while English Liberals were hoping that the concessions carried out by Gladstone would make Ireland a contented partner in the Union, Bradlaugh had already given his assent to the claim for Home Rule; always, however, flatly opposing the doctrine of separation. On this he was explicit when, speaking in New York in 1873, he found otherwise friendly Irish auditors disposed to be satisfied with nothing short of absolute severance from England. Home Rule, however, he all along considered to be not only just but inevitable. While those of us who hoped for a real Union (with Irishmen admitted to perfect equality in the Executive system) were urging that as a solution which escaped the proved dangers of Federalism, he had made up his mind that Englishmen could not and would not ever deal with Ireland as an integral part of the State; and he had declared himself a Home Ruler long before Mr Gladstone, who had frustrated the hope for a true Union by consistently keeping Irishmen out of his cabinets. That, helping as he thus did the

Home Rule movement, he should yet have been treated with bigoted hostility and injustice by the bulk of the Irish Nationalists in his Parliamentary struggle, was so remarkable that explanations were demanded; and the Nationalists offered several, to the effect that Bradlaugh had turned against them. It is necessary to go into some detail to show that this is untrue.

At the outset of his Parliamentary struggle Bradlaugh was not only not regarded as an opponent by the Nationalists as a political party, but was even defended by Parnell, although against the wish of most of that leader's Catholic followers; and despite the quickly shown ill-will of these, Bradlaugh continued to support their cause in the House during the nine months of his conditional tenure of his seat, 1880-81. But as he never hesitated to counter what he held to be wrong policy among English democrats, so he condemned, albeit reluctantly, what he held to be unjustifiable courses on the part of the Parnellites. This appears in his "Parliamentary Jottings" in his journal under date 5th September 1880, where he says he "much regretted, during the long conflict of Thursday-Friday, to find himself brought into collision with the Irish members." Nineteen Irish members had spoken, with his entire sympathy, against the Constabulary Vote; and after midnight they sought to postpone the discussion, on the ground that "more Irish members wished to speak," though not a penny of the estimates had been voted. There were only twelve more Home Rulers present, and they could all have spoken had they wished. They, however, appealed to the Radicals to help them to delay business, on the score that the Constabulary Vote was a "life and death question." As obstruction could only delay and not stop the vote, Bradlaugh objected, and made a speech to that effect, which was warmly cheered by the Liberals, and as warmly condemned by Home Rulers; though, when it came to voting, only 27 of the 61 Home Rulers went into the lobby. Obstruction he always condemned. This was a pretext for Irish hostility, though there had been abundance of that already. Some weeks later he writes:—

"My personal position as to Ireland is by no means an easy one. I find English Radicals in general, and myself in particular the subject of constant abuse in Irish journals. I read words attributed to Irish members of the House of Commons full of the most intense hostility to everything English, and find speakers in their presence

declaring that the land movement is only the cover for the disruption of the two countries."

And after quoting some of the frenzied sayings of Irish Americans, he appeals to "Mr Parnell and his co-traversers," and other responsible Nationalists, "not to check our desire to co-operate with them by their open declarations of hostility to our race;" and "in the name of humanity . . . to check the tendency of the people whom they lead to waste their energies in worse than useless force." At the same time, he protested against the prosecution of Mr Parnell and his colleagues by the Liberal Government, supported the fund for their defence, and incurred new hostility in England in consequence. Correspondents wrote him on both sides, and he answered: *—

"We must ask both sides to be a little patient. The agrarian crimes cannot be justified, nor does our contributing to the Parnell Defence justify these. We subscribe in order that he and others may have fair play: it is never easy to be defendant in a State trial. . . . Some remind us that three-fourths of the Irish M.P.'s voted against us, and nearly every Irish paper attacks us. That is so, but it does not alter our duty. Our duty is to work honestly for redress of Irish grievances, although even every Irishman should be personally unjust to us."

One form of the injustice is seen in an editorial sentence from the Dublin *Freeman* about the same time, *àpropos* of the argument of the Tory *St James's Gazette*† to the effect that over-population was the cause of Irish distress. "Does the *St James's* propose," asked the *Freeman*, "the introduction of Bradlaughism into Ireland, when it says that the 'rapid growth of population, which is checked in some countries,' must be fatal to the prosperity of cotter families across the Channel?" The Tory argument was really a sample of the method of utilising the principle of population solely as a reason for not doing justice, while vilifying those who not only see the trouble but point out the remedy. Not a word of support did Bradlaugh ever get from a Tory organ in his attempt to avert the evil of over-population. But as regards Ireland, he not only recognised that over-population there was positively fostered by the unjust land system, but he again and again in the House denied that even wholesale emigration, if

* *National Reformer*, Nov. 20, 1888.

† Then edited by Mr Frederick Greenwood.

practicable, would cure the evil while that system endured. In July 1880 he writes:—

"I had to listen to the Hon. B. Fitzpatrick, sent by 118 votes for the borough of Portarlington, who, in the course of a wild display of imbecility, had the audacity to declare that wholesale emigration of the natives of Ireland was the 'only remedy' for Irish distress; and this was said by an Irishman."

On the 15th of the same month, in the debate on the second reading of the Irish Tenants' Compensation Bill, he protested against the irrelevance of the Tory opposition to the Bill.

"There had been renewed the argument that Ireland was over-populated, and that the tenants who were distressed ought to find in some other country the relief they could not find in Ireland. Now, there was no colony in England, and there was no part of the United States of America, to which any poor man without means could go, hoping to benefit himself at the present time. Therefore, those who recommended emigration had either never taken the trouble to investigate the matter, or were simply talking against time to delay the measure going into committee."

Again, though in January 1881 he found himself "driven into the lobby, for the first time this Session, against the Irish members, only to vote that the business of the House was not to be absolutely stopped by an utterly irregular discussion," he took a most active part in opposing the Government's coercive measures. In the debate on the address he "made one of eight English Radicals who alone had been found to record their votes in favour of Mr Parnell's amendment," though feeling that the Irish methods of hindering business had kept many English members out of the Nationalist lobby; and when Mr Forster made his appeal for special powers, Bradlaugh made a strong speech in support of one of the Irish amendments.* Yet again he felt bound to vote for the suspension of Mr Biggar, doing it "with very heavy heart," and grieving "that Irish members should so play into the hands of their

* Those were "the days of all-night sittings," forced by the policy of the Nationalists; and Bradlaugh missed voting on the motion for leave to bring in the Coercion Bill, by reason of having gone home to rest after having sat for twenty-six hours out of thirty, the vote being suddenly taken in his absence on the decision of the Speaker.

enemies, and so totally damage the cause of their country." Of the later suspensions of Mr Dillon and the O'Gorman Mahon, he wrote with much regret; but for others who had, outside, "boasted that they wished to degrade Parliament," he confessed he had "little pity." None the less, he moved the rejection of the Coercion Bill on the second reading, in the never-explained absence of Mr Parnell, who had suddenly gone to Paris. The Irish Anti-Coercion Committee, who had just denounced him in one of their leaflets for his votes against obstruction, felt constrained about this stage to send him a vote of thanks. All the while, his journal had published numerous articles sharply attacking the Government's coercion policy.

A vote on the Arms Bill was the last act by which Bradlaugh ministered to the wish of the Nationalists to have a case against him. He had repeatedly protested against the advice given by Mr Dillon and others to Irish peasants to buy rifles; and he held that the case of Ireland was bad enough without adding to wrong and misery the freedom to seek amends in murder. His vote on this point, like his votes against obstruction, were held by the Parnellites to outweigh all his protests against coercion and all his appeals for land law reform; his exclusion from Parliament after the decision in the Law Courts in the spring of 1881 was hailed by most of them with delight; and during his long battle outside, they were among his worst enemies, the Irish press and people fully abetting them. Still he never relaxed his advocacy of the cause of the Irish peasantry, pleading for a merciful and conciliatory treatment of them when they were hooting his name; and when he at length obtained his seat in 1886 he gave his unhesitating support to the Home Rule policy of Mr Gladstone. It was in that year that a leading Irish Nationalist went up to him in the House with the greeting, "Mr Bradlaugh, you have been the best Christian of us all." Considering that only the influence of the Catholic priesthood could account for the course taken by the Parnellite party, the acknowledgment—in spirit if not in form—was suggestive of some moral progress on the Christian side.

It may be questioned whether many Liberals could have thus borne the test undergone by Bradlaugh on the Irish question. It is certain that Bright, with all his chivalry and rectitude, was somewhat influenced in his latter attitude on that question by the evil return which Irishmen had made to him for all his efforts on

their behalf. Bradlaugh suffered far worse treatment at their hands, but was in no way turned by it from his conviction of what was just. He was content to recognise that the people were swayed by the priests, and that in any case it is vain to look for the moral fruits of equality from a people to whom equality has been for ages denied. He had been treated by Irish Nationalists as he had been by English Conservatives; and though he felt the ingratitude of the former, he would not admit that they had shown any grosser unscrupulousness than the latter, who had denied justice to an Englishman on motives of party strategy, reinforced by religious malice. If there was any difference, it was that the Irishmen had been more moved by religious malice and less by party strategy; and it is usual to rate the latter motive the lower of the two.

Bradlaugh himself would never have claimed that he had shown any special magnanimity in the case; but those who know how much personal interest or pique counts for in political action will recognise the singularity of his course. It belonged to his character, equally with his avowal and advocacy of unpopular opinions. Later, when the question of Woman Suffrage was being pressed on his constituency, he was told by Mr Labouchere, as he had been told by others before, that if the women of Northampton had a vote he would not be returned. His public answer was:—

"If I knew this to be true, it would not hinder me from casting my vote in favour of woman suffrage, even if my vote alone should be required to pass the Bill. I deeply value the representation of Northampton, but the grant of the right of woman to the suffrage cannot be determined by the fact that, if legalised, her exercise of that right according to her conscience would be personally hostile to myself."

It may be doubted whether Mr Labouchere gauged the situation aright. When Bradlaugh stood for Northampton in 1868 and was beaten, the wives and women-folk of his supporters subscribed their scanty pence, and bought him a gold pencil-case. If after hearing the utterance above cited the Northampton women of to-day were capable of voting in the mass against a man so declaring himself, they would indeed give Mr Labouchere a better case against their enfranchisement than he has yet been able to make out. But would they?

§ 6.

In virtue of the qualities which made him a warm friend of Ireland, Bradlaugh was all his life, and in his latter years still more warmly, the friend of India. All his instincts of justice and sympathy were moved by the spectacle of that vast congeries of immemorially immature races, ruled by a bureaucracy of Englishmen, none of whom would for a moment be trusted to exercise similar power over their fellow-countrymen, but all of whom collectively are assumed by their countrymen to need next to no supervision when ruling a "lower" race. Again and again Bradlaugh protested, as other Englishmen had protested before him, against the inveterate apathy with which the House of Commons regards Indian questions, as shown by the scanty handful of members who attend to hear them discussed once a year. The death of Professor Fawcett, "the member for India," left Indian interests ill cared for indeed, and immediately on gaining his seat Bradlaugh stepped into the vacant place, although it was by itself work enough for one man, and he had three men's work on hand besides.

His speech on India in 1883 to his constituents shows the broad and systematic way in which he approached the problem. He studied it with the minute care he bestowed on every subject he handled; and in a few years he acquired by his work an amount of popularity among natives such as had never before been earned by an Englishman outside India, and by few Anglo-Indians. As this work was mostly done after his Parliamentary struggle was over, the record of it belongs to the story of his closing years; but it was only the consistent sequel to his previous political life. He took up the cause of India as he had done those of Italy, Poland, Ireland, of Boers, Zulus, and Egyptians, with no thought or prospect of personal gain, out of sheer zeal for justice and hatred of oppression. And inasmuch as Anglo-Indians of the school of Mr Rudyard Kipling have consistently derided and denounced his Indian policy, it may be fitting to note at this point the advantage that policy has over such opposition in respect of its relation to universal political principles. The doctrine of Mr Kipling's school—who may be defined as barbaric sentimentalists—is that Asia in general, and India in particular, are absolute exceptions to all the principles of

European politics. The East, they say, is unprogressive, unchangeable, unimprovable. The most direct confutation of that doctrine is supplied by the simple fact of the persistence of the Congress movement, which at its outset the sentimentalists scouted as a chimera. Whatever may be its outcome, they are for ever discredited, in that they declared the thing itself, when broached, to be impossible. And those whose sociology goes deeper and wider than a rule-of-thumb acquaintance with part of the actual life of a race or a region are aware that India can no more than any other land resist the laws of social transmutation, given the transmuting forces and conditions. It is extremely unfortunate that many Englishmen are ready to accept as final the sweeping sociological dicta of Mr Kipling, on the score merely of his first-hand knowledge of Indian life and his literary genius. Foolish generalisations on social possibilities have been made in every country in every age by men with first-hand knowledge of their theme; and it must be regretfully said that foolish men of genius are among the most eminent darkeners of counsel on such matters. When Mr Kipling gives a particular account of a particular phase of Indian life, Englishmen who in the terms of the case have no knowledge of that life accept the account as a "revelation," when obviously their estimate of it in that light has no critical value whatever. Strong in the suffrages of such judges, Mr Kipling has been pleased to speak of Bradlaugh as being prepared by defective education to take that mistaken view of Indian life which Mr Kipling inexpensively imputes to all inquiring Englishmen at home. The sufficient answer to that criticism is that there are many kinds of defective education, and that nobody can well be further wrong about India than Mr Kipling, inasmuch as he has himself contradicted every one of his own numerous generalisations by others. He first came forward with pictures of the Indian Civil and Military Services, in which they appeared nearly as corrupt as those of Russia are said to be: husbands getting promotion on the score of their wives' adultery, and so forth. Later he saw fit to represent the Indian Civil Service as embodying every virtne a Civil Service can have. As a rule, he pictures the English in India as the "Dominant Race," with impressive capitals, and the natives as being universally cowards. When, however, a native officer can "play like a lambent flame" on the polo-field, and can transgress every law of hospitality by thrasonically declaring

defiance to Russia in the person of a Russian officer at a British mess-table, that native becomes even as an Englishman in Mr Kipling's eyes. The simple canon of Mr Kipling is the feeling that any race which thwarts his own must be base. Thus every indiscreet Russian officer must needs be a blackguard, and every disaffected Irishman a ruffian and a sneak; the evil principle being so deep rooted that the Asiatic children of an Irishman spontaneously take to cutting off cows' tails; though at the same time the Irish soldier is a hero of heroes, if only he is duly devoted to "the Queen, God bless her." It will be a bad business for English rule in India when minds which sociologise in this fashion come to be the guides of the British people in their political relations with their dependency.

Bradlaugh, it may suffice to say, was under no delusions as to the present political capacity of the Indian races. He perfectly recognised their bias to rhetoric and their immaturity of character, as well as the enormous difficulties in the way of their political amalgamation. Hence his programme for them was an extremely gradual introduction of the principle of self-rule. Nothing could be more judicious and restrained than his brief address to the Congress on his brief visit to India after his dangerous illness of 1889, within about a year of his death. And the chances are that before a generation is over his view of the case will be the accepted commonplace of Liberal politics; while the notion of a perpetual domination of Englishmen in a country where they cannot rear healthy children will be regarded as a crowning flight of unscientific political sentiment. In any case, it implies no great rashness to predict that an England which ignores the affairs of its subjects as much as possible in Parliament will not long be able to maintain a despotic rule over a people accessible to Western ideas. The Home Rule principle, which was for Bradlaugh a principle of universal virtue, however different the degree of its application to a given case at a given moment, must in time be wrought out in India as elsewhere, if only it goes forward in the West, and the West keeps up its growing intercourse with the East. And it was one of his many political merits to have been one of the first to see this not only abstractly but in the concrete.

Enough has now been said to convey a broad idea of the manner and matter of Bradlaugh's philosophy of life, cosmical and political,

as it was developed and acted on by him at the time of his most memorable appearance on the arena of British public life. At that time much work, though not many years of life, remained to him, so that some who then opposed him claimed afterwards that they could not have known his capacities for good, as exhibited in his extraordinary Parliamentary labours. But the foregoing account of his teaching and action will probably suffice to show that his political career was all of a piece, and that at the time of his ostracism he had given proof of all the powers and opinions which were later admitted to do him honour. Neither, as we shall see, did he in later life surrender any one of the teachings of his earlier years. He laid more stress on some and less on others; but he unsaid nothing, and for the most part he did but carry on his youthful programme. Before 1880 he had been the ardent and yet sagacious friend of oppressed nationalities, the advocate of Radical land law reform, the defender of liberty of conscience, the exponent of the claims of the poor against the rich, the preacher of unpopular but all-important doctrines on personal conduct. In the brief period of his first tenure of his seat he wrought vigorously against the abuse of Perpetual Pensions, which he was later the means of removing, though not in a fashion fully satisfying to himself. In the same period he exhibited a constant concern for the remedying of all manner of grievances. As early as 1863, too, he had taken what Mill rightly calls the extremely undemagogue-like line of publishing a pamphlet in favour of Proportional Representation, on the lines of Hare's scheme—a "counsel of perfection" still too high for most democrats.

As for his general tone of feeling on the questions which turn in an equal degree on feeling and judgment, it is well illustrated by the last non-personal speech he made in the House in the period of his conditional tenure of his seat. It was delivered on 28th March, and was on the subject of flogging in the army:—

"Mr Bradlaugh said he wished to say a few words on this matter from a different point of view than other members who had spoken. He had been a private in the army during the time that flogging was permitted for offences now described as trivial, and he heard the same argument used, that it would cause a relaxation of discipline if flogging were abolished. If hon. members opposite knew the feeling of the soldiers at that time it would have much modified some of the speeches delivered to-day (hear, hear); and

the hon. member for Sunderland (Sir H. Havelock-Allan) would be surprised to hear the number of letters he had received from private soldiers, asking him to speak on this subject to-day. There was a feeling of utter detestation against the punishment, not simply on the part of the men who were likely to suffer from it, but on the part of every one else. Private soldiers in England occupied a position which no other private soldier in the whole of Europe occupied, and he did not know any other country in the whole world where it was a disgrace to wear the uniform of your country. He remembered upon one occasion he went into an hotel in a great city and ordered a cup of coffee, and was told that he could not be served because he wore the uniform of his country. All punishments which made soldiers seem less reputable than their fellow-citizens ought to be abolished. He asked the Government to allow nothing whatever to influence them in favour of this most degrading punishment. The men who once felt the lash were not loyal to any command, and they felt a bitterness and an abhorrence of every one connected with the ordering of the punishment. If they flogged a man engaged on active service, he was either a good man or a bad man, a man of some spirit or none at all. If he were a man of any spirit, there were weapons in his hands, and he might use them for purposes of revenge. The hon. and gallant member for Wigton Burghs talked of men who preferred the lash. The army would be far better without such men. (Mr Childers: Hear, hear.) He had seen the lash applied, the man tied up, and stripped in the sight of his comrades; he had seen the body blacken and the skin break; he had heard the dull thud of the lash as it fell on the blood-soddened flesh, and he was glad of having the opportunity of making his voice heard against it to-day, and trusted that nothing would induce the Government to retain under any conditions such a brutal punishment. (Cheers.)"

And it was with these matters in their knowledge that a majority of the House of Commons subjected him for five years to an extremity of wanton injustice of which it is still difficult to think without burning anger. The story of that injustice must now be separately told.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE.

Chronological Summary.

1880 April 2. Bradlaugh elected (with Mr Labouchere) for Northampton.

May 8. Asked to be allowed to make affirmation of allegiance. A Select Committee agreed to be appointed to consider his claim.

12. Committee of 17 appointed.

20. Committee reported, by casting vote of Chairman, against the claim to affirm.

Bradlaugh announces his intention to take the oath.

21. Presented himself at the table of the House to do so. Motion made that he be not permitted. Amendment moved by Mr Gladstone, that the claim to take the oath be referred to a Select Committee, carried by 289 votes to 214.

28. Committee of 23 appointed.

June 2. Bradlaugh examined by Committee.

16. Committee reported that Bradlaugh could not properly take the oath, and recommended that he be allowed to affirm at his legal peril.

21. Motion made by Mr Labouchere that he be allowed to affirm.

22. Motion defeated by 275 votes to 230.

23. Bradlaugh again presented himself, claiming to be sworn. Made his *First Speech at the Bar*. Refusing to withdraw, was finally taken into custody on motion of Sir Stafford Northcote.

24. Bradlaugh unconditionally released from custody.

July 1. Mr Gladstone moved as a Standing Order that members-elect be allowed at their choice to affirm, at their legal peril. Motion carried by 303 votes to 249.

2. Bradlaugh made affirmation of allegiance and took his seat. On giving his first vote, was served with a writ suing for penalty.

14. Tory Bill introduced to incapacitate all Atheists for membership (fell through).

1881 Mar. 11. Judgment given against Bradlaugh in suit for penalty, he being thus pronounced unqualified to make affirmation of allegiance. Bradlaugh gave notice of appeal.

31. Judgment given against him on appeal. Seat thus vacated,

1881 April 9. Bradlaugh re-elected for Northampton, by 3437 votes to 3305.

26. Presented himself to be sworn. Made his *Second Speech at the Bar*. Motion made that he be not allowed to take the oath, carried by 208 votes to 175, many Liberals and Home Rulers abstaining. Bradlaugh again presented himself to be sworn, and refused to withdraw. House adjourned.

27. Bradlaugh presented himself as before, and refused to withdraw. After debate, withdrew on informal understanding that Government should attempt to introduce an Affirmation Bill.

29. Government announced this intention.

May 2. Attorney-General in Commons moved for leave to introduce Bill. Debate adjourned.

Lords Justices of Appeal decided against Bradlaugh on the separate issue of his affirmation being a sufficient answer to the claim that he was liable in a penalty for voting without being sworn.

6. Debate in Commons again adjourned owing to Tory obstruction.

10. Government, owing to continued obstruction, postponed the Bill. Resolution carried, on motion of Tory leader, that Bradlaugh be prevented entering House.

16-17. Clarke's counsel moved before Lord Coleridge and Mr Bowen for judgment. Bradlaugh moved to be heard afresh on the point of the validity of the writ, the issue of which he contended had been too soon for legality,

25. Bill of indemnity to Bradlaugh, introduced by Mr Labouchere, blocked by Mr Newdegate, who had been the private maintainer of the action for penalties.

June 20-21. Plaintiff having amended statement as to date of voting, and Bradlaugh demurring that writ was void as being dated on the day of the voting sued upon, Justices Denman and Watkin Williams decided against him on the legal point. Bradlaugh appealed.

July 19, 20, 22. The question of fact as to the actual hour of issue of the writ came before Justice Grove and a special jury. The jury, after declaring themselves unlikely to agree, gave a majority verdict in favour of Clarke.

27. Police summonses obtained on Bradlaugh's behalf against Mr Newdegate and his solicitor for the criminal offence of maintenance.

28, and Aug. 1. Bradlaugh moved before Justices Grove and Lindley for a new trial on the point of time of issue of Clarke's writ, and argued the point. Decision delayed.

1881 Aug. 3. Bradlaugh, on trying to enter the House, was seized by officials; and he resisting, was forcibly ejected after a struggle by four messengers and ten policemen. Immediately afterwards he was formally resisted in a formal attempt by Inspector Denning.

5. Application by Bradlaugh for a summons against Inspector Denning refused by Mr D'Eyncourt, police magistrate.

8. Rule *nisi* for a new trial granted by Justices Grove and Lindley.

Sept. 20. The summonses against Newdegate and his solicitor dismissed by Mr Vaughan, magistrate.

Nov. 12 and 14. Bradlaugh's appeal from the decision of Justices Denman and Watkin Williams (as to validity of writ dated on day of ground of action) heard by Lord Coleridge and Lord Justices Baggallay and Brett. Decision again against Bradlaugh.

Dec. 2 and 3. Pleadings heard on the rule *nisi* for a new trial on the question of fact as to the hour of issue of the writ. Rule made absolute in Bradlaugh's favour.

1882 Feb. 7. On the reassembling of Parliament, Bradlaugh again presented himself, the excluding order having expired with the Session in which it was passed. Northcote moved that he be not allowed to swear. Government moved the previous question. Bradlaugh *heard at Bar for the Third Time*. Northcote's motion carried by 286 votes to 228. Bradlaugh again presented himself, but being ordered to withdraw below the bar, did so.

20. Mr Labouchere moved for a new writ for Northampton. This refused by 307 votes to 18. Bradlaugh then advanced to the table, administered the oath to himself, withdrew below the bar on the Speaker's order, but returned and took his seat. Churchill moved that the seat be declared vacant. Debate adjourned.

21. Northcote moved an amendment to exclude Bradlaugh from the precincts of the House. On its being noticed that Bradlaugh had again seated himself within the House (he proposing to speak), the Speaker ordered him to withdraw, and Northcote moved his complete expulsion. This carried by 297 votes to 80, and a new writ was agreed to.

21. Judgment given against Bradlaugh in Clarke's appeal against rule for a new trial.

Mar. 2. Bradlaugh once more elected for Northampton by 3796 votes to 3688.

6. Northcote again moved that Bradlaugh be not allowed to take the oath should he again present himself. Mr Marjoribanks moved amendment that it was desirable to amend the law, making affirmation optional. Northcote's motion carried by 259 votes to 244.

1882 Mar. 29. "Judgment" given against Bradlaugh for £500 penalty. Costs reserved.

April. Action brought by Bradlaugh against Mr Erskine, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, for assault of 3rd August 1881.

May 9. Bradlaugh moved before Lord Justices Brett and Cotton for leave to appeal in Clarke case on point of costs. Appeal dismissed: matter left to the House of Lords with the main appeal.

15. Justices Manisty and Watkin Williams declined to hear friendly action by Gurney against Bradlaugh for not taking his seat. Pleadings to be readjusted.

July. Affirmation Bill, introduced by Duke of Argyll in House of Lords, defeated.

11. Prosecution begun against Bradlaugh, Foote, and Ramsey, by Sir Henry Tyler, before Lord Mayor, for "publication of blasphemous libels" in the *Freethinker*.

21. Bradlaugh "committed for trial." Bail accepted.

Nov. 10. Justice Mathew declined to hear Gurney's action on re-adjusted pleadings, and discharged jury.

Dec. 18. Bradlaugh's action against Mr Erskine dismissed by Justice Field.

1883 Feb. 2. Second *Freethinker* prosecution begun, Bradlaugh not being included.

20. Government moved for leave to introduce an Affirmation Bill: motion carried by 184 votes to 53.

Mar. 5 and 6. Bradlaugh's appeal in the Clarke suit heard by the House of Lords, he pleading in person.

6. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp sentenced to terms of imprisonment in *Freethinker* prosecution.

8 and 17. Bradlaugh's action against Newdegate for "maintenance" heard by Lord Coleridge, Bradlaugh appearing by counsel.

April 9. House of Lords gave judgment for Bradlaugh in his appeal, with costs.

10. Bradlaugh separately tried on the first *Freethinker* indictment before Lord Coleridge and a jury. Verdict of acquittal.

23. Lord Coleridge gave judgment for Bradlaugh against Newdegate, with costs.

April 24 and 25. Foote and Ramsey (now prisoners on conviction in second prosecution) tried before Lord Coleridge and a jury on the original indictment. After the judge's summing up, the jury disagreeing, the Crown decided to abandon this prosecution (prisoners already very heavily sentenced).

23—May 3. Debate on second reading of Affirmation Bill. Bill rejected by a majority of 3—292 against and 289 for.

May 4. Bradlaugh again presented himself to be sworn. Northcote moved that he be not allowed to take the oath. Being

allowed to speak, Bradlaugh made his *Fourth Speech at the Bar*. Mr Labouchere moved the "previous question," and was defeated by 271 votes to 165.

1883 July 9. Bradlaugh having notified his intention again to present himself (by way of raising a testing action at law) Northcote moved his exclusion. Carried by 232 votes to 65.

19. Bradlaugh began test action against the Sergeant-at-Arms for resisting his entrance to the House.

Dec. 7. Bradlaugh *v.* Gossett heard before Lord Coleridge and Justices Stephen and Mathew.

1884 Feb. 9. Judgment given against Bradlaugh.

11. Bradlaugh once more presented himself at the table of the House, and administered the oath to himself. Motion by Northcote that he had not really sworn, and that he be not allowed to swear, carried by 258 votes to 161. Motion by Northcote of complete exclusion, carried by 228 to 120.

12. New writ allowed for Northampton after Tory resistance.

19. Bradlaugh re-elected for Northampton by 4032 votes, to 3664 for Richards.

21. Though Bradlaugh undertook not to present himself till the decision were given in the action to be brought against him by the Government for his last oath-taking, Northcote moved afresh his complete exclusion from the precincts of the House. Carried by 226 to 173.

June 13-18. Government's action against Bradlaugh for illegally taking the oath, heard before Lord Coleridge, Mr Baron Huddleston, and Mr Justice Grove, "sitting at bar," and a jury, five counsel acting for the Crown, Bradlaugh pleading his own cause.

30. Lord Coleridge summed up. Jury gave answers for the Crown. Bradlaugh asked for a stay to move for a new trial.

Dec. 6. Motion for new trial heard by the same judges sitting "*in banc.*" Rule refused. Bradlaugh appealed.

15. Appeal heard by Lords Justices Brett, Cotton, and Lindley.

18. Judges of appeal gave rule *nisi* on points of law only, the appeal in arrest of judgment to be argued at the same time.

1885 Jan. 26. Arguments heard on whole case.

26. Judgment given against Bradlaugh as incapable of taking an oath in law. Notice of appeal given.

July 6. On the new (Conservative) ministry taking office, Bradlaugh again presented himself to be sworn. Motion of exclusion by Sir M. Hicks-Beach. Amendment moved by Mr Hopwood (who had introduced an Affirmation Bill) declaring that legislation was necessary, lost by 219 votes to 263.

1885 Nov. 25. Bradlaugh again carried for Northampton at the general election, the figures being—Labouchere 4845; Bradlaugh 4315; Richards 3890.

1886 Jan. 13. The new Speaker (Mr Peel) permitted Bradlaugh to take the oath, refusing to allow any interference.

Affirmation Bill introduced by Mr Sergeant Simon, but never brought to a second reading.

1888 Aug. 9. Bradlaugh carried a general Affirmation Bill, which passed the House of Lords and became law.

1891 Jan. 27. While Bradlaugh lay dying, the House of Commons passed a resolution, moved by Mr W. A. Hunter, expunging from the Journals of the House the resolutions excluding him in former years.

§ 1.

In the general election of 1880 Bradlaugh was at length elected member for Northampton. He had fought the constituency for twelve years, and had been defeated at three elections, at one of which he was not present. As has been made plain from the story of his life thus far, it was his way to carry out to the end any undertaking on which he entered, unless he found it to be wholly impracticable; and he was very slow to feel that an aim was impracticable because it took long-continued effort to realise it. He seems first to have thought of standing for Northampton about 1866. At that time Northampton was already reckoned a likely Radical constituency, not so much on account of its Parliamentary record as on the strength of the Radical element in its population. The trouble was that for long the bulk of the workers were not electors. His eloquence could win him a splendid show of hands in the market-place, but the polls told a different tale. The Whiggish middle classes were in the main intensely hostile to him, on political as well as on religious grounds; and the influence of pastors and masters alike was zealously used against him. After the passing of the Household Suffrage Act of 1868, however, the constituency became every year more democratic. The Freehold Land Society, some of whose founders and leading members were among his most devoted and capable followers, created year after year scores of freeholds, the property of workers, in a fashion that has finally made Northampton almost unique among our manufacturing towns. The electorate, which in 1874 had stood at 6829, had in 1880 risen to 8189; and of these it was estimated

that 2,500 had never before voted. Of the new voters, the majority were pretty sure to be Radicals, and as Bradlaugh's hold on the constituency had grown stronger with every struggle, it began to be apparent to many of the "moderate Liberals" that a union between their party and his must be accepted if the two seats were not to remain in Tory hands. In the early spring, however, the confusion of candidatures seemed hopeless. Mr (now Sir) Thomas Wright of Leicester stood as a Liberal candidate at the request of a large body of the electors, and though not combining with Bradlaugh, deprecated the running of a second and hostile Liberal candidate. Other Liberals, however, brought forward in succession three candidates, of whom the once well-known Mr Ayrton was the most important. He, however, failed to gain ground, partly by reason of the qualities which had made him a disastrous colleague to Mr Gladstone's ministry, partly by reason of coming to grief in a controversy with Bradlaugh as to the facts of the agitation for a free press, and free right of meeting in Hyde Park, in regard to which Mr Ayrton claimed official credit. His candidature finally fell through when he met with an accident. A Mr Hughes was brought forward, only to be removed from the contest by an attack of illness. Mr Jabez Spencer Balfour, of recent notoriety, made a very favourable impression, but could not persuade "moderates" enough that the Liberals ought to unite with the Radicals. A little later Mr Labouchere was introduced, and giving his voice at once for union, found so much support that Mr Wright, with great generosity and public spirit, shortly withdrew, giving his support to the joint candidature of Bradlaugh and Labouchere, who stood pretty much alike in their Radicalism, though the latter was described in the local Liberal press as the "nominee of the moderate Liberals." As he explained in his own journal, a man who was a moderate Liberal in Northampton would rank as a Radical anywhere else. The joint condidature once agreed upon, victory was secure.

The Tory candidates were the former sitting members, Mr Phipps, the leading local brewer, and Mr Merewether, a lawyer. Their platform opposition was not formidable, and the greatest play on their side was made by the clergy and the press, who sought to make the contest turn as far as possible on Bradlaugh's atheism and on his Neo-Malthusianism. Nearly all the Established Church clergy, and some of the Nonconformists preached

fervently against the "infidel." On the Sunday before the election the vicar of St Giles' intimated that "to those noble men who loved Christ more than party, Jesus would say, 'Well done!'" and on the day before the poll many thousands of theological circulars were showered upon the constituency. On the other hand, the deep resentment of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy felt by a great part of the nation led to unheard-of concessions on the part of the Nonconformists. The late Mr Samuel Morley, a representative Dissenter, wealthy and pious, being appealed to for an expression of opinion on the Northampton situation, sent to Mr Labouchere a telegram—soon repented of—"strongly urging necessity of united effort in all sections of the Liberal party, and the sinking of minor and personal questions, with many of which I deeply sympathise, in order to prevent the return, in so pronounced a constituency as Northampton, of even one Conservative." At the same time Mr Spurgeon was without the slightest foundation described in the Tory press as having said, with regard to the fight at Northampton, that "if the devil himself were a Liberal candidate, he would vote for him;" and it was supposed that the anecdote affected some votes.

But before any of these episodes had occurred, Bradlaugh was tolerably well assured of victory. His organisation, then controlled by his staunch supporter Councillor Thomas Adams, who lived to be Mayor of Northampton, was perfect; and he knew his strength as nearly as a candidate ever can who has not already been elected. The combination of his forces with those of Mr Labouchere of course strengthened him; yet such was still the strength of religious animosity that though the joint candidature stood on the footing of a strict division of votes, every elector having two, for the two seats, the Liberal press still encouraged "plumping," and many then, as later, voted for Mr Labouchere who would not vote for Bradlaugh, thus provoking a smaller number of the latter's supporters to "plump" for their man in turn. The result was that the election figures stood:—Labouchere (L.) 4518; Bradlaugh (R.) 3827; Phipps (C.) 3152; Merewether (C.) 2826.

No sooner were the results known throughout the country than the Northampton election became a theme of special comment, and of course of special outcry from the defeated party. One journal, the *Sheffield Telegraph*, which about the same time described the Scriptural phrase about the dog and his vomit as a

"popular, though somewhat coarse saying," designated Bradlaugh as "the bellowing blasphemer of Northampton." Mr Samuel Morley was hotly assailed, and promptly wrote to the *Record* a pitiful letter of recantation, which ended :—

"No feeling of pride prevents my saying that I deeply regret the step I took, which was really the work of a moment; and I feel assured that no one who knows me will doubt that I view with intense repugnance the opinions which are held by Mr Bradlaugh on religious and social questions."

To which Mr Bradlaugh in his own journal replied that he had had no part whatever in the appeal to Mr Samuel Morley, and that he would have been elected all the same if Mr Morley had done nothing, adding the following :—

"We have no knowledge of the opinions of Mr Morley except that he is reputedly very rich, and therefore exceedingly good; but we must express in turn our intense repugnance to the conduct of Mr Morley, who having accidentally been betrayed into an act of kindness to a fellow-creature, regrets the act when pressure is brought to bear upon him by a pack of cowardly and anonymous bigots, and couples the public expression of his regret with a voluntary insult to one for whom Mr Morley publicly expressed great respect on the only occasion on which the two have yet come publicly in contact."

Mr Spurgeon, who had been quite falsely accused of avowing readiness to welcome the devil as a Liberal candidate, had the manliness to declare, while indignantly repudiating that latitudinarian doctrine, that Mr Bradlaugh's claims to be returned to Parliament were not to be measured by his piety or orthodoxy.

§ 2.

But the question was soon carried into a greater arena. The elections were over in April; on 3rd May Parliament assembled, and Bradlaugh's first problem was to choose his course in the matter of the oath of allegiance, the taking of which by members of Parliament is still made a condition of their taking their seats. It has long been felt by the thoughtful few, even including Theists, that oath-taking, a barbaric and primevally superstitious act under all circumstances, is gratuitously absurd in the case of admission to Parliament, where it serves to bring about the maximum of

religious indecorum without in any way affecting the action of anybody. Originally set up in the reign of Elizabeth, the Parliamentary oath was maintained in the interest of disputed dynasties, though it was notoriously taken by hundreds of men who were perfectly ready to overthrow, if they could, the dynasty to which they swore allegiance. Now that there is no longer any question of rival dynasties, and that no instructed person disputes the power of Parliament to abolish the Monarchy, the oath of allegiance is maintained by the stolid unreason which supports the monarchic tradition all round. State after State has abandoned the practice as absurd; but Britain clings to it with hardly even a demur, save from men of the chair. France since 1870 has had neither oath nor affirmation, though, if oaths could be supposed to count for anything, the Republic might fitly have exacted them. Since 1868 affirmation has been substituted for the Parliamentary oath in Austria; and congressmen and senators in the United States have their choice between swearing and affirming. Neither oath nor affirmation is exacted in the German Reichstag, though the members of the Prussian Diet, like those of the States General of Holland, still swear. In Italy, the performance is attenuated to the utterance of the one word "Giuro," "I swear." In Spain, where it has never deterred rebellion, the oath, as might be expected, remains mediævally elaborate.

Before Bradlaugh's time the oath in England had been adapted to the requirements of Catholics, Quakers, and Jews successively, the resistance increasing considerably in the last case. O'Connell's refusal to take the Protestant oath of supremacy in 1829, when there were three separate oaths—one of allegiance, one of supremacy, and one of adjuration—led to the passing of an Act permitting Catholic members to take the Catholic oath, already provided under the Catholic Relief Act for use in Ireland. Protestant public opinion avowedly regarded all Irish Catholics with distrust as being disaffected, but the Tory leaders being committed to Catholic Emancipation, the resistance was overpowered. The next extension took place under Whig auspices.

In 1833 the Quakers, who in the case of Archdale in 1699 had been held incapable of sitting in Parliament by reason of their refusal to swear, were allowed to affirm, first by resolution of the House, later by Act. This was done at the instance of a Quaker member, Sir Joseph Pease, who besides being rich enjoyed person-

ally the respect latterly accorded to his sect by those which formerly persecuted it.

Then came the case of the Jews, first raised in the person of Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, in 1850. There was now a triple Protestant oath, and an alternative Catholic oath, the theoretically dangerous church being allowed to swear in its own way; but for the small community of Jews there was no formula, and the Jewish banker had to choose between exclusion and swearing "on the true faith of a Christian." He omitted these words from his oath, and was accordingly declared disentitled to sit, the House at the same time formally resolving to take Jewish disabilities into its consideration at the earliest opportunity in the next Session. In 1851, another Jew, David Salomons, returned for Greenwich, refused to take the oath in the Christian form, formally resisted the Speaker's ruling against him, was formally removed, and was excluded from his seat. Not till 1858 was the relief given. In that year a single (Christian) oath was substituted for the triple asseveration of the past, and on the re-elected Baron Lionel again refusing it, he was allowed, by resolution of the House, to swear without the Christian formula. In 1859 he, with Baron Mayer Amschel de Rothschild and Salomons, was again sworn theistically. Finally, in 1866, by the Parliamentary Oaths Act, the oath was made simply theistic for all, the familiar expletive "So help me God" being held sufficient to associate the First Cause ethically with the proceeding in hand.

This movement was doubtless due to a certain semi-rational perception of the futility of oaths in general, as being a vain formality to honest men, and a vain barrier to others. Sir William Hamilton, a thinker so fervent in his instinctive Theism that he undid his philosophy to accommodate it, had in his day created a strong impression by his essays (1834-5), on the right of Dissenters to be admitted into the English universities, in which he emphatically reiterated the declaration of Bishop Berkeley—made when the oath test was in fullest use—that there is "no nation under the sun where solemn perjury is so common as in England." "If the perjury of England stand pre-eminent in the world," said Hamilton, "the perjury of the English Universities, and of Oxford in particular, stands pre-eminent in England." Doctrine like this had made for an abolition of oaths which could easily be classified as "unnecessary," and for the

simplification of those retained; but though the very step of reducing the act of imprecation to a curt conventional form meant, if anything, the belittling of the act of imprecation as such, the Parliamentary formula had for half a generation remained unchallenged. John Mill had in 1865 sworn "on the true faith of a Christian," and a good many Agnostics and Positivists have since unmurmuringly invoked the unknown God. It was left for Bradlaugh to attempt a departure from the course of dissembling conformity. When he stood for Northampton in 1868 (as he stated in answer to Mr Bright on the second select committee of 1880), he had gravely considered the question of oath-taking, there being then no possibility of affirmation. Believing now that he had the right to affirm under the Act which permitted affirmation to witnesses, he felt bound to exercise it.

As every step in his action has been and still is a subject of obstinate misconception and wilful falsehood, the story must be here told with some minuteness. The usual statement is that he "refused" to take the oath of allegiance. He did no such thing. A professed Atheist, he had been the means of bringing about the legal reform which enabled unbelievers to give evidence on affirmation, albeit the form of enactment was, to say the least, invidious. A great difficulty is felt by many Christians in regard to the abolition of the oath, in that they fear to open the way for false testimony by witnesses who would fear to swear to a lie, but do not scruple to lie on mere affirmation. It is for Christians to take the onus of asserting that there are such people among their co-religionists; and they have always asserted it in the House of Commons when there is any question of dispensing with oaths. And it was on this plea that the first Act framed to allow unbelievers to give evidence on affirmation was made to provide that the judge should in each case satisfy himself that a witness claiming to affirm was not a person on whom an oath would have a binding effect. That is to say, he was to make sure that the witness was not a knavish religionist trying to dodge the oath, in order to lie with an easy mind. It was the duplicity of certain believers, and not the duplicity of unbelievers, that was to be guarded against, though, of course, the only security against the lying of believers in answer to the judge was that a known conformist would be afraid publicly to pretend that he had scruples against the oath. But the main effect of the clause, framed to

guard against pious knavery, was to stigmatise unbelievers as persons on whom an oath would have "no binding effect." An ill-conditioned judge was thus free to insult Freethinking witnesses, and even a just judge was free to embarrass them by an invidious question, since the bare wording of the Act enabled and even encouraged the judge to ask them—not, as he ought to have done, whether the oath was to them unmeaning in respect of the words of adjuration, but—whether the oath as a whole would be "binding on their conscience." * While recognising the invidiousness of such a question, Bradlaugh always claimed to affirm in courts of law, though to him, as to most professed rationalists, the repetition of an idle expletive was only a vexation, and in no way an act of deception, when made the inevitable preliminary to the fulfilment of any civic duty. He had openly avowed his opinions, and if the oath was still exacted, the responsibility lay with those who insisted on it. On his return to Parliament he felt that not only would it be inconsistent for him to take the oath if he could avoid it, but it would be gratuitously indecorous, from the point of view of the believing Christian majority. Sitting in the house before the "swearing-in," he remarked to Mr Labouchere that he felt it would be unseemly for him to go through that form when he believed he was legally entitled to affirm. And in this belief, it must always be remembered, he had the support of the former Liberal law officers of the Crown, who had privately given it as their opinion † that he was empowered to affirm his allegiance under the law relating to the affirmation of unbelievers. With that opinion behind him, he

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* In the action of Richards *v.* Hough and Co., however, in May 1882, Mr Justice Grove expressly remarked that some judges did not think it necessary to enquire at all as to the belief of a witness claiming to affirm. In the prosecution of Bradlaugh, Foote, and Ramsay in 1883 for blasphemy, on the other hand, Lord Coleridge, a very considerate judge, expressly asked Mr Foote, before letting him affirm, whether the oath "would be binding on his conscience," though Mr Foote, declaring himself an atheist, rightly objected to such a query. His lordship after discussion agreed to modify the question, making it apply only to the words of invocation; and he put the question with still more modification to Mrs Besant, who, warned by what had been done to her partner, declared in so many words that any promise she made would be binding on her, whatever the form.

† Sir Henry James later avowed that they adhered to that opinion all along.

was in the fullest degree entitled—nay, he was morally bound as a conscientious rationalist—to take the course he did. Other rationalists, real or reputed, were returned to the same Parliament. Professor Bryce, as candidate for the Tower Hamlets, had been assailed as an Atheist, and was yet returned at the head of the poll. Mr Firth had been similarly attacked, but was nevertheless carried in Chelsea. Neither of these gentlemen, however, made any public avowal, direct or indirect, of heresy. Mr John Morley, who was justifiably regarded as a Positivist or Agnostic on the strength of his writings, when elected later made no demur to the oath; and Mr Ashton Dilke, who afterwards avowed his heterodoxy in the House of Commons,* also took it without comment. It was left to Bradlaugh to fight the battle of common sense—I might say of common honesty, were it not that long usage has in these matters wholly vitiated the moral standards of the community, and honourable men are free to do, and do habitually, things which, abstractly considered, are acts of dissimulation.

§ 3.

Bradlaugh's first formal step after obtaining the opinion of the last Liberal law officers and privately consulting the officials of the House, was to hand to the Clerk of the House of Commons, Sir Thomas Erskine May, on May 3rd, a written paper in the following terms:—

"*To the Right Honourable the Speaker of the House of Commons.*

"I, the undersigned Charles Bradlaugh, beg respectfully to claim to be allowed to affirm as a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration, instead of taking an oath."

He had already explained, in answer to the questions of the Clerk, that he made his claim in virtue of the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and the Evidence Amendment Act, 1870, which "explains and amends" the Act of 1869. The Clerk formally communicated these matters to the Speaker (Sir Henry Brand), who then invited Bradlaugh to make a statement to the House with regard to his claim. Bradlaugh replied:

* In the discussion on the Burials Bill, 1881.

"Mr Speaker,—I have only now to submit that the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, gives the right to affirm to every person for the time being permitted by law to make affirmation. I am such a person; and under the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and the Evidence Amendment Act 1870, I have repeatedly for nine years past affirmed in the highest Courts of Jurisdiction in this realm. I am ready to make the declaration or affirmation of allegiance."

The Speaker thereupon requested him to withdraw, and formally restated the claim to the House, remarking that he had "grave doubts" on the matter, and desired to refer it to the House's judgment. On behalf of the Treasury bench, Lord Frederick Cavendish, remarking that the advice of the new law officers of the Crown was not yet available, moved that the point be referred to a Select Committee. Sir Stafford Northcote, the Tory leader in the Commons, was at this stage not actively hostile. A man of well-meaning and temperate though meagre quality, made up of small doses of virtues and capacities, well fitted to be a country gentleman, but of too thin stuff and too narrow calibre to be either a very good or a very bad statesman, he was a Conservative by force of tradition and mental limitation, and a partisan leader in respect of his pliability to his associates. As his biographer puts it, he was "not recalcitrant to compromise" in matters of party strategy and leadership. Being personally willing to substitute affirmation for oath,* he seconded the Liberal motion without any show of animus, and only some of his minor followers, as Earl Percy and Mr Daniel Onslow, sought to effect the adjournment of the debate. This attempt, however, was not pressed to a division, and the Select Committee was agreed to.

Only a few of the speeches in the House thus far had indicated a desire among the Tory party to make Bradlaugh the victim of their feud with the Liberals. But outside the House, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, member for Portsmouth, speaking at Christchurch, had already publicly declared his intention to oppose Bradlaugh's entry: the broaching of the oath question in legal and other journals before the assembling of Parliament having given

* He wrote in his diary at the time: "It seems strange to require an oath from a Christian, and *to dispense with it from an Atheist.* Would it not be better to do away with the member's oath altogether, and make the affirmation general?" (Mr Lang's "Life of Northcote," ii. 154.)

to such politicians their cue. Over and above the purely factious motive of such men, and of the mass of the Tories, there was the motive of genuine religious malice; and the two instincts in combination wrought memorable results.

On 10th May Lord Richard Grosvenor, the Liberal Whip, announced to the House the names of the proposed members of the Select Committee whose appointment he should move next day:—Mr Whitbread, Sir J. Holker, Mr John Bright, Lord Henry Lennox, Mr W. N. Massey, Mr Staveley Hill, Sir Henry Jackson, the Attorney-General (Sir Henry James), the Solicitor-General (Mr Farrer Herschell), Sir G. Goldney, Mr Grantham, Mr Pemberton, Mr Watkin Williams, Mr Spencer H. Walpole, Mr Hopwood, Mr Beresford Hope, Major Nolan, Mr Chaplin, and Mr Serjeant Simon. Although the motion was not to come on till next day, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff sought, in despite of the Speaker's opposition, to raise at once a debate on the legitimacy of the Committee; and on the following day he was able to do so. He moved "the previous question," and pronounced the course taken "inconvenient, unprecedented, and irregular," although it had been agreed to by his nominal leader; thus beginning the tactic of independent action which served to mark him off with three colleagues,* as constituting a "fourth party" in the House, the other three being the main bodies of Liberals and Tories, and the Irish Home Rulers. The debate, once begun, was carried on with great violence and recklessness, Mr Stanley Leighton alleging that Bradlaugh had been pressed on the Northampton constituency by the Liberal "whip," prompted by Mr Gladstone; and Sir R. Knightley affirming that the election had been determined by the interference of Mr Samuel Morley. A member known as F. H. O'Donnel, but originally named Macdonald, an Irish Catholic, asserted that Bradlaugh had "explained religion as a disease of the brain, and conscience as a nervous contraction of the diaphragm." After more random discussion the House divided, when there voted for the appointment of the Committee 171, against it, 74, giving a majority of 97 to the Government. Most of the Conservative leaders walked out of the House before the division,

* These were Mr Gorst, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Mr A. J. Balfour. The latter took little oral part in the Bradlaugh struggle, but always voted with his party.

thus already showing a disposition to surrender to the irresponsibles on their side.*

Already, too, there began to be apparent what can now no longer be disputed—the mismanagement of the Speaker. Only bad judgment or partiality could account for his permission of such gross irrelevance as filled the speeches of Mr Leighton and Mr F. H. O'Donnel, *alias* Macdonald. On the language of the latter now forgotten personage Mr Bradlaugh thus commented in the *National Reformer*:—

"I remember, fourteen or fifteen years ago, when the countrymen of that member's constituents came to me for help and counsel. The honourable member professes to now represent those Irishmen who then sought and had my aid; and on Tuesday he in effect told the House that it ought to exclude from it one who did not believe in God, and had no standard of morality. But I see from the division list that the 'third party,' of which he pretended to be the spokesman at the election of the Speaker, went into the lobby opposed to that into which their leader went, so that the really Irish members did not forget old ties."

Unfortunately the latter tribute was not long to be deserved.

On 20th May the Select Committee presented its report. There had been eight members in favour of the view that Bradlaugh was legally entitled to affirm, and eight against; and the casting vote of the chairman, Mr Spencer H. Walpole, was given for the Noes. It was said, and it was believed by Mr Bradlaugh, that Sir John Holker had avowed a belief that his claim was valid, but Sir John Holker on the Committee voted with his party. Save for the fact that the Noes included Mr Hopwood, the vote would stand as a purely party one, the rest of the Noes being Conservatives, while the rest of the Liberals took the affirmative side. And so general was the attitude of reckless prejudice that we still find the Chairman's son giving a flatly misleading account of the situation. Mr Spencer Walpole, in his work on "The Electorate and the Legislature"† published in 1881, and re-issued in 1892, has made (p. 75) this statement (italics ours):—

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* Northcote's diary, so far as published, naturally offers no confession or explanation as to the change in his attitude. Under date May 24, he simply records that "we agreed to stand firm for Wolff's motion" (Mr Lang's "Life," ii. 159).

† Macmillan & Co., "The English Citizen" series.

"In 1880 . . . the legislature was suddenly confronted with a new dilemma. The borough of Northampton sent a representative to Parliament who *refused to take an oath*—not because he had any conscientious objection to be sworn, but because an appeal to a God—in whom he had no belief—seemed to him an idle formula which was not binding on his conscience."

Since Mr Walpole has chosen to print and reprint this maliciously untrue statement, and takes no notice whatever of published protests against it, I am obliged to say in so many words that he, a professed historian, is here grossly perverting history. Much might indeed be set down to his carelessness. Issuing in 1892 the second edition of what should be an authoritative treatise, Mr Walpole inserts (p. 77) a passage as to Parliamentary affirmation which is completely quashed by the passing of Mr Bradlaugh's Affirmation Act of 1888. Of this Act, in 1892, Mr Walpole does not seem to have any knowledge; but however he may contrive to overlook such a fact as this, he cannot have been unaware in 1880 that Mr Bradlaugh did *not* refuse to take the oath, and that he repudiated the expression that the oath would not be binding on his conscience,* repeatedly declaring that any promise he made would as such be binding on his conscience, whether or not an idle formula should be appended to it. Bradlaugh's position on this point was always explicit; for him a promise, however embellished, was a promise which as an honourable man he was bound to keep. By the majority of the British House of Commons it is still implicitly ruled that a certain promise would not necessarily be binding on the consciences of Christian members unless accompanied by the popular imprecation "So help me God."

The decision of the first Select Committee, on the casting vote of the chairman, at once carried the question to a new phase. Bradlaugh immediately published a statement † of his position as to the oath, the taking of which he now held to be forced upon him by the refusal of the right to affirm.

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* A technical assent to this ambiguous question was, as we have seen, the condition attached to affirmation in the law courts. But common decency usually gave the formula there a purely technical and non-natural force.

† Printed in *National Reformer* of 30th May 1889, p. 338, and in several London newspapers.

It ran :—

"When elected as one of the Burgesses to represent Northampton in the House of Commons, I believed that I had the legal right to make affirmation of allegiance in lieu of taking the oath, as provided by sec. 4 of the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866. While I considered that I had this legal right, it was then clearly my moral duty to make the affirmation. The oath, although to me including words of idle and meaningless character, was and is regarded by a large number of my fellow-countrymen as an appeal to Deity to take cognizance of their swearing. It would have been an act of hypocrisy to voluntarily take this form if any other had been open to me, or to take it without protest, as though it meant in my mouth any such appeal. I therefore quietly and privately notified the Clerk of the House of my desire to affirm. His view of the law and practice differing from my own, and no similar case having theretofore arisen, it became necessary that I should tender myself to affirm in a more formal manner, and this I did at a season deemed convenient by those in charge of the business of the House. In tendering my affirmation I was careful, when called on by the Speaker to state my objection, to do nothing more than put, in the fewest possible words, my contention that the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, gave the right to affirm in Parliament to every person for the time being by law permitted to make an affirmation in lieu of taking an oath, and that I was such a person, and therefore claimed to affirm. The Speaker, neither refusing nor accepting my affirmation, referred the matter to the House, which appointed a Select Committee to report whether persons entitled to affirm under the Evidence Amendment Acts, 1869 and 1870, were under sec. 4 of the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, also entitled to affirm as Members of Parliament. This Committee, by the casting vote of its Chairman, has decided that I am not entitled to affirm. Two courses are open to me—one, of appeal to the House against the decision of the Committee; the other, of present compliance with the ceremony, while doing my best to prevent the further maintenance of a form which many other members of the House think as objectionable as I do, but which habit and the fear of exciting prejudice has induced them to submit to. To appeal to the House against the decision of the Committee would be ungracious, and would certainly involve great delay of public business. I was present at the deliberations of the Committee, and while, naturally, I cannot be expected to bow submissively to the statements and arguments of my opponents, I am bound to say that they were calmly and fairly urged. I think them unreasonable, but the fact that they included a legal argument from an earnest Liberal deprives them even of a purely party character. If I appealed to the House against the Committee, I, of course, might rely on the fact that the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, Sir Henry Jackson, Q.C., Mr Watkin Williams, Q.C., and Mr Sergeant Simon, are reported in the

Times to have interpreted the law as I do; and I might add that the Right Honourable John Bright and Mr Whitbread are in the same journal arrayed in favour of allowing me to affirm. But even then the decision of the House may endorse that of the Committee, and should it be in my favour, it could only—judging from what has already taken place—be after a bitter party debate, in which the Government specially, and the Liberals generally, would be sought to be burdened with my anti-theological views, and with promoting my return to Parliament. As a matter of fact, the Liberals of England have never in any way promoted my return to Parliament. The much-attacked action of Mr Adam had relation only to the second seat, and in no way related to the one for which I was fighting. In 1868 the only action of Mr Gladstone and of Mr Bright was to write letters in favour of my competitors, and since 1868 I do not believe that either of these gentlemen has directly or indirectly interfered in any way in connection with my parliamentary candidature. The majority of the electors of Northampton had determined to return me before the recent union in that borough, and while pleased to aid their fellow-Liberals in winning the two seats, my constituents would have at any rate returned me had no union taken place. My duty to my constituents is to fulfil the mandate they have given me, and if to do this I have to submit to a form less solemn to me than the affirmation I would have reverently made, so much the worse for those who force me to repeat words which I have scores of times declared are to me sounds conveying no clear and definite meaning. I am sorry for the earnest believers who see words sacred to them used as a meaningless addendum to a promise, but I cannot permit their less sincere co-religionists to use an idle form, in order to prevent me from doing my duty to those who have chosen me to speak for them in Parliament. I shall, taking the oath, regard myself as bound not by the letter of its words, but by the spirit which the affirmation would have conveyed had I been permitted to use it. So soon as I am able I shall take such steps as may be consistent with parliamentary business to put an end to the present doubtful and unfortunate state of the law and practice on oaths and affirmations. Only four cases have arisen of refusal to take the oath, except, of course, those cases purely political in their character. Two of those cases are those of the Quakers John Archdale and Joseph Pease. The religion of these men forbade them to swear at all, and they nobly refused. The sect to which they belonged was outlawed, insulted, and imprisoned. They were firm, and one of that sect sat on the very Committee, a member of Her Majesty's Privy Council and a member of the actual Cabinet. I thank him gratefully that, valuing right so highly, he cast his vote so nobly for one for whom I am afraid he has but scant sympathy. No such religious scruple prevents me from taking the oath as prevented John Archdale and Joseph Pease. In the cases of the Baron Rothschild and Alderman Salomons the words "upon the true faith of a

Christian' were the obstacle. To-day the oath contains no such words. The Committee report that I may not affirm, and, protesting against a decision which seems to me alike against the letter of the law and the spirit of modern legislation, I comply with the forms of the House."

As might have been expected, this decision to take the oath evoked fresh outcry, and this time some Freethinkers joined. The most injurious attack of this kind came from Mr George Jacob Holyoake, who had long been on strained terms with Bradlaugh, and avowedly regarded him with disfavour as a too militant Atheist. Before the assembling of Parliament Mr Holyoake, in answer to a correspondent who asked him whether Mr Bradlaugh would take the oath, had written to the effect that Mr Bradlaugh had taken the oath scores of times before, and would doubtless do so now. This remark had reference to a long-standing dispute as to the propriety of oath-taking by a Freethinker under any circumstances. Before the reform of the law which permitted unbelievers to affirm, Mr Bradlaugh had without hesitation taken the oath in courts of law, holding the forced formality a much smaller matter than the evil of a miscarriage of justice. Mr Holyoake condemned all such oath-taking; but it was pointed out that while he was in business partnership with his brother Austin, the latter, a highly esteemed Freethinker, had taken the oath wherever it was necessary for the purposes of the business. This, of course, would not altogether set aside Mr G. J. Holyoake's argument, if put forward only as a statement of his own position; but he was not content with that. After avowing his expectation that Bradlaugh would take the oath, he expressed surprise and reprobation when Bradlaugh proposed to do so. Needless to say, such a deliverance was eagerly welcomed by Bradlaugh's enemies, and zealously used against him; as it was when repeated by Mr Holyoake in the following year, with expressions about Freethinkers being made to hang their heads for shame by the action of their nominal leader. Were there not reason to presume that Mr Holyoake would not now repeat or defend his former language, it might be fitting to endorse here some of the very emphatic comments made on it at the time by Mrs Besant and others. It may suffice to say, however, that Mr Holyoake had never before taken such an attitude against Freethinkers who took the oath; that he had once himself expressed readiness to take it in court if it were regarded as a civil act, and not as a confession of faith (exactly Bradlaugh's

case); and that he later seemed to other Freethinkers to quash once for all his own case by justifying quite gratuitous acts of conformity and co-operation with churches whose teaching he held to be false. The common sense of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand Freethinkers, including attached friends of Mr Holyoake, decided that such an act of enforced ceremonial as official oath-taking by an avowed Atheist surrenders no jot of principle or self-respect, particularly when the Atheist is openly striving for the abolition of all such compulsions. Of all Freethinkers who have taken oaths in England, Bradlaugh was the very least open to the charge of temporising; and the expressions used by Mr Holyoake at different times in this connection as to "apostolic" conduct have been, to say the least, unfortunate as coming from a professed Freethinker, not usually acquiescent in orthodox phraseology.

§ 4.

The document above quoted, announcing Bradlaugh's intentions, was dated 20th May, the date of the Committee's report. On the following day Bradlaugh went to the House to take the oath and his seat. Immediately on his presenting himself, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff rose and objected to the oath being administered, whereupon Mr Dillwyn protested against the interruption. The Speaker now made the fatal mistake of allowing the interruption to be carried out. It is established by the highest possible authority—that of the present Speaker—that the holder of the Chair as such had and has no right to permit any such intervention between an elected member and the statutory oath. Sir Henry Brand, intimidated by the action of men like Wolff, weakly stated that he "was bound to say he knew of no instance" in which such an intervention had taken place; but "at the same time" he would allow Wolff so to intervene. That personage then made a speech, resting on the two arguments that Atheists who had made affirmation in the law courts thereby admitted that an oath "would not be binding on their conscience," and that Bradlaugh had further, in his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," affirmed that Parliament "has the undoubted right to withhold the Crown from Albert Edward Prince of Wales." The hon. baronet "could not see how a gentleman professing the views set forth in that work could take the oath of allegiance."

It was in the course of this speech that the hon. baronet was understood by all his auditors to say, of the sects permitted by law to affirm, that they "had a common standard of morality, a conscience, and a general belief in some divinity or other."*

The Tory case against Bradlaugh's admission to Parliament was thus at the outset a combination of a moral subterfuge and a notorious political fallacy. All concerned knew perfectly well that the oath was habitually taken by men to whom the adjuration was an idle form, and that their consciences could only be "bound" by the simple promise. It had further been ruled by the highest judicial authority, in the cases of Miller *v.* Salomons, and the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway Company *v.* Heaton, that the essence of the oath consisted in the promise, and not in the words of imprecation. Yet further, Wolff had before him, and in his speech quoted from, the statement above cited, in which Bradlaugh expressly declared that he held himself bound, in taking the oath, "not by the letter of its words, but by the spirit which the affirmation would have conveyed had I been permitted to use it." These words he suppressed. On the other hand, as regards the point of allegiance, he was negating the whole established doctrine of the British constitution. It is a commonplace of that doctrine that Parliament can repeal, as Parliament passed, the Act of Settlement. The contrary is now maintained by nobody, and was not really maintained even by Burke, in his furious feint of disputing the constitutional principle in his "Reflections." As the law stands, any member of Parliament is entitled to move constitutionally for the abolition of the Monarchy. The oath, framed though it be for the dynasty, and not for the State, promises allegiance to the sovereign as by the law established. If the law in future quashes sovereignty, there will be no sovereign to whom to bear legal allegiance.†

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* Some years afterwards he stated in the House that what he had really said was "one Deity or the other," meaning either the Unitarian or the Trinitarian God. The explanation did not seem to be credited.

† It is worth noting that Mr Keir Hardie, a professed Christian Socialist, when recently (28th June) protesting against the foolish ceremony of congratulating the Queen on the birth of a great-grandchild in the direct line, went the length of declaring, "I owe no allegiance to any hereditary ruler" —this after he had sworn allegiance to the Queen. Bradlaugh never stultified himself in this fashion.

But such protests as those of Wolff were perfectly fitted to serve the turn of the Tory party in a campaign of faction. The cue of shocked piety and the cue of "loyalty" came alike easily to the representatives of the feudal and the capitalistic interests; and the "bag-baron" and the "crag-baron" vied with each other in the display of sham godliness and sincere zeal for the Throne. Never was there such a reek of cant in St. Stephen's before. All the English gift for hypocrisy, unrivalled in Europe, was brought to bear on the task. Alderman Fowler, a fitting exponent of the cult of Mammon in His sacred city, followed up Wolff with a petition emanating from bankers and merchants, all praying with one consent that an unbeliever in their gods should not be allowed to sit at Westminster. The honour of God was avowedly the one concern of the Alderman and of the men, so many of them gross with fortuitous gain, who made him their mouthpiece. And those strategists who knew the imperfect efficacy of bogus religion as a means of keeping an Atheist member out of his seat, took care to supply the additional weapons needed.

Mr Gladstone met Sir Henry Wolff's motion with a counter motion for the appointment of a fresh select committee to consider Bradlaugh's competence to take the oath—a sufficiently unwise course, in view of the action of the previous committee. At once, however, the official Tories gave their full support to Wolff's motion, declaring that the matter should not even go to a committee. Mr Gibson, formerly Attorney-General for Ireland, argued that Bradlaugh had deserved all that befell him for raising the question. "The hon. member might have taken his seat without opposition, but he had chosen to obtrude himself on the House and the country. He must therefore accept the grave responsibility of thus thrusting his opinions on the House." Observe the situation. Bradlaugh had acted not only as a scrupulous man in his place was bound to do, but as a man careful of other men's susceptibilities would do. Had he simply taken the oath, he would certainly have been yelled at as a hypocrite, and further as a blasphemer. The point had been publicly discussed in the press beforehand, and his enemies were prepared. Trying to avoid at once inconsistency and scandal, he quietly and circumspectly sought to make affirmation. The right to affirm was denied him in committee by the champions of the oath, joined by one conscientious Liberal. When he then came to take the compelled

oath, these men and their fellows assailed him as one who "obtruded his opinions"; and Mr Gibson, their spokesman, proceeded to allege in so many words that the member for Northampton had "walked up the floor of the House with that oath and Book before him and declined to take the oath." It was a falsehood; and Mr Gibson himself had just before, in the same speech, admitted that Bradlaugh had "claimed for himself, in careful and guarded language, the right to make an affirmation."

There are many points in the story of this struggle at which it is hardly possible to abstain from imputing wilful falsehood to some of the actors. But on this point it seems right to conclude that one or other form of prejudice or passion made men all round incapable of realising when and how they grossly perverted a simple fact. It was not merely the factious Tories who repeated the misstatement, though they naturally used it most industriously. Mr Chaplin, M.P., was reported in two newspapers as having asserted that at a public meeting on 1st June "Mr Bradlaugh announced his intention of refusing the oath, and asked that he might affirm instead." Mr Chaplin, at the time of speaking, was a member of the second select committee appointed to sit on the oath question, and Bradlaugh indignantly protested to the Chairman, who was again Mr Spencer Walpole. Mr Chaplin, after some fencing, declared that the report was inaccurate. Baron Henry de Worms, another of the champions of Omnipotence, publicly averred* that "he was in the House when Mr Bradlaugh came to the Speaker and said he could not and would not take an oath which in no way bound him, as he did not acknowledge any God." Challenged as to this statement, Baron Henry de Worms avowed that the words from "which" onwards were his own comment, but could not see anything unwarrantable in the previous statement as to the facts. Such were the notions of truth and honour among English —and other—oath-taking gentlemen and noblemen with which Bradlaugh had to contend. And he was only in part supported by the remarks of Mr John Morley in the *Fortnightly Review* for July 1880:—

"There is no precedent for Mr Bradlaugh's case, for the simple reason that there is no precedent for the frank courage with which he has considered it desirable to publish his views as to the nature of an oath.

* Report in *Standard* of 11th June 1880.

That the oath is just as meaningless, so far as its divine appeal is concerned, to many past and present members of the House of Commons as Mr Bradlaugh protested it would be to him, no one doubts. Whether and how far he was justified in asking to be sworn, *after he had declined to be sworn*, is a different question. Whatever the answer to that may be, it cannot at least be said that the course adopted by Mr Bradlaugh involved the surrender of any principle."

The last clause is so candid that it is a pity Mr Morley should have "considered it desirable" to fortify his own position by penning that above italicised. He had previously spoken of Bradlaugh's "pertinacity" in "parading" his views—a statement which obtrudes its inspiration. When a leading Liberal publicist wrote so, the godly multitude naturally asserted in chorus that Bradlaugh had first ostentatiously refused to take the oath, and then insisted on taking it. Dean Boyd, of Exeter, capped the record by asserting that when Bradlaugh first "advanced to the table of the House," he "openly, boldly, and defiantly affirmed that he believed there was no such being as a Deity."

In the frame of mind represented by a variety of such utterances as these, the House of Commons deliberated on Mr Gladstone's motion that the question of Bradlaugh's competence to swear should be referred to a second special committee. On the second day of the debate, Sir Stafford Northcote, the nominal leader of the Conservative party in the House, accepted the position into which he had been ignominiously forced by irresponsible and even semi-defiant adherents, and opposed the appointment of the Committee. He is reported as saying:—

"Without raising any question as to whether there is anything irreverent in the course which the hon. member proposes to take, it seems to me that we, in allowing him to take it, should be incurring a responsibility from which our better judgment ought to make us shrink"

—a fair sample of the hon. baronet's forcible-feeble oratory. Some Tory speakers, as Earl Percy, admitted that "the hon. member, to do him justice, had sought to avoid taking an oath to which he attached no sacred character"; but these ingenuous combatants were concerned only to prevent the House from "incurring the guilt of an act of hypocrisy," and had no anxiety about avoiding an act of iniquity. When John Bright met the subterfuges of the Opposition with the retaliatory criticism of

which he was a master, the temperature naturally rose. If, he asked, they set up the principle of a creed test, where were they going to end? Would they next question members known to be unbelievers, though not publicly professed ones? As certain Conservative members were actually known by their comrades to be Gallios in these matters, Bright's challenge created the appropriate resentment, as did his emphatic avowal, "One thing I believe most profoundly, that there is nothing amongst mankind that has done more to destroy truthfulness than the forcing of men to take an oath." But the memorable part of his speech was this :—

"I have no right to speak of the member for Northampton. I think it never happened to me more than once to address to him a single sentence, or to hear any expression from him. I never saw him to my knowledge but once, before he appeared in this House; but he is returned here by a large constituency, to whom his religious opinions were as well known as they are now to us. . . . Now, I have no doubt whatever, though I have no authority to say so, that the oath as it stands is binding on the conscience of the member for Northampton, in the sense that an affirmation would be binding on his conscience—that the words of the oath, so far as they are a promise, are words which would be binding upon him, but that their binding character is not increased by the reference to the Supreme Being, of whose existence, unhappily as we all think—such is the constitution of his mind, and such has been the constitution of many eminent minds of whom we have all heard—he is not able to form that distinct opinion and belief which we, who I think are more happy, have been able to do. Therefore if he were to come to the table and to take the oath as it is, and as he proposes to take it, I have no doubt that it would be binding on his conscience as my simple affirmation is binding on mine; because in my affirmation there is no reference to the Deity. I make a promise. My word is as good, and is taken to be as good, as your oath. (Loud Ministerial cheers.) And that is declared by an irrevocable Act of Parliament. And if Mr Bradlaugh takes this oath, as he proposes to take it, I have no doubt that, though the last words of the oath have no binding effect upon him, yet his sense of honour and his conscience—(Opposition laughter, and cries of 'Hear, hear' from some Ministerialists)—his sense of honour and his conscience would make that declaration as binding on him as my affirmation is on me, and as your oath is on you."

Among those who joined in the brutal laughter of the gentlemen of the Conservative party at these passages were men who had com-

mitted bribery, unscrupulous stock-jobbers and company promoters, men about town, topers, libellers, and liars. But some who thought it fitting to laugh with these would be normally classed as chivalrous and well-bred gentlemen.

The debate remained picturesque to the close. Lord Randolph Churchill, who has within the present year proved afresh his capacity to create a Parliamentary sensation, protested that "if the words 'so help me God' were held to be a mere superstitious invocation, the idea or the faith which had for centuries animated the House of Commons that its proceedings were under the guidance of Providence would lose its force, and would very soon have to be abandoned altogether." The better to exemplify the energy of the divine supervision, the noble lord, after quoting a somewhat strong passage from Bradlaugh's "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," threw the pamphlet violently on the floor of the House, in parody of Burke's performance with the daggers. Baron de Worms hazarded the proposition that "this was an irreligious, not a religious question." The late Mr Thorold Rogers, an economist whose incapacity for logical thought led to his not unsuccessful cultivation of the department of historical detail, made a foolish and offensive speech on the Liberal side, setting out with a statement of his sense of intellectual superiority to Bradlaugh. "In his opinion, a person who recognised no law beyond that of his own mind, and such scanty rules as he thought fit to lay for his own guidance, very much weakened his own character and lessened the value of his own life and acts." Further, Mr Rogers had over and over again found "in the course of the study of history" that Atheists were Conservatives; and he cited in proof the names of Hobbes, a Theist; Hume, who till the latter part of his life was an emphatic Deist; and Gibbon, who was one till his death. "He knew something of the political views of educated sceptics; and when this unhappy gentleman became a little better educated it would undoubtedly be found that he was migrating towards the opposite benches." After other remarks to similar effect, Mr Rogers provoked even the protest of the much-tolerating Speaker by charging the Tories with being indisposed to "act as generously as they did in their sports, and to give a little law even to vermin." For this felicitous figure Mr Rogers made a stumbling apology. On this being privately repeated, Bradlaugh, with his usual magnanimity, later forgave the speech as a whole.

Where a professed Radical could be thus insolent, on the score of his sense of superiority to opinions which he was incapable of discussing, the language of the customary Tory may readily be imagined. The revelations of ardent piety made by some eminent capitalists and company-promoters were unexpectedly gratifying to the religious feelings of the nation; and the unrelieved malignity of the personal allusions of these and other Christians to a man precluded from turning unto them there and then the other cheek, proved the injustice of the charge that this is an age of lukewarm religious convictions.

After two days of largely irrelevant debate, Wolff's motion was rejected by 289 votes to 214—a result not ungratifying to the Tories, as showing that already certain Liberals had taken their side. A select committee of twenty-three was duly appointed, the Tories being defeated in an attempt to strengthen their representation on it. The members were:—The Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General, Messrs Bright, Chaplin, Childers, Sir Richard Cross, Mr Gibson, Sir Gabriel Goldney, Mr Grantham, Mr Staveley Hill, Sir John Holker, Mr Beresford Hope, Mr Hopwood, Sir Henry Jackson, Lord Henry Lennox, Mr Massey, Major Nolan, Messrs Pemberton, Simon, Trevelyan, Walpole, Whitbread, and Watkin Williams. The Committee began by examining Sir Thomas Erskine May as to precedents; and Mr Bradlaugh was allowed to put questions to him likewise, bringing forward precedents Sir Thomas had not noted, among them the important case of Sir Francis Bacon, who, as Attorney-General, was challenged for breaking the law in making oath that he was duly qualified to sit, when, as a practising barrister, he was legally disqualified under an Act of Edward III. (It was in this case that the House ruled: "Their oath their own consciences to look unto, not we to examine it.") After Sir Thomas May, Bradlaugh was himself examined, and conducted his case with the lawyer-like exactitude and the more than lawyer-like concision and cogency which even his enemies admitted to belong to all his legal pleadings.* He pointed out that if it were competent to the House to interfere between a member and the oath, the first forty members sworn in a Parliament might prevent the sitting of any of the rest; and

* See the report of the Committee's proceedings, reprinted in his "True Story of my Parliamentary Struggle."

that if he were held legally incompetent to make affirmation of allegiance, he stood legally bound, as an elected member, to take the oath, no matter what his opinions were. He formally stated—

"That there is nothing in what I did when asking to affirm which in any way disqualifies me from taking the oath.

"That all I did was—believing, as I then did, that I had the right to affirm—to claim to affirm, and that I was then absolutely silent as to the oath.

"That I did not refuse to take it; nor have then or since expressed any mental reservation or stated that the appointed oath of allegiance would not be binding upon me.

"That, on the contrary, I say and have said that the essential part of the oath is in the fullest and most complete degree binding upon my honour and conscience, and that the repeating the words of asseveration does not in the slightest degree weaken the binding effect of the oath of allegiance upon me."

These explicit statements he repeated again and again in answer to questions, saying once :—

"Any form that I went through, any oath that I took, I should regard as binding upon my conscience in the fullest degree. I would go through no form, I would take no oath, unless I meant it to be so binding."

This emphatic explanation was given in reply to a question on what is, to my mind, the only obscure point in his examination. Asked: "Do you draw any distinction between the binding effect upon your conscience of the assertory oath, as it is called, and the promissory oath?" he answered—

"Most certainly I do. The testimony oath is not binding upon my conscience, because there is another form which the law has provided which I may take, which is more consonant with my feelings. The promissory oath is and will be binding upon my conscience if I take it, because the law, as interpreted by your Committee, says that it is the form which I am to take, and the statute requires me to take it."

There is here, I think, a momentary confusion among the terms "assertory," "promissory," and "testimony"; and the phrase "not binding on my conscience" is also used in a sense probably not intended by the questioner, and not that intended

by Bradlaugh in his next answer, above quoted. The "because" is inconsequent. What he meant to convey was simply that he expressly rejected the testimony oath because in giving evidence he was free to affirm; whereas he was compelled to take the oath of allegiance, there being no legal alternative in the opinion of a Committee of the House. He had been forced to submit in the law courts to the invidious formula that the oath was not binding on his conscience, because it had been expressly ruled in law * that if a witness simply said "I am an Atheist," the judge was bound to infer that an oath did not "bind" him. But Bradlaugh's answers to the Select Committee, taken together, made it superfluously clear that in the natural sense of the words he held any formula of promise he took to be binding on him, whether with or without an imprecatory tag. And inasmuch as members of the Committee nevertheless thought fit afterwards to allege that he had all along declared the contrary with regard to the oath, we are driven to one of two conclusions. Either (*a*) these gentlemen hold that a formal public promise is not fully binding on *their* consciences unless they add "so help me God," or something of the sort, and that an Atheist cannot be more conscientious than they; or (*b*) they deliberately chose to bear false witness for party purposes. And it finally matters little which conclusion we draw; for the acceptance of the first leaves open the chance of the second being true also.

The Committee, after a variety of votes, finally reported to the effect that Bradlaugh, by simply stating [though in answer to official question] that he had repeatedly affirmed under certain Acts in courts of law, had brought it to the notice of the House that he was a person as to whom judges had satisfied themselves that an oath was "not binding on his conscience"; that, under the circumstances, an oath taken by him would not be an oath "within the true meaning of the statutes"; and that the House therefore could and ought to prevent him from going through the form. They further suggested that he should be allowed to affirm with a view to his right to do so being tested by legal action, pointing to the nearly equal balance of votes in the former committee as a reason for desiring a decisive legal solution.

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* In a case not legally reported, however—that of *ex parte* Lennard *re* Woolrych, in the Court of Queen's Bench, in April 1875.

For this report of course only those members are responsible who voted for its main clauses. Under this reservation it falls to be said that the use made of the mean technicality of an oath being held not "binding on the conscience" of an Atheist was in itself profoundly unconscientious. That formality was, to begin with, expressly intended to prevent the evasion of the oath by religious knaves, and not at all to imply that an Atheist who took the oath could not be believed. What was more, Bradlaugh had only specified the Evidence Amendment Acts in reply to the express challenge of the Clerk of the House of Commons. To turn an accidental ambiguity to the account of an iniquity, to decide that a man was untrustworthy under the pretext of a legal subterfuge, was merely to show that the oath is less than no security for right action, and that under its cover men can far outgo the lengths of injustice that they are likely to venture on in the name of simple law. In the words of Bright, who opposed the conclusion come to as "absolutely untenable," "the course taken was one involving a mean advantage over Mr Bradlaugh." What the proceeding proved against Bradlaugh was simply this: that he had done wrong in ever accepting, even as a technical phrase, the juridical formula that an oath as a whole is not "binding on the conscience" of one to whom an imprecation is an idle barbarism. He ought in the law courts to have repudiated even the technical shadow of an implication that a rationalist's word is worth less than a religionist's oath. Nothing but persistent resistance will ever make tyrannous religion give way to justice; and he, who was habitually accused of gratuitously defying religion, had simply not defied it enough. And the lesson taught to other rationalists by his struggle is this, that oath-taking must in future be stigmatised and warred against as implying not a higher but a lower moral standard than that of rational ethics. Men who must swear to be believed are not to be believed.

§ 5.

On 21st June, a few days after the presentation of the Committee's report to the House, Mr Labouchere moved a resolution to the effect that Bradlaugh be allowed to make affirmation instead of taking the oath—the course the Committee had recommended. He had previously given notice of a general Affirmation Bill, but had

postponed the discussion of it, pending the report. He now moved his resolution, after presenting a petition in support of Bradlaugh from some thousands of the people of Northampton, on the heels of a large Tory petition, also from Northampton, praying that Bradlaugh "might not be permitted to take the holy name of God in vain." Mr Labouchere in an extremely able and persuasive speech dwelt on the prime fact that the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866 gave to all persons legally qualified to affirm in courts of law the right to affirm in Parliament, and that by later Acts Bradlaugh was entitled to affirm in courts of law. [The opposition view presumably was that the Act of 1866 could only refer to persons *then* entitled to affirm; but no argument to that effect appears on the reports consulted by the present writer.] He further warned the enemy that if they carried their hostility to the point of unseating Bradlaugh, he would simply be re-elected—a statement which evoked confident "No's" from members whose faith in Deity was more deep than philosophical; and remarked what was perfectly true—that there were "exceedingly few persons in Northampton of Mr Bradlaugh's views" on religious matters. Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord Halsbury) rang the changes on the argument about obtrusion of views; and pietists like Alderman Fowler and Mr Warton expressed afresh their corpulent horror of Atheism. One Irish member, Mr Arthur O'Connor, took occasion to protest—in a debate on a proposal to permit an affirmation—against letting Bradlaugh take the oath; and the Speaker seems to have made no objection. On the other side, Mr Hopwood, whose vote in the first committee had possibly permitted all the trouble, made a powerful speech against the "obtrusion" argument, which, as he justly said, amounted to telling Bradlaugh, "If you had come to the table with a lie on your lips, we would have allowed you to be sworn." But again the great speech in the debate was Bright's. The remark, "There are many members of this House who take the oath and greatly dislike it," was his first home-thrust; and soon, after a temperate and weighty argument, he nobly repeated his declaration of belief in the honour of the Atheist, whose opinions were probably as repugnant to Bright as to any other man in the House. "I pretend," he said—and his voice rose with his theme, —"I pretend to have no conscience and honour superior to the conscience of Mr Bradlaugh. (Ironical cheers from the Opposition.) It is no business of mine to set myself up—perhaps it is no

business of yours to set yourselves up—(cheers)—as having conscience and honour superior to that which actuates Mr Bradlaugh." He went on to protest that the course taken by the majority of the committee was "one involving a mean advantage over Mr Bradlaugh." The speech, however, mainly ran to perfectly judicial argument; and it was the obvious determination of the Tories to give no ear to argument that evoked the flashes of feeling which lit it up. Bright having said that the oath was now made a theistic test, where before it had been a Protestant and a Christian test, a "No," came from Mr Spencer Walpole, the Chairman of the Committee. "Why," retorted Bright, "the right hon. gentleman must have forgotten everything in the committee; he cannot have been conscious of his own opinions. Why, surely the object of this motion is to establish the test of theism." There were again "No's" from the party which denies; and Bright, after establishing his point, thrust afresh. "The theistic test," he repeated, "is proposed by the member for Portsmouth—the front bench opposite appears to have abdicated entirely—there is now only an abject, a remarkable submission to gentlemen who sit in the lower part of the House." A plain statement of the obvious fact that Wolff was establishing a precedent for intervention elicited more blatant "No's," and Bright began to warm up to his peroration. He reminded the House that a Positivist or Comtist who had been concerned in the issue of an anti-theistic pamphlet might quite as plausibly be challenged as Mr Bradlaugh; going on to speak of certain Positivists as "some men for whom I have the utmost respect in regard to everything but their opinions on the question of religion, which I deplore, and in connection with which I can only commiserate them. But," he went on, correcting the touch of superciliousness,—

"I know that many people have much greater power of belief than others have; and I am not one of those—having myself passed through many doubts—to condemn, without sympathy at any rate, those who are not able to adopt the views which I myself hold. (Hear, hear.) Now, sir, only one word more. There are members of this House of different Churches, but generally all, I trust, of one religion—of the religion which inculcates charity, and forbearance, and justice, and even generosity. There are those who belong to the Roman Catholic Church. I need not remind them of what they and their ancestors have gone through in Ireland—(hear)—for the last 200 or 300 years

or more, or of how long a time they were kept out of this House, and by the very same class of arguments which the honourable and learned member for Surrey used. (Cheers.) He tells us that for a very long time past there has been a gradual relaxation. Yes, no doubt. Did he ever sit among those who have promoted those relaxations? I have been here for thirty-seven years, and I have heard these questions discussed over and over again; but I never found that the time had come when the party opposite, represented by gentlemen who now sit there, were willing to make these relaxations. They submitted not to argument, not to sentiments of generosity or of justice; they submitted only to a majority which sat on this side of the House. (Cheers.) Then there are the Nonconformists. I am told that there are some Nonconformists even—but I think it is rather in the nature of a mistake or a slander—who have great doubts as to how they should vote on this occasion. It is occasions like this that try men and try principles. (Hear, hear.) Do you suppose that in times past the Founder of Christianity has required an oath in this House to defend the religion which He founded? Or do you suppose now that the supreme Ruler of the world can be interested in the fact that one man comes to this table and takes His name—it may be often in vain—(murmurs)—and another is permitted to make an affirmation, reverently and honestly, in which His name is not included? But one thing is essential for us, the House of Commons representing the English people, which is, to maintain as far as we can the great principles of freedom—freedom of political action and freedom of conscience."

An allusion to the remark of Mr Labouchere that the Northampton constituency in the mass had no sympathy with Bradlaugh's theological opinions evoked another Conservative laugh, and Bright continued:—

"Well, hon. gentlemen who know nothing about it laugh at that. I think it very possible that, finding that Mr Bradlaugh in his political opinions was in sympathy with them, those electors so little liked the political opinions of hon. gentlemen opposite that they preferred Mr Bradlaugh, with his political opinions, to some opposing candidates who have represented them, and whose religious views might have been entirely orthodox. (Hear, hear.) . . . *To a large extent the working people of this country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion.* (Cheers, and loud cries of 'Oh,' and 'Withdraw.') I wish from my heart that it were otherwise. (Cheers, and renewed cries of 'Withdraw.')"

Despite the Tory wrath, there was no withdrawal.

This great speech was followed, after the adjournment, by one from Gladstone, less powerful because less fired with moral feeling, but eloquent, cogent, and unanswerable, save for the slip of the statement that Bolingbroke, the Theist, was "without any religious belief at all."* Yet the end of the debate—after a series of speeches, including one by Sir Henry Tyler in which he brutally dragged the name of Mrs Besant into his attack on Bradlaugh—was that only 230 voted for Mr Labouchere's motion, and 275 against. This was on 22nd June. What Bright had thought could not be had taken place, though the Nonconformists were not the bulk of the Liberals who enabled the Tories to trample underfoot the first principles of Liberalism. Thirty-six Liberals and thirty-one Home Rulers voted in the majority, and doubtless joined in its exultant cheers.

A number of Liberals, further, were absent without pairs. There were found among the allies of tyranny representatives of nearly all of the sects which had themselves suffered persecution, Catholics, Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Jews, as well as members of the Established Church. When, therefore, Mr John Tenniel in *Punch* caused his weekly contribution to the gaiety of his nation to take the shape of a cartoon joyfully representing Bradlaugh as "kicked out," with a crumpled paper in his hand bearing the legend "Atheism," he was more than usually in touch with the social sentiment of which he is the leading artistic exponent. Our "English love of fair play" was never more neatly illustrated, even by that "primitive pencil." †

The action of the Home Rulers is perhaps specially notable. Some of them later pretended that their hostility to Mr Bradlaugh was due to a single vote he gave on the Arms Bill. It will be seen that they opposed him in great force before he had ever had a chance to vote at all, and this on a simple claim that he should be allowed to make affirmation. Mr Justin M'Carthy, in keeping with his general attitude on religious questions, sought from the first to exclude the Atheist from Parliament. The only other plea open to the majority was that Bradlaugh had "forced his Atheism

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* On the other hand, Tory journalists went much further astray in asserting that Bolingbroke believed in future rewards and punishments.

† It should be noted that the "kicked-out" idea is a favourite one with the cartoonist. He used it lately in the case of the Irish Evicted Tenants Bill.

on the House." This was the line taken, for instance, not only by Sir Hardinge Giffard, but by Sir Walter Barttelot, a typical Tory squire and "English gentleman," who just before Bradlaugh's death in 1891 won for himself some credit by a frank tribute to his honesty of character. Were it not for the countenance given by Mr John Morley at the time to a patently unjust account of Bradlaugh's action—an account which Gladstone as well as Bright then explicitly contradicted—one would be disposed to point to the general repetition of the untruth by the Tory press and party as proving how worthless a thing the "honour and conscience" of English gentlemen is in matters of public action. It is a matter of simple fact that Bradlaugh all along anxiously sought to keep his Atheism out of cognisance of the susceptibilities of the House;* and it is perfectly certain that had he come forward to take the oath at the outset, he would not only have been afterwards vilified by the Opposition as a blasphemous hypocrite, but would have been challenged all the same by Wolff and the rest. The matter had been openly discussed beforehand. There is thus no conclusion open save that the majority in the vote on the affirmation motion did a gross injustice; and though the really religious men in the House, as Gladstone and Bright, were mostly on the other side, and the religiosity of the aggressors was in many cases a nauseous farce, it must be assumed that religion counted for much † in the matter. Parnell in the next stage of the question avowed that he had been on Bradlaugh's side from the first, but had found himself opposed on the point by "the great majority of the Irish members." There would seem to be no doubt that the Catholic priesthood—actively represented by Cardinal Manning—determined the action of Parnell's followers, and later his own. It is

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* The Select Committee persistently examined him to get avowals which he had not made, and had no wish to volunteer.

† The *Echo* of 25th May 1880 has the passage: "Say what we like, occupants of the Tory benches are penetrated with deep and undying religious convictions. The very reference to an unbeliever, unless it is in fierce denunciation of him, reddens their faces. . . . But strange to say, the very men who apparently were so jealous of religious or semi-religious forms last evening will this evening vote that Parliament shall not sit to-morrow because it will be the Derby day. Now if there be one place on this wide earth which may be denominated a pandemonium it is the Epsom Downs on a Derby day."

perhaps not unprofitable to reflect that most of the "Liberal" wrongdoers have since paid some penalties. Some dozen lost their seats at next election on the Bradlaugh issue. The Home Rulers have felt to the full the power of fanaticism against themselves; and Parnell, who later yielded to the bigotry of his party, lived to know all the bitterness of religious injustice. A minor Scotch Liberal then on the wrong side, Mr Maclagan, has lately been unseated by clerical effort; and doubtless others could testify that they who draw the sword of bigotry tend to perish by it. It would doubtless be giving an undue air of moral regularity to the business to lay any stress on the final political fate of Northcote, who in the Bradlaugh struggle made himself the catspaw of the worst section of his followers. He certainly had his due reward.

§ 6.

Being thus expressly denied the right to affirm by a vote of the whole House, Bradlaugh promptly reverted to his position that if he could not affirm, he was legally bound to take the oath and his seat. A committee had declared by a casting vote that he could not affirm, and left him to swear. The House referred the point of his swearing to a larger committee, which decided by a majority that he could not swear, but recommended that after all he be allowed to affirm. The House stood by the finding of both committees in so far as it was hostile, and overruled that of the second in so far as it was favourable. It remained to fight the whole House on the point of the oath.

On 23rd June, after the "prayers," which remain one of the institutions of the House, Bradlaugh walked to the table amid some cries of "Order," and spoke to the Clerk. The Speaker then formally intimated to him the decision of the House, and called upon him to withdraw. Amid roars of "Withdraw" from the furious mob of Tory members, Bradlaugh contrived to let the Speaker understand that he claimed to be heard. He had to withdraw while the question was discussed, and when Mr Labouchere sought to move that he be heard, the Speaker had to rise to secure order. On grounds not easily inferred, the House, suddenly changing its temper, with very little dissent agreed to let Bradlaugh be heard at the "Bar," which was at once drawn across the bottom of the House, and at which he proceeded to speak, as represented

in the admirable portrait done after his death by Mr Walter Sickert. This, his first speech at the Bar of the House,* I have heard described as perfect by some Liberals who thought less highly of the three others it was his lot to make from the same place. It is perhaps the most vividly impressive, but only, I think, because it was the first. Certainly it is the most memorable address of challenge ever made to the House, though it has all the straightforward, terse simplicity of Bradlaugh's general speaking, which was never rehearsed. It was measured and controlled throughout. The mean insult of a "Hear, hear" when he asked, "Do you tell me I am unfit to sit amongst you?" did not discompose him. "The more reason, then," he went on, "that this House should show the generosity which judges show to a criminal, and allow every word he has to say to be heard." Even in rebuking the most dastardly attack made upon him in the House he was gravely dignified.

"I have to ask indulgence lest the memory of some hard words which have been spoken in my absence should seem to give to what I say a tone of defiance, which it is far from my wish should be there at all; and I am the more eased because although there were words spoken which I had always been taught English gentlemen never said in the absence of an antagonist without notice to him, yet there were also generous and brave words said for one who is at present, I am afraid, a source of trouble and discomfort and hindrance to business. I measure the generous words against the others, and I will only make one appeal through you, sir, which is, that if the reports be correct that the introduction of other names came with mine in the heat of passion and the warmth of debate, the gentleman† who used those words, if such there were, will remember that he was wanting in chivalry, because, while I can answer for myself, and am able to answer for myself, nothing justified the introduction of any other name beside my own to make a prejudice against me. (Cheers, 'Question,' and cries of 'Order.')"

He went on to deal with the common objection to his action:—

"It is said, 'You might have taken the oath as other members did.' I could not help, when I read that, sir, trying to put myself in the place of each member who said it. I imagined a member of some form of

* See the verbatim report reprinted in the volume of his Speeches.

† The reference was to the ever-offensive Sir Henry Tyler, who had made a cowardly allusion to Mrs Besant.

faith who found in the oath words which seemed to him to clash with his faith, but still words which he thought he might utter, but which he would prefer not to utter if there were any other form which the law provided him; and I asked myself whether each of those members would not then have taken the form which was most consonant with his honour and conscience. If I have not misread, some hon. members seem to think that I have neither honour nor conscience. Is there not some proof to the contrary in the fact that I did not go through the form, believing that there was another right open to me? ('Hear, hear' and 'Order.') Is that not some proof that I have honour and conscience?"

The most searching thrusts were delivered with entire amenity.

"It is said that you may deal with me because I am isolated. I could not help hearing the ring of that word in the lobby as I sat outside last night. But is that a reason—that because I stand alone, the House are to do against me what they would not do if I had 100,000 men at my back? That is a bad argument, which provokes a reply inconsistent with the dignity of this House, and which I should be sorry to give."

And no less measured was the warning that the struggle would not end with his exclusion:—

"Do you mean that I am to go back to Northampton as to a court, to appeal against you? that I am to ask the constituency to array themselves against this House? I hope not. If it is to be, it must be. If this House arrays itself against an isolated man—its huge power against one citizen—if it must be, then the battle must be too. But it is not with the constituency of Northampton alone . . . ."

The peroration was as austere as the rest of the speech:—

"I beg your pardon, sir, and that of the House too, if in this warmth there seems to lack respect for its dignity; and as I shall have, if your decision be against me, to come to that table when your decision is given, I beg you, before the step is taken in which we may both lose our dignity—mine is not much, but yours is that of the Commons of England—I beg you before the gauntlet is fatally thrown down—I beg you, not in any sort of menace, not in any sort of boast, but as one man against six hundred, to give me that justice which on the other side of this wall the judges would give me were I pleading before them."

Then ensued a fresh debate. Northcote at some length expressed himself to the effect that there was nothing to be said. Gladstone at similar length agreed. The Speaker asked whether

Bradlaugh should be called in, and after some confused discussion Mr Labouchere was allowed to move that yesterday's resolution be rescinded. Mr Gorst moved the adjournment of the debate; but on an appeal from Gladstone, Mr Labouchere withdrew his motion. The Speaker then recalled Bradlaugh to the table, and informed him that the House had nothing to say beyond calling upon him once more to withdraw. Bradlaugh replied: "I beg respectfully to insist upon my right as a duly elected member for Northampton. I ask you to have the oath administered to me, in order that I may take my seat, and I respectfully refuse to withdraw." The helpless Speaker "thought it right to point out to the hon. gentleman" what he had pointed out before. Again Bradlaugh replied: "With respect, I do refuse to obey the orders of the House, which are against the law;" and the Speaker had to appeal to the House "to give authority to the Chair to compel execution of its orders." Gladstone remained silent, despite calls for him, and Northcote in his flabbiest manner proceeded to move, "though I am not quite sure what the terms of the motion should be, that Mr Speaker do take the necessary steps for requiring and enforcing the withdrawal of the hon. member for Northampton." The Speaker confusedly explained, to the perplexity of the House, that according to "former precedents" the motion should simply be "that the hon. member do now withdraw"—precisely what he had already declared to be the resolution and order of the House. The motion being challenged, there voted for it 326, and only 38 against, the Government having chosen to give effect to the vote of the majority of the day before. The scene now became still more exciting. On the Speaker's again calling on Bradlaugh to withdraw, he answered: "With submission to you, sir, the order of the House is against the law, and I respectfully refuse to obey it." The Speaker then called on the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove him, and that officer, coming up, touched him on the shoulder and requested him to withdraw. He said, "I shall submit to the Sergeant-at-Arms removing me below the bar, but I shall immediately return to the table," and he did so, saying on his way back towards the table, "I claim my right as a member of the House." Again led back to the bar by the officer, he again walked up the floor of the now tempestuous House, saying "in a voice rising high above the din" (says a contemporary report), "I claim my right as a member of this House. I admit the right of the House to imprison me, but I admit no right on the part of the

House to exclude me, and I refuse to be excluded." Again led to the bar by the Sergeant-at-Arms, he awaited the action of the House.

His action had been taken with a forethought. He was determined to force the House to further steps, and to make its path a *cul de sac*. The Speaker again appealed to the House for orders, and Northcote, making an effort to get up a state of vigorous purpose in himself, conscious the while that the moral right was all on the other side, once more took action. He somewhat disappointed the followers who had led him by remarking: "I am quite sure that none of us are disposed to make any personal complaint of the conduct of the hon. member. We know that he is in a position which calls for our consideration, and that we must make all proper allowance for the course which he may think it right to take." Complaining that the duty ought to have been taken up by the leader of the House, Northcote proceeded to move that Bradlaugh, having defied the House, be taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Gladstone once more explained that he thought those who had got the House into the trouble should get it out, and wordily went on to indicate that he thought the Opposition were taking a consistent course. But again a discussion arose. Mr Labouchere began by remarking on the position of a citizen sent to prison for doing what some high legal authorities thought he had a perfect right to do. Mr Courtney suggested that the arrest be formally carried through to permit of the legality of the House's course being tested on a writ of habeas corpus. The appearance of a shorthand writer at the bar taking notes led to a question of order; and the Speaker explained that he was there by authority, reporting the proceedings, "not the debate, which would clearly be out of order." A friendly motion for the adjournment of the debate was made, discussed, and withdrawn. Another was made by Mr Finigan, a friendly Irish member, and seconded by Mr Biggar; but only five voted for it and 342 against. Mr Parnell then made the very creditable speech in which he avowed his dissent from the majority of the Home Rulers; and some of these in turn expressed their dissent from him. At length Northcote's motion was carried by 274 votes to 7. The result was received "without any manifestation of feeling," and members laughed when the Speaker announced the resumption of "the private business." Already the majority had begun to feel that its triumph was a fiasco. In an hour the

Sergeant-at-Arms, called upon by the Speaker to report, announced to the House that "in pursuance of their order and Mr Speaker's warrant, I have taken Mr Bradlaugh, the member for Northampton, into custody."

He was in the "Clock Tower"—in a room, that is, on the second story of that part of the House—whither he had gone with the slight requisite show of formal resistance, passing first a short time in the Sergeant's private room. There he was visited by Parnell, Mr O'Kelly, Mr O'Connor Power, Mr Finigan, and Dr Commins, all of whom expressed their cordial sympathy. The imprisonment was a farcical form. A constant stream of friends visited him; and he went about the business of fighting his battle in the country as he would do in his own rooms. On the very evening of his arrest a Committee was formed to secure his liberation, and an appeal drawn up in its name by Mrs Besant. This was distributed by thousands next day; and a fresh petition for signature was likewise framed and sent out broadcast at once. But the democracy did not wait for petitions. The moment the news of the House's action reached the public, a cry of indignation arose, loud enough to alarm Beaconsfield,* on whose urgent advice (so it was said at the time) Northcote on the next day moved for Bradlaugh's unconditional release, which was hurriedly agreed to. The stultification of the majority was now complete; and the course taken by Northcote thus far may stand as a fair sample of modern Conservative statesmanship—the policy of irrational resistance, on no better principle than that of partisan habit, ending in ignominious collapse. Still the cry of protest swelled in volume. In less than a week two hundred meetings were held throughout the country to pass resolutions in Bradlaugh's favour; Radical and Liberal clubs and societies of all kinds sent their messages of protest and appeal; and Liberal members who had voted on the Tory side were sharply called to account. Even before matters had come to a crisis, abundant proof was given that a large and earnest minority were dead against the policy of intolerance. In May Mr Labouchere had given notice of a Bill to permit affirmation by any member in place of the oath of allegiance; and by

* This perhaps understates Beaconsfield's protest. Bradlaugh heard that he condemned the whole proceedings, and called his followers "fools" for their pains.

6th July there had been presented 462 petitions in favour of that measure, with 40,434 signatures, largely obtained through the organisation of the National Secular Society. The effect of these and other displays of popular feeling began to be seen in the House. Liberal members who had voted on the Tory side out of fear of the bigots in their constituencies began to hesitate. On 28th June leave was given to Mr Labouchere to introduce his Affirmation Bill, which was read a first time. The Government, however, took the view that Bradlaugh's rights ought to be legally determined in respect of the state of the law at the time of his election; and instead of supporting or giving facilities for Mr Labouchere's Bill, they proposed the compromise of moving that the excluded member be allowed to affirm pending the legal settlement of his position. This was accepted; and, on 1st July, Mr Gladstone moved as a standing order that members-elect be allowed, subject to any liability by statute, to affirm at their choice.

This was of course the signal for a fresh storm. On Mr Gladstone's preliminary motion that the Orders of the Day be postponed, Mr Gorst pronounced the motion disorderly, and opposed the proposal in advance as being to the effect that "the House should break the law, in order to smuggle Mr Bradlaugh into the House." Gladstone, in moving his order, was studiously moderate, giving as a reason for the Government's not introducing a Bill the impossibility of having the question calmly discussed in the then state of feeling, while urging the necessity of preserving the dignity and decency of the House as a reason for doing something. He went on to defend Bradlaugh fully and forcibly against the charge of having "obtruded his Atheism" on the House, and wound up with a calm contention that it was the duty of the House to further the claim of any member to take his seat under a given law, leaving it to be settled in the law courts whether his claim was valid. Northcote opposed, arguing that there was no fear of a repetition of the scene of last week, since the Speaker could give instructions that Mr Bradlaugh be not allowed to enter the precincts. To accept the motion "would be to some extent humiliating to the House."* No question of justice or righteous-

* Again he was surrendering his own convictions to the partisanism of his colleagues. He had been personally willing to support legislation for the settlement of the difficulty, but was overruled as usual by his associates. See Mr Lang's "Life," ii. 172.

ness was raised by the Tory leader. One of his followers, Lord Henry Scott, advanced the pious proposition that "the mere affirmation of a person who did not believe in a Supreme Being could not be regarded as a binding engagement upon him." Another ignoramus named Smyth explained that the "test of Theism" "pervaded the whole body of the Constitution, of which, like the soul of man, it was the animating principle." "Let Atheists be admitted within its walls, and there would be Atheistical legislation. . . . Such teaching it was that led to the outbreak of the French Revolution." Thus were old lies made to support new. An Irish Catholic named Corbet spoke of "Mr Bradlaugh's Byzantine doctrines of morality," either forgetting that Byzantium was the typical Christian State for a thousand years, or desiring to asperse the Christian Church which had all along been the great rival of his own. Mr A. M. Sullivan, another Catholic, made a rabid speech, supporting the cause of religion with the plea, "Where was the class that was oppressed now? It was nothing but an individual." He went on to avow that he sought to keep Mr Bradlaugh out of Parliament on the score that his Malthusianism, "taken in conjunction with his Atheistic opinions, struck fatally at the foundation of civil society." The Church of the confessional is naturally zealous for the sacredness of the family; and the Church of the Inquisition for the "foundations of civil society." Men who regard the hamstringing of cattle as at most a pity are naturally warm on the subject of rational control of human procreation. On the other hand, Parnell "wished, as an Irish Protestant, with the utmost diffidence, to say a few words in explanation of the vote he would give to-night." Already he seemed shaken by the resistance of his followers; and he was at pains to say "he regarded the religious tenets of Mr Bradlaugh and his doctrines with reference to over-population as abominable" —a deliverance which reads dramatically in connection with the close of his own career, when an only less insensate and irrational ethic than his own gave the sanction for similar vilification of himself. There was finally a ring of anxious bravado in his avowal that "it was personally an odious task for him to take the course he should on this occasion"—(this after he had voluntarily gone to shake hands with Bradlaugh after the arrest)—"but if he had to walk through the lobby alone, he should deem himself a coward if he did not act up to his conviction."

Less self-regarding, and much more helpful, was the speech of Mr Richard, the most impressive in the debate. Mr Richard was one of the extremely few Christians who keep one set of gospel passages so constantly in view as never to be led into imitating the rest. He never echoed their words of execration. His very rebukes to his fellow-Christians for their pious scurrility were gentle; and he must have caused some searchings of heart when he observed that "no man who watched what went on, on the first day of the present Parliament, when hon. members were squeezing round the table, and scrambling for the New Testaments amid laughter—('No, no,' and Ministerial cheers)—no man could have watched that scene, and believed that the act had any of the solemnity of a religious act about it." When the otherwise pious Wolff followed, the altered balance of feeling was shown by impatient interruption of his remarks. An exceptionally offensive Catholic, named M'Coan, was called to order by the Speaker for the remark that "a more offensive representative of Atheism never was seen" than Bradlaugh. Finally, after General Burnaby had mentioned that "the Chief Rabbi, although refusing to interfere with political questions, felt very deeply on this subject," the vote was taken, and by 303 votes to 249 Gladstone's motion was carried.

Bradlaugh was now free to make affirmation, and did so next day. Almost immediately on taking his seat he had occasion to vote, and immediately thereafter he was served with a writ to recover a penalty of £500 for illegal voting. The writ had apparently been prepared beforehand. The suitor was one Henry Lewis Clarke, the tool of Mr Newdegate, M.P.,—the latter, a man of the most restricted understanding, notorious as an old opponent of the admission of Jews to Parliament and a rabid assailant of Catholicism, but now eager to combine with Jews and Catholics against the Atheist. A few days afterwards a similar writ was served at the instance of one Cecil Barbour, of Nightingale Lane, Clapham; and yet a third was given notice of; but the work was left to Mr Newdegate's employee.* A new stage in the struggle had now been reached.

§ 7.

For nine months—that is, while Parliament sat in the period

* A friendly action by Mr Swaagman, for all the remaining penalties that might arise, served to forestall other speculative suits.

July-March 1880-81*—Bradlaugh now sat in the House, doing his work with intense and continuous application, though all the while there hung over him the shadow of a ruinous litigation. He had taken the risk. On 8th July the Government were asked by Mr Norwood, a hostile Liberal, whether they would instruct the law officers of the Crown to undertake his defence in any suit brought against him; but the answer was, of course, in the negative; and Bradlaugh rose to explain that he had had no communication with either Mr Norwood or the Government on the subject. A fortnight later a Bill was zealously forced through both the Houses to indemnify Lord Byron, who had sat and voted without being sworn, against any action for penalties. Bradlaugh had the experience of helping to safeguard the peer from the prosecution laid against himself.

His Parliamentary activity was many-sided, including as it did the charge of the interests of endless correspondents in all parts of the world who had grievances to redress and claims to put. But above all he devoted himself to the interests of Ireland and of India, the one still suffering from an imperfect realisation of her needs by English Liberals; the other from the general neglect of Liberals and Tories alike. The gratitude of the people of India has been freely given for his service; that of the majority of the Irish members was naturally not prompt. They had wronged him, and so could hardly forgive.

Such a frenzy of malevolence, further, as had been aroused among bigots of all Churches by Bradlaugh's entrance into the House, was slow to decline. Whether outside the House or inside, he was furiously aspersed. A Bill to exclude Atheists was early introduced by Sir J. Eardley Wilmot,† and petitions in support of this were largely signed, though wholesale subscription by the children of Sunday Schools was in many cases found to be necessary to fill the sheets. But petitions for his exclusion were a small part of the storm of malice that assailed him. It would fill a volume to recite or even cite the hundreds of denunciations—often vile and grossly libellous, and nearly all implying a religious motive—which were poured forth against him week by week.

* Mr Lang, in the page of random jottings in which he "sketches" the Bradlaugh story, makes the misleading statement that he only sat "for a few weeks under statutory liability" ("Life of Northcote," ii. 137).

† The same member tried to raise the question on a vote in supply.

Clergymen naturally formed the bulk of the assailants; and of these the State Church furnished the largest contingent, all grades of the hierarchy being represented; but the President of the Wesleyan Conference, on behalf of the Conference Committee, presented a hostile petition to Parliament; and the secretary to the same Conference issued a circular calling upon the various Wesleyan bodies to join in the general movement against the Atheist. Protestants vied with Catholics in the foulness of their abuse, the ferocity of their enmity.

On the other hand, it must be put on record that in every church, in varying numbers, there seem to have been lovers of freedom as well as persecutors. Some of the most forcible and earnest letters sent to the newspapers on Bradlaugh's behalf were written by clergymen of the Church of England; and many Nonconformist clergymen spoke out on his side ably and warmly. At a Church Conference, more than one priest of the Establishment defended him bravely and well. Even from within the pale of the Church of Rome there came voices of protest against the intolerance of the majority. On 27th June 1880 the "Home Government Association" of Glasgow sent to Bradlaugh a resolution of the majority of its members to the effect "that this meeting of Irish Roman Catholics . . . . most emphatically condemns the spirit of domination and intolerance arrayed against you, and views with astonishment and indignation the cowardly acquiescence, and in a few instances active support, on the part of a large majority of the Irish Home Rule members to the policy of oppression exercised against you." Bradlaugh was peculiarly quick to appreciate such messages of sympathy and fairness from religious opponents. The words of Bright on his behalf in the House brought tears to his eyes; and he never forgot to be grateful for them. In his own journal, immediately after his entrance to the House on tentative affirmation, he printed the following appeal:—

"Now that the fierce struggle is over, and that I am really in full enjoyment of the right and privilege which the people of Northampton gave me on the day of the poll, I beg my friends not to mar this triumph by any undue words of exultation or ungenerous boast. If bitter bigotry and Tory malice have been active against me personally, there has been also honest, earnest piety, in despite of the foulest and most persistent misrepresentations, enlisted in the grand array on behalf of right. If some clergymen have been cruel and unjust in language and conduct,

there have also been preachers who have been most generous and kindly. Do not let our Freethinking friends remember so much what we as a party have done towards the result, as what has been done for us by religious men, notwithstanding the cry of heresy. If the heart of the great Nonconformist party had not been brave and just, the fight, instead of being so far over, would yet have to be fought. The speeches of religious men like William Ewart Gladstone, John Bright, Henry Richard, and Charles Stewart Parnell — each representing a varying shade of Christian belief, and each a most earnestly religious man— must more than outweigh, and cause our friends to pass by, the rabid, raving, fanatical outpourings and deliberate misrepresentations which have disfigured the Parliamentary discussions on this subject. When the reader remembers that the very vilest mis-statements and coarsest caricatures of my language and conduct have been circulated to every member of Parliament, ... it makes worthy of the strongest praise the high-minded conduct of those Nonconformists in the House of Commons who have declared for justice despite all."

But no good-feeling on his part or on that of the tolerant religious minority could stay the torrent of libel and vituperation; and a paragraph penned a month later shows how the majority bore themselves:—

"Many of my good friends have—during the progress of the bye-elections which have taken place at Oxford, Scarborough, Berwick, Wigton, and other boroughs—written indignantly as to the exceedingly wanton and coarse personal slanders which, chiefly for electioneering purposes, have been circulated against me by the Conservatives in order to induce votes against supporters of the Government. It is a little difficult to know how properly to deal with these most indefensible and cowardly attacks. By the law as it stands no action can be maintained for any spoken words unless an indictable offence is charged in the slander, or unless actual special pecuniary damage can be shown to have resulted, which latter is of course not in question. . . . Thus, Sir John D. Hay — who in the Wigton election has descended to a lower depth of coarseness and falsehood than any other Parliamentary candidate*—could not be sued for damages. . . . The journals may of course be sued; but even if this is a wise course, the case is not easy. I am now proceeding against the *Yorkshire Post* for one very gross libel, and in the proceedings, which will be very costly, am actually required to answer voluminous interrogatories, not only as to all the doctrines I have taught and works I have published or written during

* "Language fit for a Yahoo," was the description given of Hay's scurrility by the *Scotsman*.

the whole of my life, but also to works I happen to have referred to. . . . In the indictment against the editor of the *British Empire** I shall probably have to bring a large number of witnesses from various parts of England to speak as to what has happened at lectures as far back as 1860. The fearful cost in this case (in which, being a criminal procedure, counsel must be employed) can only be fairly estimated by professional men. . . . I refrain from commenting on the infamous, most cowardly, and utterly uncalled-for attacks made on Mrs Besant by Sir John Hay and the *Glasgow News*, as these will in all probability be submitted to another tribunal."

Some of these proceedings had to be abandoned, so enormous was the burden.

A leading part had been early taken in the outcry against the Atheist by the leading representative in England of the Church of Rome, Cardinal Manning. In a highly declamatory and malevolent article contributed to the *Nineteenth Century*, that ecclesiastic took the line of appealing to the spirit of traditional national religiosity, grounding his case not on any tolerable form of Christian doctrine, but on the ignorant instinct that he knew to underlie the orthodoxy of the Protestant Churches, as of his own. He lauded the English people, regardless of its attitude to his own Church :—

"It knows nothing," he declared, "of a race of sophists who, professing to know nothing about God, and law, and right and wrong, and conscience, and judgment to come, are incapable of giving to Christian or to reasonable men the pledges which bind their moral nature with the obligations necessary for the command of fleets and armies, and legislatures and commonwealths."

Of the historic fact that the English people had once brutally persecuted the Quakers, but had latterly allowed them to dispense with oath-taking, he disposed by saying that they were allowed to affirm because they were known to be deeply religious, and therefore trustworthy :—

"But let no man tell me that this respectful confidence is to be claimed by our Agnostics ; much less by those, if such there be, who, sinking by the inevitable law of the human mind below the shallowness and timidity of Agnosticism, plunge into the great deep of human pride, where the light of reason goes out, and the outer darkness hides God, His perfection, and His laws. . . . .

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* For publishing the "watch" libel.

"There still stands on our Statute book a law which says that to undermine the principles of moral obligation is punishable by forfeiture of all places of trust (9 and 10 Will. c. 32, Kerr's *Blackstone*, iv. 34, 35, note), but there is no law which says that a man who publicly denies the existence of God is a fit and proper person to sit in Parliament, or a man who denies the first laws of morals is eligible to make laws for the homes and domestic life of England, Scotland, and Ireland."

The whole article was in this strain, as far removed from political science as from the charity which is conventionally associated with the Christian name. And though all the while it was notorious that the ignorant and superstitious of the Cardinal's own Church are the least to be believed, whether on oath or without oath, of all *quasi*-civilised men, the rancorous rhetoric of the Romish priest counted for something with the class of Protestant bigots who, hating Rome, hate reason so much more as to be ready to work with even Rome against it. And yet Manning, in his work on "The Present Crisis of the Holy See," had declared that "England has the melancholy and bad pre-eminence of being the most anti-Catholic, *and therefore the most anti-Christian*, power of the world." Thus can fanatics manœuvre.

Among other libels, the ancient fable of the watch, the story of which has been told in an earlier chapter, was at this time made to do special duty, the flight of Edgcumbe being insufficient to set up hesitation on the subject among the mass of the orthodox. Some assailants, however, showed much discretion when challenged. Thus one J. F. Duncan, a Wesleyan minister of Nottingham, who in his pulpit described "that man from Northampton" as a "blot on the British escutcheon," and as a "wretch" who gave his Maker five minutes to strike him dead, was told that unless he apologised at once, criminal proceedings would be taken against him. He instantly replied: "I am this morning honoured with your communication, and have to say in reply that I know nothing of newspaper reports of my sermons, but if any remarks of mine have been offensive to you, you have my retractation and apology *at once*." A line in the *Reformer* tells how "J. H. Martin Hastings, a professedly religious person, having grossly libelled Mr Bradlaugh, now, under threat of criminal proceedings, sends us his retractation and sincere apology."

Some persons, offered an opportunity for a much-needed apology, did not avail themselves of it, the risk of criminal proceedings

being absent. The following correspondence sets forth one such case :—

"To the Lord Norton, June 25th, 1880.

"My Lord,—In the lobby of the House of Commons this afternoon your lordship said in my hearing, 'Mr Bradlaugh ought to be flogged in Trafalgar Square,' to which I at once replied to you that it was ungentlemanly and impertinent to offer me an insult at a moment when I could not return it.

"I now beg to ask your lordship for some explanation, at the same time informing you that several members of the House of Commons whom I have consulted on the subject advise me that your lordship's carefulness in being ill-mannered and insulting three feet outside the House of Commons precludes me from submitting the matter to the Speaker, and I can therefore only place this letter before the public with such answer as your lordship may be pleased to send me.—I have the honour to be your lordship's obedient servant,

"Charles Bradlaugh."

"35 Eaton Place, June 26th, 1880.

"Sir,—In reference to your letter just received, the facts are these :

"I was yesterday in a crowd at the door of the House of Commons, waiting to get into the gallery for the Irish Compensation debate. You came out and passed into the lobby. Some one pointed you out to me. The observation was made, how much trouble one man's desire for notoriety could give. I added that a desire for notoriety might be gratified by a public flogging in Trafalgar Square. You seem to have imperfectly overheard the last words on returning to the House, and connected your name with them. I certainly had no idea of suggesting a mode and place of treatment for any particular case. You came up to me and said, 'You should not insult a man in his presence.' I replied that I had said nothing to you.—Obediently,

"Norton."

Bradlaugh's fingers must have itched to apply to Lord Norton's person the chastisement which his lordship had prescribed for him. Less well-bred people than his lordship expressed their sentiments to Bradlaugh by letter, being denied the opportunity of insulting him in his hearing. In the *Reformer* of 12th September he writes :—

"I was sorry that Mr Dillon thought it necessary to call the attention of the House to the threatening letters which had been sent to him. When I was fighting for my seat in the House, I received at

least threescore letters threatening my life. I put them all in the waste-paper basket, although one or two of the communications were works of art, and decorated with skulls, cross-bones, bleeding hearts, and daggers. There is always a fair proportion of lunatics who in times of excitement write strange letters to public men."

His laugh over these things was entirely genial. At no period of his struggle, and on no provocation, did he ever show a touch of that general embitterment which so many men feel towards society on the strength of an ill-usage either imaginary or trifling in comparison with what he underwent. But the wrongers, as always, could not forgive. There was no slackening in the output of Conservative defamation, the device of saddling Bradlaugh's Atheism on the Gladstone Government being too congenial to be abandoned. As Lord Henry Lennox had put it in an inspired but unguarded moment, it was felt to be good Tory policy to "put that damned Bradlaugh on them." Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord Halsbury) publicly and falsely asserted in November that before the election the Liberal whip, Mr Adam, had written to the Northampton electors, asking them to return Bradlaugh; going on to add that this step "had never been disavowed or disapproved by the Liberal leaders"—an extremity of false witness memorable as coming from a man who was soon to be made Lord Chancellor. Such a lead was of course zealously followed. And the average upper-class Liberal, while reluctantly voting with the Government in the matter, indemnified himself by insolence to the man over whom the trouble had arisen. There are always in the Liberal party men loyal to it as a faction, while caring little for its principles in themselves, and bearing small goodwill to those more advanced adherents who give pause to the weaker brethren. This state of mind may account for the gratuitous offensiveness, though hardly for the inaccuracy, of one utterance by Mr Marjoribanks (now Lord Tweedmouth) in an address to his constituents at Duns in November 1880:—

"It was in his opinion a great pity that the electors of Northampton should have elected a man to be their representative whose views, moral, religious, and social, were such as were Mr Bradlaugh's specialty, and not only his specialty, but his means of subsisting. (Applause.) It was a pity, too, that when Mr Bradlaugh had been elected he had not followed the example of far greater men, such as Mill and Hume, who were to some extent sharers in his beliefs, or rather his disbeliefs,

but who who had quietly gone to the table and taken the oath, and said no more about it. Then, again, it was a pity that when Mr Bradlaugh claimed to affirm, he was not at once allowed to do so at his own risk. Of one thing, however, he was perfectly sure, and that was, that the House of Commons was perfectly right in the distinct and peremptory refusal which Mr Bradlaugh's demand to take the oath met when it was ultimately made."

It is not necessary here to go into Mr Marjoribanks' estimate of the relative greatness of Bradlaugh and Joseph Hume, or of the merits of Bradlaugh's views. It is not such judgments as his that determine a man's standing with his generation, or with posterity. The remark as to "means of subsisting," also, may be left to supply its own commentary. More recently the same speaker has emphasized his objection to some action of some journalists by remarking that it was done for a livelihood; a judgment which strikes at the whole mass of the Christian clergy, and which would seem to imply that a rich man is to be pardoned for saying a false or a base thing where a hireling is to be doubly denounced. A man who has never had occasion to do anything for a livelihood presumably sees such things in a different light from those who lack his pecuniary advantages; and though a professing Christian is supposed to hold that the labourer is worthy of his hire, Lord Tweedmouth doubtless remains satisfied with the ethics of his youth. Mr Chamberlain has indicated similar views. Suffice it here to point to Bradlaugh's whole career for the proof of the utter sincerity of his propaganda. But to praise Mill and Joseph Hume for taking an oath "on the true faith of a Christian," and to blame Bradlaugh for choosing rather to affirm when he believed an affirmation was open to him, is to set up an ethic which one would hardly expect any professed Liberal to avow. As for the "distinct and peremptory refusal," no such thing had taken place. What the House had distinctly refused was to allow the affirmation; and in the division on that point Mr Marjoribanks *had not voted for Mr Labouchere's motion;* whereas he had voted for Mr Gladstone's motion referring the oath question to a select committee. When a politician can thus deal with simple historical facts, his opinion on weightier issues is apt to lose even the significance it would normally have. Other Liberals added their quota. Lord Sherbrooke, writing in the *Nineteenth*

Century, spoke of the oath which Mr Bradlaugh "at first refused and afterwards was ready to take." His Lordship had once spoken of Disraeli as possessing a "slatternly and inaccurate mind." No milder epithets could well be applied to himself in the present case. But for all these endless insults and wanton slanders Bradlaugh had seldom anything save a restrained and dignified rebuke. When Mr Grantham, Q.C, M.P. (now Mr Justice Grantham), spoke of him as gaining his livelihood "by the circulation of obscene literature," he remarked in his journal that there was one homely Saxon word that would meet the case. He might reasonably have said that there were several, of varying length.

It was noticeable that all of these insults were uttered in Bradlaugh's absence, or in periodicals where he was allowed no reply. From the first he had been refused the right of reply in the *Nineteenth Century*. Men did not now venture to attack him in the House; but they were bold when among their constituents, especially in the rural districts. On his own part he was scrupulous to give no just cause for offence. One journalist recklessly represented him as having once obtruded himself on the ceremony of prayers in the House, when in point of fact he had been accidentally shut in, and had remained motionless where he stood. We have seen how he besought all of his freethinking followers to beware of seeming to presume on the vote in his favour. During the autumn of 1880 there was much discussion of the question of the Burials Bill, a test which served to show the amount of good-will subsisting between bodies of citizens professing belief in the same God and the same sacred books. Dissenters were fit to swear and sit in the House of Commons, but from the Church point of view were not fit to be buried "on their own recognisances," so to speak, in the public churchyard. The Tories in their traditional fashion opposed all concession, arguing that if dissenters were allowed to hold their own services, Atheists and heathens would follow. One Conservative member, named St Aubyn, pictured Atheists holding "indecent orgies over the bodies of the dead." Considering that drunkenness at funerals had been a reproach to Christendom for centuries; that it was common in Presbyterian Scotland within the century; and that Irish wakes are still customary, the suggestion may serve to measure the "honour

and conscience" of the speaker, who further signalised himself by admitting, as a lawyer, that Bradlaugh had a legal right to sit in the House, while he confessedly opposed his taking his seat. In view of the general state of the Christian mind, Bradlaugh abstained from speaking on the subject in the House, and the National Secular Society decided to present no petitions in support of the Bill, lest they should thereby injure its chances. They had their thanks in a speech from Mr Osborne Morgan, who asked in Wales whether it was "reasonable to keep four millions of Nonconformists knocking at the churchyard gate for years because a handful of Secularists wanted to enter with them?" Any suggestion, however indirect and unobtrusive, that Secularists were entitled to the rights of other citizens, was sure in those days to elicit some display of animosity from the majority of those who call their creed a religion of love. Upright and scrupulous Nonconformists there were in the House, such men as Richards and Illingworth, who were faithful to the principle of equal liberty, and sought to carry it out; but the feeling that Secularists were as much of a nuisance dead as alive was the prevailing one.

Among the Irish members, finally, the full power of the Catholic priesthood was exerted to the utmost. Bradlaugh did the Home Rulers careful and continuous service in the House, besides publishing in his journal many articles and paragraphs in support of the Parnell movement. When the Chief-Justice of Ireland made a scandalous exhibition of judicial prejudice in regard to the Parnell trial before the case was heard, Bradlaugh denounced it as an "impudent manifesto." At the same time, nothing would induce him to cater for Irish or any other support at the expense of truth and fair play, and he protested against Irish wrongdoing no less promptly, though more gently, than against the wronging of Ireland. Any such display of impartiality served the majority of the Catholic Home Rulers as a political pretext for an antagonism motived either by religion or fear of priestly influence; and when Bradlaugh protested against the Irish tactics of obstruction and scurrility—tactics which he always refused to employ—they deliberately represented him as supporting coercion, though he not only spoke repeatedly against the Coercion Bill and published in his journal a number of articles emphatically condemning

it,* but actually moved the rejection of the Bill on the second reading, when Parnell had taken flight to avoid arrest. By this time Parnell had given way to the pressure put upon him by his followers, by the priests, and by the Irish press, and had joined them in aspersing Bradlaugh as the enemy of Ireland. None the less did he continue his Parliamentary labours in the Irish as in other causes. A reference to Hansard shows that in the months July-March 1880-1 (in only five of which, however, did Parliament sit) he was one of the most usefully industrious members in the House; and so much was abundantly admitted by his fellow-members, including even some opponents. Running over the scanty reports of his work, we find him pleading for Maories and Hindus, urging reform of the Criminal Code, asking the House to reject the Lords' amendments on the Ground Game Bill, moving for a select committee on perpetual pensions, challenging Indian finance, resisting the prohibition of Sunday funerals, calling for returns of national revenue and expenditure, working hard on the Employers' Liability Bill of 1880, protesting against the plank bed for prisoners, protesting against the flogging of soldiers,† besides putting questions on behalf of aggrieved correspondents everywhere.

It was within this period that he came before the public in a new light, through having been challenged to fight a duel by a wild French *député*, M. Laisant, who declared in the Chamber, 27th December 1880, that he had precise information proving Bradlaugh to be a Prussian spy. Declining to go through the ceremony of the duel, Bradlaugh invited M. Laisant to lay the matter before a jury of honour of six—three to be English M.P.'s of whom M. Laisant should name one, and three French Deputies of whom Bradlaugh should name one. The matter, like the regulation French duel, came to nothing. But Bradlaugh had a very real fight before him at home.

§ 8.

Meanwhile the litigation forced upon Bradlaugh by the policy of the Government was proceeding, heaping up debt and preparing

* The *National Reformer* of 16th January 1881 contains, besides Bradlaugh's own protest, articles by two leading contributors strongly condemning the measure and criticising its defenders, including Bright.

† See above, p. 201.

disaster. After some distant skirmishing on points of form, the action of Clarke came on in the Court of Queen's Bench on 7th March 1881, before Mr Justice Mathew (a Roman Catholic) who, being newly appointed, was only that morning "sworn in." When the case was called, the junior counsel for the prosecution applied for an adjournment on the score that his leader, Sir Hardinge Giffard, was absent, and he, the junior, did not feel able to argue the case. Bradlaugh curtly explained that "Sir Hardinge Giffard has on more than one occasion refused to consult my convenience," and declined to agree to the adjournment. Giffard then appeared. Stripped of minutiæ as to demurrers and cross-demurrers, the arguments were:—

For the plaintiff: That the defendant was not in law entitled to make affirmation of allegiance as he had done, the laws permitting such affirmation having been "intended" to cover only persons holding religious beliefs—*i.e.* beliefs as to a Deity and a future state.

For the defendant: That the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866 expressly provided that every person "for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration instead of taking an oath," should be entitled to make affirmation in Parliamentary matters; that the Evidence Amendment Act of 1869 enabled any unbeliever to give evidence in any court of justice on the presiding judge being satisfied that an oath would not be binding on his conscience; that the further amending Act of 1870 defined the term "judge" as covering any persons legally authorised to administer oaths for the taking of evidence; and that the Speaker was so authorised. Therefore defendant was entitled to affirm allegiance. "I contend," said Bradlaugh, "that all enabling clauses in statutes must be interpreted liberally, not restrictively, in favour of the person claiming the benefit, and not harshly against him."

The one technical weakness of the case was that nowhere had the legislature explicitly said that persons with no religious belief should be free to make affirmation of allegiance; though to found on this omission would be to assume that the legislature, while thinking the oath could advantageously (for that was avowed in the preambles) be dispensed with in the taking of evidence, thought it could not be dispensed with in the formality preceding entrance into Parliament.

On that point, however, Mr Justice Mathew founded his judg-

ment, which was delivered on 11th March. The Evidence Acts, he decided, were clearly "intended to remove restrictions upon the admissibility of witnesses with a view of promoting the discovery of the truth," and "had no other object." The Acts of 1866 and 1869-70 must not be read together, because the legislature could not be supposed to have "intended" them to be so read. To this argument—one of the two mutually exclusive methods of interpretation of law which judges employ at their choice—Mr Justice Mathew added a pointed comment on one of the defendant's arguments. Bradlaugh, he said, had "attempted to show that the privilege of sitting in either House of Parliament was analogous to the 'privilege' of giving evidence in a court of justice." On which his lordship absurdly remarked that "no one who was free to choose his words and had a preference for accuracy of expression would speak of the discharge of the all-important and anxious duty of a witness as a privilege." It plainly follows on this, either that the work of a member of Parliament is *not* an "all-important and anxious duty," or that it is not a privilege. The first alternative is absurd; the other quashes the judge's argument. Further, it is the historical fact that Bradlaugh and other Freethinkers *had* regarded the power of giving evidence in court as a privilege, and had so described it. It may suffice to give these grounds, for the view of many of us is that the decision was unjust. But neither at this nor at any other time was Bradlaugh known even in private to question a judge's fairness. His loyalty to the established system of "justice" was absolute.

Judgment being given for Clarke, Bradlaugh applied for a stay of execution (as to the costs), with a view to an appeal; and the judge assented. On 14th March, when Bradlaugh was rising in the House to present a petition, Mr Gorst interposed with the objection that his seat was now vacant, and took occasion to assert that to his knowledge no notice of appeal had been given in the case. A discussion ensued, in which Mr Labouchere read a letter from Mr Bradlaugh to him, telling that he had instructed his solicitor to give the formal notice of appeal, and would prosecute it without delay, and offering to vacate his seat, if thought fit, to save time. Lord Randolph Churchill suggested that they had "no security" that the appeal would be made till nearly the end of the statutory twelve months. The point being dropped, Bradlaugh on 23rd March moved the Court of Appeal to expedite the hearing. As the

appeal was "from an interlocutory order, and not from a final decision,"* it could be taken promptly, and on 30th March it was heard before Lords Justices Bramwell, Baggallay, and Lush. Bradlaugh began by arguing that Clarke was not legally entitled to sue, the Act founded on by him having been repealed by another which did not re-enact permission to anybody to sue. Going over the other ground afresh, he argued that the Act of 1866 made no exclusion of any class of persons whatever; and that the legislature ought therefore to be held as having desired to enable every class of citizens—an argument much more cogent, to the lay sense, than the contrary inference drawn by Justice Mathew. The arguments were long and intricate on both sides; and one of Bradlaugh's remarks in his closing address shows to what length of speculativeness they sometimes went: "The learned counsel said the word 'solemnly' could not mean 'sincerely,' because there was already the word 'sincerely' in the declaration. By the same process of reasoning the word 'sincerely' cannot be construed to mean 'truly' because there is also the word 'truly' in the affirmation. I think it is better to confine ourselves to law, and not go into philology." Towards the close, on a question as to whether their lordships' judgment was to be judicial or extra-judicial on both points raised, Bradlaugh remarked, "The House of Commons has been very generous in its treatment of me, and I am anxious to reciprocate that generosity," adding a hope that their lordships would not think he was pressing his point unduly. "If you will allow me to say so," replied Lord Justice Lush, "you have argued the case with great propriety as well as great force." But the judgment (delivered on 31st March) was again hostile, being to the effect that Clarke was entitled to sue, and that Bradlaugh was not entitled to make the Parliamentary affirmation. The reason given by Lord Bramwell, the presiding judge, was that the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866 would only permit affirmation to persons *already entitled*, like the Quakers, to make affirmation "not on particular occasions but on *all* occasions when they would other-

* Bradlaugh put the technicalities thus to the Lord Chancellor in the Court of Appeal on 27th March:—"There are issues of fact untouched by the demurrer, and there is the first paragraph of the statement of defence, on which I may possibly defeat the plaintiff even should the allowance of the demurrer be maintained."

wise have to take an oath." Unbelievers not being thus already entitled (having only the right to affirm as witnesses), Bradlaugh was not entitled to affirm by the Act of 1866, read in connection with others which did not give a complete qualification. That is to say, as I understand him, Lord Bramwell argued that the Act of 1866 was meant to give the right of affirmation in a particular case to persons who already had it in all possible cases. It sounds sufficiently absurd, and I may have failed to follow the reasoning; but I can arrive at no other interpretation of his words as published. Lords Justices Baggallay and Lush concurred. The latter put it that the "every other person" in the Act of 1866 "must mean every other person in a like position with Quakers," that is, persons having "a perfect immunity from taking the oath in all places and on all occasions." "Therefore I feel no doubt whatever that the true construction of this sentence is that Parliament never intended to allow every person whomsoever when elected to appear before the House of Commons, and on stating that he had a conscientious objection to the oath, being permitted to make affirmation." Nobody, as it happened, had ever said so. But Lord Justice Lush's confident conclusion as to the intentions of Parliament involves this: That Parliament, knowing there were Atheist members, *deliberately chose to have them take the oath, rather than let them make affirmation.* To this outrageous conclusion all these judges are shut up; for there is not a word in any of the Acts about excluding Atheists; and if the "intentions" of the legislature are to be looked for—thus argued Sir Hardinge Giffard in this very case—"the language must be clear and unequivocal." So say we all. But the judges expressly inferred exclusive intentions from the mere absence of special detail in the inclusive language. They would not infer friendly intention from friendly language; but they would infer hostile intention from no language at all.

Bradlaugh's seat was now vacant in law; and he at once stood for re-election. All along the great majority of his constituents had stood by him cordially and courageously. A series of crowded public meetings, some addressed by himself and Mr Labouchere, some by leading local politicians, protested against the injustice done to member and constituency at each new stage of the process of exclusion, and now that the constituency was called upon to express its feeling at the polls it effectively responded. A certain number, of course, were detached from Bradlaugh by the storm of

obloquy which beat upon him, and this the more readily because they had accepted the joint candidature with reluctance; but the great majority stood staunch, despite desperate efforts to turn them. As Bradlaugh told at the time, the constituency was flooded with pamphlets containing

"not only what I have said and what I have written, taken out of its context and distorted, but containing things I have never said and have never written, and never dreamt of saying or writing. Books that I have neither written nor published, but which were supposed to be obnoxious, have had extracts taken out from their medical parts and circulated, and the physiological part of the Knowlton pamphlet, for which I was indicted, was taken separately and sent by post to each of the electors. The vilest things have been said. Some of my foes have been more foul than even I had thought possible."

The dirty work was largely done by a person named Varley, known as "a tradesman of Notting Hill." Further, a notice was served on the electors assuring them that Bradlaugh had vacated his seat "as if he were dead"; and on the comedy side of the contest the Conservative candidate, whose name figured on his bills in the alliteration "Corbett and Christianity," fortified his position in his electoral address by the appeal: "I am intimately connected with a family in your own county (that of Sir Charles Isham), which is well known to you, and members of which have at former periods had the honour of representing their native county in Parliament."

On the other side, a considerable amount of goodwill to Bradlaugh was shown in the Liberal press. The *Christian Globe*, declaring "unhesitatingly that the member for Northampton should be allowed to affirm if he desires it," remarked that "Mr Bradlaugh has his faults, but he is a man of cleanly, decent, orderly life—a man of brains and ability, and of sterling courage as well." The *Daily Chronicle* testified that he had "made a decided and creditable mark in the House of Commons by his ability, his moderation, and his general deportment." Even the *Times* bore witness:—"Mr Bradlaugh has his compensations. It is something to have displayed forensic ability so conspicuous. It is only fair to him to allow that many, whom the choice of Northampton naturally did not content, have been conciliated by Mr Bradlaugh's manly and moderate attitude." The more Radical

Weekly Dispatch declared that "no other new member of this new House of Commons has so much distinguished himself for political integrity and shrewdness, or given such evidence of statesmanlike qualities." Even in the House itself, Sir John Holker had observed that Bradlaugh had shown himself "a skilful debater, an eloquent man," whose "voice and tongue had an influence on the debates." More solid than these testimonies were the thousands of subscriptions, mostly small, but ranging from twopence to £5, sent in to meet the election expenses. This help from the workers was the kind of sympathy that always touched Bradlaugh to the quick.

The upshot of the fight (9th April 1881) was that Bradlaugh received 3437 votes, being 390 less than at the general election, while the Conservative candidate got 3305, being 153 more than the former Tory vote. Some 150 electors had turned round, while some 240 nominal Liberals had abstained—not a very bad result under the circumstances. The narrow majority of 132, however, gave sufficient encouragement to the Tories in the House to stick to their policy of exclusion; and anger at defeat did the rest. One journal, whose name it will be charitable to suppress, deplored that the reluctance to fight a seat against "a Yahoo like Bradlaugh," with whom even that "association" would be "pollution," had prevented the advent of a better Tory candidate than Mr Corbett.

§ 9.

Parliament being in recess, it was only on 26th April that Bradlaugh was able to present himself once more on the field of battle. Sir Stafford Northcote, courteously enough, as Bradlaugh acknowledged, wrote him beforehand, intimating that he felt himself bound to object as before to the oath-taking. This he did as Bradlaugh was about to be sworn. The Speaker confessed that "undoubtedly a proceeding so regular and formal" as the oath-taking "ought under ordinary circumstances to be continued without interruption," but in view of the former resolution of the House he felt bound to allow the intervention. Bradlaugh interposed a request that he should be heard before the House came to a decision; but it needed the special interposition of the Speaker to get him a hearing for the bare request from the shouting Tories. Northcote spoke on the customary lines. Bradlaugh had been legally declared unentitled to affirm; but on the other hand, it

would be "profanation" for him to take the oath—albeit everybody knew it had been taken by dozens of Atheists. And the old dishonourable equivoque once more did duty: "it had been clearly shown that Mr Bradlaugh did not regard the oath as having any binding effect on his conscience." The mover of the amendment in Bradlaugh's favour, Mr Davey, was much interrupted, as was Bright when he proceeded to support it. Interrupting Bright was never profitable. His first allusion to religious disability evoked the customary imbecile correction, "irreligious disability." The answer was prompt:—

"Hon. members say 'irreligious disability.' Well, you have objected before to the admission of the Roman Catholics. ('Hear, hear.') You objected to them because of their religion, which you deemed to be false—(loud cries of 'No' and 'Yes')—and the religion you deemed to be false you would now seem to consider much better than no religion at all. On the same ground you refused for many years the claims of the Jews to be admitted to this House, and you have now raised exactly the same question—('No' and 'Hear')—but in a more offensive form—('Oh' and cheers)—because you aim your shafts at a particular individual, who cannot be said to represent a class."

Once more Bright defended Bradlaugh from the impudent charge that he had "obtruded his opinions on the House." His declaration that Bradlaugh's ground for proposing to affirm "was a ground honourable to himself—it was in point of fact a tenderness of conscience, as I should call it," drew "loud laughter" from the conscientious gentlemen of the Opposition. Bright pressed his point all the harder:

"I think it a gross unfairness—it was then and is now—to bring forward the fact that he himself preferred to affirm rather than take the oath, and then upon that to assume that the oath would not be binding upon his conscience. . . . He states in the most distinct manner that the words of the oath are binding upon his conscience—binding upon his honour and conscience. If that be so, you have no right to assume that the oath is not binding upon his conscience. You might as well tell me that the oath is not binding upon my conscience."

Later in the speech came a shrewd thrust:—

"If it be permitted to make these assumptions with regard to the hon. member for Northampton, why is it not equally right to make them with regard to other persons—I will mention no names—in this

House or outside this House, who either publicly or privately have expressed the same opinions as are assumed to be held by Mr Bradlaugh? But nobody proposes to put any questions to them. (Cries of 'Name.') It is admitted now that if Mr Bradlaugh had come to the table and said nothing about the affirmation—I do not hesitate to say that it is to his credit that he did not take that course—and had offered to take the oath, no question would have been asked, but he would have been allowed to take the oath just as other members of the House."

Another reference to Bradlaugh's conscience brought out the cry, "What is its value?" from a Conservative member, and Bright commented mildly enough:—

"I must express my regret at what I must call the almost violent temper with which some hon. gentlemen come to the consideration of this question. I can feel the greatest charity for a member of this House who in my opinion holds views on religious matters which appear to me so extraordinary and so unfortunate. . . . There has been no member of this House who has conducted himself with greater propriety and decorum—(cheers)—and he has brought to our discussions at least an average—perhaps more than an average—ability; and there is not a single word he has uttered, not a single act he has committed, which in the slightest degree ought to bar him from taking his place in this assembly of gentlemen. (Cheers.) I would ask hon. members to think for a moment whether it is in accordance with that Christianity which they presume so much to defend that they should now at this time, after many years, almost centuries, of discussion of questions of this nature, determine to raise up another barrier against the civil freedom which our constituencies believe they enjoy."

The use of the quotation:

"Bigotry may swell
The sail he sets for Heaven with blasts from Hell"

was perhaps the most resented item in the speech; and Mr Gorst, who followed, thought it judicious to assert that on his side of the House "there was no disposition to treat this question in the spirit of intolerance and bigotry which the right hon. gentleman had done his very best to stir up. . . . It ought to be treated purely as a question of legality." But in a few minutes Mr Gorst arrived at the further conclusion that "to say that this was a question for the courts of law was absurd."

Bradlaugh then made his "Second Speech at the Bar." He first reminded Mr Gorst, who had argued from his old answer to the

Committee on the point of the oath, that that answer was given unwillingly and after objection to its being put. In another preliminary paragraph he remarked: "My return is untainted. There is no charge of bribery, no charge of corruption, nor of inducing men to come drunken to the polling-booth." ("Hon." members who had done these things had had no scruple about taking the oath, nor had the House ever shown much resentment at contact with them.) Mr (now Sir) Edward Clarke had during the debate spoken of Bradlaugh's "making an avowal of opinions to the House" on a former occasion, and had contended that the dignity of the House was now involved.

"I have never," said Bradlaugh, "directly or indirectly, said one word about my opinions, and this House has no right to inquire what opinions I may hold outside its walls. The only right is that which the statute gives you; my opinions there is no right to inquire into. I shelter myself under the laws of my country. This is a political assembly, met to decide on the policy of the nation, and not on the religious opinions of the citizens."

He was accordingly meeting the Conservatives, as represented by Mr Gorst, on their own ground. On the question of dignity, raised by Mr Clarke, he asked:

"Do you mean that I can injure the dignity of this House? this House which has stood unrivalled for centuries? this House, supreme among the assemblies of the world? this House, which represents the traditions of liberty? I should not have so libelled you."

The most direct thrust in the speech is perhaps the following:—

"What will you inquire into? The right hon. baronet would inquire into my opinions. Will you inquire into my conduct, or is it only my opinions you will try here? The hon. member for Plymouth [Mr E. Clarke] frankly puts it—opinions. If opinions, why not conduct? Why not examine into members' conduct when they come to the table, and see if there be no members in whose way you can put a barrier? ('Hear, hear.') Are members, whose conduct may be obnoxious, to vote my exclusion because to them my opinions are obnoxious?"

Here again the tone is not deprecatory:—

"The right hon. baronet has said there has been no word of recantation. You have no right to ask me for any recantation. Since the 9th April you have no right to ask me for anything. If you have a legal

disqualification, petition, lay it before the judges. When you ask me to make a statement, you are guilty of impertinence to me, of treason to the traditions of this House, and of impeachment of the liberties of the people."

And the close—it cannot be called a peroration—makes no abatement of emphasis :—

"I ask you now, do not plunge me into a struggle I would shun. The law gives me no remedy if the House decides against me. Do not mock at the constituencies. If you place yourselves above the law, you leave me no course save lawless agitation, instead of reasonable pleading. It is easy to begin such a strife, but none knows how it would end. . . . . You think I am an obnoxious man, and that I have no one on my side. If that be so, then the more reason that this House, grand in the strength of its centuries of liberty, should have now that generosity in dealing with one who to-morrow may be forced into a struggle for public opinion against it."

Mr Gladstone followed with a carefully subdued speech, in which, however, he remarked: "Mr Bradlaugh is upon his trial before the House; but the House also, permit me to say it with great respect, is upon its trial," and he proceeded to cite against the opposition the authority of

"Sir George Grey, who was an ornament of the House for fully forty years, and who has not ceased to take a lively interest in its proceedings. I hold in my hand his written opinion, expressed in the most decisive terms, and he has the fullest conviction that the opposition to the taking of the oath by Mr Bradlaugh ought not to be permitted by the Chair."

He further bore laudatory witness to Bradlaugh's behaviour in the House :—

"Every man must in common fairness admit that Mr Bradlaugh is to be credited with the best and highest motives. He is under a *prima facie* and presumptive obligation and duty, having been elected by a constituency to present himself at the table as the only means of fulfilling his duty to them. On the other hand, I need not animadvert upon his conduct. It is generally admitted that his conduct while he sat on those benches was the conduct of a man of great ability, integrity, and honour."

Incidentally, the Premier mentioned that the authority of Sir John Holker was with those who held that the House had no right

to interfere; and he put to the Opposition, at some length, the plain logical outcome of their action, namely, that they were bound, in every case in which a member's opinions were known from any source to be irreligious, to refuse that member the oath. The argument was unanswerable; but it was not argument that was to be met. After a long debate the House divided, when 208 members voted for Northcote's motion, and only 175 against.

Then came another "scene." Bradlaugh came to the table and made his old protest: "The resolution of the House is against the law, and I respectfully refuse to withdraw." The Speaker, as before, asked for "instructions." Northcote asked Gladstone to propose something. Gladstone "left it to the majority to carry out their own vote." Northcote, after lecturing the Premier for dereliction of duty, moved "that Mr Bradlaugh be ordered to withdraw." Gladstone warmly demanded to know on what grounds he was lectured. Mr Labouchere interposed with a warning, and proposed to divide, but at the request of Mr Bright withdrew the motion. The Speaker again asked Bradlaugh to withdraw, and Bradlaugh again refused. The Serjeant-at-Arms was then called on to remove him, and did so in the former fashion, Bradlaugh returning from the bar to the table as before, protesting against physical force, and asking the House "not to put me to the indignity of a physical struggle." Again the Speaker "threw himself upon the House for instructions," and the House called for "Northcote" and "Gladstone"; but neither leader responded. A member asked whether Mr Bradlaugh had not already been ordered out. The Speaker helplessly explained that the order "only extended to the bar of the House and no further," on which Bradlaugh moved back to the bar and stood there. Northcote rose and feebly protested that he "was only prevented from moving that Mr Bradlaugh should be committed by the feeling that Mr Bradlaugh was encouraged by the Government in his resistance." Gladstone "entirely repudiated and repelled the statement," considered the accusation groundless and wanton, and called upon his right hon. antagonist to "point to the facts on which he has made so grave a charge to the House." Northcote suitably replied, and Gladstone again repudiated, intimating that he "should not take any steps in this matter until the time came when it appeared to him he could do it with advantage to the House." Thereupon Mr Cowen moved the adjournment of the House, which was eagerly

agreed to. Only in that fashion was the House able for the time to get out of the ignoble dilemma in which it had been landed by a cowardly cabal of bigots and faction-fighters. Northcote did not dare again to move Bradlaugh's committal, but did not dare to confess it; and there was nothing to do but run away.

Next day, however, the trouble began afresh. Bradlaugh again presented himself, and was once more removed to the bar, where he stood as before. Mr Labouchere now asked whether the Government would give facilities for the Affirmation Bill he had introduced last session; and Gladstone in his lengthiest manner evolved the answer that it would depend on whether the Bill was to be opposed. Mr Labouchere and others passed on the appeal to Northcote as directly as the forms of the House permitted; and Northcote, as lengthily as Gladstone, made answer to the effect that "a measure of the kind" would have his "careful consideration," but he could agree to nothing "in the nature of a bargain." The truth was, of course, that Northcote could not answer for his more unscrupulous followers, but dared not admit as much; so the debate went on in the diffusest House-of-Commons manner. After a long speech from Bright, Mr Hubbard, losing patience, and having no judgment to lose, asked "What use were the police, or officers of the House, if they could not protect the House from the intrusion of people who had no business there?" No answer being vouchsafed from the deaf heavens, Mr Walter pompously explained that in his opinion Mr Bradlaugh ought to be allowed to affirm, but that no unbeliever ought ever to be allowed to take the oath. "It was idle to say the House had not official cognisance of the fact that the hon. gentleman belonged to a sect which did not believe in the existence of God." Another long speech from Gladstone left the situation unchanged. Mr Newdegate intimated that if neither leader moved the arrest of Mr Bradlaugh, he would, if necessary, do it himself. Still the debate rolled on. Mr Chaplin admitted that Bradlaugh while in the House "had acted with great ability and great moderation," but then he had "openly avowed," etc., so they could not stand by, etc. They commenced their proceedings with prayer, and invoked the aid of the Supreme Being to guide them in their labours. On the obvious efficacy of the appeal, Mr Chaplin did not dwell. A dozen more speakers followed, some of them—as Alderman Fowler and Mr Warton—

declaring that they would oppose any bill; while one Maciver intimated that he "intended on Thursday to ask the Prime Minister whether he would introduce a short measure for the partial disfranchisement of Northampton." At length, on no assurance from Northcote, but simply on a favourable expression of feeling from Sir Walter Barttelot, Mr Labouchere's motion for the adjournment of the House, under cover of which the whole long-drawn discussion had taken place, was by leave withdrawn; and Bradlaugh withdrew to await the action of the Government.

On the 29th April Gladstone did announce the intention of the Ministry to introduce an Affirmation Bill, whereupon Lord Randolph Churchill announced his intention to oppose it; and the early stages of the measure were systematically hampered. Bradlaugh published in his journal an "Appeal to the People," in which he asked them to "speak out clearly, distinctly, thoroughly, and at once on this issue;" and he again held a great town's meeting at Northampton. After a long and brilliant speech, ending with the words, "In this struggle some one must recede, some one must bend, some one must break. This I do pledge myself, that if health do keep, and life do hold, I will never give way," there was a loud tempest of applause, at the close of which he rose again and asked the audience, "Have you still confidence in me?" and "Will you stand by me in this fight?" Every hand went up to both questions with fresh storms of cheering, and Bradlaugh answered "Then on my honour, if I live, we will win."

The House, however, did not mend its ways. On 2nd May Gladstone moved that the other Orders of the Day be postponed for the Oaths Bill, and Churchill opened the debate with a vulgar and violent harangue, which ended with a hope that the Tories would "give no facilities for placing in that House brazen Atheism and rampant disloyalty." Several followed suit; and Northcote, seeing his followers leading him as usual, made one of his flabby speeches in deprecation of anything like speedy action in the matter. The measure must be discussed "upon its own merits, and not with reference to the circumstances and position of any given individual;" and there must be no "semblance of hurry for the purpose of avoiding a scandalous scene." In fine, there should be no alacrity. Gladstone extensively assented, agreeing to allow an interval after the introduction of the Bill; but a number of Tories threw over

their leader, and one Lewis moved the adjournment of the debate. This failing, the Home Rulers raised a dispute on procedure, whereafter the Attorney-General, Sir Henry James, introduced the Bill. In the course of his speech Sir Henry cited the admission of Northcote to the effect that he did not object to Bradlaugh sitting in the House, but to his taking the oath. The unhappy Northcote, pressed on all sides, made the pitiful explanation that when he said so he only wanted to raise the point of the oath; but he did not now wish to be understood as having no objection to Bradlaugh's presence in the House.

Adjourned till Friday the 6th May, the debate was then proposed to be postponed till the 10th, whereupon Mr A. J. Balfour—who now for the first time interposed in the controversy within the House—objected to the Government's course as being taken "not to give relief to any large class of Her Majesty's subjects, but to deal with an individual." Sir Richard Cross, who was reminded that he had admitted there was no way out of the difficulty save by legislation, granted that he was of that opinion, but avowed that he would all the same oppose any attempt to give facilities for Bradlaugh's admission. On a division on the amendment the Government had only a majority of 6 votes—128 to 122. On their motion being put substantively, a new discussion arose, the Tories moving the adjournment of the debate. Bright made an impressive speech, in which he "ventured to say that if the Bill were passed there were scores of members who would prefer to make an affirmation," but obstructive speaking went on, Mr T. P. O'Connor, among others, ridiculing Bright's speech, and charging him with having "insulted the religious feeling of the Irish people" earlier in the evening. After hours of time had been spent, the Government, at three o'clock in the morning, agreed to the adjournment; but on Tuesday morning, when the question was raised after one A.M., the obstruction was continued on precisely the same lines, and the ministry gave up their plan of a "morning" (*i.e.* afternoon) sitting. Lord Henry Lennox's principle of "putting that damned Bradlaugh on them" was now felt by his party to be an inspiration worthy of the common cause. Bradlaugh's admission stood indefinitely adjourned, so far as the Government were concerned. But they had still to reckon with Bradlaugh himself.

Giving due notice, he presented himself at the House next day,

and the now customary scene was enacted. The Speaker made his usual appeal, and Sir Stafford Northcote moved "that the Sergeant-at-Arms do remove Mr Bradlaugh from the House until he shall engage not to further disturb the proceedings of the House." On challenge, he explained that by this he meant that Bradlaugh should "not come within the door kept by the door-keepers." To this motion Gladstone agreed, asking his followers to do likewise. It "relieved the Government," as the journals noted at the time, "of the necessity for pushing on the Parliamentary Oaths Bill."

Bradlaugh for his part decided not to renew his attempt until the Irish Land Bill had got through the House. So much consideration he thought the Government were entitled to, and no amount of injustice from Irishmen could induce him to put in jeopardy a measure of justice to Ireland. On this decision he promised the Sergeant-at-Arms not to attempt any forcible entry of the House without giving him full notice.

§ 10.

Meanwhile the battle of opinion went on outside the House. It was noticed at the time, as a significant fact, that in the newspaper war on the subject nearly every attack on Bradlaugh was anonymous, or signed with initials, while nearly every defence of him was signed. His friends fought for him with his own spirit. A "League for the Defence of Constitutional Rights" was founded in his support; and an "anti-Atheistic Committee" was formed on the other side, with an office in the Strand, and with the name of Sir Bartle Frere figuring in its propaganda. On this Bradlaugh struck out as he seldom did. "At least very shame," he said, "should have made Sir Bartle Frere hesitate before he paraded his blood-and-shame-stained name in a crusade against me." The "anti" Committee held a ticket meeting in Exeter Hall, at which a Secularist who had a platform ticket learned from a member of the Committee, a magistrate, that the Committee had engaged for the evening six prize-fighters, with instructions to "stop the mouths of Mr Bradlaugh's friends with their fists." The meeting was presided over by Earl Percy, and among the speakers was the Varley before mentioned. "Bradlaugh's friends" filled the street outside and carried counter resolutions. Indoors the promoters had the services of the police in tearing up the

tickets of any comers who were pointed out to them as Freethinkers, and in ejecting the presenters; while disorder was created by the further ejection from the platform of a number of Freethinkers who had gone thither with proper tickets.* No less than two hundred policemen had been supplied by the Home Office. After this naturally there was some disturbance. According to Canon Taylor, one of the speakers, "for an hour and a half it was scarcely possible for the different speakers to get a hearing, except a few sentences at a time; and when 'God save the Queen' was sung the Atheists in every possible way showed their disloyalty." The resolution of the promoters was declared carried; but the Rev. Canon "was alarmed to see such a large minority, extending from beneath the platform to the other end of that large hall, composed of men and, he was grieved to say, women." (The boys present, it may be inferred, belonged to the Young Men's Christian Association.) And this alarmingly large minority, when the "contrary" vote was taken, "rose with the greatest possible manifestations of dissent, and with the waving of handkerchiefs." Quite a number of similar meetings in the provinces failed more or less badly. On the other hand, Bradlaugh in person held crowded meetings, free to all, in many towns, getting an ovation everywhere, in addition to which scores of resolutions and petitions in his favour were sent to the House by Liberal and Radical clubs. A mass meeting held at St James's Hall under the auspices of the Constitutional Rights League, finally, was packed to the door Among the speakers were three clergymen, one belonging to the Church of England, Admiral Maxse, and Mr Labouchere; and no dissentient vote was given on the resolutions in Bradlaugh's favour. One of the Nonconformist ministers who spoke, the Rev. Mr Sharman, told how Plymouth Liberals had sent to Northcote the telegram: "We protest against your effort to deprive Northampton of one-half of its representation as being revolution in the name of Conservatism and robbery in the name of religion." The Rev. Stewart Headlam said of Bradlaugh:—

"I know the great work he has done in the east of London for the moral condition of the people. I know how he has got hold of

* In the House of Commons on 7th February 1882 Earl Percy asserted that Bradlaugh's friends had fabricated tickets for the meeting. The statement was absolutely false.

hundreds of people whom we clergy have been utterly unable to reach; and . . . I am certain that the work he has done in the east of London has been of the greatest moral use for the elevation of the people."

Bradlaugh, on his own part, paid one of his many tributes to Gladstone.

Of this meeting no report appeared in the leading Liberal paper, the *Daily News*, then understood to be mainly owned by Mr Samuel Morley, before mentioned. This was unhappily not the only instance of a Liberal journal perverted by private motives to the side of bigotry in Bradlaugh's case. Mr Joseph Cowen, M.P., owner of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, who had long been on friendly terms with him, and who had volunteered the expression of approval of Bradlaugh's action when he was imprisoned in the Clock Tower, now took the line of charging him with inconsistency in proposing to take the oath, though it was for trying to take the oath in the previous session that he had been imprisoned. And Mr John Morley, then editing the *Pall Mall Gazette*, not only gave prominence in that journal to utterances hostile to Bradlaugh, such as that of Mr Holyoake, but suppressed letters in his favour, even when sent by a literary man of good standing like Mr Moncure Conway. Mr Morley, while of course condemning the Tory tactics, now blamed Bradlaugh for proposing to take the oath at all, though he had before spoken of him as "parading his views," and though, when he previously accused him of first "declining" the oath and then asking to take it, he had *not* condemned oath-taking by an unbeliever. Bradlaugh pointed out that voluntary abstention from taking the oath would have made his seat void in law, to which the *Gazette* editorially answered by expressing its confidence that if Bradlaugh had simply refused to take the oath, the House would not have dreamt of unseating him on that score. On the strength of that conviction the *Gazette* editor wrote:*—

"We have not concealed our opinion that Mr Bradlaugh would have consulted his own dignity by refusing to take the oath, and fighting out an issue which could only have one end." And again:† "The

* April 27, 1881.

† May 6, 1881.

national belief in the existence of a Deity will not be lessened by the fact that Mr Bradlaugh and men like him are no longer called upon to use a form which in their lips is an indecent piece of mockery."

When later elected himself, Mr Morley made no attempt to act on the rule he had thus laid down or caused to be laid down for another man.

It is a curious and a melancholy illustration of the instability of human character that while Mr Morley was partly playing into the hands of the spirit of injustice, Mr Goldwin Smith, who now wears its livery, was emphatic on the other side. He thus wrote in his Toronto journal, the *Bystander*, in April 1881 :—

"To the shame of British civilisation and religion, the attack upon Mr Bradlaugh and upon the civil rights of his constituents goes on, and has been technically successful in a court of law. *The ringleaders are scamps*, putting forward religion as a pretext for political persecution. It is Sandwich over again denouncing Wilkes for impiety. Set a coronet on Mr Bradlaugh's head, give him a large fortune, make him a Tory in politics, and though he were the most offensive of Atheists, and the most profligate of debauchees to boot, he would have these crusaders at his feet. . . . If Parliament allows a fine to be levied on Mr Bradlaugh for taking the seat to which he had been duly elected it will undergo a far greater disgrace than any that can be inflicted upon it by obstruction."

Doubtless Mr Goldwin Smith, writing in Canada, did not feel the burden which weighed on Liberal respectability at home, the more so as he had never professed himself a rationalist.

§ 11.

The lawsuit raised by Clarke on behalf of Mr Newdegate still went on its difficult way, Bradlaugh fighting it inch by inch and point by point. On 2nd May 1881 he argued before the Lords Justices of Appeal a point on which he had previously been stopped, and on which no judgment had been given. This was as to the validity of the "replication," in which Bradlaugh argued that, as he had actually made affirmation, he could not properly be sued (as he had been) for sitting and voting without taking the oath. The judges ruled that as he was not in their opinion entitled to affirm, the fact of his affirming was not a valid answer. Defeated here, Bradlaugh decided next to endeavour to overthrow the action on what he described as a pure technicality, the

argument that, as the writ was dated 2nd July 1880, and the vote sued on had been given on that day, the action had been brought too early, "for that the writ must be held to have been tested at the earliest possible moment of the 2nd of July, and therefore prior to the sitting and voting for which the penalty is claimed." This point was raised on 16th and 17th May before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge and Mr Bowen, on Clarke's counsel moving for judgment, and Bradlaugh advanced a long and learned argument on the point. Judgment was delayed, and the legal point was tried on 20th and 21st June, before Justice Denman and Watkin Williams, on the plaintiff's amended statement, Bradlaugh demurring. His demurrer was overruled, Justice Denman admitting that the point raised was "true as a general rule of law," but not applicable to this case; and his lordship gave this singular reason: "For a legal fiction is for the purpose of doing justice, not for defeating it." It was not suggested that justice was being done in the case in hand; but if Bradlaugh's argument were to hold good, it might be defeated in somebody else's case. "No rule of law," said Justice Watkin Williams concurring, "compels us so to violate common sense and plain understanding," another decision worth remembering in the present connection. Bradlaugh drily wrote in his journal: "I think the decision of Justices Denman and Watkin Williams is in accordance with common sense, but I do not think it is consonant with common law." He added: "I shall, of course, appeal against the decision. The next step will probably be the trial at *Nisi Prius*"—that was, the trial of the matter of fact as to the exact hour of issuing the writ, which had still to be proved by oral evidence before a jury.

That trial took place before Mr Justice Grove and a special jury, in the Queen's Bench Division, on 19th, 20th, and 22nd July; and the cross-examination of witnesses by Bradlaugh elicited, for one thing, that Newdegate was the financial backer of Clarke's action, and, for the rest, that the evidence of Newdegate and his principal witnesses on the question of the time of issue of the writ was rather worse than worthless. Newdegate had a very bad time of it in the witness-box, and the verbatim report of his cross-examination * may be recommended to legal students as illustrating

* Given in a special number of the *National Reformer*.

the value of the testimony of an English gentleman and magistrate who believes devoutly in God, and holds that no unbeliever can be believed. A worse appearance has seldom been made in the witness-box by a man of standing; and in the case in question it was only surpassed in importance by the exhibition made by Newdegate's principal legal witness — a gentleman who was proved to have expressed his surprise that another legal gentleman should consent to give evidence for "a man like Bradlaugh." The whole report is a singularly dramatic comment on the proposition that oaths secure truthful evidence. Probably no competent and unbiassed person who now reads it will have any difficulty in concluding that the writ had actually been taken out at least an hour before Bradlaugh had given the vote on which it proceeded, and that at least three witnesses swore to falsehoods. Bradlaugh categorically asserted in Court that Newdegate had lied; and Newdegate's evidence was hardly the worst.

The facts of the case may now be historically stated with tolerable confidence Newdegate had been afraid that a friendly action would be brought against Bradlaugh, in which case Bradlaugh would not have to meet the £500 penalty. Newdegate desired that Bradlaugh should be mulcted; and he had actually been indecent enough to block the Bill of Indemnity introduced on Bradlaugh's behalf by Mr Labouchere. Nay more, in opposing the motion that Bradlaugh be permitted to sit on affirmation, he had argued that it was beneath the dignity of the House to lay a trap for a man and leave him to be caught in it by any one who cared to prosecute. Yet after saying this, he gave a bond of indemnity to Clarke, the common informer, for suing Bradlaugh; and he had apparently selected Clarke—a nondescript person, sometimes called a surveyor, sometimes an accountant, but professionally neither—because, having little or no means, he could not be made to pay costs in case of Bradlaugh winning the action.* Such a litigant would not stick at trifles. In concert with his legal advisers, Newdegate, to forestall the friendly action, had the writ ready for serving before Bradlaugh had voted. This, at

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* Formally, Newdegate was bound to pay Bradlaugh's costs if Bradlaugh won, but had the fact of the maintenance never come out, it would have been an easy matter for Clarke to become bankrupt, and leave Bradlaugh no redress, while he himself could be privately reimbursed by Newdegate.

least, seems to be pretty clearly revealed by the extraordinary prevarications of Newdegate and his witnesses.

The case ended oddly. The jury, after being locked up for nearly an hour, intimated that they were not likely to agree; and the judge asked whether a majority verdict would be accepted. Bradlaugh offered to do so, but Newdegate's counsel declined. After nearly an hour more, however, the jury agreed on their verdict; and it was for the plaintiff, Clarke. It was understood that they had agreed to give their verdict by majority. Bradlaugh tersely remarked in his journal: "The ultimate verdict a little disappointed me: I had thought that I had won." Certainly the judge's summing-up had seemed to be in his favour.

As usual, he appealed. Like Ben Bolt in the novel, he was "bad to beat." He appealed for a new trial, on the ground that the verdict was "against the weight of the evidence." But that was not all. Newdegate, having confessed giving a bond of indemnity to Clarke, had laid himself open to a return action, under a form of law, for the offence of "maintenance;" so on 27th July Bradlaugh accompanied Mr (now Sir) George Lewis, the famous solicitor, to Bow Street Police Court, where Mr Lewis moved for a summons against Newdegate, and another against his solicitor as accessory. The magistrate, Mr Flowers, was somewhat taken aback. "Is it not rather——" he began. "Yes," said Mr Lewis promptly; "and so is the action against Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Newdegate asks for strict law against Mr Bradlaugh, who now asks in return that strict law may also be enforced against Mr Newdegate." The summonses were granted.

Next day, 28th July, and on 1st August, Bradlaugh argued before Justices Grove and Lindley his motion for a new trial on the question of time in the Clarke case. Finally (8th August), after a request from the Court for affidavits had been followed by an extremely improper step on the part of Newdegate's solicitor, who actually sent some affidavits privately to Mr Justice Grove's house, the Judges gave a rule *nisi* for a new trial on the ground urged. This rule could not be argued till November, and if it were then made absolute the new trial could not take place till after Christmas, so that Newdegate was once more intercepted. The criminal summonses, on the other hand, did not come on till 20th September, for reasons which will appear in the next section, and when heard were dismissed by the magistrate, Mr Vaughan.

"He was of opinion that complainant had not shown that the maintenance of which he complained came within the meaning of the statute. Though the statutes of Richard II. and Henry VIII. did undoubtedly refer to crimes and imprisonment for maintenance, still it was most singular that no indictment could be found for violation of these statutes. It seemed to him that the proceeding was an obsolete one, and that the criminal law ought not to have been invoked for a purpose of this description, when it was open to Mr Bradlaugh . . . . to apply to the common law courts. . . . Old statutes had been searched out in order that proceedings—which he could not help thinking had been taken to gratify a very unfriendly feeling on Mr Bradlaugh's part—might be instituted in the hope that Mr Newdegate would be committed for trial."

The licence of general criticism taken by our magistrates has seldom been more strikingly exemplified; and no one but a prejudiced magistrate, probably, would have had the assurance to condemn a litigant for "unfriendly feeling" towards a declared enemy who had wantonly and zealously sought to ruin him.* The deliberate setting aside of the statutes as obsolete, too, while a civil action was admitted to lie, was an act of lenity to Mr Newdegate, contrasting favourably with the attitude of other judges towards Bradlaugh. But the fact that a civil action remained open was sufficient for Bradlaugh's purposes; and already Newdegate had begun to repent somewhat of his zeal. His costs were accumulating, and still the hoped-for prey was out of his reach. A circular was accordingly issued on his behalf by Captain Bedford Pim, who felt "strongly that Mr Newdegate, M.P., should not be allowed to suffer for his spirited and patriotic action against Atheism, and that some steps should be taken to bear him harmless in the struggle upon which he has so nobly entered."

§ 12.

In the interval between the issuing and the hearing of the summonses for maintenance, something more serious had occurred. When the Government had in May decided to postpone their Oaths Bill, Bradlaugh, while acquiescing perforce in the delay, had renewed his platform agitation with redoubled energy, pre-

* Mr Vaughan had twice previously given decisions against Bradlaugh, and both had been upset on appeal.

paratory to forcing a fresh contest on the House if need were. The situation grew worse instead of better. Between 20th June and 4th July he had had a formal correspondence with Mr Gladstone on the subject. "You are aware," wrote Mr Gladstone, declining the request for an interview, "to how considerable an extent Liberal and public interests have been brought into prejudice by untrue suppositions as to communication between you and the Government." Bradlaugh answered by a detailed statement of his action, which had been guided by a desire to avoid embarrassing the Ministry; and Gladstone in reply acknowledged this; but later (28th June) intimated that they proposed to try to close the Session early in August, and they could not hope to carry any strongly controversial measure after the Land Bill. This intimation was made definite in a letter of 2nd July, and Bradlaugh was once more left to his own devices. He chose his course at once. First he addressed to the Speaker, under date 4th July, a formal letter, setting forth his contention as to the illegality of the House's action on 10th May. He was advised, among other things, that the excluding order of that date did not authorise the Sergeant-at-Arms to use force, and that the use of force to prevent his re-entry would be illegal.

"I beg therefore, sir," he went on, "most respectfully to give notice that I claim to disregard the order of the House, ... and to treat the same as not requiring obedience from me, on the ground that such order is absolutely illegal. . . . . In the name of the law, sir, and of my constituents, I also most respectfully give notice that I shall, in the manner and at the time provided by the standing orders of the House, again present myself at the table of the House, to complete the fulfilment of the duty imposed on me by law."

On this declaration he set about acting. He had had no encouragement whatever to hope for justice save under pressure. Northcote, who had no moral motive for his action, was open to no moral appeal. To him Bradlaugh addressed a public letter (1st July 1881), which to-day needs neither adding to nor taking from. After a recital of the facts, it ran :—

"At first, though I disagreed with you, I thought you honest, for you had the repute of an honourable man, and you said that it was not from any desire to prevent my taking my seat, but from a desire to prevent the profanation of the oath, that you were prompted to act as

you did. You had been present in the House when John Stuart Mill took the oath, and you raised no objection. You have been present in the House when other members, whose heresy is matter of common repute, took the oath, and you have rested silent. Yet I counted you a fair English gentleman, and I believed your word in any case. But now, from your speeches outside the House, I find that you claim to hinder me from sitting in Parliament, whether by complying with the law as it now stands, or by means of any change which may be proposed to meet your objection. At Manchester you justified your action on the ground that there was a general feeling in the country against me personally*—a dangerous argument, even if it were well vouched. But how is this feeling to be tested? Nearly all the meetings called against me have been lamentable failures, despite the most ridiculous precautions. Almost every meeting called in my favour, and this whether or not I have been personally present, has been an enthusiastic success.

"And yet the very vilest means have been resorted to to damage me in the public mind. In your presence at Manchester, and without one word of rebuke from you, one distinguished and noble member of your party repeated against me some of the utter falsehoods of the Varley pamphlet, although I had given you in writing my distinct assurance of the untruthfulness of much of that pamphlet. . . To make a show against me, petitions have been sent round the country to hundreds of Sunday Schools, and little children by the score have been compelled to affix their signatures. Two petitions presented by yourself from Glasgow and York contain hundreds of signatures of lads and girls under twelve years of age. Orange Lodges, Roman Catholic organisations, and the machinery of the English Church Associations have been utilised to procure signatures."

Northcote replied:—

"I cannot admit that there is any foundation for the charge of illegality which you make against the House of Commons. But I must decline to enter into controversy with you upon the general subject of your case. I can only say that I have acted from a sense of

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* The essential unveracity of Northcote's political character is shown by the fact that after thus using the "numbers" argument against Bradlaugh, he himself solemnly denounced the principle. Speaking at Edinburgh in 1884 (see Mr Lang's "Life," ii. 218) he said: "I am afraid that the Government will take far too much to the numerical principle, and if you take to the principle of mere numbers, depend upon it you will be introducing the most dangerous change into the Constitution." Exactly what Bradlaugh had said to him.

public duty, and from no personal motives; and that I see no reason for doubting the propriety of the course which I have pursued."

But even those Liberal members who had voted on his side were for the most part quietly acquiescent in the injustice done, regarding a wrong to one "unpopular" man as a small matter. The only member who persistently protested was Mr Labouchere, for whose courage and constancy throughout the whole struggle no words of praise could be too high. In the circumstances there was nothing for it but to rouse the country, and this Bradlaugh did as only he could. It is difficult now to realise the enormous amount of energy he had to spend. While his cases were pending in the higher courts, he was doing three men's work outside. Thus in the week 18th to 24th July we find him spending three days fighting his case in the hot and crowded Court; holding three night meetings in London; attending a Freethinker's funeral (where the sight of the grief of the widow and children made him quite break down); speaking at a great demonstration of miners in the north; giving three lectures in South Shields; and holding a huge gathering in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. He knew he was drawing terribly on a constitution which, though of a giant's strength, had for many years been doing giant's work; but he never flinched in a battle while he had any strength left. His plan was to evoke a clear expression of feeling on behalf of his claim in all the large towns, to hold a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square, and then again to present himself at the House; and if the House had been capable of looking at the issue half as reasonably as the constituencies did, it would have been promptly settled. Wherever Bradlaugh went, he got unanimous votes in his favour. At one stage he reckoned that out of a series of audiences amounting in numbers to 75,000, only two hands had been held up against his claim. It was wonderful to see how he swayed audiences against their own prejudices. He must have been listened to by thousands of men who disliked him and his opinions equally; but they simply could not resist the appeal for a just judgment. I well remember how, when he spoke in Edinburgh in 1881, he extorted a vote from a general audience there. The body of the hall was filled with middle-class citizens, few of whom had any sympathy with his propaganda, and many of whom must have strongly resented his "notoriety;" in the gallery were a number of Tory

students, with the manners of their kind; and post-cards had been freely circulated with a view to an organised opposition. At the outset the students did their best, but Bradlaugh's voice rose easily above their din; a quick repartee or two to their interruptions turned the laugh against them, and soon he was quietly listened to.* At the close he made the usual call for a show of hands on his claim. As one of the promoters of the meeting, I was interested in watching the manner of the response; and I can still see the respectable church-going shopkeepers slowly and as it were compulsorily raising their right hands at the call of the Atheist and Republican. Only some dozen, as far as I remember, voted "on the contrary." This was in an audience mainly unsympathetic. At Trafalgar Square, of course, he was in a dense army of enthusiastic supporters, including many delegates from provincial towns. The Dublin *Freeman* then, owned by Mr E. D. Gray, and the organ of Mr Parnell's party, intimated beforehand that "no large assembly can take place within a mile of Westminster Palace and the police will very summarily dispose of Mr Bradlaugh's ragged followers." The police made no such attempt; and it was well they did not, for the followers were neither ragged nor timorous, and their blood was not just then very cool.

This was on 2nd August; it was on the next day that Bradlaugh again presented himself at the House; and then occurred the crowning episode in the struggle—crowning alike in point of the dastardliness of the tactic employed against him and the desperation to which it momentarily moved him.

His unanswerable contention was that the House was bound to do something to settle the case. It ought either to declare his seat vacant or take some course to permit of his sitting. To keep an elected member out of his seat without disputing the validity of his election was a course which only a majority of professed law-breakers could consistently take; and the resolution excluding him from the House was merely a puerile evasion by the majority of the legislative problem they had raised. When, however, Bradlaugh presented himself afresh, that puerile policy was adhered to, only in a fashion that developed puerility into brutality. The Liberal Government acquiescing in the vote of the majority, the

* In this particular speech he used the phrase "that grand old man" of Gladstone. It was probably he who set the fashion.

matter was left to the police, who treated it as a police question, some of them behaving with that exuberance of insolence and ruffianism which they so often and so naturally bring to their task. Their way of seizing him angered him in a way in which he had never been angered before. A few extracts from the newspaper accounts of the time will suffice to tell what happened :—

"Mr Bradlaugh, after having waited till the Speaker had taken the chair, claimed admission to the House. He was in the first place opposed by the regular officials. 'I am here,' he said, 'in accordance with the orders of my constituents, the electors of Northampton ; and any person who lays hands on me will do so at his peril !'" Attempting to enter the House, he was seized by the messengers, but their resistance being insufficient to overcome the force they roused him to use, the police were called upon. "It was said by Inspector Denning that four ordinary men certainly could not have expelled Mr Bradlaugh, and that the ten constables, all remarkable for strength and activity, who were engaged in forcing him down the lobby stairs, found their task far more arduous than they had expected." They had him by the throat, arms, and collar, and he had some of them in the same hold. "The strong, broad, heavy, powerful frame was hard to move, with its every nerve and muscle strained to resist. . . . . The sight, little of it as was seen from the outside, soon became sickening. . . . . An almost death-like pallor had spread over Mr Bradlaugh's sternly-set features ; he was gasping for breath, his body was bent, and he was in a state of exhaustion painful to see. His black frockcoat was much torn, his collar and shirt disarranged, and he himself in a condition of intense mental excitement and bodily prostration. . . . . The Trafalgar Square phrase that this man might be broken but not bent occurred to minds apprehensive at the present appearance of him. . . . . His face was deathly white, and there was about the mouth an expression of determination, which those who witnessed it cannot readily forget. Overborne by the desperate struggle, he fainted, but soon recovered when water was brought to him."

When Bradlaugh appeared at the door in the grasp of the police there was a cry of wrath from the assembled crowd, which told of a source of "force" that might conceivably be tapped. At another door Mrs Besant stood, at the head of a mass of followers, who, hearing vaguely of what was happening, were urgent in their demand to be let take the law in their own hands. A word from her, a word from him, would have sent the multitude headlong into the House. They were not a chance London mob : they

included thousands of staunch working men from all parts of the country, who had attended the demonstration the day before. They were wroth with the callous iniquity that had been and was being worked by the majority inside. And Bradlaugh, standing bruised and shaken and insulted on the steps, hardly able to breathe, but with the fury of physical struggle still upon him, had a supreme temptation. In his first anger, alluding to the brute force used against him, he had said to Inspector Denning, "I shall come again with force enough to overcome it;" but he did not carry out his threat, though he might have done it on the instant. Had he but lifted his hand to beckon, the ten policemen would have been tossed aside like chaff by the host of his infuriated friends; the House could have been stormed, and his enemies could have been kicked wholesale into the river. With a supreme effort, he controlled himself, and forbade all outbreak; proceeding further to go through the form of trying again to enter the House, so that Inspector Denning should have to make a form of resistance, on which he might found an action. It was well. But it is believed that there are still some who, perfectly recognising the superiority of the course actually taken, can never wholly stifle, on retrospect, an obscure and unreasoned but haunting wish that the multitude had taken its own way, sacked the House, and thrown, if not the Speaker and his wig, at least Lord Randolph Churchill, and Sir Stafford Northcote, and Sir Henry Wolff, comrades three, into the Thames, that ancient river and unclean.

The picture as it stands is memorable enough. I have been told that James Thomson the poet, the estranged friend of Bradlaugh's youth, was among those at the gates; that he turned pale at the sight of the struggling group; and that his companions could hardly withhold him by force from rushing to his old comrade's help.

English gentlemen in general, of course, did not feel about the matter in that way. Bradlaugh told:—

"On Wednesday last I saw more than 150 members of the House of Commons gathered to witness, for the first time in English history, the cowardly and shameful use of overwhelming brute force in order to prevent a duly-elected member of that House from complying with the law. Most of these members seemed to enjoy the scene; one, Montague Scott, climbed to the top of a pillar, so that he might have a good (and safe) view; another, Alderman Fowler, actually followed to

the very bottom of the stairs, encouraging with voice and gesture those who were using force against law. A few, a very few members, protested against this conduct towards one of their fellow-members."

Fowler had shouted "Kick him out." He afterwards denied doing so. Bradlaugh on this wrote:—

"I see that Alderman Fowler in his place in the House of Commons denies my statement. I can only say that it is quite impossible I can be mistaken, for I saw Alderman Fowler stand, occasionally making jeering gestures, for nearly ten minutes after this, within four or five feet from me while I was recovering from the exhausting effects of the struggle."

Others saw the same. Concerning Fowler it is not necessary to investigate: his denial may stand for what it is worth; but it is quite certain that scores of members had looked on gleefully. Such creatures can our "English gentlemen" become, under the inspiration of their religion and their politics.

Inside the House the matter was at once raised by Mr Labouchere, who moved as a matter of privilege that the resolution of 10th May only excluded Bradlaugh from the outer doors of the Chamber, and not from the lobbies, and that the officers of the House, in excluding him completely, had acted without authority. The Speaker stated that the officers had acted under his directions. Mr Gladstone lengthily argued that there were "three distinct grounds" on which it was to him "quite plain that the motion could not be sustained." Northcote naturally approved altogether of the Speaker's action. Sir Wilfred Lawson contrived, despite interruptions, to make a good fighting speech on the main question, under cover of a proposed amendment, which turned out to be a motion for the rescinding of the resolutions of 26th April and 10th May. Mr Cowen invited the Government to say whether they would reintroduce their Oaths Bill next session, but no response was given; and the discussion drifted on in the usual wasteful way. Mr Biggar observed that on personal grounds he was indisposed to vote on Bradlaugh's side in the matter, because Bradlaugh had voted for the expulsion of Irish members earlier in the year, but he would vote against it as a bad precedent. The level of the debate was raised by a dignified speech from Bright, who irregularly appealed to the Opposition to think of what they were doing; whereupon Lord John Manners made the pragmatic reply that might have

been expected from that feudal personage. On the moving of an amendment approving what had been done, Gladstone diffusely intimated that it would be out of order for him to answer Mr Cowen's appeal. After much talk a vote was taken, when 7 voted for Mr Labouchere's motion and 191 for the amendment, a number of Radicals walking out to avoid voting. To the amendment, put as a substantive resolution, Mr Ashton Dilke moved a fresh amendment asserting the need for legislation, but this was disallowed as irrelevant. Sir Wilfred Lawson tried another, which fared no better. Mr Callan rose to explain that whereas Mr Bright had described Bradlaugh as being reduced to a fainting condition, he had put one of the officers in a far worse condition by his grip of that officer's throat—a statement which, despite its source, was not wholly untrue. Finally the resolution approving the course taken was allowed to pass, whereupon Mr Labouchere gave notice that he would again raise the main question on going into Committee of Supply.

§ 13.

Thus once more was the day of reckoning put off, the more decisively because an early result of the scuffle for Bradlaugh was a dangerous attack of erysipelas in the arm—the same arm which had suffered from the Tory bludgeons in 1878. He was able, indeed, though sorely shaken, to speak at the Hall of Science in the evening, when he appealed to his followers to avoid all violence. He was able to attend the law courts at Westminster on the 5th, when a House of Commons policeman, seeing him, fled indoors to give warning. On the same day Bradlaugh attended at the Westminster Police Court to apply to the magistrate, Mr D'Eyncourt, for a summons against Inspector Denning for the assault of the 3rd—not the ejection by the police, but the later formal resistance to Bradlaugh's entrance. This was a purely formal action, Bradlaugh having testified in his speech at the Hall of Science that Mr Denning personally had managed his unpleasant task with all possible consideration. The magistrate, laying significant stress on the action of the Speaker and of the House, declined even to grant the summons. One of his explanations was that "society has a right to protect itself against intrusion," and his tone throughout showed sufficient animus.

Having thus done what he could, Bradlaugh had to own himself disabled, and go to the seaside under medical treatment. On his arrival at Worthing, when he had wearily taken his place in the fly, a clergyman walked up, stared hard at him, and then said in a loud voice: "There's Bradlaugh; I hope they'll make it warm for him yet." The enemy in general behaved with their accustomed generosity. The *Irish Times* led the way with an intimation that he was malingering, stating further that the Irish members had opposed him because he "supported the Coercion Bill." The *North Star* repeated the charge of malingering with exuberant brutality. The *St James's Gazette* spoke of Bradlaugh as having behaved "like a drunken rough," further repeating the lie that he had "originally refused" to take the oath. Others rated him for his constant appearances in the law courts. The *Standard*, on being courteously asked to insert a letter correcting a misrepresentation, suppressed it. Liberals, professing to deprecate the course taken, yet palliated it; and Professor Thorold Rogers, among others, declared that nothing the House of Commons could do was illegal. The ministerial journals, of course, condemned him, telling him he had "lost friends" by his attempt. He was to sit still and wait till the Ministry should have the courage to make an Affirmation Bill a Cabinet question—a course which they refused from first to last to take, though it would at once have compelled their deserters to return to their allegiance. On this it may here suffice to say, once for all, that the justification given for Gladstone's course in the matter simply serves to show how low are the standards of our "Christian" statesmanship down to the present day. The justification is that Gladstone was bound to refrain from "compromising" his party by making the admission of the Atheist a Cabinet question. The good of the party must override the claims of justice. Mr Gladstone's memory is welcome to all the credit which such an argument will gain him from a posterity probably devoid of his sense of religious enlightenment. It will be a doubtful certificate of the foundations he claims for his morality, that while conscious of "bloodguiltiness" in the matter of the Transvaal, he declined to incur for conscience' sake the trivial and transient odium of having made justice to an Atheist a decisive demand as between him and certain of his followers. I am not here putting the opinion of Bradlaugh—whose chivalrous respect for Gladstone prevented him from passing any such criticism, whatever he may have thought in

his heart—but laying down what seems to me the only doctrine worthy of conscientious democrats.

It is satisfactory to be able to record that whilst the worst of the Tory and clerical party exulted in Bradlaugh's physical ejection, many religious men were moved by it to new sympathy with him. One esteemed Churchman wrote as follows:—

"After reading of the violence unjustly perpetrated on you yesterday by the order (or, at least, with the sanction) of a so-called Liberal majority, I desire, though an entire stranger to you, to offer you my sympathy. I never read anything which warmed me more than this account. If the present Cabinet does not secure your admission to the House in some way or other, I can only wish they may be turned out of office. The name of 'Christian' and the religion of 'Christ,' which *I* venerate, they make odious. As if Christianity could ever be *less* than common justice! I don't know what more I can do than say, 'Go on!' and 'Go in!' And if others feel as I do, you will be pushed into your place by a whole nation, with a much more irresistible force than has been used by a contemptible clique to keep you out.—I am, very respectfully and heartily, your well-wisher,

"E. D. GIRDLESTONE."

Needless to say, a number of Liberal journals, though less emphatically, protested likewise. All along, indeed, there were more voices for justice in the Liberal press than in the House, despite the common sense of a need to disclaim sympathy with the wronged man's "opinions." On the other hand, a number of pious persons, none giving their names, but all stating that they were Christians, wrote to assure the disabled man that he was going to hell. One promised to help him thither by shooting him if he again tried to take his seat. Two wrote that they prayed he might not recover, and many imbeciles sent tracts and religious books.

Of another order was the enmity of Sir Henry Tyler, who, feeling now safe in Bradlaugh's enforced absence, made an attack in the House of Commons on the Hall of Science science-classes and their teachers—an attack which he might have made while Bradlaugh sat, but did not. The argument was that science classes taught by atheists should be excluded from the South Kensington system. Of the teachers, three were women, viz. Mrs Besant and the Misses Bradlaugh; and as even the pious majority did not care to back up such an outrageous attack, it

came to nothing. Mr Mundella, the Minister concerned, even went out of his way to vindicate the classes; and the press mostly supported him. As a matter of course, the classes had been taught on strictly scientific lines.

In a few weeks from the date of his injury Bradlaugh was about again, lecturing, and speaking at demonstrations. His doctor advised him to go abroad, but he had his law cases before him, and felt he must buckle to work. At the beginning of September he published a fresh appeal "to the people," and on the 5th of that month he spoke at a potters' demonstation at Hanley, despite continued suffering in the arms. In his own journal, too, he once more took up the cause of Ireland—which indeed had all along been advocated in its columns—disregarding entirely the treatment he had had at the Irish members' hands. But stiffer work was before him, in the trial of his appeal against the decision of Justices Denman and Watkin Williams, on the legal or technical point, as to the validity of a writ dated on the day of the ground of action. This appeal was argued before Lord Coleridge and Lords Justices Baggallay and Brett, on 12th and 14th November, partly on different lines from those gone upon in the first instance. Bradlaugh was complimented by the judges on his "able and ingenious argument;" and the discussion between him and them is indeed a very pretty piece of high-class legal fencing. Sir Hardinge Giffard, who throughout these cases makes no great show as a pleader, did not attempt to deal with the most difficult point at all, and his junior did still worse; but their lordships dealt with it fully and carefully; and Bradlaugh handsomely acknowledged their rectitude, though they decided against him. His first care was to make sure that the plaintiff should not be allowed to tax his costs until final judgment on the other appeals to the House of Lords; and this was granted. The wolves were thus still kept at bay.

Next came on the pleading on the rule *nisi* for a new trial on the point of fact as to whether Clarke's writ (which specified no act of voting) had not been issued before the act of voting on which it was afterwards formally founded. This was heard on 2nd and 3rd December by Justices Denman and Hawkins, who went into the details with minute circumspection. Bradlaugh explained that his argument involved a charge of wilful perjury against James Stuart, the clerk employed by Newdegate's solicitor,

who had been a principal witness in the previous trial. He further pointed out that Newdegate's secretary, Hobley, had given a hopeless set of contradictions in cross-examination; and after the notes of that evidence had been read, Mr Justice Denman observed: "I am bound to say that after the searching cross-examination, which no counsel could have conducted more ably, it is hardly wonderful that Mr Hobley was very confused." It required no more than the reading of the rest of the evidence to satisfy the judges that the case for a new trial was fully made out; and they stopped Bradlaugh in his argument to say so. In regard to the special point of the time of the division in which he voted, the actual evidence of reporters was against Bradlaugh, making it earlier than he did; but when the judges checked his calculations they could find nothing wrong with them; and the evidence discrediting that of Stuart was too strong to be dismissed. After a good deal of vacillation, Clarke and Newdegate decided to appeal against the decision allowing a new trial, Newdegate in particular having reason to avoid one if possible.

§ 14.

Northcote's excluding resolution of 10th May being only valid for the session in which it was passed, Bradlaugh was free to enter the House as before, on the first day of the new session. He announced his intention to do so; and on the day of re-assembling he kept his word. In the interim an incessant discussion on the case had been going on in the press and on the platform. Tory speakers, as a rule, alluded to him with insult, sometimes of the basest description. One, Lord Ebrington, described him as a person who, but for a legal quibble, "would be in jail at this moment for publishing an obscene, indecent book." Another, Mr Orr-Ewing, spoke of Bradlaugh as circulating "filthy books, calculated to . . . . drag hundreds down as low as the brute beasts that perish." Most of the Tory speakers dwelt either on his having "first refused to take the oath" or "obtruded his views on the House," or "declared the oath would not bind his conscience;" and scarcely one omitted to add untruth to insult. The "profanation of the oath" was never alluded to without a shudder. On the Liberal side some members altruistically urged upon Bradlaugh to stand aside "for a few years" to let opinion ripen; and of the many who spoke in favour of his admission nearly all

thought it necessary to disclaim with "pity" or "abhorrence" all sympathy with his opinions. Of all these disclamatory gentlemen, there was not one whose name had then, or has now, the slightest philosophic authority; but though one or two admitted that they did not know the nature of the opinions which they all the same disclaimed, none seems to have been moved to avow that the subject was beyond his capacity.

Throughout the country, as all along, Liberal opinion was in advance of the action of the majority in the House; but the *Times* carefully suppressed the reports of meetings held in Bradlaugh's favour, and even of friendly allusions in members' speeches, and the *Daily News* at times exhibited equivalent traces of the ownership of Mr Samuel Morley. On the other hand, the cause of justice had some unexpected adherents. Lord Derby, speaking at the Liverpool Reform Club, frankly avowed that he "utterly disbelieved in the value of political oaths," and expressed a hope that no further attempt would be made to prevent Bradlaugh from taking the oath if he wanted to. Some groups of dissenting clergy, too—in particular the Unitarians—petitioned for the abolition of the oath or the permission of affirmation. But as against the possible gain from such declarations there was to be set the systematic and energetic hostile action of the Church of England. One Diocesan Conference passed a resolution calling on Churchmen in both Houses of Parliament to resist any measure which would admit "professed infidels" into Parliament. There was no objection to the admission of infidels who were not "professed." Another interesting exhibition of Conservative ethics came from Mr Gorst, Q.C., who, at a banquet at Chichester, in presence of the Dean, avowed that "he was not a person who pretended to have any great horror of the offence of bribery." Bradlaugh, who took a different view, had earlier taken occasion to speak of another of his assailants as a political scoundrel, in respect of being a convicted briber.

On the 7th of February 1882, when Bradlaugh as before presented himself at the table of the House, he was as before interrupted by Sir Stafford Northcote, who made his customary motion. This time, however, it was rested on the ground that Bradlaugh had admitted himself to be a person of a class on whom the law declared an oath had "no binding effect." Thus the Opposition stood explicitly on the nefarious application of an

ambiguous legal formula, which, as has been above shown, was not at all framed to carry the meaning thus put upon it. On this occasion nothing seems to have been said by the Tory leader in his opening speech about "profanation."

Bradlaugh withdrew to the bar pending the discussion, and Sir William Harcourt, in Gladstone's absence, briefly moved the previous question. Newdegate followed with an imbecile speech, which supplied a useful measure of the minds of those who had supported him throughout the country. He pointed to the history of France, protested against the proposed Channel Tunnel, and argued that to admit Bradlaugh would be "to destroy the distinctions between the basis of government in the two countries." Further,

"let them compare the condition of the two countries. While the wealth and the population of France were stationary, and the prestige of her arms was gone, England's wealth had increased and her kingdom expanded into empire. The fundamental difference between the two countries was this—that in the coronation oath taken by the Sovereign, and in the oath taken by members of both Houses of Parliament, a Deity was recognised, and the people venerated the obligation. There was but one other country in the world besides England that had not been conquered or had not suffered from revolution, and that was Russia. . . . Both countries based the claim of their Government to the respect of their subjects upon the Word of God. The United States had not adopted that system, and they had seen a civil war and two Presidents murdered there."

Bradlaugh was then allowed to make his Third Speech at the Bar. He struck briefly but sufficiently at the speech of Newdegate; and once more nailed down the eternal misrepresentation as to his having "paraded his opinions." When he reminded the House that his letter of 20th May was outside the House, and that he had objected to the Committee taking cognisance of it, the Opposition laughed. He reminded them that judges give a silent hearing to a man pleading his case. "If you are unfit to be judges, then do not judge." Again he put the plain dilemma: "If what I did entitles the House not to receive me, why has not the House had the courage of its opinions and vacated the seat?" Then came a graver challenge:—

"I have read within the last few days words spoken, not by members of no consequence, but by members occupying high positions in this

House, which made me wonder if this is the House of Commons to which I aspired so much. I have read that one right hon. member, the member for Whitehaven*—(laughter from the Ministerial side)—was prompted to say to his constituents that I was kicked downstairs last session, and that he hoped I should be again. If it were true that I was kicked downstairs, I would ask the members of the House of Commons on whom the shame, on whom the disgrace, on whom the stigma? I dare not apply this, but history will when I have mouldered, and you too, and our passions are quite gone. But it is not quite true that I was kicked downstairs, and it is a dangerous thing to say that I was, for it means that hon. members who should rely on law rely on force. It is a dangerous provocation to conflict to throw to the people. If I had been as wicked in my thought as some members are reported to have been in their speech, this quarrel, not of my provoking, would assume a future to make us all ashamed."

As the speech went on, he came into more and more sharp conflict with his antagonists.

"Does the House," he asked, "mean that it is a party to each oath taken? ('Hear.') There was a time when most clearly it was not so a party. There was a time when the oath was not even taken in the presence of members at all. But does the House mean it is a party now? Was it a party the session before last? Was it a party when Mr Hall† walked up to that table, cheered by members on the other side who knew his seat was won by deliberate bribery?—(loud Opposition cries of 'Order')—bribery sought to be concealed by the most corrupt perjury. Did the House join in it? (Renewed cries of 'Order.') If the House did not join in it, why did you cheer so that the words of the oath were drowned? Was the House a party when John Stuart Mill sat in this House?"

After repeating his former explicit declaration that the words of adjuration would in no way weaken the binding effect of the promise on his honour and conscience, he was met by jeers, and he began: "Members of the House who are ignorant of what is honour and conscience," meaning to add "in the case of a non-religionist" or words to that effect. He was again interrupted by loud cries of "Order" and "Withdraw" from the men who had just been insulting him *en masse*. He asked to be allowed to finish his sentence, but was still interrupted by the mob of hon. gentlemen on the

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* Mr Cavendish Bentinck.

† Elected for Oxford.

Opposition benches. "These," he cried, pointing at the rowdies, "these are my judges." There was a silence, and he went on. His blood was up, and he spoke at greater length than before, dwelling among other things on the scene of August, and indignantly rebuking those who had exulted in it. In conclusion, he offered to stand aside for four or five weeks if the House would in that time discuss an Affirmation Bill. Nay, if they feared to make it a Bradlaugh Relief Bill, he would resign his seat and stand for re-election. The Liberals cheered at this, and he ended: "I have no fear. If I am not fit for my constituents, they shall dismiss me, but you never shall. The grave alone shall make me yield."

Mr Labouchere, speaking next, stated that he had had sent him over 750 fresh petitions, signed by about 170,000, in favour of Bradlaugh being allowed to take his seat, and that other Liberal members had received petitions signed by about 100,000 more. He proceeded to challenge Northcote to abide by his own declaration of the previous year, that the question should be legislated on by the Government; and Northcote rose to make a second speech. He too, he averred, had received many petitions, and among others one from Northampton, "signed by 10,300 persons, giving their occupations and addresses"—a manifest prevarication, inasmuch as many of the 10,000 must have been the wives and children of the Tory electors.* On the Government amendment he objected to "profanation of the oath;" and as to the obstruction of the Oaths Bill last session, he reminded the Government that though they had certainly been somewhat obstructed, they might at any later time have put the Bill first on a Government night. As before, however, the Tory leader declined to make any "bargain." Gladstone replied, pointing out that it had been quite impossible for the Ministry to push the Oaths Bill as suggested, and declining to promise that the Government would give precedence to an Oaths Bill. They should let Bradlaugh swear, and take his chances in the law courts as before. On this theme he rang the changes, without much energy. After a number of

* Bradlaugh noted later in his journal that the petition was "alleged to be signed by 10,300 freemen of Northampton." This, he remarked, "cannot possibly be true, as the freemen do not amount to that number." They really numbered about 300! It turned out that thousands of the signatures were those of school-children.

minor speeches the House divided, when there voted for Northcote's resolution 286, and for the previous question only 228. Such a vote served to dispose of the view which had been advanced by some Liberals, that the minority of 26th April 1881 was due to the absence of many of their party who were prolonging their holiday, while all the Tories were in town for Beaconsfield's funeral. Some seventy "Liberals" had now deliberately stayed away (among them being Mr Goschen, Sir John Lubbock, Sir E. Reed, and Sir A. Gordon), while the whole Parnellite members present voted with the Tories. Five Scotch, eight Irish, and fifteen English Liberals did the same, among the latter being Mr Samuel Morley and Sir Edward Watkin.

Immediately on the vote being announced, and the question being put, Bradlaugh presented himself afresh, refusing as formerly to obey the resolution. The usual appeal from the Speaker elicited the usual motion from Northcote, which being carried, Bradlaugh said: "It would be undignified in me to indulge in any other kind of contest on the floor. I respectfully obey the House, and withdraw below the bar." The struggle was now apparently reduced to something like a recognised set of moves, all of which had been made and might be in due course made again; and Bradlaugh for the present was left to attend every meeting of the House, sitting beyond the bar, but without the power of voting or speaking.

Bradlaugh at once appealed to his constituents to choose whether or not he should resign; and they promptly decided that he should not; while some thirty indignation meetings were held throughout the country within a week, all condemning the action of the House of Commons. The law advisers of the Crown further formally declared on challenge that the seat was not vacant; and Bradlaugh wrote Gladstone, formally asking whether he was prepared to do anything. Gladstone on 18th February formally replied that he was not. Bradlaugh then took a new step, forcing the question on the House more determinedly than ever.

On Monday, 20th February, Mr Labouchere formally moved in the House that a new writ be issued for Northampton, seeing that Bradlaugh had been prevented from taking the oath and his seat. Churchill moved to amend the motion by substituting a description of Bradlaugh as "disqualified." The Attorney-General formally

opposed, and the perplexed Northcote did likewise, being guided by the sole fact that the motion was proposed by Bradlaugh's friendly colleague. After a debate, in which Northcote was dishonest enough to assert once more that Bradlaugh had "claimed" to be "a person on whose conscience the oath was not binding," the amendment was negatived, as was the proposition that the words proposed to be left out should be left in. The resolution was thus left at a stand at the word "who;" and on the unfinished sentence the House proceeded to divide. When it seemed as if the "Noes" would "have it" without a division, Bradlaugh moved from his seat and stood at the bar; but on Mr Labouchere's challenging a division he returned. On the vote being taken there were 307 "Noes" to 18 "Ayes." The House thus explicitly refused to decide that the seat should be vacated, though they were all the while preventing it from being taken.

Bradlaugh was once more at the bar when the tellers announced the figures. Immediately he walked up the floor to the table, members looking on without excitement, counting on a repetition of the old scene. But this time "the scene was changed." While members waited for the usual action of the Speaker, it suddenly dawned on them that Bradlaugh had a book in his hand —it was the regulation "New Testament"—and was taking the oath of his own accord! He had gone through the whole mummery before the excited House could collect its faculties, and he duly finished by subscribing a written oath on a sheet of paper with a pocket pen. The Speaker was on his feet; the Clerk had come half-way to meet Bradlaugh; and Northcote had risen to speak, and sat down again, speechless. The Speaker mechanically called on Bradlaugh, as usual, to withdraw below the bar. He did so, but in doing it announced that he should return and take his seat, which he did, seating himself on a back bench. The Speaker solemnly charged him with disobedience, to which Bradlaugh blandly responded that he had obeyed them, and had taken his seat in addition, having first taken the oath. On the Speaker insisting, however, he once more withdrew beyond the bar, sitting under the gallery as before. Churchill, collecting himself more promptly than his leader, argued that Bradlaugh, having taken his seat "without taking the oath," "was as dead," and moved that the seat be declared vacant. The Attorney-General professionally pointed out that to vacate the seat under

the statute the offending member must vote or sit during a debate. He suggested that the House had better adjourn the discussion, which it did after much further speech-making, in the course of which Churchill declared that Bradlaugh had "deliberately insulted the House," not for the first time; other members of similar dignity speaking to similar effect.

Next day the debate was resumed. Gladstone made a long and scrupulously bland speech, in the course of which he endured much contradiction of those who thought him insufficiently zealous for the honour of Omnipotence, concluding by saying that he left it to the majority to act for themselves. Northcote was laboriously indignant, and lengthily led up to a motion "that the Sergeant-at-Arms be instructed to prevent Bradlaugh from entering the precincts of the House," which motion, on the correction of the Speaker, he converted into an amendment to that of Churchill. A dispute arose on behalf of Dr Lyons, who had on the previous night given notice of a more drastic motion, but had not "caught the Speaker's eye" when he rose before Northcote. Then the debate drifted on; some members drivelling, some ranting, some platitudinising. At length Churchill's motion was negatived, whereupon Dr Lyons proposed his declaring Bradlaugh incapable of sitting, as an amendment to Northcote's. The pious Lyons was of opinion that "behind the particular issue there lay a great moral question," which, however, he did not specify. Again the debate rolled on. At length it was noticed that Bradlaugh had once more taken his seat within the House. The Speaker challenged him, and Bradlaugh began to explain that he proposed to "ask the indulgence of the House," when his voice was drowned in yells of "Order." The Speaker then solemnly charged him afresh with disobedience, and called "the attention of the House to that circumstance." Gladstone rose in response to calls; but the Speaker hastily interposed to call upon Bradlaugh to withdraw beyond the bar, which he did, formally protesting. Gladstone blandly observed that there was now no disobedience to deal with, and that it was not incumbent on him to do anything. Northcote arose in a state of ostensible but flabby indignation, and declared that "he must say there was a limit" to his "very moderate line." He now proposed to withdraw his amendment and substitute a motion of expulsion. Gladstone suavely intimated that he should not object to the withdrawal of the amendment, and Dr Lyons was

induced to withdraw his likewise. The motion for expulsion, on the ground that Bradlaugh had, "in contempt of the authority of the House, irregularly and contumaciously pretended to take the oath," was then put, and Gladstone intimated in a period that he would not oppose. Mr Labouchere dropped the very apt remark that "he had always found that when the House was exercising judicial functions it got into an unjudicial frame of mind," and pointed out that Bradlaugh's action had been taken to obtain a case for legal judgment, and could not reasonably be termed "insulting." On a division, 291 voted for the amendment proposing expulsion and 83 against; some Liberals salving their consciences with the formula that "the House must maintain the authority of the chair."

A new point was raised by the intimation of one of the tellers that Bradlaugh had voted in the division. He had thereby completed the legal circumstances for a test case. The Speaker again asked for instructions, but Northcote, rather than begin a fresh debate, let the matter pass. Then arose the question, energetically put by Mr Storey, whether Bradlaugh should not be heard afresh in his defence; but this too had to be dropped. On the substantive motion being put, 297 voted with Northcote, and 80 against; and a motion for a new writ was at once agreed to by Mr Labouchere.

§ 15.

Not only his constituents, but the people generally, gave Bradlaugh their instant and warm support. At a great Sunday meeting at Manchester, to which hundreds of men had trudged many miles through the rain in the early morning, over hills and moors, from the country round, some of them only to find the hall full to the door, he had a reception which brought tears to his eyes. At Northampton, of course, the struggle was desperate. Mr Samuel Morley, bent on making reparation to his Deity for his one act of rational tolerance, followed up his many Tory votes by a letter to the Northampton Nonconformists, asking them to vote for the Tory candidate as an "act of allegiance to God;" but, on the other hand, the Radical Association of Bristol (the town for which he sat), who had by this time, after twice hearing Bradlaugh, determined to unseat their

member, sent 3000 copies of an address begging the Northampton electors to return Bradlaugh by an overwhelming majority of votes. A meeting of delegates from some scores of workmen's clubs in London sent down 10,000 copies of a similar appeal. When Bradlaugh went down, thousands of people lined the streets to see him pass to say a few words in the Market Square. Radicals came from other towns to help in the canvassing, and Mr Labouchere gave his powerful aid. The Tories, on their part, did their utmost, using, if possible, viler weapons than before; and meantime they had been adding every possible vote to the register. The insolence of the Tory candidate to the workers was such that several of his meetings were broken up. The outcome of desperate efforts was that Corbett, the Tory, received rather more of the new votes than Bradlaugh, the figures being 3796 to 3688, a majority for Bradlaugh of 108 (2nd March 1882). In the fury of despair, the Tories had demanded a re-count of the votes, but this had only altered the majority by three. The betting fraternity, who had mostly laid their money on the side of "religion," were naturally enraged; and Corbett was reported to say on leaving, "I shan't come back to your dirty town any more." When the news spread, the fury did. One academic ruffian wrote in the *Saturday Review*:—

"The average Northampton elector and the rascal who shot at the Queen, while the average Northampton elector was voting for Mr Bradlaugh, probably acted from motives not dissimilar in kind, though the acts to which those motives led differed in degree of heinousness."

Journals which had predicted that Bradlaugh would be defeated, now propagated the lie that he had been carried by terrorism—their own terrorism having failed. By the workers in general the news was received with delight; in most towns it was waited for on the evening of the election with intense excitement, and acclaimed with unbounded enthusiasm. The House of Commons, however, was not to be turned from its evil courses.

On 4th March Northcote notified Bradlaugh of his intention to take the same course as formerly if he presented himself, and to make a motion on the writ if he did not. Bradlaugh replied, saying he presumed the motion would be one to promote the legislation which Northcote had often said ought to take place. "I congratulate you," he concluded, "on the return of at least

yourself to some respect for the law, and beg to assure you that I shall in such case do my best to help you to avoid further embittering a conflict of which I am sure you must feel heartily ashamed." On Monday, 6th March, Northcote asked the Speaker whether the resolution of 7th February was still in force, and was answered in the negative. He was proceeding to say he would make a motion, when successive protests against the interruption were made by Mr Labouchere and Mr Dillwyn. The Speaker overruled both, and Northcote moved that Bradlaugh, should he present himself, be not allowed to take the oath. On the Liberal side, Mr E. Marjoribanks (now Lord Tweedmouth) moved as an amendment a resolution that it was desirable so to alter the law as to permit any elected member to take the oath or make affirmation, at his choice. With the worst of bad taste, Mr Marjoribanks, who had before declared his preference for decorous hypocrisy, went on to explain that he was "one of the very large section of that House who regarded Mr Bradlaugh's conduct both within and without that House with something very like disgust and indignation," and to describe the recent oath-taking as an "unworthy manœuvre"—a display of class hatred which may serve to suggest the nature of the feeling on the Tory side. Mr Labouchere, after defending his colleague, undertook for him that if the amendment were carried he would not present himself until a decision was come to. Gladstone formally approved of the amendment; but after a long debate of the usual kind, it received only 244 votes against 259, to the wild delight of the Opposition. Twelve Liberals, including Mr S. Morley, Mr Torrens, and Mr Walter; and twenty-six Home Rulers, including Mr M'Carthy and Mr Sexton, had voted with Northcote.

The Liberal press was now nearly unanimous for legislation and even the *Pall Mall Gazette* went so far as to say: "All that is wanted is that the Government should pluck up a little more moral courage, and recognise that even in practice honesty is the best policy." In the foreign press, the general judgment was that the House of Commons was systematically disgracing itself. The Government, however, proposed nothing, leaving the Oaths Bill in the hands of the "disgusted" Mr Marjoribanks; while in the Upper House Lord Redesdale had on 7th March introduced a Bill providing that a declaration of Theism should be compulsory

on all members of Parliament and peers. This measure, he explained, he introduced "from a deep sense of what was due to Almighty God." A little later, on its discussion, his lordship withdrew it "in deference to Lord Salisbury."

Bradlaugh, on his part, after consultation with his committee in Northampton, and after publishing a telling "Address to the Majority" for general circulation, decided that his future course must be one of systematic agitation in the constituencies. The Constitutional Rights League was reconstituted; an election fund was begun for the purpose of contesting certain seats held by renegade Liberals; and in these constituencies the Radicals quietly went about the work of making them untenable. Already a Liberal candidate had been defeated on the score of the insolence of his language towards Bradlaugh's supporters, Mr Samuel Morley had been called upon by the Bristol Radical Association to resign; other members had been sharply censured in their constituencies; and it was plain that it only needed time to ensure the unseating of most of the renegades. For the present nothing was to be hoped for from the Government; and a fresh notice by Mr Labouchere of a motion for leave to introduce an Affirmation Bill was blocked by Earl Percy. Thus the men who shrieked against "profanation" resisted all the while every attempt to make oath-taking by unbelievers unnecessary. Finally, a petition by the Northampton electors to be heard at the bar of the House was dismissed by the Speaker as unentitled to a hearing; and a notice of motion on the subject by Mr Firth never got to a hearing. There was clearly nothing for it but to carry war into the renegades' country. On the subject of the Speaker's action generally, Bradlaugh contented himself with penning a very temperate but very weighty paragraph:*—

"I am just a little troubled how to decide one or two points. The Speaker of the House of Commons is the first commoner in England, and his judgment on the various points from time to time submitted to him is practically without appeal. It is impossible to suspect him of intentional unfairness; he is a clear-sighted and courteous gentleman. Yet some of his decisions seem so conflicting that I fail in understanding how he reconciles them to himself. On the 21st February he held that Mr Labouchere was entitled, under the then circumstances,

* *National Reformer*, April 2, 1882.

as of privilege, to move for a new writ for Northampton. On the 24th March, under precisely similar circumstances, Mr Speaker ruled that such a motion could not be made as one of privilege. On the 6th March, without any reason given whatever, except that I might come some time or other, the Speaker allowed Sir S. Northcote to raise the question of my right to my seat as one of privilege; but the Speaker now refuses to allow Mr Labouchere to raise as one of privilege the fact that one of the seats for Northampton is now in fact unfilled. On the 15th February the Speaker held that the resolution of the 7th February, which is directly in the teeth of the Standing Order of 30th April 1866, does not conflict with that order. On the 9th day of March he held that the resolution of the 6th March, which does not say one word about my coming to the table to take my seat, does so prevent my coming to the table, and that the same resolution, which does not mention my introducers or in any way forbid them introducing me, does in point of fact so act as a prohibition that he will hold any attempt to introduce me as disorderly and irregular. When my constituents wrote him, the Speaker answered that they must approach the House by petition. When they do approach by petition, he rules that their application has no privilege."

The dilemma, as between imputing to Sir Henry Brand unfairness, and pronouncing him to have failed in his duty, must be left here as Bradlaugh left it.

§ 16.

All the while the manifold litigation set up by the action of the House was moving on its slow way. The appeal of Clarke against the judgment of Justices Denman and Hawkins allowing a new trial had been heard on 21st February by Lords Justices Brett, Cotton, and Holker (the latter newly appointed), and these judges ruled that no new trial could take place, thus reversing the decision appealed against.

An independent comment on this judgment, which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the time, may be here cited :—

"The Court of Appeal holds that they [the Judges of the Queen's Bench Division] ought to have closed their eyes to everything but the partial evidence given at the trial, some of which at all events both the Court of Appeal and the Court below pronounced to be unsatisfactory. Nor does it seem perfectly fair to make so much as Lord Justice Brett does of the imputation of perjury to one of Mr Newdegate's witnesses. The Lord Justice himself admits that there were blemishes in his

testimony, and that he 'somewhat prevaricated and coloured his evidence, etc. We fail to see 'the enormous difference' between evidence of this character and perjury, at least for the purpose of such an action. If a man is to be condemned in a penal action he has a right to insist that it shall be on perfectly honest and straightforward evidence only."

The curious reader who cares to form his own opinion on the subject of the evidence referred to will do well to turn to the verbatim report preserved in the *National Reformer*.

The Clarke-Newdegate combination seemed now to see their way partly clear to their great end of making Bradlaugh bankrupt. On 29th March they moved before Justice Grove and Baron Huddleston for judgment—that is, for power to compel Bradlaugh to pay the penalty sued for and the costs. Bradlaugh admitted that at that stage he could not resist a judgment for the penalty, but resisted the motion so far as it claimed costs. To this the judges agreed; and on 30th March they gave judgment for the penalty, but reserved the costs pending the appeal to the House of Lords. Bradlaugh had thus to pay £500 into Court within fourteen days. Already, too, he had had to give securities for £500 on the appeal to the House of Lords, in addition to the £200 he had paid down according to rule. For these heavy payments he had to go into debt, his normal means of earning his livelihood being in part suspended by the very lawsuits themselves.

In course of the arguments on the plaintiff's appeal it was noticeable that Justice Grove pointed to the possibility of an action against Newdegate for maintenance, and, on Bradlaugh mentioning that the magistrate had dismissed the summonses against Newdegate and his solicitor on the ground that the law was obsolete, observed, "But it is by no means obsolete. I set aside an agreement for maintenance only a little while ago."

Another item was added to the imbroglio of litigation by the friendly action of Alderman Gurney of Northampton, on behalf of the Liberal and Radical Union there, against Bradlaugh for not taking his seat—a step taken by way of getting a legal deliverance. Bradlaugh formally demurred that he had been illegally hindered by the House of Commons. When the case came on before Justices Manisty and Watkin Williams on 15th May 1882, the judges warily declined to give any judgment, on the score that

the action was friendly, that the pleadings had been drawn so as to compel a decision in Bradlaugh's favour, and did not disclose all the facts of the case. Yet they excluded no material fact; and a friendly action for a precisely similar penalty had been heard and decided before in the historic case of Miller *v.* Salomons, while, as a solicitor wrote to Bradlaugh, "it is a matter of everyday occurrence in the Chancery Division for friendly actions to be brought to get a judicial decision on questions arising out of settlements, etc." In the present case it seemed pretty clear that the judges were simply very much concerned not to come in conflict with the legislature. The pleadings were however readjusted, and the case stood for re-hearing before a jury.

Still another complication was perforce set up by an action brought by Bradlaugh in April against Mr Erskine, the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons, for the assault of 3rd August—a step made necessary by the police magistrate's refusal of a summons against Inspector Denning for his formal assault; and by the risk, which was soon realised, that the Gurney action would be denied a hearing. The matter being brought before the House on 8th and 9th May, the Attorney-General was directed to defend Mr Erskine, Sir Hardinge Giffard suggesting that those who assisted in bringing such an action should be prosecuted according to old precedents for breach of privilege. Such a prosecution, if laid, would have struck at Messrs Lewis & Lewis, Bradlaugh's solicitors in the matter, and at the committee of the Constitutional Rights League, who had also instructed them.

And yet one more step in this bewildering litigation was taken on 9th May, when Bradlaugh moved before Lords Justices Brett and Cotton for leave to appeal against so much of the three orders of the Court of Appeal, dated 31st March 1881, 14th November 1881, and 23rd February 1882, as awarded costs. The application was of a highly technical character, and was dismissed, everything being now left to the House of Lords when it should hear the appeal.

§ 17.

The agitation in the constituencies was carried on throughout the spring and summer with an energy worthy of the cause. In addition to the crowded meetings which he held in dozens of the larger provincial towns, the Constitutional Rights League arranged

for three more great demonstrations in London—two on 10th May, and one on Sunday, 14th May. On the 10th was held, first, an immense mass meeting in Trafalgar Square, attended by delegates from over a hundred towns, and addressed by, among other speakers, the Rev. Mr Freeston of Stalybridge, Mr Ashton Dilke, Mr Labouchere, and Mr Broadhurst; and in the evening a second audience packed St James's Hall to the doors. On the Sunday an enormous mass meeting took place in Hyde Park, the attendance being estimated at 70,000 or 80,000. At all of these meetings Bradlaugh's claim was affirmed with the greatest enthusiasm. The attitude of the Tory press may be gathered from a reference in the *Evening Standard* to

"that section of the people which holds Mr Bradlaugh's coat-tails in veneration. They would get to Westminster, see the fun, shout out encouragement, and possibly pick up something to pay the expenses of the expedition."

An earlier demonstration, held in the Shoreditch Town Hall on 8th May, presided over by Mr Broadhurst and addressed by Bradlaugh and Labouchere, received no notice in the leading morning papers, though the crowd which sought admittance would have sufficed to fill the hall thrice over. It was necessary for such journals to ignore such matters as much as possible, since the main plea on the Tory side had now come to be that the public feeling was "universally" against Bradlaugh. To suppress the facts, and then to deny that the facts existed, was a natural tactic.

Naturally the Tories on their own part were not idle, either in the House or out of it. In the House they were safe from answer by Bradlaugh; and accordingly Sir Henry Tyler, who had already distinguished himself by a dastardly attack on the ladies of "the Bradlaugh family" and Mrs Besant as being unfit teachers of Science,* was foolish enough to call upon the Home Secretary, during May, to prosecute the *National Reformer* for blasphemy, on the score, not of any editorial utterances, but of certain articles by an outside contributor, controverting, as too favourable, an

* A question put to Mr Mundella on 18th June in the House elicited the fact that the Hall of Science classes had been established, and received grants, under the late Tory administration. On this Lord George Hamilton was petty enough to put the blame on his subordinates. Mr Mundella answered that for his part he was responsible for anything done by his subordinates.

estimate of the Gospel Jesus by a member of the staff. Sir Henry was no less zealous for Jesus than he had been for "God;" and he was backed by Mr Healy, who asked whether the paper could not be seized. The Home Secretary deprecated the attempt in the name of the interests of orthodoxy, as he had previously done an attempt to secure a prosecution of the *Freethinker*. But Tyler and those of his kidney, baffled here, only looked about for another means of gaining their point.

Among the most prominent of the attacks made on Bradlaugh about this time were the (second and third) articles contributed by Cardinal Manning to the *Nineteenth Century*, one under the title "An Englishman's Protest." The second was in time for the election in March, and much was hoped from it. Later, after illegally visiting Northampton in prelatic state, to turn the Irish voters against the Atheist, he contributed yet a third article to the *Nineteenth Century* of September 1882; and still the editor denied Bradlaugh all right of reply. It is probable that at no time in the long strife were Freethinkers more roused to wrath, more moved to smite arrogant insolence upon its blatant mouth, than by this manifesto from a prince of the Church of Rome, the murderous organism which had eaten out the mind of Spain and barely missed destroying Italy. Certain it is that from these malevolent outbreaks of the unsleeping Romish spirit of persecution may be dated a new birth of enmity towards Rome on the part of English rationalists, who had before been disposed to class the bloody-mindedness of Catholicism with the kindred rancours of Protestantism. It was left to Manning to put his Church in the worst light of all; to show once for all that the fundamental mission of priestly Rome is not *parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*, but to fight the ignoble battle of the million against one. And it is to his action that his co-religionists owe most of the measure of acceptation found among Freethinkers by the fierce verse in which Mr Swinburne has named the Church of Rome "Grey spouse of Satan, church of name abhorred," and taunted the "withered harlot" with the shame of her defeat on the Field of Flowers.

But Bradlaugh met the priest's attack with a prose that suffered no weakening from hysteria. In his journal it met a detailed and judicial criticism: he himself, roused as he had never been roused before, published his tract, "A Cardinal's Broken Oath," one of the hardest blows ever struck in written controversy.

"Three times," it begins, "your Eminence has—through the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*—personally and publicly interfered and used the weight of your ecclesiastical position against me in the Parliamentary struggle in which I am engaged, although you are neither voter in the borough for which I am returned to sit, nor even co-citizen in the State to which I belong. Your personal position is that of a law-breaker, one who has deserted his sworn allegiance and thus forfeited his citizenship, one who is tolerated by English forbearance, but is liable to indictment for misdemeanour as 'member of a society of the Church of Rome.' More than once when the question of my admission to the House of Commons has been under discussion in that House, have I seen you busy in the lobby, closely attended by the devout and sober Philip Callan, or some other equally appropriate Parliamentary henchman."

After telling the Cardinal how he had "blundered alike in his law and his history," making absurd mis-statements concerning the French Revolution and the case of Horne Tooke, the pamphlet takes up the point of persecution, in regard to Manning's advice that Bradlaugh should be indicted for blasphemy:—

"When I was in Paris some time since, and was challenged to express an opinion as to the enforcement of the law against the religious orders of France, I, not to the pleasure of many of my friends, spoke out very freely that in matters of religion I would use the law against none; but your persecuting spirit may provoke intemperate men even farther than you dream. In this country, by the 10th George IV., cap. 7, secs. 28 and 29, 31, 32, and 34, you are criminally indictable, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. You only reside here without police challenge by the merciful forbearance of the community. And yet you parade in political contest your illegal position as 'a member of a religious order of the Church of Rome,' and have the audacity to invoke outlawry and legal penalty against me."

And then came a hail of blows at the Cardinal Archbishop's own personality, so rashly put in the way of retaliation:—

"In the current number of the *Nineteenth Century* you fire your last shot, and are coarse in Latin as well as in the vulgar tongue. Perhaps the frequenting Philip Callan has spoiled your manners. It also seems impossible that one who was once a cultured scholar and a refined gentleman could confuse with legitimate argument the abuse of his opponents as 'cattle.' But who are you, Henry Edward Manning, that you should throw stones at me, and should so parade your desire

to protect the House of Commons from contamination?—At least, first take out of it the drunkard and the dissolute of your own Church. You know them well enough. Is it the oath alone which stirs you? Your tenderness on swearing comes very late in life. When you took orders as a deacon of the English Church, in presence of your bishop, you swore 'so help me God,' that you did from your 'heart abhor, detest, and abjure,' and with your hand on the 'Holy Gospels' you declared 'that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state, or potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm.' You may now well write of men 'whom no oath can bind.' The oath you took you have broken; and yet it was because you had, in the very church itself, taken this oath, that you for many years held more than one profitable preferment in the Established Church of England. You indulge in innuendoes against my character in order to do me mischief, and viciously insinuate as though my life had in it justification for good men's abhorrence. In this you are very cowardly as well as very false. Then, to move the timid, you suggest 'the fear of eternal punishment' as associated with a broken oath. Have you any such fear? or have you been personally conveniently absolved from the 'eternal' consequences of your perjury? Have you since sworn another oath before another bishop of another church, or made some solemn vow to Rome, in lieu of, and in contradiction to, the one you so took in presence of your bishop, when, 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' that bishop of the Church by law established in this country accepted your oath, and gave you authority as a deacon in the Church you have since forsaken. I do not blame you so much that you are forsworn; there are, as you truly say, 'some men whom no oath can bind;' and it has often been the habit of the cardinals of your Church to take an oath and break it when profit came with the breach; but your remembrance of your own perjury might at least keep you reticent in very shame. Instead of this, you thrust yourself impudently into a purely political contest, and shout as if the oath were to you the most sacred institution possible. You say 'there are happily some men who believe in God and fear Him.' Do you do either? You, who declared, 'so help me God,' that no foreign 'prelate . . . . ought to have any jurisdiction or authority ecclesiastical or spiritual within this realm'? And you who, in spite of your declaration on oath, have courted and won, intrigued for and obtained, the archbishop's authority and the cardinal's hat from the Pope of Rome—you rebuke Lord Sherbrooke for using the words 'sin and shame' in connection with oath-taking: do you hold now that there was no sin and no shame in your broken oath? None in the rash taking or the wilful breaking? Have you no personal shame that you have broken your oath? Or do the pride and pomp of your ecclesiastical position outbribe your conscience? You talk of the

people understanding the words 'so help me God.' How do you understand them of your broken oath? Do they mean to you: 'May God desert and forsake me as I deserted and forsook the Queen's supremacy, to which I so solemnly swore allegiance'? You speak of men being kept to their allegiance by the oath 'which binds them to their sovereign.' You say such men may be tempted by ambition or covetousness unless they are bound by 'the higher and more sacred responsibility' involved in the 'recognition of the law-giver in the oath.' Was the Rector of Lavington and Graffham covetous of an archbishopric that he broke his oath? Was the Archdeacon of Chichester ambitious of the Cardinal's hat that he became so readily forsworn?"

The eight small but pregnant pages of this concentrated diatribe were carefully translated into Italian by or for a certain Monsignor, once resident in England, who was understood to owe no goodwill to Manning; the translation was no less carefully circulated among the higher Roman clergy; and if anything had been needed to thwart Manning's ambition of becoming Pope, this little tractate, it was believed, would have served not a little to that end. At all events, Manning never again ventured to attack Bradlaugh publicly. He had had enough. And not only had he failed to destroy Bradlaugh, he had evoked furious Protestant protests against his action at Northampton, and this even from journals like the *Rock*, which hated Bradlaugh as much as he did. His alliance was rejected with insult. And even in his own Church the far more highly esteemed Newman, answering a correspondent on the subject of the Affirmation Bill of 1883, expressly declared that he thought "nothing would be lost to religion by its passing and nothing gained by its being rejected." *

It would be superfluous to load this already over-burdened narrative with any detailed account of the stream of insults, imbecilities, brutalities, and falsehoods which was cast forth continuously at this period against Bradlaugh in the press and on the platform. From the fatuity of Viscount Folkestone—who argued that an Atheist, being guilty of treason to God, who gave the Queen her power, should be treated like one guilty of treason to the Queen—to the brutish licence of the Tory journals who likened Bradlaugh's sympathisers to thieves and assassins, there was, as Mr Moncure Conway wrote at the time, "no circumstance

* Letter of 8th May 1883.

of heartlessnesss, injustice, hypocrisy, and falsehood * wanting to this last carnival of theological † hatred and ferocity." It was not, of course, theological hate alone. Bradlaugh had just been leading a popular movement for land law reform; and he had set in motion a second movement for the abolition of perpetual pensions, which went on wheels, and the petitions in support of which were signed by the hundred thousand.‡ There are few resentments more bitter than that of a menaced interest. But malice once aroused in men of a low type stops at nothing; and as we have seen, everybody associated with Bradlaugh was included in the hatred bestowed on him. One Tory journal, the

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* If further samples are needed of the general untruthfulness, they can be given by the dozen. Even men of good standing spoke with a disregard of scruple which put them outside courteous correction. Bradlaugh was driven to characterise Sir Edward Watkin as "an exceedingly and wantonly untruthful person." In November 1882 he represented to his Folkestone constituents that he would not have stood in the way of Bradlaugh either swearing or affirming, but that he resisted when Bradlaugh "distinctly outraged all that they held sacred." This presumably referred to the self-administered oath of 1882. But Sir E. Watkin had voted against Bradlaugh being allowed to swear on 27th April 1881. The Hon. Mr Stansfeld, speaking at Halifax in October 1882, actually represented that the oath was "on the true faith of a Christian;" and repeated the untruth that Bradlaugh had "said that the oath had no binding effect on his conscience." The Rev. Canon Gascoigne Weldon, of Rothesay, asserted in writing that Bradlaugh "boasted publicly that he sought entrance into the House of Commons to insult its members and all its past glorious history, and level it, if possible, with its sister House, to the ground."

† Mr Samuel Morley, speaking at Bristol in November 1882, admitted to his constituents that "while Mr Bradlaugh was in the House of Commons, nothing could exceed the propriety of his conduct;" but declared he would oppose his re-entrance because Bradlaugh continued "his system of violent, offensive, and disgusting attacks on the faith which he (Mr Morley) in common with the great bulk of the English people, held." To men like Mr Morley, all rationalist propaganda was "violent, offensive, and disgusting;" but they had no scruples about violent, offensive, and disgusting attacks on rationalists. Soon afterwards Mr Morley grossly misrepresented Bradlaugh's action, and on being challenged admitted the fact and made a correction. Soon again, however, Mr Morley spoke of Bradlaugh as writing in the *Freethinker*, and on being challenged, made neither admission nor correction. The champions of the oath, generally speaking, exhibited a constitutional incapacity for accuracy.

‡ In the summer of 1882 the total of petitions had mounted to over 100, and the signatures numbered over 250,000.

Manchester Courier, went the length of saying that Bradlaugh's success in Northampton was due to an exceptionally bad state of education there; the pretext being that one Northamptonshire village was in such a state. The Government inspector testified that as regarded the town he had often paid tribute to the heartiness of the people of Northampton, and especially of the working-classes, in carrying out the Education Act, and that it would be hard to find anywhere a more active School Board, a higher average of regular attendance, or a higher general standard of proficiency.

Of course such a testimony did little to check the scurrility of Tory tongues. At a meeting of the Bible Society at Exeter Hall, in May 1882, with Mr Samuel Morley in the chair, a Herefordshire vicar, the Rev. H. W. Webb Peploe, alleged that to his knowledge "the first condition imposed upon one whom he knew when he had joined an association under the leadership of a notorious infidel was that he should burn his Bible;" and that he had further "been told that two nights ago, at a meeting of a notorious infidel, the things said were so grossly immodest that a member of the press had said that they did not dare to report what had been spoken, however, in the presence of young women." On being challenged, the rev. gentleman declined to attempt any substantiation of his statements, only pleading that he had not meant to specify Bradlaugh. Of these cretinous calumnies, there were hundreds afloat for years on end. It is a comfort to be able to say that some score or more of single clergymen in different places, of different sects, spoke out bravely and generously from time to time in repudiation of the whole policy of persecution and slander. But a few voices, of course, could not avail to hinder that for thoughtful men the effect of the persecution was to identify religion with injustice. Freethinkers reasoned that the Christians who stood for justice and tolerance did but do what Freethinkers themselves did, without accepting the Christian creed; while the army of bigots did their evil deeds in virtue of a religious motive. And the effect of it all was to multiply Freethought as it had never been multiplied before. A barrister, who had no personal sympathy with Bradlaugh, wrote that "One consequence has been that the cause of Freethought has made surprising progress. . . . I do not think that at any time Freethought literature has been so widely read, and the Freethought

propaganda so actively and intelligently carried on." Active members of the Secular Society were enrolled by hundreds; and the sale of Bradlaugh's journal rose to its highest figure. Men who had before been unquestioningly orthodox became newly critical. One wrote to an editor :—

"That 'Mr Bradlaugh had brought his troubles on himself' I fully admit. So did Jesus Christ. In the latter case the ultimate result was a judicial execution as a blasphemer. But I am not aware that he is any the worse thought of by his followers on that account."

Even among Conservatives there were searchings of heart. One wrote a pamphlet in his favour. Another sent an open letter of merciless criticism to Sir Stafford Northcote, saying, "I am a Conservative, and my father before me. But there is something I put before party. That is self-respect." The letter concluded :—

"If you wish an outlet for your zeal against 'profanation,' why do you ignore in the Church the presence of numerous Broad Churchmen, including the father-in-law of your own son, Canon Farrar, who swear loyalty to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and follow the late Dean Stanley in rejecting many of them? Why should you have reserved your fervent indignation against apparent insincerity in sacred things to be expended upon a man whose admission to the House as silently as possible, so as not to promote his notoriety, justice and expediency would alike have suggested: the whole stupidity, duplicity, and inhumanity of Conservative tactics in this matter are patent to all straightforward minds. You are responsible for giving Mr Bradlaugh a name and a place in the history of this country which will survive long after those of the present Conservative leaders are consigned to oblivion."

The harvest was not immediate; but the seed was abundantly sown, and inevitably bore its due fruit. That this was not unrecognised in high places was sufficiently proved by the introduction of an Affirmation Bill in the House of Lords by the Duke of Argyll, then already sundered from official Liberalism. The Duke, on moving the second reading of his Bill, took occasion to scold Bradlaugh after his manner for "violence and scurrility," denying by implication that the violence and scurrility were on the other side. But this prudent tactic did not avail. The Earl of Carnarvon told the usual untruth about the "binding effect" of the oath on Bradlaugh, by way of showing that he deserved no relief; and the Archbishop of Canterbury opposed the Bill in the

name not only of the English Church, but of the Romish, the Wesleyan, and the Scotch Presbyterian. It was accordingly rejected (July) by 138 votes to 62.

§ 18.

On 11th July 1882 a new Tory battery was opened. The *Freethinker*, a penny weekly journal of a more popular character than the *National Reformer*, edited by Mr G. W. Foote and then owned by Mr W. J. Ramsey, was sold at the shop of the Freethought Publishing Company, 28 Stonecutter Street, of which Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant, the partners of the Company, were the lessees. For a short time after its first issue it had been published by them, but soon they decided not to take that responsibility; and thenceforward it had been sold independently by Mr Ramsey, their manager, who, in the terms of his engagement with them, was free to do other trading on his own account. Sir Henry Tyler, supposing Bradlaugh to be the publisher all along, had bethought himself of prosecuting the *Freethinker* for blasphemy, and so striking a possibly decisive political blow at Bradlaugh—a course which he was enabled to take by a readily granted "fiat" from the Director of Public Prosecutions. It had been made clear by his references to the *National Reformer* in the House of Commons that he had hoped to convict Bradlaugh of blasphemy on something he had either written or published; but that hope he had had to abandon. There remained the hope of connecting Bradlaugh with the *Freethinker;* and Tyler's solicitors coolly wrote Bradlaugh on 8th July, asking whether he would personally sell the paper, so as to prevent the prosecution either of a subordinate of his, or of the editor and printer. He replied by sending the printed catalogue of all the things he published, and offering personally to sell any of these. As it did not include the *Freethinker*, the prosecution was begun against Messrs Foote and Ramsey and their printer, Mr Whittle, on 11th July, before the Lord Mayor (Sir John Whittaker Ellis), at the Mansion House; and after evidence had been led, the prosecutor's counsel applied to have Bradlaugh's name added as a defendant. The case was then adjourned, the Lord Mayor stating that he would hear the application against Bradlaugh in private—a proceeding for which the reasons will afterwards appear. It having appeared that the selling of the *Free-*

thinker in the Freethought Publishing Company's shop tended to implicate the partners of that company, Mr Ramsey at once decided to suspend its sale for some weeks till he could arrange for its publication in a distinct office, thus partly safeguarding Bradlaugh from the attempt to identify him with it. The danger was serious; for if Bradlaugh were convicted of blasphemy under the statute, he would become legally incapable of further defending himself in Clarke's or any other suit for Parliamentary penalties. This was fully recognised on the Tory side, and the *Whitehall Review*, in an indecent article, pressed the point. Tyler's move was, in fact, a new attempt to cause the ruin aimed at by Newdegate, and hitherto warded off; and Newdegate's junior counsel (and private friend) duly attended the prosecution at the Mansion House. At the same time, Bradlaugh was defending a Freethinker prosecuted for blasphemy at the Maidstone Assizes, and after attending the adjourned hearing before the Lord Mayor on Monday, 17th July, he had to travel to Maidstone on the following day.

Before the Lord Mayor Bradlaugh led the prosecutor's counsel a grievous dance. He appealed to have the cases taken separately, and counsel was confused enough to say that this was "a most unusual and unheard-of application," which drew from Bradlaugh the comment, "There are several decided cases upon it, although it may be unheard of and unusual in your experience, Mr Moloney." Then ensued hours of fencing as to whether the case was or should be under common law or statute, and what the Lord Mayor ought to do. His lordship was at times somewhat rashly dogmatic on points of law and procedure, and had to be corrected. He finally decided to refuse to ask the prosecutor to choose whether he would proceed under common law or statute; and Bradlaugh then demanded that the case should begin *de novo*, putting every possible technical obstacle in the way of his cowardly enemies. Their evil way, he determined, should be made hard for them; and it was. As the proceedings went on, and the prosecution, who had previously succeeded in obtaining from the Lord Mayor a warrant to inspect Bradlaugh's banking account, took the dishonourable course of producing on subpœna the manager of the bank used by Bradlaugh, and his very passbook, his indignation mounted. What was intended was evidently a fishing investigation into his financial affairs, for the production of cheques at that stage was wholly irrelevant to the points proposed to be made out

in evidence, and needing to be so proved. Fighting the case with all his force and acuteness, point by point, and with no mincing of matters, Bradlaugh commented on Tyler's tactics in language of which the libel law prevented the republication. Tyler's counsel protested that he "did not quite see what these observations were intended for." "They are intended," replied Bradlaugh, "to do the same mischief to your client that he is trying to do to me;" and counsel said no more on that head, though he tried unsuccessfully to retaliate on others.

The case was adjourned to the 21st; and though the passbook was left in the Lord Mayor's hands for inspection, the prosecuting counsel so mismanaged matters that he closed his case without having applied to see it. Bradlaugh's account, however, had been personally ransacked on Tyler's behalf, in gross abuse of the order of the Court. The Lord Mayor finally committed Bradlaugh for trial on the singularly scanty evidence offered as to his connection with the prosecuted paper, the incriminated numbers of which were all dated after the time when Bradlaugh ceased to be concerned in publishing it; and in committing Messrs Foote and Ramsey (the charge against the printer had been withdrawn), his lordship refused to allow Mr Foote to make a statement in his defence, though the law clearly gave the defendant that right. His lordship repeatedly gave the extraordinary ruling that "the charge" against Mr Foote was "that he was the editor of the *Freethinker*"—as if that could possibly be a "charge"—and on this pretext declined to hear anything on the actual charge, which was one of "blasphemous libel." He similarly tried to prevent Bradlaugh from reading a formal statement, but after disallowing it he gave way on consultation with the Clerk of Court. The statement was a terse and telling account of Tyler's tactics from the time of Bradlaugh's election.

In the press the prosecution was sharply condemned, even the *Times* censuring it; and one journal took occasion to point out that Tyler represented "one of the smallest and most corrupt constituencies in England."* Bradlaugh, being "committed" for blasphemy, at once put himself in the hands of his constituents, who unanimously voted their unabated confidence in him. He immediately (27th July) applied to a judge (Justice Stephen) in

* He sat for Harwich.

chambers for leave to issue a summons calling on Tyler to show cause why a writ of *certiorari* should not issue to remove the proceedings to the Queen's Bench division; and on the 29th the *certiorari* itself was directed to issue by the judge. Tyler's counsel at this stage insisted on Bradlaugh's giving two sureties for £300 in addition to his own recognisances of £300 ordered by the Lord Mayor. They also asked for an order to expedite the trial, but the judge curtly refused. Another typical detail was the charging of the grand jury on the point of "returning a true bill" on the indictment. The Recorder for the City, Sir Thomas Chambers, was one of Bradlaugh's bitterest enemies in Parliament, and he gave his direction to the grand jury to return a true bill, not only without putting it to them to decide whether they were satisfied with the evidence against Bradlaugh, but with expressions of gross prejudice, appealing to their feelings as "Christian men."

Not content with his prosecution of Bradlaugh, Tyler in the House of Commons (10th August) at length brought forward an express motion which he had had on the paper for twelve months, to the effect that the Hall of Science was not a proper place, and the teachers not proper persons, to teach science in connection with the Science and Art Department. The argument was that persons who had expressed themselves in print to the effect that science undermined religion should be held to have taught the same thing in their science classes. Mr Mundella in reply pointed out that no fewer than thirty-five clergymen of all denominations were science teachers under the department; and that the reports on the teaching given in the Hall of Science classes, even by a religious visitor who made surprise visits, were highly satisfactory. He concluded by sharply censuring Tyler, as Mr Labouchere had already done, for his malice; and, the Tory members having all left the House, the matter was ignominiously dropped. Even the editor of the *St James's Gazette* snubbed Tyler, while himself proceeding to repeat Tyler's contention in a gratuitously insulting statement as to the teaching of the Misses Bradlaugh. In the outside public one immediate effect of Tyler's malicious action was to set on foot a movement and an association for the repeal of the blasphemy laws, the lead being ably taken by the Rev. Mr Sharman (Unitarian) of Plymouth, who had already done admirable service in the constitutional struggle.

The blasphemy prosecution not being "expedited," went on

slowly enough. Intermediate technical proceedings arose, partly out of irregularities on the part of the prosecution; and in one of Bradlaugh's visits to the Courts with his sureties, the driver of a four-wheeler who conveyed the party declined to accept any fare, declaring that it should be his contribution towards fighting Tyler. At length, on 6th November, Bradlaugh made an *ex parte* motion before Justices Field and Stephen, to have the indictment against him quashed, mainly on the score that he ought to have been definitely sued under the statute 9 and 10 William III., and that the provisions of that statute had not been observed in the indictment. The pleadings were extremely interesting as a matter of pure law, the judges debating the points courteously but closely all along, and both commenting finally on the "candour" and "propriety" with which he had argued his case. Their decision was for the most part hostile; and this was one of his very few cases in which there can be little difficulty in taking the judge's view against him. The main point decided was that the statute had not abrogated the common law in the case in hand. They gave him a rule *nisi* on only two counts in the indictment, on the ground of irregular procedure on the part of the prosecution; but Justice Stephen's judgment supplied a very useful conspectus of the history of the blasphemy laws, and incidentally declared that the statutory penalties could not be inflicted under a verdict on the indictment laid.

Very different must be the comments passed on the treatment of the friendly action, Gurney *v.* Bradlaugh, which came on afresh before Mr Justice Mathew and a common jury on 10th November. Everything had been done that could be done to meet the criticisms formerly passed by Justices Manisty and Watkin Williams; and indeed the whole pleadings had from the first been drawn from the journals of the House of Commons, which were put in evidence. But Justice Mathew summarily decided not to hear the case, and discharged the jury, on the old ground that the action was collusive. Now Bradlaugh, in swearing himself in, had in law done exactly what Alderman Salomons did in 1851; and the action of Miller *v.* Salomons was notoriously collusive, yet it was fully heard and carefully decided. We can only do now what Bradlaugh did then—leave the judge's action to the judgment of the instructed public. The *Law Times* of that time (November 1882) took the unusual step of declaring:—

"It is plain that it should be possible to try a friendly action to establish a constitutional right; and we regard the action of the judge as very questionable on constitutional grounds, and as being an arbitrary interference with a suitor's right to the verdict of a jury."

What a law journal thus describes, plain men may well call by a plainer name.

One of Bradlaugh's five contemporary lawsuits was thus quashed, but the remaining four kept his hands sufficiently full. The civil suit against Newdegate for maintenance came on before Justice Field on 2nd December, on a preliminary "demurrer," when, on the advice of the judge, both sides agreed to let the demurrer stand over till after the trial. A day or two afterwards Newdegate, speaking at the London Sheriffs' banquet, at which six judges were guests, had the indecency to comment before them on the maintenance case, and to denounce Bradlaugh. On the 5th the action against Mr Erskine, the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, came on before Justice Field. It was a long pleading on both sides; the case was adjourned till the 18th; and after the Attorney-General had spoken two hours and a half, and Bradlaugh had replied for an hour and a quarter, the judge reserved his decision. He finally gave it (15th January) against Bradlaugh, on the general ground that the House of Commons was the judge as to how it might exercise its privileges, of which the power to expel a member was one. On the point of legality he ruled that "it is not to be presumed that any Court, whether it be the High Court of Judicature or this Court, will do that which in itself is flagrantly wrong." The decision was one which might very reasonably have been appealed against. As the *Legal Advertiser Supplement* remarked at the time, Justice Field's ruling would cover a case in which the House of Commons might, say, confiscate the goods and chattels of a member expelled or suspended for obstruction. Bradlaugh, however, decided not to appeal. He had only commenced the action reluctantly because of the likelihood that the Gurney suit would be denied a hearing; and the judge had in this case at least listened to his arguments. He contented himself with a letter to the *Times*, pointing out the constitutional effect of the decision.

Thus far he had endured defeat after defeat in the law courts as in Parliament; and it may be that discouragement and debt counted for something in his surrender of the suit against the Deputy Sergeant-

at-Arms. But he was now within a short distance of three signal successes which more than counterbalanced all his previous legal defeats. On 9th and 17th March his action against Newdegate for maintenance was argued for him before Lord Coleridge * by Mr Crump and Mr W. A. Hunter, he himself giving evidence on his own behalf. The broad ground of action was that Newdegate had maliciously "maintained" Clarke, having himself no interest in the ground of action, which was the penalty sued for, and being desirous only to make Bradlaugh bankrupt. There was no question of principle, as Bradlaugh was already unseated, and was held disentitled to sit either on oath or on affirmation. Bradlaugh incidentally gave testimony that already he had had to spend on the action two legacies, and in addition £1100 he had borrowed; while Clarke testified that the total costs on his side were estimated at about £2000.

Lord Coleridge reserved his decision; and before he gave it, the appeal by Bradlaugh against Clarke's action had been heard and decided in the House of Lords. It was argued on 5th and 6th March, before the Lord Chancellor (Selborne), and Lords Blackburn, Watson, and Fitzgerald—Bradlaugh, as usual, pleading his own cause. His main argument was, as before, that only the Crown could recover penalties against him when the statute did not specify that some or any one else could; and the discussion turned on this point, on which Lord Justice Bramwell, the senior judge in the Court of Appeal, had expressed some doubt. Bradlaugh, however, cited on the disputed point as to the Crown's prerogative two fresh cases—the King *v.* Hymen † and the King *v.* Clarke; and a good deal of argument turned on the point as to whether a common informer could ever have costs allowed him. As for the case of the respondent, Bradlaugh pointed out that Sir Hardinge Giffard's argument was now directed against the very reasons on which the intermediate court had based its judgment in his favour, thus asking their lordships to support the judgment of the Court of Appeal for new and contrary reasons.

On 9th April their lordships delivered judgment. The Lord Chan-

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* A jury had been sworn in, but it was agreed all round that there was no question of fact for them, and they were discharged on the 9th, Lord Coleridge trying the case as one of law.

† This had been cited in the Court of Appeal for another purpose.

cellor in an elaborate and lucid judgment showed that the penalty really was suable for by action of the Crown in any of the superior courts, and that, as no permission had been given by the statute to the common informer to sue, he was not entitled to do so. Lord Blackburn dissented, but not strongly, arguing very judicially that there were good and mutually neutralising arguments on both sides, and pronouncing himself only "on the whole" in favour of the view that the common informer could sue under the statute. Lords Watson and Fitzgerald, however, agreed with the Lord Chancellor. The eccentric Lord Denman, who was not a law lord, chose to take part in the proceedings (the first time a lay peer had done so, it is said, since the decision of the writ of error in Daniel O'Connell's case), and declared himself in agreement with Lord Blackburn. Even if he were counted, however, the majority was for the appellant, who accordingly won the appeal with costs.

This judgment, of course, would have affected the suit for maintenance, had that been brought later. Giving judgment on 23rd April, Lord Coleridge remarked that as the House of Lords had decided that Clarke had no right to sue, it "seemed to follow" that Newdegate had no right to do so either. But he went on to decide in the appellant's favour on the merits of the case, giving a long and interesting judgment. Unless maintenance were to be struck out of the law-books, said the Lord Chief Justice, Newdegate's procedure must be called maintenance; and if maintenance were to be struck out of the books, he added, "it must be done by some higher authority, and I have not the power to do it, nor, if I had the power, have I the wish to abolish an action which may in some cases be the only remedy for a very cruel wrong." Delivering himself later on the moral or political merits of the case, he said:—

"It may be my ill fortune to have to support such an action in a case in which the defendant is a man whose character is entitled to every respect, and the plaintiff is a man with whose views, openly avowed, I have no sort of sympathy. But I will not call it my 'ill fortune,' for many of the most precious judgments given by the Courts in Westminster Hall were given in favour of men who, if English justice could ever be warped by personal feeling, would certainly have failed. It is indeed an ill fortune of the case that in the minds of many the cause of religion should seem to be connected with the success or failure of a particular person, whose defeat or success is really to the cause of religion a matter of supreme indifference, but as to whom (speaking only of what has

been proved before me), a course has been taken and proceedings have been pressed which, in the case of any other, would be strongly and universally condemned, and by which certainly the cause of religion has not been advanced. But my duty is simply to decide the cause according to the best opinion I can form of the law—a duty which the rules of Christian teaching make quite clear."

As to costs, Lord Coleridge remarked that the decision of the House of Lords, though giving costs on the appeal, left Bradlaugh mulcted in a considerable sum of costs which were not recoverable from Clarke. For the recoverable costs he assumed Newdegate would now hold himself responsible; but further,

"for the residue of the costs and the expenses which Mr Bradlaugh has been put to as between attorney and client, and the various expenses he has had to bear—for all these Mr Newdegate is responsible in damages. I think that Mr Bradlaugh is entitled to an indemnity for every loss which Mr Newdegate's maintenance has caused him, and if this cannot be agreed on between the parties it must go to the official referee to ascertain the amount, and when he has reported to me I will give judgment for the amount he finds to be due, applying the principles I have thus laid down."

Newdegate's counsel gave notice of an appeal, but after six months' delay abandoned it. Thus by two concurrent successes Bradlaugh inflicted a crushing and final defeat on one of the men who had sought to ruin his political career out of hate for his opinions. He could not have, in addition to the solace of triumph, the "stern joy which warriors feel in foemen worthy of their steel;" but he had the satisfaction, such as it was, of knowing that his victory was a source of intense chagrin to thousands of bigots who had reckoned on, betted on, and generally predicted his defeat and bankruptcy.

And his victory on the points of civil law was effectually secured by his acquittal in the action for blasphemy. A new excitement had been added to that issue by the commencement, on 2nd February, of a new prosecution of Mr Foote (now owner as well as editor) and Mr Ramsey (now publisher only), with Ramsey's shopman, Henry Arthur Kemp, for the publication of a special "Christmas number" of the *Freethinker*, in which there occurred certain woodcuts, ridiculing the Hebrew Deity and the Jesus of the Gospels. In this case there could be no pretence of implicating Bradlaugh, as the incriminated number had not even been sold on the Freethought Publishing Company's

premises. Whether Tyler saw the necessity of putting a better colour of religious zeal on his ill-conditioned action against Bradlaugh, or whether the recent strife had stirred up smouldering bigotry independently of personal animus against Bradlaugh, this prosecution was undertaken by "the City of London." The new trial, which took place at the Central Criminal Court on 1st March 1883, before Mr Justice North and a jury, is likely to be long remembered in respect of the extraordinary display of mediæval prejudice by the judge. He repeatedly and angrily interrupted Mr Foote in his defence, declining to allow him to quote current printed matter which would show at once how much "permitted blasphemy" went on among Salvationists, and how perfectly in keeping was his freethinking blasphemy with the popular religion which it attacked. The jury, after two hours' discussion, could not agree, and the judge discharged them, arranging for a fresh trial on the 6th with a fresh jury, and refusing in the harshest and most peremptory manner to let the prisoners out on bail, though in law they were perfectly entitled to it. Applications made next day to other judges fell through on the score, not of being wrong in law, but of "want of jurisdiction" on the part of the judges applied to. The second trial was even more disgraceful to the judge than the first. At the outset, Mr Foote objected to one of the jurors as having expressed animus, and the judge, in suggesting the juryman's withdrawal, declared that "he should be sorry to have a gentleman upon the jury who had expressed himself as prejudiced." His own summing-up to the jury, however, was again scandalously prejudiced; and when the jury promptly returned a verdict of guilty, he addressed Mr Foote as follows:—

"You have been found guilty by the jury of publishing these blasphemous libels. This trial has been to me a very painful one, as I regard it as extremely sad to find that a person to whom God has given such evident intelligence and ability should have chosen to prostitute his talents to the work of the devil in the way it has been done (*sic*) under your auspices."

The sentence was a year's imprisonment. The announcement called forth a display of indignation among the audience such as has perhaps never been seen in modern times; and the judge had to sit for some minutes in a storm of hisses and outcries, the epithets

"Jeffries" and "Scroggs" expressing the prevailing sentiment. Mr Foote's words: "My lord, I thank you: it is worthy of your creed," were followed by a renewal of the tumult, and it was with difficulty that the Court was cleared. Then the judge sentenced Ramsey and Kemp to nine and three months' imprisonment respectively. The same judge, it is recorded, had let off with three months' imprisonment a ruffian who had killed a coffee-stall keeper with a kick on the face when he was refused a second cup of coffee till the first had been paid for.

The impression made among thoughtful people by the judge's action was one of general displeasure. Canon Shuttleworth pronounced the sentence "a calamity." Mr Foote's methods had been widely and strongly disapproved of among cultured Free-thinkers, including Bradlaugh; and Mr John Morley, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had gone to the indefensible length of justifying the prosecution, on the very inadequate ground that the *Freethinker* had been "thrust on" the public, it having been exhibited in the publisher's window in a side street. But the infamous sentence at once turned feeling the other way, though protests like Canon Shuttleworth's were needed to teach Mr Morley and other Liberal journalists that renunciation of Liberal principles is not really necessary, even in cases of persecution, to propitiate the public. Bradlaugh, on his part, took the—for him—unprecedented course of addressing a public letter to the judge, reprobating his conduct. "My lord," he wrote,

"I pen this public letter with considerable regret and much pain. I have always in my public utterances tried to teach respect for the judicial bench. I have never, I hope, allowed hostile decisions against myself personally to tempt me to undue language when exercising my journalistic right to criticise judgments delivered. My own experience of the judges of our land has, with slight exception, been that they always listened with great patience, and when disagreeing, have expressed their disagreement in a dignified manner. When I read the report of the first trial of Messrs Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp, I was inexpressibly shocked. The character of some of the evidence you admitted alarmed me, and your refusal to reserve the objection taken to the admissibility of such evidence for the consideration of the Court of Crown Cases Reserved seemed to me so extraordinary that I even now hardly dare trust myself to characterise it. . . . But the point that most afflicts me is the fashion in which you over and over again interrupted the defendant Foote in his defence. . . . There are plenty

of precedents showing that prisoners have been permitted in defence the indulgence so peremptorily denied by your lordship to Mr Foote. . . . That you should have held the defendants in custody after the jury had disagreed, and when you had determined to again try them four days later, was mischievously and wantonly cruel. They had duly surrendered to their bail, which had been small in amount. There was no suggestion or supposition that they would try to avoid justice, nor did the prosecution ask for their detention. I am afraid, my lord, that you sent them to Newgate because they had been overbold in their defence. . . . If you had meant the three defendants to have no chance of escape, if you had been prosecutor instead of impartial judge, you could hardly have done more to embarrass their defence than by sending them to this sudden and unexpected close confinement."

The letter concluded:

"When you sat as judge in these blasphemy trials your lordship was practically omnipotent. There is yet no court of criminal appeal. . . . The very knowledge of your uncontrollable authority in the conduct of the trial . . . should have prompted your lordship to hold the judicial balance with a steady hand, its inclining, if at all, being to the side of mercy. But your lordship, in the spirit of the old inquisitor, threw into the scale your own prejudices against the heresy for which the defendants were reputed, your own dislike of the manner in which they had made their heresies known. . . . I ask your lordship what would be the outcry through the civilised world if, either in Switzerland or in Hindostan, those Salvation Army propagandists who thrust their blasphemies furiously in all men's faces were so hardly dealt with as you have dealt with George William Foote, William James Ramsey, and Henry Kemp?"

Presumably the scandal caused by Justice North tended to procure a fairer hearing for the original action, still unheard, in which Bradlaugh was indicted. It came on before the Lord Chief Justice and a jury on 10th April—Bradlaugh, as usual, defending himself, while Messrs Foote and Ramsey were represented by counsel. Bradlaugh was permitted by Lord Coleridge, in spite of the opposition of the prosecuting counsel (Giffard), to have the charge against him tried separately from that of his co-defendants, whose testimony might be important to him; and he was thus enabled to put his defence solely on the question of his responsibility, saying nothing as to the papers prosecuted being blasphemous or otherwise. His case was a clear and

detailed proof, made good at every point, that he had ceased to be in any way concerned even in the selling of the *Freethinker* before the issue of any of the incriminated numbers, he and Mrs Besant having decided to drop the publication on account of a change early made in the character of the paper;* and that this abandonment of the publication—which was the only sort of connection he had ever had with the paper at all—was made independently of any outside pressure or threat. For the rest, the malevolent tactics of Sir Henry Tyler were once more made the subject of a stinging invective; and the procedure of the prosecution in regard to the bank account came in for very severe handling. This was one of the most striking details in the trial. It came out, to the amazement of the legal part of the audience, that not only had Bradlaugh's banking account been ransacked and his cheques gone over to see if any had been dishonoured, but the junior counsel for Tyler, Mr Moloney, had actually attended the inquisition in person. Bradlaugh naturally did not spare him, declaring that he had "done work generally left to some private detective or inquiry agent, and never done by any one having the dignity of the bar to guard." And all the while, the search had been made in a bank branch in St John's Wood, N.W., in the county of Middlesex, on a warrant from the Lord Mayor, whose jurisdiction was limited to the City. On this head the Lord Chief Justice indicated a very strong feeling that the Lord Mayor's warrant for such a purpose ought not to be valid anywhere. "Vile in its inception and dishonourable in its conduct," was Bradlaugh's account of the prosecution generally, and he even had a suspicion, based on an awkward statement by one of the legal witnesses, that the examination of the bank account had been made some days before the summons against him was issued.

Sir Hardinge Giffard, now prosecuting for the Crown, fought the case as he might have done it for Tyler, declaring in his opening speech that he would call witnesses to prove certain things, and afterwards carefully omitting to call them, seeing that that course would help Bradlaugh to clear himself. In replying, he did not attempt to rebut the criticisms passed on his client and on his conduct of the case, professing to take the attitude of dignified

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* The introduction as a regular feature of "Comic Bible Sketches," of a kind which Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant were not prepared to defend.

disregard. His main line of argument was that one or two isolated woodcuts had been published in the *Freethinker* during the few months in which the Freethought Company published it, that Bradlaugh was an original promoter, and that the change made in the registration was only a stratagem, Bradlaugh remaining the real publisher. As regarded the blasphemy charged, Sir Hardinge did not take the customary line of distinguishing between vulgar and refined blasphemy, describing the contents of the *Freethinker* as deadly "poison to men's soul"—an expression which could not be supposed to apply to the mere element of vulgarity. He spoke with horror of a cartoon which exhibited Ignorance, Money, and Fear as "the true Trinity," and would doubtless have spoken similarly of the account of the Trinity as "three Lord Shaftesburys," given by Lord Coleridge's esteemed personal friend, Mr Matthew Arnold. The blasphemous matter on which the learned counsel expressed himself most strongly in detail, however, was a vulgar travesty of the extremely silly and artistically worthless religious picture known as "The Calling of Samuel." "You have that picture," he told the jury, "represented as a startled child, roused from his slumber by two cats on the tiles. And this is the sort of thing which is to be scattered broadcast over the land——!"

Lord Coleridge, on his part, summed up with great literary skill and dignity, carefully guarding against theological prejudice on the part of the jury by the avowal that he himself, despite his years and comparative detachment from the world, found it difficult to clear his mind of it. Incidentally he remarked that it was to Bradlaugh's credit that he did not disavow a general sympathy with the opinions of his co-defendants, while clearing himself of all complicity in the publications indicted. But on the point of the blasphemy charge he also incidentally expressed an opinion, which is worth citing as showing how little even an exceptionally considerate judge with strong religious feelings can get rid of the vulgar notion that irreverence to his—the popular—religious opinions is immeasurably more reprehensible than irreverence towards other less popular opinions, or vilification of unpopular men's characters. His objection to blasphemy prosecutions was mainly that they injured the cause of religion:—

"I say not how far the institution of a prosecution of this kind wounds the most sacred feelings and does injury to the holiest convictions. Some persons may think that this is not so: some may think

that by such prosecutions the most sacred truths are pierced through the sides of those who are their enemies. With all that we have nothing to do. We may dislike, we may—I do not hesitate to say, we may loathe—the expressions made use of in these libels. We may think the persons who can speak in this way of things which they themselves may disapprove of and disbelieve, which they themselves may possibly think superstitious and mischievous, but which they must know have been the life and the soul of the virtue, the morality, the self-denial, the civilisation of hundreds, and thousands, and millions of people in all ages, are persons who forget—I will not say what is due to God, for they do not believe in Him, but to man, for they are men—what is due to themselves, and to the community of which they form a part, and for whom they ought to have some consideration. All that may be perfectly true, but it has nothing to do with the question."

Here the judge assumes that there is no dispute whatever as to the claim that the Christian religion is the essence of morality and modern civilisation, and proceeds to express disgust for a line of polemic which was zealously followed by the early Christians for centuries, which is invariably followed in the Old Testament when there is any question of alien religions, which is endorsed by Paul, which is commonly followed by Christian missionaries and by Protestant assailants of Catholicism, and which was even then being followed by the Christian multitude in the very case of Bradlaugh. The Christian position is that it is right to ridicule and asperse Freethinkers, materialists, and polytheists; and the Protestant position is that it is right to deride the Catholic worship of saints, images, and relics; but Christians in the mass hold it abominable for unbelievers and "heathen" in turn to deride *their* opinions, these being "holy" and "dear." And all the while, in the case under notice, the people who thus felt the most intense animal resentment towards a handful of men for speaking irreverently of a supposed Infinite, which by no possibility could human folly or contumely disturb or hurt, were as often as not zealous accomplices in casting the vilest personal insults against a representative Atheist who confessedly could not be shown to have attacked their opinions in such a way as to lay him open to a successful prosecution for blasphemy. The Christian plea is that unbelievers should not be free to cause Christians pain. Yet the whole of Bradlaugh's life was and is in evidence to show that the first instinct of the average Christian is to cause not merely endless mental pain but material ruin to every man who ventures, how-

ever decorously, to pronounce the Christian creed untrue. Perhaps the profoundest impeachment of the religious instinct in general is this very fact that the express conviction of the absolute supremacy of a personal power over all things human never by any chance enables the believer to regard with serenity and compassion the human denials which that power in the terms of the case is alleged to permit.

Some approach to the recognition of all this must have taken place in connection with the trial of Bradlaugh on the score of the *Freethinker*, although of course it was on the point of non-complicity that the jury gave their verdict of acquittal. They deliberated for an hour and ten minutes, calling for several of the documents in the case. The foreman's pronouncement of "Not Guilty" was received with loud cheers, which the judge indignantly rebuked, with the customary remark that "this is not a place of entertainment;" but a Conservative journal, endowed with the regulation horror of Atheism, commented that the cheer expressed a sentiment not at all confined to Atheists. In general, the press rejoiced with the acquitted man, who had now won in rapid succession three decisive successes in his long battle. It was noted, too, that he had won them against one leading counsel, Sir Hardinge Giffard. Asked later how it was that he had so often and so signally defeated this counsel, Bradlaugh remarked that he believed it was because Giffard despised him as an antagonist, and neglected precautions against him, while he, Bradlaugh, was careful at all times to do his utmost, and never to undervalue the enemy's strength. The moral is an old one.

In addition to the discredit put upon the prosecution in Court, it happened that Sir Henry Tyler about this time figured rather dubiously before the public in his capacity of company-promoter. His treatment of the financial affairs of the Anglo-American Brush Electric Light Corporation, in which he was deeply concerned, gave such dissatisfaction to most of the shareholders that they took the unusual course of presenting a memorial insisting on his resignation, after he had been hissed and hooted at a shareholders meeting.* It may have been a sense of the unfitness of such a personage to represent the cause of religion that led to the founda-

* 23rd January 1883.

tion of a "Society for the Suppression of Blasphemous Literature," the secretary of which wrote to the newspapers * as follows:—

"We propose to get up cases, as our funds will allow, against Professor Huxley, Dr Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, Swinburne, the author of 'Supernatural Religion,' the publishers of Mill's works, the publishers of Strauss's works, Leslie Stephen, John Morley, the editor of the *Jewish World*, Dr Martineau, and others, who by their writings have sown widespread unbelief, and in some cases rank Atheism, in cultivated families."

That goodly project, however, came to nothing, though in the view of Justice Stephen most if not all of the writers and publishers named were certainly open to conviction for blasphemy under the existing law. It would appear that the spiritual interests of "cultivated families" arouse less solicitude than do those of the poor, in matters religious as well as Malthusian. Above all, none of the writers threatened, save Mr John Morley, was likely to give the Tory party any chance of turning his heresy to political advantage, and Mr Morley was already safe in his seat, having taken the oath without demur and without opposition, after editorially criticising Mr Bradlaugh for his willingness to take it. Mr Morley had perhaps put himself right with the religious party by applauding the prosecution of Foote and Ramsey—he who had expressly justified the polemic of Voltaire.† A clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. Stewart Headlam, whose championship of the principle of religious equality has all along been above all praise, wrote to Mr Morley in his editorial capacity, protesting "as a Christian priest" against a policy which made it "almost impossible for Christians to meet Atheists on equal terms." "It seems," Mr Headlam began, "as though you were one of those who say, 'There is no God, but it's a family secret.'" The letter was suppressed. It is bare justice to cite it here ‡ as being perhaps the most telling protest made against the blasphemy prosecutions, albeit written by a sincerely orthodox clergyman.

The original case against Bradlaugh's co-defendants, Messrs

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* March 1883.

† To do Mr Morley justice, it should be acknowledged that he unsaid his vindication in the same book.

‡ It was printed in the *National Reformer* of 1st April 1883.

Foote and Ramsey, who had been already sentenced to imprisonment on the second prosecution by Mr Justice North, came on before Lord Coleridge and a special jury on 24th April. The judge treated the prisoners with signal consideration and courtesy; and when the prosecuting counsel, Mr Moloney, persisted in putting a question to which Lord Coleridge had objected, his lordship indignantly asked, "Why cannot this case be conducted like any other case? It seems all of a piece with the learned counsel inspecting a man's bank-book." The accused defended themselves, Mr Foote making a particularly able speech, on which the judge, in his summing-up, repeatedly complimented him. That summing-up (delivered on the 25th) was in its way a masterly performance, marking the judge as the most admirably persuasive of pleaders. Deeply averse to all punishment of opinion, he showed the jury that the blasphemy law, as interpreted by past judges, was not nearly so outrageous as had been supposed; and the definition of "the late Mr Starkie," of which a scanty quotation had been given by the prosecution, he showed to be much less illiberal than it had been understood to be, though nothing could make it out to be a precise or practical formulation of law. As in the previous trial, he demolished the absurd plea that "Christianity is part of the law of the land," by the *reductio ad absurdum* that the marriage law and the monarchy are part of the law of the land, but are yet open to being argued against—at least in all modern opinion. As, however, no interpretation could do away with the hard facts of the blasphemy laws, and the accused had unfortunately put their heresy at times with extreme pictorial crudeness, his lordship could not definitely charge the jury that no blasphemy had been committed in law. He admitted that the objection against their practice on the score of violence would apply to some passages read by Mr Foote from prominent modern writers, which were new to him; but while the law stood as it was, that was no defence for Mr Foote, as the writers in question would be equally open to indictment. The jury, thus unavoidably left in doubt, disagreed. The prosecution, acting judiciously for the first time, took the course of entering a *nolle prosequi*, and the case dropped, but not without the Lord Chief Justice having to point out that the petition grossly misrepresented him as having pronounced the prosecution "unadvisable," which he had carefully abstained from doing. Unluckily, the dropping

of this case did not affect the sentence passed by Justice North; and the then Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, declined to mitigate the punishment, on the score of the offensiveness of one of the incriminated woodcuts, which he called "an obscene libel," though the charge was one of blasphemy. Some Liberal journals indignantly protested; but the Liberal leaders felt they must show no consideration to blasphemy, though even the *Spectator* censured them for their timidity.

§ 19.

While the decisive trials were yet in the future, Bradlaugh had never slackened his energetic action on the political side of the fight. The last move in the House had been taken on 18th July 1882, when Mr Labouchere moved that Bradlaugh be appointed a member of the Committee to consider the Agricultural Tenants' Compensation Bills. The right of a member in Bradlaugh's position to serve on committees had been established by the precedents of Alderman Salomons and Baron Rothschild. The point was a curious one, and could not be got over argumentatively, but of course the House could outvote the motion, which it did by 120 to 35. Not till the next year was the campaign indoors reopened.

On 15th February 1883, the day of the reassembling of Parliament, a great demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square in support of Bradlaugh's and Northampton's claim, about a thousand delegates attending from some four hundred Radical associations of provincial towns. At first some of the railway companies were understood to be willing to run cheap excursion trains, but that concession was of course violently opposed, and at a meeting of representatives of the companies held in the Railway Clearing House on 29th January a resolution was carried by a majority of votes, binding all the companies to give no special facilities whatever. An attempt to get the use of the Floral Hall, Covent Garden, for the meeting was defeated by the veto of the Duke of Bedford's agent, though the Directors were willing to grant it; and no other sufficiently large hall was available for the date. The meeting, which would have been several times larger had the railway companies given the desired special trains, was nevertheless a great success, the square being densely packed, despite bad weather; and despite some attempts at rioting by hired roughs,

there was almost perfect order throughout. The *Pall Mall Gazette* had deprecated the meeting as held in an illegal place, though for a perfectly legal purpose. This was a misconstruction of the Act 57th Geo. III. cap. 19, sec. 23, which prohibited meetings within a mile of Parliament House for the purpose of petitioning the Crown or Parliament "for alteration of matters in Church or State." As there was no petition under consideration, the meeting was perfectly legal. Other papers went further, the *Daily Telegraph* applauding the railway companies for refusing to "start trains in order to bring up country roughs;" and generally it must be recorded that some of the leading Liberal journals discouraged the whole procedure. The *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle* even suppressed resolutions sent them in support of Bradlaugh's claim from provincial clubs before the demonstration—such resolutions being part of the manifold machinery of preparation for a great public demonstration; and the Tory papers as a rule suppressed all reports tending to show the support given to Bradlaugh in the country. Other forms of boycotting were freely employed. In the cathedral town of Peterborough a debating society set up by the local Young Men's Christian Association was deprived of the use of the Association's rooms because it carried a motion in favour of Bradlaugh's right to sit and vote. This episode typified hundreds. The most skilful device employed, perhaps, was the issue of a forged circular, purporting to come from Bradlaugh, calling on "all Atheists, as well as Socialists," to "assemble in their thousands round the House of Commons," and show that "the Atheists of this country have a right to be represented" in Parliament.* Newspapers which had no space for genuine news about Bradlaugh gave prominence to this.

As the meeting of Parliament drew near, expectation naturally rose high on both sides. The sentiment of many Tories may be presumed to have been expressed by Lord Newark, son of Earl Manvers, when at the annual dinner of the Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society he was ruffianly enough to say:

"He supposed that Mr Bradlaugh meant to make himself objectionable as usual. He heard from an honourable member who sat near him† that he thought of going with a big stick, and he (Lord Newark)

* Cited in *National Reformer*, 18th February, p. 101.

† The hon. members were: Lord Galway, Messrs Foljambe and Nicholson, and Colonel Seely.

hoped that if he came within reach of Mr Bradlaugh he would make use of it."

The stick, however, was not on exhibition at the House of Commons. Bradlaugh's course was to send to the Speaker a letter stating the then position of matters, in view of the action of the law courts; and stating that he proposed to present himself as before. This letter was read to the House before any other business was taken. On Mr Labouchere asking the Government what course they meant to take, Lord Hartington at once answered that on the following night they would move for leave to bring in an Affirmation Bill. Sir Richard Cross, on the Conservative side, at once announced that he would oppose the Bill, and his statement was loudly cheered. At this stage Inspector Denning asked Bradlaugh to leave the House and reassure the multitude outside, who were beginning to fancy they might be "ill-using him inside."

On 20th February the motion for leave was made, when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was understood to express himself with ironical approbation, while Mr Chaplin opposed, and Northcote explained that he should vote against the second reading. The motion was carried by 184 votes to 53, most of the Irish party voting in the minority. Not till 23d April did the Bill reach its second reading; and in the meantime a desperate effort was made by the entire Tory party to arouse feeling against the Bill. In the previous session the petitions in Bradlaugh's favour had been signed by 275,000 persons, and those against him by only 65,000, many of these being children. The leeway was now made up. The machinery of the Anglican and Catholic Churches was worked to the utmost to beat up petitions; schools were swept wholesale for signatures, not only in England but abroad;* and large employers of labour were got to procure the signatures of employees *en masse*, reluctant workers being not obscurely threatened with the consequences of refusal. By these means half a million signatures were got up by the 23rd of April, the great majority being those of school-children and coerced employees. *Tantum religio*——.

* A barrister wrote to Bradlaugh enclosing a letter from his daughter, aged fifteen, at school at Frankfort, telling how the English chaplain there called and asked all the English girls at the school to sign a petition against the Affirmation Bill (*National Reformer*, 15th April 1883).

The Tory press likewise put its best foot foremost. In the *St James's Gazette* of 22nd February, Mr Greenwood made an abominable attack on Bradlaugh, the foulest of many foul blows, describing him as "a preacher of certain theories of the sexual relation which, in the opinion of the great majority of Englishmen, are not only immoral but filthy," going on to speak of him as having long been known as the publisher of an obscene tract, and representing him as an advocate of "Free Love, and sundry other doctrines and practices which benefit greatly by the impossibility of referring to them distinctly among decent people." The pamphlet formerly put together by Varley, largely consisting of matter Bradlaugh never wrote, falsified even at that, and partly of passages from him, wrested from their context and falsified in application, was circulated more widely than ever. Many members of Parliament repeated the palpable falsehood that Bradlaugh had been "declared by the House of Commons and the courts of law incapable of sitting in Parliament;" and Mr H. S. Northcote, son of Sir Stafford, in addition to making this statement to his constituents at Exeter, told them that "when Mr Bradlaugh led a mob of unwashed ruffians down to Parliament Yard" the Government introduced their Bill.

On the second reading, Sir Richard Cross opened the opposition, and began by making the statement that "it was a former Government whip, Mr Adam, who first invited Mr Bradlaugh to go to Northampton"—the grossest form ever given to that particular untruth. He was seconded by Mr M'Cullagh Torrens, a nominal Liberal, who in his work on "Empire in Asia" had affected a high esteem for the principle of religious toleration—in other countries. The Bill, he said, tended "to begin the abjuring of all responsibilities to heaven." Mr W. E. Baxter, following, declared that "not only had Atheists been members of Parliament, but they had sat on the Treasury Bench"—and a member called out "And sit!" Giffard, seeking his revenge at once on Bradlaugh and Lord Coleridge, "repeated without the smallest fear of contradiction that Christianity was a part of the common law of the kingdom." Mr Illingworth happening to speak of "recreant members of the Jewish community," Baron de Worms rose to order, and the Speaker ruled the term "out of order." None of the epithets directed at the Atheist had struck him in that light.

The debate was thrice adjourned. On 26th April Sir H. D.

Wolff took it upon him to accuse Lord Chancellor Selborne of using his position to help his political party; and Lord R. Churchill, in a later speech, said the same thing of Lord Coleridge. On the Liberal side, Gladstone made the greatest speech delivered by him during the whole controversy. At first he was elaborate and deprecatory, but gradually he rose to warmth and cogency. "Do you suppose," he asked—

"Do you suppose that we are ignorant that in every contested election which has happened since the case of Mr Bradlaugh came up you have gained votes and we have lost them? (Opposition cheers and counter cheers.) *You* are perfectly aware of it. We are not less aware of it. But if you are perfectly aware of it, is not some credit to be given to us —we giving you the same under circumstances rather more difficult— for presumptive integrity and purity of motive?"

It was a naïve and a vain appeal, but the speech was none the less fine. The most powerful part of its argument was the demonstration that those who consented to drop the Christian element from the oath and held by the Theistic were treating Christianity, as such, as a thing that could be dispensed with.

"I am not willing, sir, that Christianity—if the appeal is to be made to us as a Christian legislature—shall stand in any rank lower than that which is indispensable." He would not accept bare Theism as the main thing. "The adoption of such a proposition as that—and it is at the very root of your contention—seems to me in the highest degree disparaging to the Christian faith."

And then, contending that a bare belief in a remote and abstract Deity could exist with a complete disbelief in that Deity's having any relation with men, he rolled out "the noble and majestic lines, for such they are, of the Latin poet:"—

"Omnis enim per se divom natura necesse'st
Immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur
Semota ab nostris rebus sejunctaque longe;
Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,
Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nil indiga nostri
Nec bene promeritis capitur neque tangitur ira."*

* Lucretius, ii. 646–651. It was thought notable that the orator did not allude to the kindred passage in his beloved Homer (*Odyssey*, vi. 41), splendidly rendered by Lucretius (iii. 18–22), and choicely paraphrased by Tenny-

There was no one to follow him up with a citation of the lines which follow on these where they used to stand misplaced in the first book of Lucretius' poem :—

"Humana ante oculos foede cum vita jaceret
In terris oppressa gravi sub religione ;

but some listeners there must have been who bethought them how perfectly this long controversy had answered to the Roman's picture of "life crushed to the earth under the weight of religion ;" and they may fitly have murmured "primum Graius homo" of the man whose long battle was even then visibly tending to relieve them one day of the old hypocrisy of adjuring the unknown God.

Touching his mother earth of classic verse, Gladstone drew new strength of eloquence.

"The Deity exists, as those I must say magnificent words set forth, in the remote, inaccessible recesses of which we know nothing, but with us it has no dealing, with us it has no relation. I have purposely gone back to ancient times, but I do not hesitate to say that the specific evil or specific form of irreligion with which in the educated society of this country you have to contend, and with respect to which you ought to be on your guard, is not blank Atheism. That is a rare opinion that is seldom met with ; but what is frequently met with are those forms of opinion which say that whatever is beyond the visible scene, whatever there be beyond this short span of life, you know, and can know, nothing of it. It is a visionary and bootless undertaking to try to fathom it. That, sir, is the specific mischief of the age ; but that mischief of the age you do not attempt to touch. . . . Whom do you seek to admit ? You seek to admit Voltaire. You would admit Voltaire, and that is a specimen of your liberality. Voltaire was no taciturn unbeliever. He was the author of that phrase which goes to the heart of every Christian, and of many a professor of religion who is not a Christian—'*Ecrasez l'Infâme.*' Voltaire would not have had the slightest difficulty in taking your oath ; and yet that is the state of the law for which you are working up the country to madness." (Loud ministerial cheers.)

Speeches followed varying between imbecility and commonplace ; and on the debate being again adjourned, it was re-opened (1st May) by Churchill in a speech of characteristic scurrility.

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son in his poem "Lucretius." The best expression in English verse of the idea in the passage quoted by Gladstone is again Tennyson's—the great passage at the close of the "Lotos Eaters."

"The personal supporters of the representative of Atheism," said the noble Lord, "were the residuum, and the rabble, and the scum of the population. The bulk of them were men to whom all restraint, religious, moral, or legal, was odious and intolerable."

An effective reply to other parts of the speech was made by Mr Labouchere, who incidentally made the startling revelation that to his knowledge there were several members who had never taken the oath at all, having signed the roll, but missed swearing in the scramble for the Testaments. At length, on a third adjournment, the question came to the vote. Northcote made an ignominious speech, in which he defended himself on the point of having formerly urged that special legislation was the right course for the Government to take. He admitted that he had said so, but contended that saying so did not commit him to voting for that course when taken. The positive part of the argument was worthy of the negative. But bad as the pleading on the Tory side was, it had with it a majority of votes. On the division there voted only 289 for the second reading, and 292 against. Irish and renegade Liberal votes had just turned the scale; and it was noted that in the majority there voted several members too drunk to walk straight without support.* The result was received with a positive frenzy of delight by the Tories and their Home Rule allies, all alike shouting that they had "beaten Bradlaugh." "The Irish have beaten Bradlaugh," was the cry of Mr Sexton. The Liberals who voted with the majority were the three "Hon." Fitzwilliams of Yorkshire, Sir Edward Watkin,† Dr Lyons, Messrs Guest, Nicholson, and Torrens, and Mr Jerningham, a Roman Catholic, who had owed his recent election for Berwick mainly to his having promised to support Bradlaugh's claim to sit, and who all along broke his word in the House.‡

Bradlaugh without hesitation took his usual course, with a

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* Bradlaugh later publicly specified Newdegate as having been tipsy, "not for the first time;" and Newdegate, though denying the charge, did not bring an action for libel.

† It should be said that Sir Edward Watkin is understood to regret his action.

‡ Mr Jerningham defended himself by asserting that Bradlaugh had written a "Comic History of Christ," which was one lie more. On being corrected, he told another, saying that Bradlaugh admitted having written the Introduction.

difference. He sent a letter to the Speaker, asking to be called to the table in the usual way to take the oath, and, in the case of that course being declined, to be heard at the bar. On 4th May he duly re-presented himself at the bar, and the letter was read by the Speaker. Northcote moved as usual that Bradlaugh be not allowed to swear; and Mr Labouchere moved that he be heard at the bar, which being allowed, he made his Fourth Speech at the Bar. It was comparatively brief, tersely repeating the old pleas, and the old protest—

"I submit that any hindrance which is not prescribed by law is an act which in itself is flagrantly wrong, whoever may commit it, and that the mere fact that a majority of voices in one Chamber may prevent a citizen from appealing to the law in no sense lessens the iniquity of the illegal act, and that history will so judge it, whatever to-day you may think it your right and your duty to do."

After disposing of the old falsehood that the late Liberal whip had recommended him to the Northampton electors, he remarked :—

"I have always regarded the Liberal party as standing in the way of my election, rather than as in any way helping my return. This, however, I submit, was matter unworthy of this House. No such consideration has ever entered at any time into the discussion of any other candidature. I submit that a great House, which claims the powers of one of the highest courts of these realms, should try to be judicial."

Again he exposed the persistent lie that he had "paraded his views," pointing out that even when, at official request, he named the statutes under which he claimed to affirm, he did not in law profess Atheism, since a Theist was legally incompetent to swear if he did not believe in future rewards and punishments, and such Theists were only entitled to affirm under the Acts under which he claimed. Again he protested that he had never uttered his opinions in the House.

"Under great temptation I have refrained from saying a word which could wound the feelings of the most religious, although I have heard within these walls, within but a few hours, language used by one who had declared his religion which I should have felt ashamed to use in any decent assembly."

This referred to an exhibition by Callan, the Catholic hench-

man of Cardinal Manning, who had repeatedly appeared in the House drunk, and who, in the division of the 3rd, had used such "filthy and blasphemous" language towards another Irish member who proposed to vote for Bradlaugh, that he had to make a formal apology to prevent the matter being raised. On 30th April, in the adjourned debate, another Irish member, M'Coan, had read some of the false quotations compiled by Varley, and, on being challenged, impudently asserted that Bradlaugh had never repudiated them. A third Irish member, Mr O'Brien, had observed that he "did not believe that any greater number of persons favoured Mr Bradlaugh than would be content to go naked through the streets." Yet another religious member, an English Tory, Mr Ritchie, had declared that the Affirmation Bill would be "the triumph of Atheism and Socialism," and further quoted to the House, as words used by Bradlaugh, words which he had never used, and which were described in the very document quoted as taken from a report for which he was not responsible. The "filthy book," too, had been mentioned; and on this Bradlaugh read the words of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, hereinbefore printed, with the exculpatory words of the jury. "But all these things," he added, "although they were as true as they are false, give you no right to stand between me and my seat." His peroration was perfect :—

"I heard a strange phrase from a noble lord, that both sides had gone too far to recede. The House honours me too much in putting me on one side and itself on the other. The House, being strong, should be generous. The strong can recede, the generous can give way; but the constituents have a right to more than generosity—they have a right to justice. (Cheers.) The law gives me my seat. In the name of the law I ask for it. I regret that my personality overshadows the principles involved in this great struggle; but I would ask those who have touched my life, not knowing it, who have found for me vices which I do not remember in the memory of my life, I would ask them whether all can afford to cast the first stone—(cheers)—or whether, condemning me for my unworthiness, they will as just judges vacate their own seats, having deprived my constituents of their right here to mine." (Loud cheers.)

It remained to discuss the closing step, as usual. Mr Labouchere moved the previous question in a speech which pointedly raised the issue of the actual presence of other Atheists in the House.

"Since Mr Bradlaugh has been re-elected—since you refused to allow him to take the oath—it is well known by every member of this House

that a gentleman has been elected who is of great position in the literary world ; and every man who knows anything of English literature knows perfectly well that that gentleman has avowed himself to be an unbeliever in a superintending Providence as clearly as Professor Huxley himself. ('Hear, hear.') I ask, is it not monstrous hypocrisy to allow that hon. member to take the oath, and prevent Mr Bradlaugh from taking it, because you assert that three years ago he had stated within the precincts of this House that he was an Atheist?"

The member referred to was Mr John Morley, who, destined to be Mr Gladstone's most trusted lieutenant, had listened to the Premier's account of "the mischief of the age," but had taken no part in the debate. His Atheism, or non-Theism, was as notorious as Bradlaugh's. It had been zealously used against him by the Tories in his recent election at Newcastle. The fact that he had "spelt 'God' with a small 'g'" through a whole book was known to the whole newspaper-reading public; and the Tories would certainly have been glad enough to exclude him if they could. But they knew all along that there were Atheists on their own side; and Mr Morley's case could not be raised without raising these. So the "profanation of the oath" was permitted without a murmur by the party which had declared itself incapable of tolerating such a thing; and the flagitious persecution of the avowed Atheist was recommenced all the same.

To Mr Labouchere's charge of "monstrous hypocrisy" no answer was attempted. Gladstone and Northcote with one consent ignored it. On a division, though Gladstone supported Mr Labouchere's motion (which if carried would have enabled Bradlaugh to take the oath), only 165 voted for it, and 271 against.

§ 20.

Three years had now passed since Bradlaugh first sought to take the seat to which he was alike morally and legally entitled—three years of manifold exhausting and sorely burdensome strife, of iniquitous and vile calumny, of lawless and shameful persecution, in part brutally fanatical, in part dishonest and hypocritical in the lowest degree. It had been made to embrace all who were closely connected with him. First Mrs Besant was insultingly refused leave to use the garden of the Royal Botanic Society for her studies, on the score that the daughters of the Curator used it. Later

(1883) the Misses Bradlaugh were denied membership of the "Somerville" (Women's) Club on the score that their names were sufficient objection. Yet later (2nd May 1883) Mrs Besant and Miss Bradlaugh were refused admittance to the practical Botany Class at University College, London. On applying by letter, they were requested to present themselves, and then they were told in person by the secretary and the "lady superintendent" that they could not be admitted, because there was "some prejudice" against them. It seemed as if nothing short of the personal insult would suffice the officials concerned; but the Council* endorsed their action at its meeting of 7th May, though the very purpose for which the College had been founded was to dispense with religious qualifications. A memorial requesting the Council to summon an extraordinary general meeting to consider this action was signed by, among others, Professors Huxley, Bain, and Frankland, and Dr E. B. Tylor; but on the meeting being held, the medical graduates came in large numbers to support the action of the Council, greatly outvoting the others. Only nine voted against. The University College was thus committed to a course of ethical rivalry with the House of Commons, outdoing that body, however, in declining to assign any reason for its action. At the meeting Mr Justice Denman took an active part in justifying the action of the Council, and it went from him to the country that the excluded ladies had "refused to comply with the rules of the College." This was pure fiction. Mrs Besant described it at the time as a "cruel and malignant falsehood, for we complied with every condition laid down to us." Informed of his mis-statement, Mr Justice Denman made no correction. Later in the year an attempt was made to deprive of his chair a Professor of Mathematics in the South Wales University, Mr Lloyd Tanner, who was a member of the National Secular Society, and had helped the movement in support of Bradlaugh's claim. It was, however, defeated by a majority of votes.

These endless acts of persecution, parodied as they were in a thousand acts of less publicity, only roused the persecuted party to

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* The President was Lord Kimberley; the Treasurer Sir Julian Goldsmid; and the Council included Lord Belper, Sir B. N. Ellis, Sir A. Hobhouse, Lord Reay, and Sir George Young. I cannot ascertain who were present, save that Sir A. Hobhouse was one.

more energetic action. The Freethought propaganda was carried further than ever, and naturally did not grow more gentle. On the political side, Bradlaugh set himself afresh to rouse the constituencies, bating no jot of heart or hope. To his own constituents he offered his resignation if they wished it, and once more they emphatically refused. He accordingly issued one more "Appeal to the People," organised a series of addresses and demonstrations in the large towns, and in particular took fresh steps for overthrowing the Liberals who had helped to throw out the Affirmation Bill. Previous menaces had reduced the number of these renegades in the last trial of strength; and Torrens in particular now received hundreds of letters warning him that he need not again stand for Finsbury. In the course of a few months, Bradlaugh had addressed audiences numbering in all over 300,000, and nearly all were unanimously in his favour, while at none did the malcontents number above two per cent. In some towns, as at Halifax and Leeds, he had enormous open-air demonstrations, the numbers coming to some fifty thousand. A densely packed meeting took place in St James's Hall in July; and another Trafalgar Square demonstration was held in August, attended by some thirty thousand men, of whom hundreds came as delegates from the provinces; and concurrently with these "constitutional" gatherings there was carried on the work of the Association for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, largely conducted by advanced Unitarian clergymen, who worked with a disinterested zeal worthy of the very highest praise, considering how little of personal sympathy they could have had with the imprisoned Freethinkers.

In the way of more direct action, Bradlaugh on 5th July notified Gladstone that he proposed again to present himself to take the oath, and on the 9th Northcote interrogated the Premier on the subject. Left to do as he would, Northcote once more moved that Bradlaugh be excluded from the House until he should engage not to disturb its proceedings; and on a division 232 voted for the motion and only 65 against, Gladstone deprecating any division at all. On the next day, on receipt of the order of exclusion, Bradlaugh notified Captain Gossett, the Sergeant-at-Arms, that if Captain Gossett would say he interpreted the order to involve the use of physical force to resist Bradlaugh's entry, he would take legal proceedings to obtain a restraining injunction from the High Court of Justice against such resistance. In this

way the legal question might be raised and settled without a fresh scuffle. In the House the Speaker declined to let this letter be made ground of discussion as a matter of "privilege," though he allowed the letter to Gladstone to be so treated. The Sergeant-at-Arms, however, made the requisite answer, and the action was duly begun (19th July). The Treasury defended, and on Bradlaugh's appeal the case was tried by a "full Court." It came on before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, Mr Justice Stephen, and Mr Justice Mathew, on 7th December, the defence arguing by Demurrer to the Statement of Claim. Bradlaugh's pleading was one long argument with the judges, who followed him with great care; and on 9th February 1884 they gave their judgment, not unexpectedly, against him. The view taken was, broadly, that "if injustice has been done, it is an injustice for which the courts of law afford no remedy," which had been the contention of the Attorney-General. Mr Justice Stephen, while concurring with Lord Coleridge to the above effect, delivered a separate and very careful judgment. They could not, he said in effect, assume that the House intentionally defied the law. It must have supposed it was within the law. Then the Court could not pronounce its action illegal without hearing its reasons. But the House could not without loss of dignity give the Court its reasons, or allow the Court to overrule them. Therefore the plaintiff, right or wrong, had no legal redress. If wronged, he must go to the constituencies. In fine, the breaking of any law by the House in its own procedure would not be illegal, or, if it were, the illegality could not be redressed by the law courts. The House of Commons might be restrained in the case of an illegal order against a stranger, but not in the case of an illegal order against one of its own members. If it erred or did injustice, it was in the position of an erring or unjust judge, from whose decision there was no appeal. The rights of the constituency of Northampton and their member were strictly legal rights; but it lay with the House to override them if it would.

Expecting this decision, Bradlaugh had already laid the new situation before his constituents, in order to have their assent to his action on the re-opening of Parliament, and once more they declared their entire confidence in him. He had also arranged with the Tories, through his colleague, to take no action in the House before 11th February, if they would take none. His course

now was to go to the House on 11th February, go up to the table with Mr Labouchere and Mr Burt as his introducers, and once more administer the oath to himself.

The Speaker gave the customary order to withdraw, and Northcote, after stating that Bradlaugh had not taken the oath according to the statute, absurdly moved that he "be not allowed to go through the form of repeating the words of the oath prescribed by the statutes." Then ensued the customary miscellaneous debate. Gladstone at much length suggested that there should be no division. Mr Labouchere offered to agree if Northcote would limit his motion to the time within which it would be possible to obtain a legal decision on the legality of Bradlaugh's latest act of self-swearing; but Northcote would not agree, and Mr Labouchere proceeded forcibly to argue the point, not only declaring the act to be in his opinion legal, but adding:—

"I confess that, for my part, I do regard these words of the oath [which Bradlaugh had called an unmeaning form] as an utterly unmeaning form — (Opposition cries of 'Oh, oh') — utterly and absolutely an unmeaning form. To me they are just the same superstitious incantation—('Hear, hear,' laughter, 'Oh, oh,' and 'Order') —as the trash of any Mumbo-Jumbo among African savages. (Renewed laughter, cries of 'Oh, oh,' and 'Order.') Why do hon. gentlemen say 'Oh, oh'? Are they aware that there are many in this House who regard these words as a blasphemous form? ('Hear, hear.') I say I regard them as an unmeaning form."

From this point at least, if not before, the proceedings against Bradlaugh in the House may without fear of contradiction be described as an indecent farce. His colleague had in the most aggressive fashion, and within the House, declared the oath to be in his opinion a superstitious, barbarous, and senseless incantation. Mr John Morley, as Positivist, had taken the oath without contradiction. And before either of these episodes Mr Ashton Dilke, whose vacated seat for Newcastle Mr Morley obtained, had declared in the House, in course of debate, that he was without belief in the reigning religion. Bradlaugh, who heard the avowal, remarked on the stilled surprise with which it was received. But no one ever sought to challenge the right of Mr Dilke, Mr Morley, or Mr Labouchere to sit in virtue of having taken an unbelieving oath. The Tory talk in the House of "profanation" is thus stamped once for all as a tissue of the worst hypocrisy; and the

Tory leader and all his men stand convicted of a course of dissimulation as cowardly as it was shameless. They would attack the "unpopular" man; they would not obstruct Mr Morley, since that would bring up the question of Tory Atheism; they would not proceed against Mr Labouchere, since he was likely to publish in his journal the names of some of the Tory Atheists.

Gross as it had become, the farce went on. Forster, who now spoke on the subject for the first time, gave a touch of dignity to the debate by protesting against Mr Labouchere's remarks on the oath (though without proposing to have him proceeded against), and saying, as Gladstone and others had said before, that the opposition to Bradlaugh was one of the greatest blows against the cause of religion that had been struck for many years. Northcote, making no comment whatever on Mr Labouchere's hardy avowal, briefly explained the force of his motion; and after this irregularity the debate grew more and more confused. It was known that Bradlaugh meant as before to vote in the division; and the Speaker was repeatedly appealed to to prevent it. He declared he had not the power; and Mr Healy—in one of a series of grossly insolent speeches, in which he spoke of "the Government, Bradlaugh & Co."—moved immediately after the division, before the numbers were announced, that the vote be expunged. After much squabbling, the House divided on this point, when there voted 258 Ayes and 161 Noes. Bradlaugh's vote with the Noes was thus "disallowed;" but after the voting on the original motion had been stated—280 Ayes and 167 Noes—Mr Labouchere announced that Bradlaugh had voted with the Noes on the motion to expunge his previous vote. The farce was thus pretty complete.

Northcote then made his usual motion to exclude Bradlaugh "from the precincts of the House until he shall engage not further to disturb the proceedings of the House." Again the debate broke out. Mr Labouchere offered to undertake that if the motion was withdrawn Bradlaugh should not disturb the proceedings until he had obtained a legal decision on this last oath-taking; and Gladstone and Bright pointed out the hardship and indignity of excluding Bradlaugh from the very library and lobbies of the House; but Northcote, swayed as usual by the worst of his followers, pressed his motion, disregarding Mr Burt's final repetition of the undertaking that Bradlaugh should not disturb the

proceedings till his law case was settled. On a division, 228 voted for the final indignity, and only 120 against. The farce had become as ignoble as meanness could make it; and Northcote was admitted by most people to have fully realised the character in which he was more than once presented by the caricaturists—of pantaloon to Churchill's clown in the Tory pantomime. Churchill took the lead on the following evening when, Bradlaugh having "applied for the Chiltern Hundreds," Mr Labouchere moved that a new writ be issued for Northampton.* The hereditarily noble lord saw that if Bradlaugh were re-elected they would be no further forward; and his object was to exclude him permanently. He had lately given notice of a motion that Bradlaugh be declared incapable in perpetuity of sitting, but had dropped it as hopeless. He now "moved the adjournment of the debate." A straggling and noisy debate ensued, in which Mr Healy was pronounced disorderly by the Speaker for his interruptions of Northcote, whose ally he had been. On a division, only 145 voted for the adjournment, and 203 against. Then more discussion as to whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer had the right to grant the Chiltern Hundreds, the motion for the new writ being finally agreed to.

Unseated for the third time since his perfectly valid return in 1880, Bradlaugh appealed to his constituents to elect him for the fourth time, and was received by them with if possible greater enthusiasm than ever. A new Tory candidate, Mr H. C. Richards, had been for some time in the field, and the seat was fought in the old fashion; but whether owing to the feebleness of the candidate, whom Bradlaugh generally treated with humorous contempt, or a sense of shame among some of the local Tories, the opposition vote now fell away. The forces of bigotry had squeezed the last possible vote out of the borough, and after a short and strenuous struggle the poll (19th February 1884) ran: Bradlaugh, 4032; Richards, 3664. Bradlaugh had clearly "touched bottom," and begun to rise again. At the general election he had polled 3827, and been 695 above the highest Tory; in 1881 he had only polled 3437, a majority of only 132; in 1882, polling 3796, he was only

* In this case the Government arranged to sue Bradlaugh in the Courts for the penalties that would be incurred if his last oath-taking and voting were pronounced illegal by the Courts. It was accordingly left to Bradlaugh to vacate his seat by his own act

108 above his opponent with 3688; now he had reached a higher figure than ever, polling 368 more than the Tory, who was 24 below the last Tory vote. The Tory game was now hopeless so far as Northampton was concerned.

The badgered Northcote, goaded by his lawless following, now proposed to take the step of preventing Bradlaugh from entering the House on his new return. Learning this, Bradlaugh on the 20th wrote a letter of protest to the Speaker and the Premier, and the anticipatory course was prevented. But when on the 21st the Speaker read to the House a second letter in which Bradlaugh formally undertook (as his introducers had undertaken for him before) not to present himself at the table until judgment should be given in the test action to be laid against him by the Government. All the same, Northcote moved, amid cries of "Shame," his old resolution of exclusion "from the precincts." The Tory army had to be solaced somehow for Bradlaugh's decisive victory at the poll. Gladstone opposed, and yet again there was a miscellaneous debate, in the course of which Churchill made the worthy suggestion that the Government meant that Mr Bradlaugh was to be allowed once more to appeal to the mob, in order that not only the House of Commons might be prejudiced, but that even the courts of law might be biassed by the demonstration in his favour. On a division, 226 voted for Northcote's motion and only 173 against. Bradlaugh was now denied the use of the House's library for the lawsuit pending against him on the House's behalf. He addressed to Northcote, and printed in his journal, an open letter touched with indignant contempt.

The critical part of the letter, and perhaps the special sting of some of the phrases—as, "You wear knightly orders. You should be above a knave's spitefulness"—moved Northcote to send a long defensive reply, repeating the "profanation" formula, and concluding: "The inconveniences of which you complain are inconveniences which you might, if you chose, put an end to to-morrow"—which meant that Bradlaugh might have the use of the House if only he would undertake never again under any circumstances to try to take his seat. To this "knightly" suggestion *

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* The harping on the "chivalry" of Northcote by Mr Lang and others is an interesting light on the nature of their ideals. Northcote was certainly more of a gentleman than were his accomplices in the Bradlaugh struggle,

Bradlaugh replied with perhaps too scrupulous courtesy of form, but with sufficient emphasis, and turned himself once more to the struggle outside.

§ 21.

From this point forward it is difficult to record the course of the Parliamentary struggle with the serious patience hitherto spent on the narrative. On the side of the House it had become a revolting hypocrisy, since Bradlaugh was being ostracised for what other men were allowed to do freely; and the form of legality put on in the resort to the law courts was only a new simulation. The law courts had declared that they could have no possible jurisdiction over the House in such matters however it might break the law, and still the House was formally proceeding to obtain from the law courts penalties against Bradlaugh for trying to fulfil the law when the House hindered him. The House knew quite well that if it had even declared him entitled to affirm under the existing law, no court would have decided otherwise. The hostile decision was here a foregone conclusion; for *a fortiori* the courts, after their last emphatic decision, would not prevent the House from interpreting the law as to swearing in its own way. Only the strenuous energy of Bradlaugh, joined with his chivalrous belief in the ideal rectitude and jurisdiction of the judges, could have set any man in his position on a fresh legal adventure.

Begun in March 1884, the lawsuit at the instance of the Government came on before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, Mr Justice Grove, Mr Baron Huddleston, "sitting at bar," and a

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but barring his comparative moderation, there was not a gleam of "chivalry" in his whole conduct of the business. As for the mass of his followers, they had, as Sir George Trevelyan has said of the Tories who ostracised Wilkes, "as much chivalry in them as a pack of prairie wolves round a wounded buffalo." Mr Lang ("Life," ii. 136) writes that "an acute and well-informed critic has singled out Sir Stafford Northcote's treatment of the questions raised by Mr Bradlaugh as the best example of Sir Stafford Northcote's tact and adroitness." The "adroitness" need not be disputed. But Mr Lang, on his own part, holds that "it would throw no light on Sir Stafford Northcote's leadership to follow the details of this tedious and protracted struggle." For "light" and "leadership," read "credit" and "character," and the proposition would be quite valid.

special jury, on 13th, 15th, 17th, and 18th June. Against Bradlaugh were arrayed five counsel,—the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, Sir Hardinge Giffard, Mr Danckwertz, and Mr R. S. Wright, and the case was argued at enormous length on a multitude of minutiæ as to Bradlaugh's original evidence before the first Select Committee, the practice of the House, the position of the Speaker on 11th February, the law as to what constituted the oath, the force of an oath taken by an atheist, and so on. After two delays, caused by the illness of Lord Coleridge, his summing-up, which was proportionately long and elaborate, was given on 30th June. It advised the jury that the weight of evidence was to show that Bradlaugh was all along an unbeliever in a Supreme Being—a point which Bradlaugh argued should not have been raised—that in law a person on whose conscience an oath would have "no binding effect" was a person who could not legally take a oath; and that Bradlaugh had not taken the oath in accordance with the practice of Parliament. The other judges concurred; but Lord Coleridge having spoken of inquisitorial questions on belief in general (not those in the Bradlaugh case in particular) as "hateful" and "disgusting," Mr Baron Huddleston desired to express dissent on that head, while Mr Justice Grove said he would call them, "to use a mild term, extremely objectionable." The Lord Chief Justice, remarking that he felt strongly on the matter, gracefully agreed that his words should be "discounted" on that score.

Formally, there went to the jury eight questions, to this effect: (1) Was the Speaker sitting when Bradlaugh took the oath on 11th February? (2) Was he sitting to prepare notes for use in addressing Bradlaugh? (3) Had he resumed his seat to let Bradlaugh swear? (4) Was Bradlaugh then without belief in a Supreme Being? (5) Was he a person on whose conscience an oath, *as an oath*, had no binding force? (6) Had the House full cognisance of these matters through Bradlaugh's avowal? (7) Did he take the oath according to Parliamentary practice? (8) Generally, did he take and subscribe the oath?

The jury's answers were, in brief:—(1) Sitting; (2) Sitting to prepare notes as stated; (3) No; (4) He had no such belief; (5) Yes; (6) Yes; (7) Not according to the "full" practice; (8) Not as an oath.

Bradlaugh at once asked for a stay of judgment in order to enable

him "to move for a new trial to move to enter judgment for the defendant *non-obstante veredicto*, and to move for arrest of judgment." Outsiders had supposed that the jury trial ended the matter, but it was not so. Bradlaugh wrote in his journal undauntedly: "If my constituents still give me their confidence, nothing can defeat me;" and when friends wrote that they could see no hope of good from the "wearisome and disappointing litigation," he characteristically answered :—

"There are only two weapons to defend the right with : Law and Force. As yet I try the law ; and so long as I believe, as I do believe, the law to be on my side, it is to the law and to public opinion I ought to appeal. My opponents rely on force and trick. If the law was actually against me they would take away my seat by law. This they do not even try to do. They hope to weary my constituents, and to tire and ruin me in this contest. Hampden, resisting ship-money, fought more than three years in the law courts ; but his wearisome litigation was not quite in vain. Wilkes, backed by Earl Temple with purse and power, struggled with the Commons through several weary years, and at last Middlesex gave him victory."

The appeal was, on the face of it, a better case than Bradlaugh had had in defending the action of the Crown. It came on, on 6th December, before the same judges, sitting "*in banc*," who had tried the action "at bar," Bradlaugh turning out to be right in his theory of the proper procedure, whereas the judges had all been avowedly in doubt. But the greater apparent force of the case as now put did not avail. Bradlaugh cogently argued that no Act of Parliament gave the least countenance to the notion that Atheists were to be disabled from swearing. The Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866, cap. xix., enjoins on members of Parliament, with the exception only of those qualified to affirm, the taking of an oath of allegiance of uniform phrasing, thus admitting of no disability, and making an end of any disability which may be supposed to have previously existed. Yet again, an Act of 1867 expressly provided that any subject of Her Majesty, *without reference to his religious belief*, should take the oath of allegiance on taking office. But Lord Coleridge had in the previous trial fully made up his mind that "oath" must mean "adjuration made by one believing in the Deity adjured," and he early indicated that this conviction overthrew all arguments from the mere wording of statutes. On the Act of 1867 he

remarked (with a discourtesy which for him was unusual, and which disappears in the report) that "a little common sense and a little knowledge of history" would have made the appellant aware that that Act was passed on behalf of a Roman Catholic judge. Bradlaugh knew the facts well enough, and capped the Lord Chief Justice's history with some more, all going to show that the wish of the legislature had then been to sweep away all religious disabilities whatever. It was all to no purpose. Lord Coleridge was rather a man of strong sentiments than a strong lawyer. He hated all persecution on behalf of religion; and on behalf of Messrs Foote and Ramsey he stated the law of blasphemy in the mildest possible way—a way to which Mr Justice Stephen, albeit a rationalist, declared he could not subscribe. But Lord Coleridge was also an emotional Christian; and though his admired friend Arnold would readily have taken the oath without any belief in the Deity adjured, his Lordship was strongly averse to having it taken by an "aggressive" Atheist; and though he must have known perfectly well that in Parliament there had for generations been known holders of atheistic views, and that nobody proposed their exclusion, he yet chose to assume that all laws as to oath-taking were meant to exclude oath-taking by Atheists. One or two notable passages took place between him and the appellant. Lord Coleridge, in his nervous irritation at being persistently argued against, once so far forgot himself as to say Bradlaugh was wasting time. The charge was too bad: Bradlaugh was one of the closest and concisest of pleaders, as many judges had admitted; and at a later stage in this trial the Lord Chief Justice took back his words. At another point he somewhat impatiently deprecated a particular line of argument, and Bradlaugh quietly answered, "My Lord, I must fight with what weapons I can." Once or twice more his lordship was rather idly petulant,* but this was transient; and he was very genial when, on his remarking, "It may be, of course, that you are right and we are all wrong," the appellant answered, "With the utmost respect, my lord, that is practically what I am going to contend."

Justice Grove, an amiable and fair though unsubtle judge, argued very courteously (while incidentally avowing that his sympathies were on the side of minimising oaths) that the legis-

* I was present at this trial, and took notes for an article.

lature could not be held to have enacted an oath in the tolerant expectation that it would be taken by some men for whom the adjuration had no meaning. That was no doubt a perfectly reasonable point for a judge to put; but, on the other hand, nothing is more common than the plea of judges—it was made by Justice Grove himself—that they have only to do with the law as it stands; and if in this case they were to look into the probable state of mind of the legislature, it was plainly their business to take into account all the well-known facts of the case, including the notorious fact that members known to their fellow-members to be Atheists or "Lucretian" Theists had repeatedly sat in the House.

Their lordships, of course, repeated their former decision—Lord Coleridge giving the very inaccurate reason that no "new point" or "new argument" had been raised—and the rule for a new trial was refused. Immediately Bradlaugh appealed; and the case was heard (on the motion for a new trial, and, secondarily for seven days' time to move for arrest of judgment after the first motion should have been adjudged upon) in the Court of Appeal on 15th December by Lords Justices Brett (Master of the Rolls), Cotton, and Lindley. These judges heard the appeal with great patience, and on the 18th gave judgment to the effect that they could not grant a rule for a new trial on the ground that the verdict was against the evidence. But on "many other questions in the case which it is not improbable might all be raised upon the appeal by way of arrest of judgment," they thought it right to grant "a rule *nisi* to show cause upon all the other points taken by the defendant, upon condition that the appeal in arrest of judgment is brought on at the same time." The argument on this rule was taken on 26th January 1885, when the Attorney-General and Sir Hardinge Giffard argued (a point which had been left open before) that no appeal lay, the case being technically a criminal one. This plea, after voluminous argument, was overruled—the point being settled by Bradlaugh's references to portions of the Crown Suits Act which the other side had not dealt with. Then came the argument on the main issue. To a lay listener Lord Justice Brett seemed to give a more strictly judicial attention to the problem than did any of the judges who had dealt with it hitherto, and never was the subject more fully illuminated. In a previous trial Justice Grove had noticed the anomaly that whereas an oath or affirmation was set up as a means of securing true

answers, the judge had to satisfy himself beforehand on a witness's bare word as to the nominally all-important point whether an oath would be "binding on his conscience." Bradlaugh now brought out another no less precious anomaly, namely, that the Speaker, at the opening of Parliament, must of necessity administer the oath to himself; and that the first forty members *must positively break the law*, seeing that they swear while there is not a "full House" sitting. Another curious issue was raised by the Court. An unbeliever could certainly be punished for perjury; how, then, could his oath be "no oath," when perjury expressly meant false testimony given on oath? Sir Hardinge Giffard's answer was that no man may "take profit from his own wrong." It might have been more dramatically put that the Christian law says to the Atheist, "Heads, we win; tails, you lose."

Despite the fairness of the hearing given, it soon became apparent that the Master of the Rolls held that "religious test" could only mean "test as between different forms of religion," and that to exclude an Atheist from civic rights is not to impose a religious test. Now, the English tests of last century were as between sects, not as between religions; that is, they were denominational; that is, political. Still, they were always known as religious tests. It would surely follow that "religious test" meant any test connected with religious matters. In that case Lord Justice Brett's distinction was completely arbitrary and fallacious. But on grounds such as these, among others, the judgment was given (28th January) against the appellant. It was certainly an able judgment—as able as it was lengthy. It raised, among other things, the exquisitely complicated anomaly that Bradlaugh could satisfy a judge on his bare statement that he was an Atheist, and yet, after affirming on that ground, could be solemnly examined as to whether he was an Atheist. And the judge very explicitly laid it down that if a non-believer in a falsehood-punishing Deity were to take the oath unopposed, with all the customary formalities, he could on proof be sued for the penalty of £500 for every vote he had given. This meant, if anything, that the Atheists or Agnostics then sitting in Parliament were all so liable.

Lord Justice Cotton, with much simplicity, laid it down that the law of England "undoubtedly" was that if a person in the "unhappy position" of not believing in a lie-avenging Deity took

the oath, it was not a real oath. And Lord Justice Lindley, with a certain cynical candour, dealt with Bradlaugh's main argument, that it was absurd to hold that a man is by law incapable of doing that which the law requires him to do. "I agree in the absurdity," said his lordship, "but not in the argument adduced from it." He held that the only solution would be that the defendant "could not be properly elected."

"It is a mistake to suppose," said Lord Justice Lindley further, "and I think it is as well the mistake should be known, that persons who do not believe in a Supreme Being are in the state in which it is now supposed they are. There are old Acts of Parliament still unrepealed by which such people can be cruelly persecuted. Whether that is a state of law which ought to remain or not is not for me to express an opinion upon; but having regard to the fact that these Acts of Parliament still remain unrepealed, I do not see my way to hold judicially that this oath was not kept alive by Parliament *for the very purpose, amongst others, of keeping such people out of Parliament.*"

This last deliverance is memorable on several grounds—memorable as showing the need, from the point of view of one more judge, for a repeal of the brutal laws of the past against heresy; and further memorable as showing once more how ready are judges to rest alternately on mutually exclusive principles of interpretation. On the point as to whether the case was one in which an appeal lay, Lord Justice Lindley grounded his opinion on the fact that there was not to be found in the Judicature Act "the slightest indication of any intention on the part of the legislature" to prevent appeals in cases which were "previously made civil proceedings for the purposes of appeals." On the same principle, he ought to have looked whether there were the "slightest indication of any intention on the part of the legislature" in modern acts to exclude all Atheists from oath-taking. There is no such indication. Not a word is said of excluding unbelievers. On the contrary, it was only with difficulty that the legislature could be got to meet the fact that there *were* many Atheists who at times had to give testimony in courts of law. Had the legislature really desired to exclude all Atheists from oath-taking it would surely have said so, knowing as it must have done how common unbelieving oath-taking had been. And all the judges, as individuals, must have known perfectly well that privately known Atheists had sat in every Parliament for genera-

tions. Such are the conditions of legal judgment on questions of legal principle.

Bradlaugh at once gave notice of appeal to the House of Lords; and, all things considered, he had as good chances of success as ever he had. But this litigation had now reached its climax, and the appeal did not come off. The struggle had gone far towards completing its fifth year, and relief was almost within sight. It was not to come from legislation. Mr Hopwood had undertaken to introduce an affirmation Bill grappling with the whole position, which was not merely an affair of the admission of Atheists, but of providing also for certain religionists who, not being Quakers, Moravians, or Separatists, were not entitled to affirm, though strongly objecting to the oath. And there were yet further matters to be dealt with, as the position of free-thinking jurors. But the saving credit of passing such a measure was not in store for the "Liberal" Parliament. At the Liberal Conference on Reform in 1884, presided over by Mr John Morley, a resolution had been unanimously carried in favour of Northampton's right; and at the Conference of the National Liberal Federation in 1885, Mr Hopwood's Bill was unanimously approved of; but though this action was backed up by countless resolutions of Liberal and Radical Clubs, and hundreds of petitions,* the Anglican and Roman Churches set to work as zealously as ever to oppose, the Liberal Government would make no attempt to grant facilities in the House, the Bill was blocked, and nothing was done while that Government remained in office. But when, on their being defeated at their own wish on the Budget, a Conservative Ministry took office, Bradlaugh at once presented himself (6th July) to be sworn. He might have presented himself before the re-elected Tory ministers, in which case they could not have taken part in the proceedings against him, but he treated them with the chivalry they never showed to him, and allowed the ministers first to be sworn in. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, took up the matter on the lines of Northcote, who was now made a peer, and moved that Bradlaugh be as before excluded from the precincts. Mr Parnell and Mr Healy went further, appealing to the Speaker to have Bradlaugh (who was standing below the bar) wholly

* By August, 655 petitions had been presented, with 77,639 signatures.

excluded from the House at once, before the motion was debated. To this stretch of malice the Speaker could not accede, and the debate proceeded in the usual way. Mr Hopwood moved an amendment declaring legislation to be necessary "on wider grounds than the interests of a constituency." Gladstone, though deprecating any general legislation on the subject, supported the amendment. Only 219 voted for it, however, and 263 against, the majority again including many Home Rulers and a number of Liberals, while many more Liberals had absented themselves. Against most of these, vigorous measures were taken in the constituencies, which now had before them the imminent prospect of a fresh general election. In this election it had been arranged that Bradlaugh should stand for the new borough of East Finsbury, London, as well as for Northampton, on the understanding that if elected for both he should sit for Northampton. This was a generous attempt on the part of the Finsbury Radicals to strengthen his case; but other Radical candidates being less generous, he finally withdrew from the Finsbury candidature to avoid a split in the Radical camp. In Northampton the fight had little excitement in it, the conclusion being foregone. Mr Richards at one of his meetings claimed credit for avoiding personalities, and mentioned that he had in his pockets letters from several persons offering to flood Northampton with slanderous tracts. He did not add that that device had been played out, and had become just a little unsafe besides. Towards the election day virulent placards were resorted to, from force of habit. Bradlaugh did not post a single bill. The poll (25th November) stood:—Labouchere, 4845; Bradlaugh, 4315; Richards, 3890; Bradlaugh thus standing higher than ever before. The difference between him and his colleague was represented by 366 plumpers for Mr Labouchere, and 300 votes split with the Tory, less 126 plumpers for Bradlaugh, and 10 split for him and the Tory. The news was received everywhere with special enthusiasm. But still more significant was the havoc wrought among those pseudo-Liberal members who had turned the scale against Bradlaugh in the House. Mr Samuel Morley had been forced to retire from Bristol, Mr M'Cullagh Torrens from Finsbury, the Hon. H. W. Fitzwilliam from Dewsbury, Mr Jerningham from Berwick, and then later from Blackpool, the selection being cancelled before the election; Mr George Courtauld, Unitarian, from Maldon,

Sir Alexander Gordon from Aberdeenshire, Sir Thomas Chambers from Marylebone, and Baron de Ferrières from Cheltenham. These were all opposed by former supporters on the express ground of their votes in the Northampton question. Others who went to the poll, again, were defeated on the same score. Mr Norwood at Hull was defeated by the running of a special Radical candidate in protest against his anti-Bradlaugh action in the House. Mr A. P. Vivian, a frequent absentee on the question, was defeated in North-west Cornwall, and Sir W. Charley at Ipswich. Mr B. Whitworth, formerly of Drogheda, chosen and then dismissed at Hackney, was defeated at Lewisham. Prominent Tory and other enemies suffered in a hardly less degree. Newdegate, after beginning his candidature, withdrew rather than meet certain defeat; Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was defeated, so was Earl Percy, so was Sir J. E. Wilmot, so was Mr Warton, so was "O'Donnell." Dr Lyons collapsed at nomination in Dublin. M'Coan was thrown out at Lancaster, Mr Nicholson at Petersfield, and Mr Denzil Onslow at Poplar. Of new Tory candidates who had been specially offensive in their hostility, Mr Hammond was beaten at Newcastle, Mr Bruce Wentworth at Barnsley, Mr Holloway at Stroud, and Mr Edwardes-Moss at Southport. There was no mistaking the "Bradlaugh element" in these cases; and though some Radicals who had stood by him were also defeated, as Mr Hopwood and Mr Hugh Mason, that was solely owing to the hostility of the Irish vote, then being manœuvred by Parnell to weaken the Liberals. Much of the work of destroying the renegade Liberals had been done by Bradlaugh in person in his lecturing tours. "I think I have settled a round dozen of them," he remarked some time before the election. One former Liberal member, who had been his persistent enemy in the House, finding defeat staring him in the face through Bradlaugh's action, came to him in his hotel when he was lecturing in the constituency concerned, and humbled himself to ask for mercy. Bradlaugh gravely refused. "You are very hard," whined the petitioner, who had thought fit to work iniquity with the majority for five long years, with as little thought of justice as of generosity.

The tables thus turned, it is probable that in the first Parliament which assembled in 1886, an Affirmation Bill could have been carried in the teeth of the Tory minority, seeing

that even some Tory members had had to pledge themselves to support such a Bill; and Mr Serjeant Simon had arranged to re-introduce Mr Hopwood's. But the settlement was precipitated in an unexpected way. Bradlaugh wrote Sir Michael Beach asking how the Government would treat the Bill if introduced, and received a non-committal answer. Soon afterwards it was announced that communications had passed on the subject between Sir Michael and the new Speaker-elect, Mr Peel; and Bradlaugh wrote to ask Sir Michael what they were, but was refused the information, whereupon he strongly protested. The mystery was only cleared up when the new Parliament assembled on 13th January 1886.* The new Speaker had determined to reverse the policy of his predecessor in the Bradlaugh case, and the Tory Cabinet in vain sought to dissuade him. On the opening day, before any members were sworn, he informed the House that he had had two communications—one from Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and one from two other members, Mr Raikes and Sir John Kennaway, appealing to him not to let Bradlaugh take the oath. To these requests he flatly declined to accede. In the former Parliament, he pointed out, the Speaker had taken no independent authority on himself, but had always acted on the instructions of the House. "We are assembled," he went on,

"in a new Parliament. I know nothing of the resolutions of the past. (Cheers.) They have lapsed; they are void; they are of no effect in reference to this case. (Renewed cheers.) It is the right, the legal, statutable obligation of members, when returned to this House, to come to the table and take the oath prescribed by statute. ('Hear, hear.') I have no authority, I have no right, original or delegated, to stand between an hon. member and his taking of the oath. ('Hear, hear.') I have been further asked whether, when the House is completed, and after a quorum has been constituted, it would be competent for a motion to be made intervening between the hon. member for Northampton and his taking of the oath. I have come clearly and without hesitation to the conclusion that it would neither be my duty to prohibit the hon. gentleman from coming, nor to permit a motion to be made standing between him and his taking of the oath. (Opposition cheers.) The hon. member takes that oath under whatever risks may attach to him in a court of law. ('Hear, hear.') But it is not for me—

* This Parliament is alluded to as "of 1885" by Mr Walpole, Mr Lang, and others. It was elected in 1885, but did not assemble till 1886.

I respectfully say it is not for the House—to enter into any inquisition—(cheers)—as to what may be the opinions of a member when he comes to the table to take the oath. I am bound, and the House is bound, by the forms of this House, and by the legal obligations and rights of members. If a member comes to this table and offers to take the oath, I know of no right whatever to intervene between him and the form of legal and statutable obligation. (Cheers.)"

The Chancellor of the Exchequer in vain sought to make a declaration: he was called to order. Bradlaugh was duly sworn, with a Tory Ministry in nominal command of the House. The protesters against "profanation" had to stand by and see what they had defined as profanation "solemnly"—as the law courts defined solemnity—authorised by the supreme authority of the House. They had refused to permit affirmation; their oath was now, on their own declaration, outraged and trampled upon. At the same time, the whole past procedure of the House, the whole course of the last Speaker, was overruled and impeached as unwarrantable. The House had drunk its cup to the dregs.

§ 22.

The Tory press naturally solaced itself by repeating the well-tried falsehood that Bradlaugh had originally refused to take the oath, and declaring that he had now eaten his words. On 26th January, dissatisfied with that unsubstantial comfort, Mr Raikes asked the Government if they would prevent Bradlaugh from sitting and voting until he had proved his capacity to take the oath, or until the judgment of the Court of Appeal was reversed by a higher tribunal. Sir M. Hicks Beach formally replied that he was not prepared to take action, and no action of the kind was ever taken. Soon the Tories, being in the minority in the House, were turned out and the Liberals installed in their places. Appealed to to enter a *stet processus* in the action in which Bradlaugh had appealed, they timorously declined, dreading Tory comment. But when the Tories later in the year were returned to power by the election following on Mr Gladstone's defeat on his first Home Rule Bill, and Lord Randolph Churchill became leader of the House of Commons, that versatile personage, desirous of placating if possible so formidable and so avowed an enemy as Bradlaugh, gave the relief which the Liberals

had refused. Bradlaugh was thus finally secured in his seat by the capitulation of one of the most unscrupulous and offensive of his old enemies. Churchill's allusion in the House to Bradlaugh's supporters as the "scum and dregs of the nation" had elicited from Bradlaugh, in connection with his agitation against perpetual pensions, a short tractate on the manner of the founding of the Churchill family, which struck his lordship in a fashion he had not been used to at the hands of Gladstone, or even of Mr Chamberlain; and he desired to make peace. He did not obtain it.

But not only did the Tory party, as represented by its new leader in the Commons, thus give up all it had contended for: it was finally to make personal submission to the man it had wronged. The Affirmation Bill introduced by Mr Serjeant Simon never reached a debate; and it was left to Bradlaugh to carry one on his own initiative in 1888, by the votes of the men, Tory and Parnellite, who had defeated former Bills. Last of all, it was in the same Tory House of Commons, while Bradlaugh lay dying, that there was carried the resolution he had repeatedly put down, expunging from the journals of the House the old votes for his exclusion, even as the resolutions against Wilkes had been expunged. If the act was one of repentance, it the more certainly implied an infamous wrong done.

There were certainly many reasons why the Tory party should repent. They had "struck for themselves an evil blow," though the sudden rising of the Home Rule issue served to obscure the consequences of their course in the Northampton struggle. It was impossible that as a party they could have gained in credit by it either among the masses or among thoughtful and earnest men. Nothing was more notorious than that nine-tenths of the leading Bradlaugh-baiters were the least worthy men in the House. Wolff, described by Bradlaugh as a noted retailer of *choses grivoises;* Churchill, the noisy and reckless charlatan of the new Toryism, "the Demosthenes of bad taste and vulgar vehemence;" * Tyler, the company-promoter, hooted by the shareholders he had impoverished; "O'Donnell," the turncoat; Callan, the drunken; Newdegate, besotted with more fumes than those of fanaticism; Fowler and Warton, the gross and blatant; Healy, the ever-

* Byron's description of a better man.

rowdy—these could not gain good repute from alliance with types like Mr Samuel Morley, and could not be made respectable by the leadership of Northcote, whom they hustled and humiliated. It is not possible to say with entire certainty what had been the general view of Beaconsfield on the case while he lived; but it is difficult to believe that he could have taken any satisfaction in seeing the most prominent function of the new Toryism made out to be the rowdy resistance to the sitting of a freethinking member, and the insolent refusal of a constituency's rights.

There can be no doubt, I think, that one effect of the whole episode was to create a new and widespread intensity of antagonism to the prevailing religion and to the Conservative cause. Men who had before regarded Christianity with indifference or disfavour or contempt, as a delusion, began to detest it as a living fountain of injustice; and men who had seen in recent Conservatism a policy of diverting the people's attention from home needs by foreign adventure, now saw in it a great machinery for working iniquity within the State. The party which had been seen making gun-wadding of the decalogue in its wars of aggression had now made a crass Semitic Theism the pretext for a dastardly effort to crush one man, partly by way of embarrassing the opposite side; and the party which denounced "disloyalty" took sides with the disloyalists to the same end. Of course, the heat of the immediate struggle did not last on one side any more than on the other; above all, it did not last with Bradlaugh himself; but it is certain that thousands of Freethinkers date their conversion from the time of Bradlaugh's fight with the bigots; and I fancy there are still many who preserve the impression they then gained of what Voltaire meant by "the infamous," and the purpose they then formed to make war on it throughout their lives. As regards Toryism, too, though "each day brings its petty dust, our soon-choked souls to fill," the adherents of that cause may rely on it that for many a citizen, for many a day to come, their declarations of concern for justice and right, in any case whatever, are made derisory by memories of their five-year-long course of gleeful injustice to the Atheist. Time brings its revenges. If Liberals in mass have deserved ten years of frustration, in an effort to do right, by their former treatment of Ireland, Tories in turn have wrought for the cup of defeat they have tasted, and are yet to drain to the dregs. And the Irishmen

who, claiming freedom for themselves, shamelessly withheld from another even the rights they already enjoyed—they, too, have paid and are paying for their misdeeds, despite their avowed repentance.

As for the Conservative party, despite its practical recantation, it would be too much to say that there is any real concern among the mass of its members for the five years' carnival of injustice over Bradlaugh. I have gone through Mr Lang's "Life of Northcote" without finding one word of regret for the whole shameful business, though he quotes a passage in which Northcote expressed in his diary a mild deprecation of the ruffianism of some of his followers in the matter. But, indeed, the capacity to do the thing as it was done excludes the capacity to be ashamed of it. Toryism is transmuted, but does not repent. At best, new Tories may at times deprecate the action of their predecessors.

§ 23.

Whatever be the sympathies with which the matter is looked at, there is no gainsaying the historical fact that Bradlaugh's struggle is a decisive episode in constitutional history. It will always rank in English annals with the partially parallel case of Wilkes, dating a hundred and twenty years earlier; and it will be a very bold or a very blind majority which ever again attempts to exclude from the House of Commons a duly-elected member against whom no legal objection lies. Of Wilkes, Mr Gladstone has declared that whether we choose it or not, his name must be enrolled among those of the great champions of English freedom. If that be so, Bradlaugh's name must stand still higher, in that it represents not only the principle of the rights of constituencies, but the principle of freedom of conscience in the last and most serious issue. And in every moral respect, Bradlaugh's case stands above that of Wilkes. The point in which they best compare is their courage; but even the undoubted courage with which Wilkes faced an unpopular king and unpopular ministers was a less rare thing than the fortitude which faced the hate and the slander of half of the more articulate part of the nation. For the rest, though he had the merit of geniality, Wilkes was a poor creature enough in many ways—a rascal towards his wife, a leader of ribald orgies, a prurient poetaster, a briber of constituencies, while professing to be uncorrupting and incorruptible. He was a

blasphemer in the strict and really bad sense of a man deriding a Deity in whom he did not profess to disbelieve; he wrote and privately printed indecent verse for the indecency's sake. And if he is to be remembered for courage in that he resisted an unpopular Ministry with a great and aristocratic party to support and salary him, much more so is Bradlaugh, who was scouted and insulted by many even of the Liberals that felt constrained at times to vote on his behalf, and who had little save poor men's help in his long and costly fight. It is significant of the worth of common opinion that Wilkes was much more readily forgiven for real and ill-meant and undisputed obscenity than was Bradlaugh for the earnest and scrupulous defence of true doctrines infamously miscalled obscene. On the point of politics, Wilkes is hardly more justly notable than on the point of character. He had no higher mission than to attack an autocratic and unpopular minister; his very animus was partly the evil and vulgar spirit of racial animosity; he had no high purpose of political reform. After unwilling drudgery in a public office of dignity, he found his chosen reward in a semi-sinecure. Bradlaugh stood for great causes in the world of thought as well as in the world of action: he was a thinker and a high-minded reformer where Wilkes was at best a high-spirited adventurer.

And as Wilkes was the worse man, so he had the worse case. When elected in 1768, he was legally an outlaw—albeit under an unjust sentence; and his supporters signalised his success by a riot, breaking windows wholesale, mobbing and insulting leading opponents. Afterwards he was elected while a prisoner. Certainly Parliament, in his case, took a more courageously illegal course than it did in Bradlaugh's, not only refusing to admit him, but declaring him disqualified, voiding his seat, and declaring Luttrell member when elected by the minority. The jugglers of 1880-85 kept a member out of his seat without daring to declare the seat therefore vacant, though the law courts hinted not obscurely that an Atheist was *hors la loi* in respect of the chief civic rights. Certainly in the case of Wilkes the King was known to be the main mover in the breaking of the law, and so was more openly putting the liberties of the whole people in jeopardy. But the fact that in Bradlaugh's case the tyrants were bigots and partisans, representing masses of electors, and the wronged man a heretic, only made the danger the more profound. The final

triumph of the law-breakers would in his case have been a worse blow to freedom than it could have been in that of Wilkes, just because so many hundreds of thousands of bigots would have rejoiced in it. It would have been more dangerous to democracy, because undermining democracy from within, whereas the ostracism of Wilkes was an ostentatious blow from without. The "many-headed tyranny of an unscrupulous senate" is a more sinister thing when it rests on the fanaticism of thousands than when it is the mere subservience of time-servers to the sovereign; for if the principle were to be practically established that a man may be politically ostracised for theological heresy, the axe would be laid to the root of a greater thing than political privilege. What the Inquisition did for Spain, brainless bigotry might have begun to do for England. It had become clear that the law courts would not give any decision which struck at the freedom of the House of Commons to act as it pleased, our constitution being thus seen to lack the safeguard set up in the Supreme Court of the United States; though the House went through the form of arguing its case before the judges. The value of their decisions was seen when, after Bradlaugh took the oath before Mr Speaker Peel, he was allowed to sit in peace though he had been declared legally incapable of taking an oath. Evidently the principle of legality had little remaining validity. It may be, nevertheless, that the time is not yet come for the majority of Englishmen to realise fully how much was saved to their heritage by Bradlaugh's long stand against nefarious faith. The language of sincere conviction still blends with the language of cant in calling his opinions "peculiar" or worse; and half of those who stood beside him on the political issue were anxious in avowing their repudiation of his doctrines and his personality. But even in the few years between his struggle and his death there was a change; and to say that he has not yet had his full share of honour is only to say that his fame will be at its clearest in the larger air of a more enlightened day.

CHAPTER IV.

CLOSING YEARS.

1886.

ADMITTED at last to the seat for which he had fought so long and so hard, Bradlaugh set himself strenuously to work to make up for lost time. With nearly every quality that goes to make a good legislator, and with the most abundant political experience from his youth up, he had reached his fifty-third year before he sat in his place in Parliament by secure tenure. He had fought for that place, in all, eighteen years—chronically during twelve of them, against constitutional opposition; continuously through six of them, against gross injustice. And in these last six years, unhappily, his life went very much quicker than the years. Those who had lived by him through it all recognised that it had made him an old man. A certain aging effect seems to have come from the terrible attack of typhoid fever in New York in 1875; but still in 1880 his portraits show him in his prime, the face mature without being furrowed. In 1886 he looked far more than ten years older. The long battle had left its dire marks.

No private member in his prime, however, went to work in the Parliaments of 1886 with such energy. Before January was out he had obtained leave to bring in his Land Cultivation Bill,* which was backed by Mr Joseph Arch, Mr Thomas Burt, and Mr Labouchere; and he was extorting from the officials exact details as to the Perpetual Pensions, against which he had already for years agitated outside. In March he obtained from the new Liberal Ministry the appointment of a Select Committee on the subject. The debate on Mr Jesse Collings' amendment to the Address, calling for labourers' allotments—the amendment on which the Tory Ministry were thrown out—gave him his first opportunity of striking a blow at the party which for him was identified as

* Described in a previous chapter, p. 182.

much with tyranny in general as with tyranny towards himself. In February he gave the first notice of his intention to raise a question which he later pushed far—that of market rights and tolls; his first move being to call for a return giving minute particulars as to the state of the case in each municipal borough in England and Wales. And in the same month he was vigorously pressing his proposal for a Labour Bureau on the lines of that of Massachusetts—a proposal to which the Government promptly acceded. In March he took a step abundantly justifiable on public grounds, in moving the reduction of the monstrous vote of £12,000 to Sir H. D. Wolff for six months' unprofitable service abroad, and £3000 more for telegrams in connection with his mission. And he was further able to connect another enemy, Sir Henry Tyler, with systematic breaches of the Truck Act on the part of the Rhymney Iron Company, of which he was a director. Bradlaugh characterised the action of the Company as part of "an infamous system by which poor men are defrauded of part of their earnings." The result was a Government prosecution and the infliction of the fullest statutory penalty. In the way of direct service to labour, he was in the same month appointed a member of the Select Committee on the Employers' Liability Bill, on which he worked hard and carefully. In April came the epoch-marking Home Rule Bill, in the debate on which he made a powerful speech in support, loudly cheered by the Home Rulers who had so long helped to exclude him. He was emphatic against the exclusion of the Irish members, but urged that such points should be left for discussion in committee; and he did his best outside for the second reading by organising a great mass meeting in St James's Hall, presided over by Mr Labouchere, which was in its way a great success, a multitude coming sufficient to fill the hall twice over. His own Land Cultivation Bill came to its second reading; and his speech upon it was well received, though he saw fit not to try to press it to a division. Again in June, shortly before the decisive division, he delivered a second and longer speech in support of the Home Rule Bill, to listen to which to the end Mr Gladstone delayed his dinner; and on the dissolution he issued an "Appeal to the Electors: Mr Gladstone or Lord Salisbury: Which?" He had done more than justice by the people whose representatives had most zealously done him injustice. Readers of his journal had written to urge this on him as one reason for opposing Home Rule. He

answered: "If I cannot try to do justice to my political and religious enemies, I am unfit to be a legislator." On the merits of the reform he tersely observed: "Home Rule is no four-leaved shamrock, but it is the beginning of justice."

In the new General Election, a new excitement was given to the contest in Northampton by the candidature of a Liberal Unionist, Mr Turner, a leading local manufacturer, in coalition with a Conservative. His supporters were extremely confident; but when the vote was counted the figures stood: Labouchere, 4570; Bradlaugh, 4353; Turner, 3850; Lees, 3456. On the declaration of the poll, Mr Turner, being shouted down by the crowd, addressed to the reporters the intimation that he "came forward for the first time to wrest the representation of the town from the greatest and most mischievous demagogue of the present century." But by this time the old obloquy had considerably quieted down. At the beginning of the year the Bishop of Peterborough, Dr Magee, had published a review article in which, while making hostile allusion to Bradlaugh—doubtless in recollection of old criticisms—as an Atheist "whose name certainly neither softens nor sweetens any controversy with which it is connected," he declared forcibly against the Parliamentary Oath altogether. As he truly observed,

"Whatever else our present Parliamentary Oath was designed to effect, it was never designed to keep Atheists out of Parliament. It was, and is, strictly a political test, and for a purpose happily quite remote from modern English politics. It is dynastic. . . . It does not even . . . . exclude Republicans; for, should the Parliament which imposes it decide at any time upon the ultimate abolition of monarchy, there would then be no 'successors according to law' to whom to be faithful. . . . As a political test, it is practically all but obsolete. . . . It does not even incidentally and indirectly act as a religious test, for no Atheist that we know of has ever refused to take it."

Oddly enough, while arguing for the abolition of the Parliamentary Oath, the Bishop proposed to "retain" the oath in courts of justice, being apparently unaware that there it was already to some extent optional. His opinion on the other point, however, counted for something; and though an appeal was made to the Liberal ministry, as it had been made to their predecessors, to prosecute Bradlaugh afresh for sitting and voting, the ministry refused, and the

matter dropped once for all. There was also, of course, a cessation of the attacks on him by Conservative members. One, a Mr E. H. Llewellyn, at a Primrose League meeting early in the year, scurrilously spoke of him as having "seemed more as if he spat upon than kissed" the Testament in taking the oath; but for this congenial indulgence Mr Llewellyn had to make a public apology to Bradlaugh and to the House of Commons alike. Bradlaugh was an excessively inconvenient enemy to have at close quarters.

No one knew this better than Lord Randolph Churchill, who was now promoted to the leadership of the House of Commons over the head of Sir Michael Hicks Beach. "The most bitter enemy of the Tory party," wrote Bradlaugh, "could hardly have planned for it greater degradation than this leadership." One Tory journalist attributed to him, quite falsely, a proposal to hiss Churchill on his first rising to address the House. That was not his way of fighting. The "new leader," on his part, was extraordinarily conciliatory. When the new Parliament met in August, Churchill made not even a sign of wish to stand again between Bradlaugh and the oath; and when Bradlaugh made his important motion that the House do not assent to the usual Sessional Order prohibiting the interference of peers in elections, his lordship actually offered him a committee for the following year to frame another Order instead, admitting that the existing one was habitually ignored. Bradlaugh, however, pressed the matter to a division, when 126 members supported him, the Liberal leaders voting with the Tory majority against him. His object had been, as the vigilant Newdegate noted, to take the "first step to getting rid of the House of Lords." By allowing peers to interfere freely in elections, he proposed to strike at their hereditary privilege. But the time for such a measure was not yet.

It was understood to be on Churchill's urging, again, that two months afterwards the Tory Attorney-General entered a *stet processus* in the still outstanding appeal to the House of Lords, thus ending an action which the Gladstone Ministry had declined to end at Bradlaugh's request. But Bradlaugh in no way slackened his hostility on this score. On 19th September, in a discussion on the committal of Father Fahy for using threatening language towards magistrates, he reminded the House how its leader had once declared in the House that the Crown could procure the decisions it wanted from certain judges. Churchill, entering the

House later, and learning what had been stated, assured Bradlaugh that he had been entirely mistaken, and gave the statement an unqualified denial. On Bradlaugh saying he thought he was right, Churchill made the curious answer: "I am sure he cannot find anywhere a record of my having said such a thing." Bradlaugh immediately went to consult Hansard, and not finding the passage he had expected, came back and frankly confessed the fact to the House. But on turning back he found that he had made an equivalent statement in his letter to Northcote on 1st March 1884, and that Northcote, while disputing in his reply certain of Bradlaugh's assertions, lest he should be taken to admit them, did not dispute this. A more leisurely search in the newspaper files cleared up part of the mystery. Churchill had repeatedly said in effect what Bradlaugh had attributed to him. In at least three speeches (30th April 1883; 21st February 1884; 12th June 1884) he had directly and indirectly insinuated that the Government could get the decisions they wanted in a collusive action against Bradlaugh by bringing it before judges who had been Liberal Attorneys-General. What had apparently happened was that the noble lord had struck at least one passage out of the Hansard report when, according to custom, the proofs of his speeches were sent to him as to other members for correction afterwards. Having done this, he felt safe in saying that Bradlaugh "could not find anywhere a record" of such a statement on his part. It was a mistaken confidence; and besides publishing the newspaper extracts at the time, Bradlaugh later found an opportunity to pay off his score with interest.

In the October of 1886, meantime, he addressed to the noble lord an open letter of scathing comment on his policy, his tactics, his speeches, and his character. It contained the sentence—referring to "old English gentlemen"—"These belong to a class to which I, as well as yourself, am a stranger—I from birth, and you from habit;" and in reference to his lordship's language (outside) towards Mr Gladstone, it had the passage: "He has often been generous to you—the great can be generous. You might, in taking a leader's place, at least have for the moment aped a leader's dignity. *Noblesse oblige;* but no such obligation weighs on you; *où il n'y a rien le roi perd ses droits.*" Yet even after this Churchill sought to make his personal acquaintance and disarm his resent-

ment, making repeated attempts to be introduced, and on one occasion actually intervening with a broad compliment in a conversation between Bradlaugh and another member in the smoking-room. Bradlaugh bowed with the old-fashioned ceremony which he adhered to in such cases, but would not further accept the obtruded friendship. He had, however, passed beyond his former disposition to square accounts with the lordling who had called his supporters the "mob, scum, and dregs." I once heard him remark that it was pitiful to see Churchill, with his fidgety, lawyer's-clerk manner and tactics, trying to rise to the dignity of the leadership of the House, trying not to twist his moustache all the time, and to listen to opponents like a statesman. And some story he heard of an act of generosity on Churchill's part helped further to disarm his never very vindictive hostility.

Nothing, indeed, could well surpass the magnanimity with which he put away from him all rancour for the endless insults he had received. New Tory members, expecting perhaps to see in him a truculent demagogue, were disarmed on finding a genial gentleman and comrade, who bore no malice, was excellent company, and played chess as sociably as skilfully. As the years went on, there actually arose a sort of enthusiasm for him among the younger Tories, more than one of whom assured him that they deplored the treatment he had met with at the hands of their party. Of course they did not suffer from the embarrassment of the Liberals at the prospect that the irrepressible Atheist, with his extraordinary gift for legislation, would possibly have to be included in the next Liberal administration.

This feeling began to arise very rapidly among the Radicals outside. His prompt success in securing the Labour Bureau, and in checking the practice of truck in Scotland and England, brought him immediate votes of thanks from labour organizations, though the press at this stage practised against him such a boycott that at a time when he was constantly speaking on the estimates, correspondents wrote deploring his silence in the House. The old tactic of ostracism was not easily unlearned; and the official Liberal journals, as the *Daily News*, for years on end sought to suppress the fact that it was he who had brought about the Labour Bureau. So anxious were such journals to keep him out of sight, that when the important return moved for by him as to market rights and tolls was issued, and had to be discussed, the *News* dealt with it

elaborately without mentioning that it was Bradlaugh who had obtained it.

No conspiracy, however, could suppress general knowledge of such a mass of work as he got through, outside the House as well as inside. When it was not sitting, he was on lecturing tours, and I find that in the last three months of 1886, Parliament being in recess, he addressed nearly sixty political meetings in all parts of the country, in addition to his Secularist lecturing, which he never abandoned, though he devoted a larger proportion of his lectures to politics than formerly. In the House, besides working specially at his questions of truck and land cultivation and perpetual pensions, and serving on the committee to consider the effects of the Employers' Liability Act, he was one of the most generally industrious of legislators. All this strain was not for nothing, and at the end of the year we find him suffering from erysipelas and neuritis.

1887.

In the session of 1887, however, he went to work with unslackened energy. In a long speech delivered to a full house in the debate on the address, he attacked the Government on their permission of illegal truck practices, on their Egyptian policy, on their Burmese policy, and on their Irish policy. On the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill, the new Commons leader, Mr W. H. Smith, continued the Tory policy of concession to the former victim of the party; and he was granted a Select Committee on Perpetual Pensions, himself being a member. The point raised by him last year as to peers' interference in elections was made the subject of investigation for another committee (of seven), moved for by the Government, and on this too he sat. The majority of the committee, of course, soon reported in favour of leaving the Sessional Order unaltered, Bradlaugh and Mr Whitbread dissenting. Meanwhile, he was continuing his attacks on the practice of truck, and got down for discussion a Truck Act Amendment Bill in addition to the Affirmation Bill which he had introduced when Sir John (formerly Mr Sergeant) Simon's came to nothing. In March, too, he took an active part with Mr Howell and Mr Labouchere in the attack on certain members of the Corporation of London, including, and specially, his own old enemy, Alderman Sir R. N. Fowler, for corrupt expenditure. In Fowler's presence,

Bradlaugh on his part "undertook to specifically connect the hon. baronet with the issue of City funds under conditions which compelled the knowledge on his part that they were corruptly used for the purpose of influencing the decisions of that House. He would prove that up to the hilt." And again he renewed his energetic action against the huge expenditure on Sir H. D. Wolff's mission to Cairo, a mission which, he declared, amid Radical cheers, to be a gross Conservative "job;" and he had the support of 146 members to his motion to quash the vote.

The charges against the Corporation were formally heard before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, Bradlaugh acting as prosecutor. Fowler, without really denying the charges in the House, had described them as "anonymous tittle-tattle;" and on the insufficiency of this disclaimer being pointed out, one of the ministers, Lord G. Hamilton, formally denied the charges on Fowler's behalf. Before the Committee—consisting of Lord Hartington, Sir Joseph Bailey, Mr Dillwyn, Mr Houldsworth, and Mr Stevenson — the statements made as to expenditure were proved,* as Bradlaugh had promised, "up to the hilt." Fourteen witnesses were examined by him; the City accounts for five years and other documents were closely gone into; and when the alleged payments could no longer be disputed, the defence (conducted by Mr J. Compton Lawrence, Q.C.) took the line of arguing that the challenged payments were within the right of the Corporation. They had been made during a number of years by way of resisting the popular movement for the reform of the municipal government of London. In the words of Bradlaugh:—

"£19,550, 10s. 10d. was proved to have been expended in financing Associations such as the Metropolitan Ratepayers' Association, Metropolitan Local Self-Government Association, Anti-One-Municipality League, and South London Municipal Association, described by Mr Howell as 'bogus' Associations, which were mostly started by paid agents employed by City officials, under the direction of, and with the knowledge of, the Special Committee; and which Associations were

* See the Blue-Book, "Report London Corporation (Charges of Malversation)," together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix, Parliamentary Paper, 161, 1887. A brief account of the matter was written by Bradlaugh for *Our Corner*, July and August 1887, under the title, "How the City Fathers Fight."

used as a means of creating a fraudulent, unfair, and collusive opposition to the proposed legislation for London municipal reform. Improper use and malversation of funds were also shown in promoting and carrying on collusive and fictitious charter movements in Lambeth, Woolwich, Greenwich, and other places in the metropolis, with the view of representing these to Parliament and to the Privy Council as spontaneous and *bona-fide* movements, when they were really only intended as opposition to the Government Bill. (The fictitious nature of the charter movement is especially illustrated by Mr Stoneham's answer: 'When the London Government Bill was dropped, the charter movements were let fall through by the City to a great extent.') Improper use was further shown in paying men to attend in very large numbers for the purpose of opposing, sometimes with violence, the meetings in favour of the reform of the Corporation; in paying for sham deputations, sham meetings in favour of the City, and for unfair reports which were published in the press; in procuring signatures to petitions," etc.

The most extraordinary thing of all was the fact that in the case of one municipal reform meeting in 1883, at least 2000 forged tickets had been issued, and their distribution was not obscurely traced to Corporation officials. In regard to this matter, Fowler was shown to have helped to evade inquiry when it was challenged at the time; and in regard to the improper expenditure, he was shown to have been officially cognisant; and though the Committee let off their fellow-member as lightly as they could, he had a very bad quarter of an hour under Bradlaugh's examination. One by one, the champions of the religiosity of the legislature against the Atheist had been shown to do their cause small credit in their persons. About the same time Bradlaugh took a leading part in exposing in the House a gross and systematic fraud in the preparation of a certain petition from Haggerston, signatures having been forged and invented wholesale, to the extent even of putting names of infant children and racehorses; and this again was done for payment made by City officials. But on Bradlaugh's side there was no subordination of the public to his private interest; and when, in April 1887, Newdegate died in the odour of sanctity, he displayed no vindictiveness in his comments on the local obituary biography, which of course dealt freely with his own name. "I am credibly informed," he wrote, "that, apart from his bigotry against Catholics and heretics, Mr Newdegate was a kindly country gentleman, well liked by those who knew him. I regret

to learn from his biographer that he treated the six years' harassing anxiety and cost to myself, which he did so much to continue, as a subject for merriment."

In respect of his legislative work he was as successful as he was industrious. By the end of April he had got his Truck Bill into the Committee stage; and he secured from the Government, without a blow, the Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls for which he moved in a speech of an hour's length.* The manner of this success was singular. In the words of one Tory journal: "It was no secret that the Government intended at first to oppose Mr Bradlaugh's motion, but it gave way on receiving an intimation from a large number of Conservative members sitting below the gangway that, if a division took place, they would be compelled to vote with the junior member for Northampton." So oddly had the tables been turned. Yet he had in no way slackened his opposition to Tory policy. On the Coercion Bill he had made three forcible speeches, and he was always pursuing ministers with awkward questions. His success with the enemy was due simply to the irresistible impression he created of honesty and industry and single-mindedness. And when in May he made a merciless exposure of Churchill on the point above alluded to, of his old imputations on the integrity of Liberal judges, it did not appear that Conservatives failed to enjoy the proceedings. It was in the course of the privilege debate on the *Times*' articles on "Parnellism and Crime." Bradlaugh first elicited from Churchill a repudiation of one of his former utterances, and then proceeded to quote in full the passage from Hansard, with the now verified reference. Another challenge elicited another denial, and yet another quotation, with the reference. They were all ready for this occasion. "I am not responsible for Hansard," cried the noble lord, in much agitation; whereupon Bradlaugh added new and sharper punishment, going on to quote yet more of the damnatory passages from Hansard. "The noble lord," he went on, "was of opinion in 1884 that the courts of law were not fair tribunals," whereupon Churchill again indicated dissent. "It was perhaps," admitted Bradlaugh, "not quite correct to say that the noble lord was of that opinion—he only said it." And still the castigation went

* Circulated as a pamphlet in immense numbers by the Cobden Club, and reprinted among his speeches.

on, the House punctuating it with laughter, till Churchill rose and protested that in regard to his recent speeches on the *Times* question he had been utterly misrepresented. Whereupon "Mr Bradlaugh said he was not dealing with the noble lord's views—he did not know what they were. (Opposition cheers and laughter.) He was only giving the noble lord's words." At the close of the speech, which as a whole was unanswerable, Churchill rose to offer a "personal explanation" on the Hansard business. Delivered with anxious prolixity, it was primarily to the effect that in 1884 his speeches were "greatly compressed" in Hansard, "as is invariably the case with ordinary members," and that the compressed reports could not be taken as true and faithful. This gave Bradlaugh his final opportunity.

"I accept the explanation of the noble lord [on the bearing of his words on the *Times* case], and I can corroborate his statements as to the compression of his speeches, because I used at one time to hear from him expressions which, having unguardedly repeated them without verification, I could not find in Hansard when I went to look for them. (Loud laughter and cheers.) The only mental difficulty I have is to imagine how any process of compression could put words on record which were never spoken. (Loud laughter and cheers.)"

It was as sufficient and artistic a piece of punishment as the House had witnessed for a long time; and Bradlaugh thenceforth considered his accounts with his former vilifier reasonably squared. Besides, in his anxiety to propitiate his powerful opponent, Churchill immediately afterwards declared in a letter to the *Times* that he did not see how Bradlaugh's Oaths Bill could with propriety be opposed by the Conservative party, whose duty it was, by supporting and passing it, to "secure that the Parliamentary oath in future will in all probability only be taken by those who believe in and revere its effective solemnity." This was written in anticipation of the action of a few Conservatives who, rebelling against their own leaders, obstructed the measure when it came on for discussion after other matters about five o'clock in the morning. Sir Edward Clarke, who had zealously resisted all previous bills of the kind, gave his support to this. Twice over, in a House of 300, Bradlaugh had large majorities—of 91 and 104—against adjournment, but still the motions went on. At length, having sat in the House for eleven hours, he gave way, an act for which some outsiders thought fit to blame him. Some journals,

however, took the opportunity to speak of him, on the merits of the question, with a civility they had never before seen occasion to show him. Others made use of the occasion to point out how fully it proved the utter dishonesty of most of the previous Tory opposition to Bradlaugh. Some of the details in the debate gave dramatic corroboration to this view. Colonel Hughes had stood forward as one of the representatives of religion; on which Mr Healy—himself once in that galley—observed that "it was to be hoped Christianity would not be defended by a gentleman who had been scheduled for bribery."

While the Oaths Bill was thus delayed, Bradlaugh contrived by incessant vigilance to get the Truck Bill through Committee in July. He confessed that if he had known beforehand the enormous labour such a Bill involved—"the receiving deputations, the large explanatory correspondence, the huge mass of suggested amendments, the objections from various interests to each amendment, and the utter impossibility of conciliating or satisfying the various sections, some friendly, some hostile, some well-meaning but impracticable"—he might have shrunk from the task. For twenty-seven nights he had watched till the morning hours on the chance of his Bill being reached, and when all was done it seemed for a time as if the Upper House, in its customary manner, would wreck everything. Their lordships' first "amendments" were insufferable, and were sent back to them, the House of Commons backing up Bradlaugh with vigour. Finally their lordships agreed to limit their amendments to a few which, while of course doing harm, did not affect the main work of the Bill, and though some Irish and other members desired to reject it on the score of these, the measure was at length passed.

He had thus in one session carried an important Act, made considerable progress with another, and obtained a Select Committee on Perpetual Pensions and a Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls, apart from the Committee appointed by the Government on his former initiative to discuss the action of peers in elections. In the Committee on Pensions his report was unanimously adopted, barring the clauses which dealt with certain payments to the Duchy of Cornwall—in other words, to the Prince of Wales. He had further prosecuted the Corporation of London before yet another Select Committee of the House, effectively damaging one of his enemies in the process, as he had in the

previous year secured the prosecution of another for breach of the law in his capacity of a company director. He had seen yet another enemy, Churchill, deposed from his place of pride, and had incidentally overthrown him in debate. All the while he was doing hard work on the Employers' Liability Committee besides speaking often on the Estimates and on the Coercion Bill, putting an ever-increasing number of solid questions to ministers on grievances submitted to him, many of which were redressed, and in particular pertinaciously pursuing the Indian Office as to certain underhand dealings in the matter of the ruby mines of Burmah. No other member's work could compare with it all; and the press decided that "Bradlaugh's Session" was the proper summary of the Parliamentary season. But, of course, such success evoked jealousy no less than tribute. In the carrying of the Truck Act he had not a little experience of the jealousy of labour leaders and others; and while the official Liberal press still partly boycotted him, the Socialist press made a point of belittling or perverting everything he did. Despite his continuous attacks on Tory policy, his Truck Bill was declared to owe its success to Government adoption. The Socialist *Reynolds* declared that he did little or nothing in Parliament; while the Tory *England* protested that he spoke far too often. As a matter of fact, he had made some sixty-five speeches up to Whitsuntide, thirteen of them against Coercion. But the circumstance which made his Parliamentary industry absolutely unique was that it was carried on alongside of a continuous course of Sunday lecturing, with special attendances at week-day demonstrations thrown in. When the Sunday lectures were in London the strain was comparatively light, as only two were given in the day at the Hall of Science; but in the provinces it is the Secularist practice to have three discourses on the Sunday when a London lecturer comes, and the physical strain of this, it need not be said, is heavy. Thus for Bradlaugh the two days of the week which other members of Parliament could give to rest and recreation were oftenest simply days of travelling and extra speaking. Now and then he could get a Saturday's pike-fishing on the Lea or on a Thames backwater; once or twice in the year he could even run down to Loch Long for two or three days of the very much more bracing fishing there. Even the holiday became a source of fresh work, for he took up with his usual energy the case of the

pollution of Loch Long by Glasgow sewage; and it was due to his persistent pressure that the nuisance was at length stopped. He thus made a rich return for the measure of rest and strength gained from his days of fishing—a gain which was at times wonderful. But though his powers of recuperation were great, the rest-days were far too few; the balance was always heavily on the side of overwork; and so his intimates now saw him year after year showing ever heavier traces of the overwhelming strain of his life. Whether he got to bed early or in the late morning hours, he was always up and at work before eight, attacking his great pile of correspondence, which alone would have seemed to many men to supply a good day's work. Every day's post brought him on an average a round dozen of grievances to be submitted to Parliament, and in every case which he thought worth attention he made careful investigation, always declining to trouble Ministers without good grounds. Then there were the continual letters from poor men of all denominations asking for legal advice gratis—a kind of request he never refused. Yet with it all he found time to write for his journal; and his articles and speeches at this time are as pregnant and efficient as any he ever penned or spoke. Among other things he wrote a weighty little pamphlet: "The Channel Tunnel: Ought the Democracy to Oppose or Support it?" which was widely circulated as the strongest possible popular plea for the undertaking. When next the public is effectively challenged for a vote on that question, it will probably be found that there has been a great transformation of opinion; and not a little of the credit will be due to his pleading. Of the extent of his influence in this and other ways the average metropolitan reader never had any accurate idea, between the grossly unjust attacks of Socialists on the one hand, and the boycotting of the Liberal press on the other. Thus we find him delivering in Birmingham, in October 1887, a great fighting speech on the party situation, of which no report whatever appears in the London papers. It dealt with the question raised by Mr Chamberlain, "Is a National Party possible?" and the answer it gave was a determined and uncompromising attack on the Unionist coalition, this at a time when Liberals and some Radicals were insinuating that he was ingratiating himself in the Tory counsels. This was a type of dozens of provincial addresses delivered by him every year, some of them at immense

open-air demonstrations of miners, who always invited him to their great gatherings. Of all this activity the London press revealed hardly a trace, any more than of his hundreds of Sunday lectures every year, of which one or two out of every three were devoted to politics. It is safe to say that no other English politician of his time spoke publicly to such numbers of his fellow-countrymen in the course of each year.

A striking illustration of the new animus against him among "advanced" propagandists came up on the occasion of the deplorable Trafalgar Square episode of 13th November 1887. The Socialist press and some Radical journals sedulously circulated the intimation that "somehow or other Mr Bradlaugh was very conspicuous by his absence," while pointing to his old proceedings in similar crises. He was actually lecturing at the time at West Hartlepool, in fulfilment of an engagement made months before; and next day he was at Hull. On his return he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* a careful statement of the law on the point of the use of Trafalgar Square, criticising and condemning the action of the authorities, and he followed this up with further protests, while advising the Radical M.P's concerned to fight out the case at law, and begging those who trusted him to await such legal settlement. Yet several times since his death it has been stated in the press that he exhumed a forgotten law which entitled the Home Secretary to prevent meetings in the Square. The laws he cited were all to the contrary effect, and were well enough known to those officially concerned; the point having been raised, as above mentioned, over one of his own Trafalgar Square demonstrations a few years before. And when Mr Cunninghame Graham and Mr Burns were prosecuted, he gave evidence on their behalf, making a hasty and difficult journey across the country from Leek to London on a telegraphic summons to arrive in time when they were tried at the Old Bailey.

A paragraph which he published in his journal in this connection will serve to mark the degree of political severance which, with no diminution of mutual regard, had arisen between him and his long-tried colleague and partner, Mrs Besant. It ran:—

"As I have on most serious matters of principle recently differed very widely from my brave and loyal co-worker, and as that difference has been regrettably emphasized by her resignation of her editorial functions on this journal, it is the more necessary that I should say how thoroughly

I approve, and how grateful I am to her for, her conduct in not only obtaining bail and providing legal assistance for the helpless unfortunates in the hands of the police, but also for her daily personal attendance and wise conduct at the police-stations and police-courts, where she has done so much to abate harsh treatment on the one hand and rash folly on the other. While I should not have marked this out as fitting woman's work, especially in the recent very inclement weather, I desire to record my view that it has been bravely done, well done, and most usefully done; and I wish to mark this the more emphatically as my views and those of Mrs Besant seem more wide apart than I could have deemed possible on many of the points of principle underlying what is every day growing into a more serious struggle."

The severance spoken of had arisen over Mrs Besant's adoption of Socialist principles, a change of attitude on her part which began about 1885, and soon went the length of a somewhat extreme propaganda, afterwards modified in common with the general tone of the Fabian Society, of which she had speedily become the most active member. The joint editorship had now become a practical difficulty as well as a source of complaint among readers; and in October 1887 it was amicably ended, Mrs Besant continuing to act as sub-editor and contributor. She had fought beside Bradlaugh and for him loyally and well, and though the suddenness and vehemence of her new departure had startled and troubled him, his friendship, as the above paragraph shows, had in no way weakened. He was not the man to break a tie for even a serious difference in opinion; though he was also the last man to do what some Socialists contemptibly accused him of doing—arrange that his colleague should take one line and he another in order to promote the circulation of his journal. He did for Socialists what he did for everybody who got into legal trouble on political grounds, and he gave Mrs Besant ample assistance in fighting the case of those who were arrested by the police for open-air propaganda. The most serious change of position on Mrs Besant's part, her conversion to Madame Blavatsky's "Theosophy," was soon to come. Even when that came, in the following year, he neither withdrew his friendship nor asked her to cease contributing to the *Reformer*; but, coming after political differences, the new and deep division of opinion undoubtedly pained and depressed him. He was to find, as so many have found, that when success comes something is sure to go which leaves success a different thing from what was dreamt of.

1888.

The first important task of Bradlaugh on the re-assembling of Parliament was to fight this cause of the right of public meeting in Trafalgar Square. It had been badly enough managed by others. In January he wrote:—

"The conviction of Messrs Cunninghame Graham and Burns for unlawful assembly is, I fear, in great part due to the foolishly boastful evidence of Mr Hyndman and Mr Tims. If the first had been a Crown witness, his evidence on cross-examination could not have been more mischievous to the accused, on the count on which a verdict was found against them; and the incautious replies of Mr Tims to the counsel for the Crown were almost as fatal."

The Government on their part had carried adroitness to the point of cowardice, refusing to arrest Mrs Besant when she sought to have a legal trial on the merits of the right of meeting. The effect of it all was that not only the Liberal leaders, but such journals as the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News*, took the line of deprecating any further public meetings in the Square. Bradlaugh, standing firmly to the claim of right, commented gravely on the promoters of the meeting for "bringing together a huge mass of people whom nobody was prepared to lead or to control;" and he expressed his regret that Mr Saunders, a prosecution against whom was laid and then departed from, should have let the legal question drop. Before the assembling of the House certain metropolitan members, learning that Bradlaugh was determined to raise the question by an amendment on the Address, took the unworthy line of protesting that, as a metropolitan matter, it was no business of his. He offered to leave it to Sir Charles Russell, as the most capable of dealing with it. Sir Charles promptly replied that no one could handle it better than Bradlaugh, but undertook the moving of the leading amendment. In addition to such difficulties Bradlaugh had the trouble of opposing the action of Mrs Besant on the newly-founded Law and Liberty League, promoted by herself and Mr Stead, with its "Ironside Circles," and other risky arrangements for meeting force with force.

When the House met, Bradlaugh took occasion, before the debates began, to make a personal statement on a matter that had of late frequently come before the public. In February

of 1886 he had offered in the House to show that large sums of money, excessive for such a purpose, had been supplied by leading Conservatives of both Houses of Parliament for the promotion of a Trafalgar Square demonstration for "Fair Trade," organised by a Tory agitator named Peters, which had culminated in a riot. Peters had at the time blusterously denied this, but had declined Bradlaugh's challenge to a formal investigation before an arbitrator as at *nisi prius*. In the recent prosecution of Messrs Burns and Cunninghame Graham at Bow Street, Bradlaugh had been pressed by the Crown Counsel on this point, had reaffirmed his statement, and had added that one of the cheques, which he had seen and was prepared to trace, was from Lord Salisbury. This statement was first denied by Lord Salisbury in a letter to the *Times* (2nd December), and was afterwards characterised as wilful perjury in a published letter from his secretary to one Kelly, a colleague of Peters. On the first denial Bradlaugh promptly offered to have the matter investigated before a Committee of the House of Commons. This offer Lord Salisbury neither accepted nor declined. Bradlaugh now asked the Government to agree to a Select Committee of Investigation, pointing out that he lay under an imputation of perjury from the Prime Minister on a statement which he had made in Parliament. An action for libel, however, had been already begun against Bradlaugh by Peters; and the Ministry, after waiting a few days, answered that the matter was not a proper one for a Select Committee, especially as a lawsuit on it was pending. Bradlaugh, however, pointed out that the action in question could not raise the real issue, and offered to raise it if Lord Salisbury would acknowledge the publication of the letter to Kelly, signed by his secretary. This acknowledgment he sought to obtain by letter, but after delay the noble lord took the singular course of declining to accept legal responsibility for the publication of the letter, as he had not consented to it. When, however, Bradlaugh read this letter of disclaimer in the House, Lord Salisbury sent him a secretarial letter (22nd February) referring to the original letter to the *Times* over his lordship's own signature (in which the truth of Bradlaugh's statement had been denied without charging perjury), and admitting his lordship's legal responsibility for that. That letter, however, was not actionable, and Bradlaugh had replied to it at the time, as he now pointed out. Lord Salisbury

then wrote (25th February), repeating that he could accept no responsibility for his letter to Kelly, concerning whom he made the curious statement that he, too, was affected by Bradlaugh's false and injurious charges, though Bradlaugh had never mentioned Kelly's name in the matter. His lordship, however, professed his readiness to facilitate a legal investigation of Bradlaugh's statements, which his lordship inaccurately professed to reproduce. Bradlaugh, protesting against his lordship's tolerating the publication of the charge of perjury, and never once apologising for it, answered that he preferred to have the charge stated in the words in which he made it, and in none other. No reply was offered, and the matter was left to be settled by Peters' action for libel.

The debate on the Trafalgar Square question did not come on for a week or two, and in the meantime one notable episode occurred over a remark made by Bradlaugh in the discussion on an amendment to the Address concerning the Scotch Crofters. The report runs :—

"Mr Bradlaugh said he understood the Chief Secretary to say that the cause of the evil they had to deal with in the Highlands was over-population, and that the sole remedy for this difficulty was emigration. He also understood the right hon. gentleman to denounce the reckless increase of population in that district during the last forty or fifty years. He felt some astonishment that the right hon. gentleman should put forward such an argument, when he remembered that the right hon. gentleman, and those who sat around him, tried before all England to make him appear as one of the most immoral men alive, because he had tried to teach the people for the last quarter of a century these very evils of over-population, and these very difficulties of their condition connected with reckless increase. It was astounding to hear from the other side such a doctrine put forward to be supported, because, when urged by him in olden times, it had made him the mark for some of the most wicked language that one man could use against another.

"Mr A. J. Balfour : I never in my life used any such language against the hon. gentleman ; never, never. (Cheers.)

"Mr Bradlaugh said that, at any rate, the important party of which the right hon. gentleman was then a prominent member, flooded the country with literature containing such attacks, without then one word of repudiation from the right hon. gentleman. But he would not discuss the personal position of the matter further. The sole remedy for the existing distress, according to hon. members opposite, was emigration. But how were they going to apply it ? Was the State

to undertake the emigration? Were the people to be sent away by force, and to what lands were they to go? In every case they would have to struggle for existence against hostile life-conditions, extremes of heat and cold, hard for starving men to bear. Everywhere they would be confronted with the labour struggle, for we were no longer the sole, or even the principal, colonising people; masses of Germans and other thrifty colonising races were now found in every distant land. Of course, emigration resulted in a few successes, and of these much was heard; but nothing was said about the many miserable failures. Medical men in America and Canada could tell many heart-rending stories of madness supervening on the home-sickness that embittered the emigrant's life. There was no country where pauper emigration would be welcomed. State emigration, if at all, must include on a large scale other distressed subjects. This was impracticable. Emigration of charity was mockery save to the veriest few. No; emigration ought not to be thought of as a remedy until other means had been tried, until the unjust conditions which hampered the poor, and which had been artificially created by the class to which the hon. gentlemen opposite belonged, had been swept away. ('Hear. hear.')"

Thus again did Bradlaugh prove that his Neo-Malthusianism was anything but an argument against the political improvement of the lot of the people. The emphatic declaration of Mr Balfour may be held to class him with Mr John Morley, Mr Leonard Courtney, and the late Lord Derby, as a believer in the importance of restriction of population; but it is not on record that he, any more than they, has sought to communicate his belief to the public or his party; and it is certain that, as Bradlaugh remarked, he never said a word in deprecation of the attacks of his fellow-Tories on Bradlaugh as a Neo-Malthusian at a time when such attacks were a main means of keeping him out of his seat.

When at length the Trafalgar Square question was reached (1st March), being raised in a masterly speech by Sir Charles Russell, Bradlaugh followed with one perhaps not less effective, which, lasting till midnight, had to be continued on the following evening. It included a sharp indictment of the conduct of the police, and a broad suggestion that the authorities seemed to have made use of *agents provocateurs*; and it made short work of the official pretence that the Square was Crown property, as having been constituted out of the King's Mews—a statement on a par with Mr Burdett Coutts' citation of the old Act against certain

meetings near Parliament without the all-essential clause specifying the kind of meetings forbidden. The King's Mews, Bradlaugh pointed out, had formed only a very small part of the ground, while the rest had been bought and paid for with public money. He challenged an investigation of the conduct of the police, and wound up with an earnest appeal to "those who were elected as Liberals" to resist the tyrannous policy of the Government. The Home Secretary was stung into promising an investigation of the charges against the police; but it is matter of history that the Liberal leaders homologated the action of the Tory Ministry.

A few weeks afterwards (21st March) came the decisive struggle on Bradlaugh's Affirmation Bill (otherwise "Oaths Bill"), which he had failed to force through in the previous session. He moved the second reading in a tersely argued and conciliatory speech; and though some Conservatives, as Mr Stanley Leighton and Mr De Lisle (Catholic), made foolish speeches against it, the great majority of the House was with him. One member, Mr Gedge, made a success of absurdity by arguing that the promoters of the Bill had defined an Atheist as one "*on whom conscience had no binding effect*," and this nonsensical phrase he repeated again and again without recognising its nature, entirely failing at the same time to see the point that the "definition" he meant to quote was that given by a court of law, and not by the promoters of the Bill at all. At length the second reading was carried over the amendment (which proposed a Royal Commission) by 247 votes to 137. On the substantive motion being put that the Bill be read a second time, obstruction was attempted, which Bradlaugh met by moving the closure. On this he had 334 votes to 50; and the second reading was then formally carried by 250 votes to 100, a majority which surpassed his most sanguine expectations.

To secure the passage of the measure, however, he had to meet the old Christian plea that the permission to affirm—which his Bill gave alike to witnesses, jurors, officials, and members of Parliament, in Scotland and Ireland as well as England—should not be given to believing Christians who, having no conscientious objections to swearing, might seek to evade it because they felt freer to lie on affirmation than on oath. This was urged on the Conservative side as a concession essential to acceptance of the Bill, and Bradlaugh consented to make the provision in Committee. No Liberal opposed; but trouble was to arise later in the matter.

Months after Bradlaugh's undertaking had been given, and after he had put down the promised amendment, some leading Liberal members, who had not before made any protest, raised a strong objection to the concession made, inasmuch as it placed upon every one desiring to affirm the necessity of avowing whether he objected to the oath on religious grounds, or as having no religious opinion. There ought, these members argued, to be no questioning whatever as to reasons. This was a perfectly reasonable objection to make on principle; but it ignored the fact that only by making concessions to the Christian side, to meet the case of superstitious and dishonest Christians, could any relieving measure be carried at all; and it was brought forward surprisingly late in the day. It is not clear, further, that the objectors realised what the amendment actually did, for they protested that while it was all right for Freethinkers, it put a stigma on those who were not prepared to say they had no religious beliefs. The plain answer to this was that such persons, if they objected to an oath, had only to say it was inconsistent with their religious belief. Although the objectors included such able heads as Mr E. Robertson and Dr W. A. Hunter, it must be said that their opposition was not justified by their arguments. It was less difficult to follow the complaint of Mr J. A. Picton, who said he would have no relief from the Bill, inasmuch as he was not without religious belief, but "regarded oath-taking as a humiliating and barbarous custom." In that case, however, Mr Picton might with perfect propriety say that oath-taking was inconsistent with his religious belief. Further, though it is quite fair for Agnostics, Theists, and others to protest that they ought not to be asked for any account of their opinions in a court of justice, it was less than fair for them to propose to leave without any relief whatever the Freethinking jurors who were liable to much worse odium and annoyance than is involved in saying that the oath is inconsistent with one's religious belief; the witnesses who in Scotland could not affirm on any condition whatever, and in England could only affirm on answering a grossly invidious question; and the members of Parliament who had to take the oath while very much disliking it. With the single exception of Dr Hunter, none of the Liberal objectors to the added clause had made any fight against oaths; the whole brunt of the battle had been left to the Freethinkers. Yet some of those objectors, who had not specially moved a finger for any reform

whatever, were now prepared to throw over the measure. Mr John Morley, who had voted for the second reading after hearing Bradlaugh's undertaking to insert the qualifying clause, now made some heated remarks against it, which Bradlaugh drily characterised as "not very philosophic." They certainly came ill from the editor who had deprecated Bradlaugh's willingness to take any oath. By dint of more forcible remonstrances with other members in the lobby, Bradlaugh secured a majority of 87 votes for the third reading, the figures being 147 to 60. Many of the Liberal objectors, recognising that to vote with the Noes, who were mostly bigots, would be to put themselves in a false position, abstained from voting; and of the 147 in the majority, 92 were Liberals.

The trouble, however, was not yet over. The "Liberal and Radical Union" of Northampton passed by a majority a resolution complaining that the value of the Bill was taken away by the amendment; and some Liberal journals accused Bradlaugh of giving away the principle of religious equality by agreeing to the imposition of "a new test." He met these criticisms in a very temperate letter "To Liberal Editors in general, and the Editor of the *South Wales Daily News* in particular," the latter journal having been one of those which had been most just to him throughout his struggle. The editor replied, acknowledging the courtesy of the criticism, and making his own less extravagant, but making the extraordinary blunder of alleging that even then any member of Parliament could affirm on the ground that oath-taking was contrary to his religious belief—this while avowing that he only dealt with the measure as regarded the Parliamentary oath. His main argument was that there were many people who detested the oath, but could not say it was condemned by their religious belief; and on the score of his measure not relieving such persons, Bradlaugh was pronounced "ungenerous." The truth was that he had done his best to make affirmation absolutely unconditional, but could only carry his Bill at all by making it conditional on the giving of a reason. He had done all he could for all classes of objectors, and he rightly thought it better to relieve those who suffered most than to secure no relief at all. The further relief claimed by believers should be demanded by them from their fellow-believers. The rational course, clearly, is to abolish oaths altogether, and this Bradlaugh would gladly have done; but it is neither rational nor candid to talk as if this or even a somewhat less measure of reform

could possibly be secured by him within two years of his admission to Parliament after a desperate struggle with a majority who stood for the grossest irrationality and injustice. Those who condemned him ought in consistency and decency to have begun an agitation either for making affirmation unconditional—a course which would still leave some people open to annoyance—or for the entire abolition of oaths. Yet, after six years have elapsed, there is still no word of any such movement. It is the old story of the half-way people leaving all the stress of the fighting to the more advanced. These may be permitted to say that it is a little too much to put on avowed Freethinkers, fighting for bare rights under all sorts of calumny and ostracism, the burden of securing an effortless immunity for those who all along stood at best in the rear-guard, if they did anything in the matter at all.

Close on the heels of the second reading of the Affirmation Bill (March) came the debate on the report of the Perpetual Pensions Committee, on which he moved a resolution that steps should be taken by the Government to give effect to the Committee's recommendations. He had a Tory seconder, Mr Louis Jennings; and the debate included a friendly speech, with an acceptable amendment, from Mr W. H. Smith, and a very interesting speech from Gladstone; whereafter the amendment (amended) was incorporated, and the Government stood pledged to "determine" all hereditary pensions with due regard to justice and economy, and to revise the pension system in general. In May, Bradlaugh again (as told in the chapter above, on his "Political Doctrine and Work") pressed his resolution as to the expediency of Compulsory Cultivation of Waste Lands, only to see the House counted out after his seconder (Mr Munro Ferguson) and the mover of an amendment had spoken. He was not to succeed alike in everything. Later in May he had an unpleasant experience in respect of the Government's breach of faith over his motion of a new Rule, to the effect that on a new member presenting himself in due form, the Speaker should forthwith call him to the table. Mr Smith agreed to accept the motion as an "amendment to going into Supply," on its being amended by the clause "unless the House otherwise resolve," which Bradlaugh was advised was a harmless provision; but when, on the pressure of Sir Henry James (who in the Courts had argued for the House's right to "resolve" to an extent to which Bradlaugh's clause would not allow) and others, he withdrew the clause, the Government

threw over the whole motion, though nobody objected to the withdrawal, and the Unionists who had urged the withdrawal of the clause left the House without voting on the motion. It was accordingly rejected by 180 votes to 152.

His main undertaking for 1888, however, succeeded finally, to a marvel. In the House of Lords, the Affirmation Bill might have been held to run considerable risk; but singularly enough, though amendments were talked of, none were pushed, and the Bill passed its third reading (December 1888) absolutely unchanged. In the absence of Lord Herschell, it was taken charge of by Earl Spencer and Lord Coleridge; but what was no less important, it was endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as a desirable measure. As usual, the Church took credit for lending itself to a reform which it had violently resisted. Outsiders were left asking which policy had been the more insincere—the old outcry against all Affirmation Bills or the new pretence of welcoming one. The Lord Chancellor, who, as Sir Hardinge Giffard, had so often opposed Bradlaugh and all his works, was more true to his antecedents, and confessed his jealousy and dislike of the measure, while grudgingly abstaining from trying to defeat it. To Lord Esher, who as a judge had always administered the law as to oaths dead against him, but who now helped the Affirmation Bill through the Upper House, Bradlaugh tendered grave and chivalrous thanks in his journal, adding that none were necessary in the case of the Lord Chancellor.

While the Affirmation Bill was on its way the libel action by Peters was heard and decided. Before it came on, the editor of the *St Stephen's Review* (Mr Allison), who had made a libellous attack on Bradlaugh in respect of the case, was on Bradlaugh's suit tried before Justices Manisty and Hawkins, and submitting himself apologetically to the Court (March 22nd), was let off with a fine of £20 and full costs for his contempt of Court, Mr Justice Hawkins observing that he "very much doubted whether such a fine was an adequate punishment for so gross a contempt. He did not think he had ever seen a worse attempt to affect the administration of justice." The judge added some no less forcible remarks on Mr Allison's explanation that he had made his attack "to advance the interests of the Conservative cause." But that principle was destined to have a still more remarkable illustration within the law courts themselves, when the libel suit was tried

(April 18th) before Mr Baron Huddleston and a special jury. If the action of Peters for libel, in inception and upshot, be not the most extraordinary libel case of modern times, it is only because the judge who tried it gave a no less extraordinary turn to another libel case which came before him eighteen months later. Peters' contention was, in brief, that Bradlaugh had libelled him by stating that he got money from leading Conservatives, including Lord Salisbury, for the promotion of a "Fair Trade" demonstration in Trafalgar Square. His counsel, Mr Lockwood, argued that "if Mr Peters was doing what Mr Bradlaugh accused him of, then Mr Peters was doing a very corrupt thing"—a plea only intelligible as resting on the fact that Peters was the secretary of the "Workmen's National Association for the Abolition of Foreign Sugar Bounties," and as implying that it would be corruption on the part of such a Society to take money from a lord. The evidence led was to the effect that Lord Salisbury had given money, not to Peters, but to Kelly, who was the *fidus Achates* of Peters, but was also secretary to the "Riverside Labourers' Association." Both had for years been known to Lord Salisbury in connection with the sugar protection movement. Kelly had gone down to Hatfield and seen Mr Gunton, the secretary, and in consequence of that interview had sent a letter to Lord Salisbury explaining that money was wanted to give a piece of beef each to 120 of "our best men at Christmas." The said best men were "all fathers of families," and "had never been in receipt of parochial relief." Lord Salisbury, who gave evidence, remembered getting this letter and sending Kelly a cheque for £25; but had no recollection of any talk with Mr Gunton as to Kelly's previous visit to Hatfield, in consequence of which the letter was sent. He thought it unlikely that Kelly would have seen Mr Gunton in that way, but confessed his error when shown that Kelly's letter to him actually mentioned the interview. The landlord of a temperance hotel, which was the headquarters of Peters' and Kelly's activities, testified to having spent this money on provisions, which he distributed to "needy working men," all save a small balance, which was otherwise distributed. He kept no books. Peters was on the committee of distribution.

Now, granting that the money had been honestly spent in the way alleged, there was clearly no libel on Peters in saying that the money had been sent him to promote the Trafalgar Square demon-

stration. There would be no wrongdoing in getting money from any one for such a purpose. He declared in his evidence that Lord Salisbury had never given him anything—"nothing, only his friendship." The buffoonery of the plaintiff's evidence, which kept the audience in chronic laughter, was not more remarkable than the bluster of his statements as to his accounts. Never was a demonstration apparently got up with a more enthusiastic zeal by working-men promoters, or with a more simple-minded financial reliance on Providence. Only £4 had been spent on the demonstration—"to obtain bands and banners." What the placards had cost witness could not say; he could not even say whether they had been paid for. The evidence of his colleague, Kelly, was hardly less edifying. He had been one of those who had received Corporation money to get up meetings against municipal reform.

Bradlaugh's defence was that even on the evidence there was no libel. When Baron Huddleston interrupted him to suggest that he should apologise, he answered that he was ready to do so as regarded Lord Salisbury, but he could not deal with the rest of the case on those lines. On the evidence led he was bound to admit that he had been inaccurate as regarded Lord Salisbury's cheque; but his statement had been wider than that, and neither in general nor in particular had it been of the nature of a libel. Further, he had spoken in good faith and on distinct evidence. Peters had on pressure admitted receiving subscriptions from persons outside his Association; and Peters had refused the investigation originally invited in 1886, when the other facts could have been better traced. And Bradlaugh had led evidence as to the receipt by Peters of such cheques, two of which had been shown to him.

In pleading his case, Bradlaugh perhaps made the mistake of being too concise in putting to the jury the point that on any view of the facts no libel had been committed. Baron Huddleston was more circumspect. He turned affably to the jury, and in the most intimate manner laid before them his view that Bradlaugh had directly or indirectly accused Peters of getting up "bogus" meetings—a statement which Bradlaugh had distinctly repudiated, and which was entirely wide of the facts and the evidence. The whole drift of Bradlaugh's charge, as he stated, was "that the Conservative party were playing with edged tools in assisting any such meetings." As the summing-up went on, indeed, it became clear that Baron Huddleston felt this also, and that in his view there had been a

"libellous" statement against Lord Salisbury, who, however, was not the suitor in the action. On the point of law he made no intelligible attempt to rebut Bradlaugh's plea that the statement sued on was in no sense a libel; but he thoughtfully suggested to the jury, with regard to the evidence of a witness called by Bradlaugh, that they could consider what value should be put on the evidence of a man who objected to take the oath. He further took much pains to impress on the jury that "a man could never be allowed to say things against a man, and then, when he found that they were false, to say he was very sorry, but he honestly believed them true. Such a thing would never do." On this instruction the jury found a verdict for Peters, with £300 damages. And yet in the following year (November 1889), when Mrs Besant sued the Rev. Mr Hoskyns for libelling her, during her School Board candidature, in a circular which had the statement: "A Freethinker thus describes the practical outcome of her teaching: 'Chastity is a crime; unbridled sensuality is a virtue,'" the same judge hardily instructed the jury that "the question was not whether Mrs Besant's books were obscene," but as to "the defendant's honesty of belief at the time he had published the handbills." He himself became conscious as he went on of the iniquity of this instruction, and proceeded to cite and vilify passages from Mrs Besant's works, thus doing everything in his power to prejudice the jury on the real issue. But in the end, while professing to put to them the separate issues of publication, libel, and truth in fact, he added the issue: "If untrue, *then did the defendant when he published it honestly and reasonably believe it to be true*, and that it was his duty to publish it, and did he do so without malice?" And yet again he urged that even if the libel were found untrue, "they would have to say whether the defendant had been guilty of *mala fides* in the sense he had explained." His own obtruded opinion was that a priest might justifiably issue such a circular to his parishioners. Thus he laid down for the trial of Mrs Besant's action against a priest the exactly opposite principle to that which he laid down in Peters' action against Bradlaugh. The priest was now adjudged free to do what the judge had said "would never do." The priest confessed in the witness-box that he had not read any of Mrs Besant's books when he issued his circular. He had availed himself of the libel of a pseudonymous scoundrel, making no attempt to ascertain its truth

Bradlaugh in his statement as to the Fair Trade demonstration had spoken on the actual evidence of cheques which he saw, and on his knowledge of the habitual co-operation of Peters and Kelly. But the Conservative judge contrived to find the priest right and Bradlaugh wrong. And it is on the strength of a verdict thus procured that Bradlaugh has since been spoken of as "a convicted libeller."

The view taken of the case by Bradlaugh's fellow-members of Parliament was shown by their instantly getting up a subscription to pay the damages and costs in which he had been mulcted; and the view taken by the legal profession may be gathered from the following verses, which appeared in the *Star*:—

"HALVES.

(AN HISTORICAL POEM.)

DECEMBER, 1885.

Take this cheque, my gentle Kelly,
Fill our starving London's belly:
Hie thee down with dearest Peters
To the lowly primrose eaters;
Tell the unemployed refiners
Cecil sends them of his shiners;
Let each toilworn Tory striver
Batten on this twenty-fiver.
Spread my bounty
Through the county;
But my right hand must not know
What my left hand doth; and so,
If thou value my attention,
Full details must thou not mention.

FEBRUARY, 1886.

Riots! whew! too bad of Kelly.
I must ask him what the—— Well, he
Can't at least pretend that I
Had any finger in this pie.

APRIL, 1888.

Halves, Peters, halves! Honour 'mongst *us*, my sonny;
Had I but tipt the wink a year ago,
You might have gone and whistled for your money,
And *my* straightforwardness been spared a blow,

I was ashamed of giving you the cash :
You were ashamed of getting it from me
Three hundred is the value of that splash
On our fair fame, unspotted previouslee.

Remember, sonny, when your freethought flesher
Showed Charles your name and mine upon that cheque,
Had I owned up, I think you must confess your
Foot would not now have been on Charles's neck.

So halves, my Peters :—nay, I crave not coin :
To touch the brass would not befit my station :
I only ask that Kelly you'll rejoin,
And pay your debt in Tory agitation."

This, unfortunately, was not the only libel suit forced upon Bradlaugh during the year. He had himself to raise another, against a gang of enemies who had laid their heads together to produce a so-called "Life" of him, which was but a tissue of the most malignant libel from beginning to end. It attacked his daughters as well as himself, and was so flagrantly malicious that no legal defence was possible. The nominal author was one Charles R. Mackay, and the nominal publisher was one Gunn—a name which was afterwards admitted by Mackay to be fictitious. Believing that the real author or promoter of the work was Mr Stewart Ross, editor of the *Agnostic Journal* (then the *Secular Review*), one of his most persistent and scurrilous assailants, Bradlaugh set about bringing him to account, and soon procured adequate evidence of his complicity. A friend had accidentally discovered for him that the book was printed by the Edinburgh house of Colston & Co.; and on proceeding against that firm in the Court of Session, he obtained from them an apology, costs, and payment of £25 to his usual beneficiary, the Masonic Boys' School. But the most effective assistance was supplied by those concerned in issuing the book, who were soon flying at each other's throats. In August 1888 Mr Stewart Ross prosecuted Mackay, with a solicitor named Harvey and his clerk named Major, for conspiracy "to obtain from him £225 with intent to defraud." Mackay had previously brought two actions against Ross, one for slander, and one to recover £500, which actions were settled on the basis that Mackay withdrew "all claim against the defendant for writing the 'Life of Charles Bradlaugh, M.P.,'" the plaintiff admitting the claim to be "based on an

erroneous conception," while Mr Ross was to pay Mackay "in respect of the other claims" the sum of £225, besides writing Mackay a letter "denying the slanders alleged," and opening his columns for subscriptions to a Defence Fund on Mackay's behalf. Mr Ross now alleged, in his prosecution for "conspiracy," that Major (whose employer was Mackay's solicitor) had called on him and alleged that he had seen some pages in Ross's handwriting in the MS. of the Mackay "Life," and "that he (Ross) who had denied all share in the authorship of that work, would be prosecuted for perjury unless he recovered possession of those pages." Ross admittedly agreed to pay £250 (afterwards reduced to £225) to recover the pages. In Court he would not admit that he had written any part of the "Life," but explained that he thought some unpublished MS. of his might have been got hold of for it. The promised MS., he stated, was not returned, and he stopped the cheques he had given towards the promised payment. In cross-examination he confessed to having supplied Mackay with books and "materials" to help him in writing the "Life," and had seen the proofs of it. Another of Ross's coadjutors fiercely quarrelled with him, and handed over to Bradlaugh's solicitor further evidence of his concern in the publication. Mackay, who became bankrupt, did likewise, expressing to Bradlaugh his regret for having been led into the publication by Ross. Bradlaugh was advised, however, that he had evidence enough without their testimony; and at length, after various delays, Mr Ross, through his solicitor, begged Bradlaugh's solicitors to intercede with their client to let him make a voluntary settlement. This being acceded to by Bradlaugh, Mr Ross agreed in Court (15th February 1889, before the Hon. Robert Butler, Master in Chambers) to account for and destroy within four days all copies of the book which had "come into his possession or control," to pay £50 to the Masonic Boys' School, and to pay all Bradlaugh's costs as between solicitor and client. Soon afterwards Mr Ross wrote to the *Star*: "I am not and never was the publisher of the 'Life,' and I cannot 'destroy all the copies of the work' for the reason that I never possessed more than one copy." Bradlaugh commented that he was still willing to have the case tried in court; and that he had evidence of Ross's sending out a large number of copies of the book for review, and once having close on 200 bound copies on his premises. Mr Ross is understood since to protest that he had been victimized in

the matter, and at Bradlaugh's death he penned a remorseful and eulogistic article. Copies of the book are still believed to be on sale in underhand ways; and Mrs Bonner has recently had to take legal proceedings against one London bookseller who announced it in his catalogue, knowing it to be a libel, and not legally saleable.

In connection with the same matter Bradlaugh in 1888-89 brought an action against the *Warrington Observer* for a libellous article founded on the "Life;" and the proprietors, after undertaking to justify, finally withdrew the plea, apologised, and paid the costs and a sum of £25 to the Masonic Boys' School. A Scotch journal, the *Dumfries Standard*, had previously apologised with promptitude, paying costs and £10 to the Masonic Boys' School, which institution thus netted £110 in all from the proceedings in this one matter. Yet further, Bradlaugh sued the *Warrington Observer* for another libel, consisting in the publication of a malicious report of a silly proceeding in which a man who had been subpoenaed by him in the Peters' case applied to a London police magistrate to know whether he could recover "costs" for a day's attendance at the court. The man had actually been paid 10s., and Bradlaugh had refused to pay more. This case was tried (April 1889) before Justice Manisty and a special jury, who awarded Bradlaugh £25 damages —another windfall for the Masonic Boys' School.

As against the manifold annoyance of libels, Bradlaugh had in 1888 one great and solacing relief from a strain which had sorely tried him. His various lawsuits over the Oath question, despite the success of those against Newdegate, and the saving of outlay through his pleading his own cases, had left him saddled with a special debt of between £2000 and £3000, on which interest was always running. And, even as the lawsuits themselves helped to cripple his power of earning while they were going on, his intense application to his Parliamentary work had limited his earnings in the years following on his admission. His whole sources of income were his lectures, his journal, and his publishing business. But he could no longer give proper personal attention to the pushing of the business; the lecturing was curtailed; and the journal fell off in circulation just when it might have helped him most. Thousands of miners had been among its subscribers, despite its non-democratic price of twopence; but prolonged distress among the miners caused many of these subscribers to emigrate, while many more could no longer buy it. In villages

where forty or fifty copies had been bought, one or two had to do duty for all the remaining readers. All the while the borrowed capital on which the Freethought Publishing Company had opened business in Fleet Street had to bear interest, whereas, in the ordinary course of things, it had been hoped that the principal would have been repaid in the years that, as the event came about, had to be devoted to a desperate struggle against political injustice. Freethinking friends, who knew how he was worried by the fresh debts incurred in the struggle, started a fund in 1886 to meet the more pressing burden of £750, which then had to be repaid, and over £500 was then collected. But in August of 1888 his embarrassments became so serious that, answering correspondents who urged a holiday on him, he wrote: "My great trouble now is lest I should be unable to earn enough to meet my many heavy obligations, in which case I should be most reluctantly obliged to relinquish my Parliamentary career." He was then addressing seven and eight meetings a week, while other members were recruiting on the moors and on the Continent. The avowal, through no action of his, got into the newspapers, and was the means of setting agoing a general public subscription, the credit for starting which is due to Mr W. T. Stead, then the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whose action in the matter was chivalrous and generous in the highest degree. Another fund was opened in the columns of the *Star*, another at Northampton, another in the *Halifax Courier*, and the upshot was that in a month's time there had been subscribed close upon £2500. There were over 6000 separate donations, and the subscribers' names indicated a remarkable range of recognition. In addition to Freethinkers and Northampton friends who had helped nobly before and now helped again, there were remittances from sympathisers whose goodwill had not before been known to the subject. Sir T. H. Farrer, Lady Ripon, Mr D. F. Schloss, Lord Hobhouse (in "acknowledgment of gallant service done for mankind"), Mr Stansfeld, Mr T. B. Potter, Mr M'Ewan, M.P., Admiral Maxse, W. M. Rossetti, Auberon Herbert, Mrs Ernestine Rose, Mr Labouchere, Lord Rosebery, Mr Newnes, Lord J. Hervey, Mr Munro Ferguson, are a few of the best-known names that catch the eye in the long lists, which include thousands of signatures. A number of Churchmen and Conservatives subscribed as such, some of them largely; £200 was given by one Freethinker over an

initial, and £100 "from Melbourne;" groups of workers and clerks made up sums among them; clubs collected goodly totals; widows gave their mites; and hundreds of scattered toilers gave yet again of their scanty pence to the man they believed in. At his wish, the funds were closed, as far as possible, on his birthday, 26th September, when he counted fifty-six years, *bien sonnés*. Had he allowed the subscription to continue, the amount would probably have been doubled. As it was, he paid off all his outstanding law debts, and had a clear £1000 to put towards the others; and he turned with new cheerfulness and courage to his tasks, his holiday, as usual, being of the shortest. But hard upon the great relief came a great blow, of the kind that turns good fortune to ashes. On 2nd December his daughter Alice died of typhoid fever, after sixteen days' illness, aged thirty-two. She was her father's daughter in her high spirit, in her generosity, in her energy, and in the thoroughness of her work as a student and teacher of biology, though for all her years of ungrudging service in the latter capacity there is only left to show, apart from the gain and the gratitude of those she taught, her little tract on "Mind considered as a Bodily Function." It had been her wish that her body should be cremated; but the crematorium just then chanced to be out of order, and she had to be buried. Briefly acknowledging condolences, and replying to the request of many friends to be permitted to attend the funeral, her father wrote, to appear after it was over, the lines: "Any public funeral would have been painful to me; and I trust I offend none in not acceding. The funeral, private and silent, will have taken place at Woking Cemetery. The funeral wreaths and flowers sent are reverently laid on the grave."

The year thus grievously closed had been for Bradlaugh as full as the preceding ones of political work, which involved strife over and above that of the lawsuits, and over the Oaths Bill. On two issues he came in conflict with sections of the democracy. The first was Sir John Lubbock's Early Closing Bill, one of those measures in which legislatures go about to remove, as it were, tumours and swellings by applying a vice to them. Declaring himself strongly in favour of the shortening of hours by voluntary

effort, Bradlaugh vigorously attacked the Bill as an arbitrary and capricious application of force on wrong principles, pointing out that it would close shops irrespectively of the length of the shifts worked in them by the assistants, and that it left untouched public-houses and tobacco-shops, which were kept open latest. It had the further demerit of renewing the old Sunday Trading Act of Charles II. and increasing the penalties. On a vote (May) it was rejected by 278 to 95. This was one of several points at which Bradlaugh came in conflict with the policy of empirical regulation in which some Socialists go hand in hand with some Conservatives. He was blamed, as before mentioned, for rejecting State interference in some cases, while urging it in others, as that of truck. The criticism failed to note that he opposed truck as a form of fraud, not at all necessarily arising out of the economic situation, whereas hours of labour are determined by the whole economic situation. While offending some Radicals as well as Socialists by opposing time-laws, he offended the extreme Individualists by supporting Public Libraries, which he justified as he had justified State education, and as being a rather more defensible form of public expenditure than much of the outlay on armaments, to which so few individualists strongly demur, on principle or in practice.

But his sharpest conflict with men usually on his own side was over the Employers' Liability Bill, to which he had given constant and laborious attention as a member of the Committee appointed to consider the subject in 1886. He had then and afterwards taken every possible pains to get at the views of the workers, had spoken on the subject before many thousands of them, and had done all he could to make the Bill as strong a measure as could be carried. He did not like it in every respect; he objected to the retention in any form of the doctrine of common employment, and of the principle of contracting-out, both of which he had sought to restrict by his action as far as possible; but the measure was in several respects an improvement on the Trade Unions Bill of 1886, then introduced by Mr Broadhurst, Mr Burt, and others, to amend the Liberal Act of 1880. That Bill had been referred to a Select Committee under the Gladstone Government, which Committee duly reported. The Bill now (1888) under discussion was, save for one or two points, either the re-enactment of the Act of 1880, or the formulation of the suggestions of the Select

Committee of 1886. It was, however, strongly opposed by the labour leaders, especially by Mr Broadhurst, who denounced it as "a sham, misleading, mischievous—the worst Bill ever introduced to the House," and moved its rejection on the second reading (December), after it had been amended by the Standing Committee on Law. On this, Bradlaugh had a sharp brush with him, pointing out that with two exceptions all the complaints urged against the 1888 Bill struck equally at Mr Broadhurst's own Bill of 1886. The hon. gentleman denounced the new Bill as protecting the London and North Western Railway Company, whereas it did exactly, in that regard, what his own Bill had done; and an amendment which he had moved, as expressing his latest wishes, would equally have legalised that Company's arrangement with its employees. Bradlaugh's criticism was perhaps the sharper, inasmuch as he believed that the Liberal labour leaders were mainly concerned to throw out the Bill because it was introduced by a Conservative Government, who would in due course have claimed the credit if it had passed. Bradlaugh knew well enough that the Conservative party systematically facilitated certain popular measures which the same party would have strongly resisted when introduced by Liberals; but that was for him no reason for refusing to pass the measures so facilitated. He took all he could get, and fought for the return of a Liberal Government all the same. Mr Broadhurst, it is believed, afterwards regretted in some respects the attitude he took up, as did Sir William Harcourt, who hastily supported Mr Broadhurst by accusing Bradlaugh of attacking the trade unions in general—a charge which Bradlaugh instantly and warmly repudiated. However that may be, Bradlaugh's case may be read by those who care in his letter to his friend, Thomas Burt, M.P., published as a pamphlet. Mr Burt sent a reply, to which Bradlaugh gave prominence in his journal, in which one of his phrases, as to "setting the employed against the employer," was objected to; and on this point Bradlaugh explained the precise limit within which he applied it. He always opposed those workers who sought to make it illegal for masters to insure themselves against loss through accidents to their men; and on that point Mr Burt fully agreed with him.

A less prominent but important part of his dealings with labour problems was his service on the Committee which investigated the subject of the immigration of destitute aliens, and on

that which investigated the working of Friendly Societies and Industrial Assurance Societies. As to the destitute immigrants, he was satisfied that they were not then numerous enough to justify any legislative action.

While to some extent in conflict, as we have seen, with some of his fellow Radicals, he was able to co-operate actively with the Irish party. On the Bill for the Commission to investigate the charges against the Irish members, he made what he confessed he believed to have been one of his best parliamentary speeches, but found it either ignored or "cut down to nothing" in the press. Recognition was forced, on the other hand, by his ever-increasing work on behalf of India, which in the course of the remaining two years of his life was to make his name known to every Indian interested in the affairs of the dependency.

1889.

Though already showing sad signs of failing health, Bradlaugh seemed to begin the session of 1889 with even extra energy. He laid down for himself at once a resolution dissenting from the Government's rate of commutation for perpetual pensions; a motion to expunge from the journals of the House the old resolutions excluding him; a fresh resolution on the utilisation of waste lands; a repetition of his motion for a new Rule as to the calling of members to the table; and a motion for a Royal Commission to consider the grievances of the native population of India; and he further introduced his Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and a Bill for abolishing political pensions. On the first paragraph of the address he made a strong speech in opposition, criticising the foreign, Indian, and colonial policy of the Government; and in regard to Ireland he made another of still greater vigour, setting out and ending with a telling attack on Mr Chamberlain, and vehemently impeaching the whole drift of Mr Balfour's policy in Ireland. Yet, again, he spoke on the Trafalgar Square question.

The first reached of his motions was that for the expunging of the resolutions excluding him in 1880, on which (8th March) he made an extremely temperate speech, assuring the House, however, that on behalf of his constituents he would certainly go on making his motion until it should be carried. The Government

strongly opposed, through Sir Michael Hicks Beach and Sir Edward Clarke, who were however answered by Sir Henry James and Sir William Harcourt, and Bradlaugh had 79 votes to 122. He certainly did little about this time to propitiate the Government, making repeated attacks on their Irish policy and their colonial administration, besides keeping up such a fire of questions on grievances of every description, submitted to him from all parts of the world—miscarriages of justice, official misdeeds and tyrannies, breaches of the Truck Act, jobs domestic and foreign, misdirection and ruin of emigrants, fleecing of workers in Government employ, waste of money on royal palaces, Irish oppression, and a score of things which cannot even be catalogued. Probably no non-official member had such a budget of daily business; and certainly none was more in earnest. At the beginning of April we find him writing:—

"I confess that I left the House about 1 A.M. on Tuesday, after a long sitting, in a very bad temper. All our front bench voted in favour of the Government resolution to spend £21,500,000 on the Navy, and to raise £10,000,000 of this by increasing the National Debt."

Of State finance he was the most vigilant of critics; and he caused much Tory resentment by habitually impugning the claim that the old purchase of Suez Canal shares had been a good investment. At least ten millions, he pointed out, had been spent in Egypt in pursuit of the policy of looking after the shares in question.

There was thus small sign of Conservative complaisance towards his Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. As always on such measures, he spoke with extreme concision and moderation, packing his argument with authoritative deliverances, and making only a quiet and simple appeal to good feeling. Similar bills had been introduced by Professor Courtney Kenny and other Nonconformists in the two preceding years, but had come to nothing. At first the promoters had inserted what is known as the "Indian clause," an extraordinary form of enactment which provides that any use of language "likely" to hurt religious feelings and cause disturbance, with the "intention" of so hurting feelings, should remain punishable. This clause had been unanimously rejected by Freethinkers as making fully a worse law than the old, the vague expressions as to "intention" and "feeling" being capable of a construction

such as bigots had not ventured to put on the blasphemy laws, and the principle being plainly destructive of that of free discussion. Even one or two religious bodies petitioned against the Bill on the latter score. The dissatisfaction with the clause was so great that it was dropped, but even then it was not till Bradlaugh took up the Bill that it reached a second reading (12th April). It was now opposed not only by Tories, but by pious Liberals, Mr Samuel Smith and Mr Waddy in particular taking pains to get up a panic about the possibility of having impious caricatures distributed at the doors of churches and Sunday schools, and children's minds blasted by blasphemous placards. Finally there voted only 46 for and 141 against the second reading. Most of the Liberal leaders were conspicuous by their absence.

He was better supported in the following month in his motion to dissent from the Government's system of commuting perpetual pensions. It was seconded by Mr Hanbury; and after a debate, in which Mr Gladstone spoke at some length in support of the resolution, the closure was carried on Bradlaugh's motion by 359 votes to 96, and the resolution was only rejected by 264 votes to 205. The moving of the closure in the midst of a speech by Dr Clark—a step which Bradlaugh declared to be fully justified by all the circumstances—gave some offence among Liberals; and just before, Bradlaugh had been made the subject of a furious newspaper attack by Mr John Burns, who pronounced him "the greatest enemy of labour in the House of Commons," and an opponent of "Employers' Liability Bills and other measures affecting the real interests of the people;" described him as shirking the Trafalgar Square question; and attacked him for having resisted a motion to reduce the Lord Chancellor's salary. The last step would have struck most people as one of peculiar chivalry, seeing that the Lord Chancellor had been one of Bradlaugh's most persistent and embittered personal enemies; but as the other items show, Mr Burns was not much concerned as to the validity of his charges. He even chose to speak of Bradlaugh as having sought an interview with him, when the fact was that Mrs Besant had introduced him to Bradlaugh to get the benefit of his legal advice. A more offensive attack was made on Bradlaugh shortly afterwards by Mr F. C. Philips in a serial in the magazine *Time*. The novelist made one of his characters allude to "a ruffian in the United States—a colonel, I believe—who is a kind of Yankee

Bradlaugh, only that he has the courage of his convictions, which Bradlaugh has not." This was by far the least offensive part of the passage; and Bradlaugh, after expressing his surprise that any editor or publisher should permit such a wanton attack, added:—

"F. C. Philips is right in saying, at any rate so far as he is concerned, that I have not the courage of my opinions, for my opinion is that I ought to horsewhip him. As I will not do that, I reprint his words."

The publishers promptly and cordially apologised for the outrage, which had taken place entirely without their knowledge, and which was really a piece of gratuitous literary ruffianism, not easily to be matched in modern times.

Much more troublous than any scurrilities or injustices from without was the shock which now came upon him from Mrs Besant's definite avowal of her conversion to the so-called "Theosophy" of Madame Blavatsky. No persistence of personal regard could countervail the complete sense of intellectual sundering from the friend and colleague of so many years which this involved for him; and the change was the more felt by him for that his physique was now fast giving way. But he held on his course with unchanging fortitude, adding fresh Freethought work to the ever-growing bulk of his work for India, and adding to his earnings as he could by articles for the reviews which were now open to him. An article on "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief," contributed in the spring to the *North American Review*, elicited an invitation to debate the point with the Rev. Mr Marsden Gibson, M.A., a Newcastle clergyman. This was accepted, and the debate took place at Newcastle in September, before densely packed audiences, on two successive nights. It was conducted with good feeling on both sides, the nearest approach to personalities being in respect of Mr Gibson's using the argument that Bradlaugh "stood alone," since "at least eleven apostles of the Secularist party" had left it within twenty years, Mrs Besant's being the only name given. Bradlaugh drily replied that he doubted whether the assertion was material to the question, but that if it were he could remind Mr Gibson "that eleven apostles deserted *his* founder in the sorest hour of his need." One bystander, not a Secularist, summed up the debate as a matter of Bradlaugh launching cannon-balls while his opponent spun cobwebs, a criticism partly justified by the rev. gentleman's defining "unbelief" as a state of mental indecision, whereas

Bradlaugh, of course, used the term to signify the critical and challenging spirit. But the open-minded reader can judge for himself on the published verbatim report. It elicited a number of sermons, some decent and courteous, others otherwise.

If Bradlaugh could have spent his autumns on Loch Long (where at last he had secured for the dwellers and health-seekers an almost complete stoppage of the pollution of the waters by the discharge of Clyde dredgings and other horrors) instead of in the usual round of lecturing, he might still have been among us. But he could never have the rest needed to build up his strength after the session's long drain on it; his vascular system was fast running down, and in October 1889 he was at length prostrated by a dangerous illness, a manifestation of the Bright's disease which was soon afterwards to destroy him. A surprising and touching proof of the change in public feeling towards him was given in the offering up of prayers in many churches for his recovery—a display of goodwill not undone by shoals of religious tracts, or even by the already started legend that he was "altering his opinions." One clergyman, the Rev. F. E. Millson of Halifax, generously gave a lecture specially to make a collection to help the sick man financially, which realised £10; and Mr M'Ewan, M.P., with characteristic munificence, sent him a cheque for £200 to enable him to take a health voyage to Bombay, as advised by the doctors. After weeks of extreme danger, he began slowly to regain ground. The great frame was not to be overthrown by one attack. But the seizure had been a terrible one: he had looked as close on death, he told us, as a man could look and live; and it was with heavy hearts that those who loved him saw him set sail in cold November for India. Before going, he penned a few notes, calmly contradicting the absurd story of his change of opinions, and other legends. "It would be ill-becoming to boast," he wrote, "but I may say that my convictions and teachings have not been with me subjects of doubt or uncertainty." One of the legends, circulated by the *British Weekly*, was to the effect that "on one occasion he said that he had almost been persuaded by a sermon of the Rev. Arthur Mursell." On this he remarked that the story was pure fiction; that though he had had friendly services from him, he had only heard Mr Mursell preach once in his life; and that all he remembered of it was the concluding intimation: "My subject next Sunday will be 'Beware of the Dog.'" The reverend editor

of the *British Weekly* had thought fit to add to his tale the judgment: "He (Mr Bradlaugh) has the earthliest of minds, is without a touch of poetry, imagination, or yearning"—a Christian characterisation which the patient treated with the charity it so eminently lacked.

There was a pathetic fitness in the advice which sent the sorely shaken man to India to recover, if it might be, health wherewith to work. It was just after delivering a lecture on India that he felt the first grasp of his illness. What strength he had had, he had indeed freely spent for India. In 1888 he had handled more Indian matters than in any previous year; and in particular had made (27th August) an important speech (reprinted under the title: "The Story of a Famine Insurance Fund and what was done with it") by way of protest, in the discussion on the Indian Budget, against the mismanagement of Indian affairs. Early in the session he had obtained a first place for his notice of motion on Indian grievances, but the Government took away the time; and he now made his criticism none the less forcible. None of his preserved speeches will better show the peculiar energy of his grasp of Indian questions, and of his pressure on the Indian Government; few indeed will better show one of the great characteristics of his speaking—the intense and constant pressure of his argument, the continuance of the highest stress of thought and feeling without a moment's lapse into incoherence or verbiage. It was in particular a crushing indictment of the action of Lord Lytton—the most destructive ever brought against him, Anglo-Indians say; and the ultimate effect of it was that the misapplied famine insurance fund was at length restored to its proper and solemnly pledged purpose.

It was a very different pulse and note that marked the short and grave address delivered by the stricken orator to the Indian Congress of December 1889. On board the *Ballarat*, jotting down a voyager's "log" for the friendly readers of his journal, he declared on the third day: "My health is coming back very fast; my hopes are rising even more rapidly;" but a man does not come back in a week or two to health from the door of death; the recovery slackened; and when he reached Bombay on the 23rd he was still far from convalescence. His reception would have electrified him into strength again if enthusiasm could. In the Congress Building, for the occasion of his coming, there were added to the

2000 delegates 3000 spectators, and the whole multitude rose to their feet in mass to cheer him as he appeared on the platform. Hundreds of addresses for presentation had been sent to him from all parts of India, some of them in rich cases, or accompanied by beautiful gifts in gold and silver and ivory and sandalwood. The address prepared by the Congress itself was read in lieu of all by the chairman, Sir William Wedderburn, and then the guest made his speech, a grave oration, touched with the tremour of recent suffering and restrained by the sense of broken strength, but full of greatness and dignity—a speech worthy of the man and of the occasion, weighty and wise in its counsels, urging patience, and disclaiming praise. It is impossible to read it without catching the vibration of its deep emotion, and as it were the breath of the listening host. The sight of the living mass, and the hearing of the actual proceedings at the Congress, gave him a new and illuminating knowledge of the great forces he had been dealing with; but he had nothing to unsay or unthink. Of the vitality of the Congress movement he was well assured, and he could gather for himself how much of sympathy among English civil servants had as yet to be concealed.

He had no time to give to seeing the regions and the peoples which the Congress represented; and in any case it was the voyage that was to restore him if anything would. So on 3rd January he set sail from Bombay for home, receiving a tremendous ovation at the Apollo Bunder, where the carriage could scarcely get through the crowds that rained flowers on him and Sir William Wedderburn. The end of January found him once more at his library table and at his work, "marvellously better," indeed, but not restored. There was to be no restoration.

1890–1891.

Before sailing for India Bradlaugh had issued a summons to an extraordinary and special general meeting of the members of the National Secular Society, to be held after his return on 16th February, to receive from him a special statement, and his resignation of the Presidentship, and to elect a successor. This last was a step he had hoped to postpone until he had carried a Bill repealing the blasphemy laws. Freethought and Freethinkers would in that event stand free and equal before the law; and, with endless tasks before him as a legislator, he felt he might

fitly withdraw from the more militant and organising work of Secularism, of which he had done so much. But looking to his defeat on his Bill in 1889, and to the desperate illness he had just gone through, he felt he must needs lighten his burdens forthwith as best he could.

The scene of his resignation was a touching one. From all parts of England came men who had fought with and for him, some of them for a good thirty years listening to his teaching and spreading it around, criticising him at times, but always admiring him, standing by him in battle and rejoicing with him in victory; and when he rose to lay down his leadership, and the cheers of welcome on his recovery rang warmer and warmer, it was some time before he could command himself to speak. A few moving periods told of the necessity he lay under of giving up a task which he was no longer fulfilling as he held it ought to be fulfilled. The party would have rejoiced to have him hold the office nominally, letting another do the work. But he "must be a real President or none. My fault," he went on, "has sometimes been that I have been too real a one (laughter), but it is no easy matter to lead such a voluntary movement as ours. I think I am entitled to say that the movement is stronger when I am giving up this badge of office (holding up Richard Carlile's chairman's hammer) than when I first took the presidential chair." And a thunderous cheer endorsed the claim.

The office had no emoluments whatever. The little wooden hammer and its memories had been the prize for a generation of work involving much spending. He calculated that during thirty years he had given to the Society and its branches, as proceeds of benefit lectures, some £3000; and the members on their part gladly relieved him of certain money obligations of considerably less amount. He ended:—

"I do not say, 'We part friends,' because this is not parting. The movement is still as much to me as ever, as much as it has been during my life. For more than forty years I have been a speaker among you. Now I lay down the wand of office, and the right to give command, but I hope always to remain with you a trusted counsellor. And to you, I hope unstained—to you, I hope untarnished, I give back the trust you gave."

When the cheering and the addresses and resolutions had been got through, he proposed as his successor in the Presidentship

Mr G. W. Foote, the able editor of the *Freethinker* and the leading lecturer in the movement; and on Mr Foote's being unanimously elected, he handed over to the new President the hammer of office, with the words: "I give it to you, George William Foote; and I trust that when it becomes your painful duty to resign, as I do now, the progress that has been made in the cause while you have held it will be such as to compensate for the pain."

In dismissing the meeting he gave it some grave words of counsel:—

"The battle of Freethought in this country is not over. There are signs, not far off, of possible strife, and there will be needed wise heads, cool heads, and firm hearts. There is a tendency to renew the anti-Jewish cry; and you may easily, in connection with the lower phases of the Salvation Army, get excitement and tension that need a greater self-command than is always shown among us, if personal conflict is to be avoided. The forthcoming report on sweating may bring about an attempt to raise the anti-Jewish cry; and it is impossible to have strife between religions without the possibility of the various religions turning on the one party that is outside all. One element of danger in Europe is the approach of the Roman Catholic Church towards meddling in political life. . . . Beware when that great Church, whose power none can deny, the capacity of whose leading men is marked, tries to use the democracy as its weapon. There is danger to freedom of thought, to freedom of speech, to freedom of action. The great struggle in this country will not be between Freethought and the Church of England, nor between Freethought and Dissent, but—as I have long taught, and now repeat—between Freethought and Rome."

To his political work he turned with all the strength he could command. At Northampton his constituents welcomed him back with joyful enthusiasm, and an address from the Liberal and Radical Association formally expressed their felicitations. When he addressed them, he had to stand for several minutes on end before the cheering and singing would subside. The speech had some pregnant passages:—

"I, personally, am not so hopeful as my colleague of a democratic Parliament in England. And why? Because a democratic Parliament in England can only come when you pay each servant there for the work and the service he renders you—(cheers)—and when the worry and the wear-and-tear of earning a livelihood beside his work do not" —he ended the sentence shortly—"sometimes break the man down."

On points of policy he went on to express himself firmly and uncompromisingly as to the Eight Hours' movement, against which he had already written and spoken as being utterly fallacious on the side of practice and pernicious in point of principle; and taking the demand for a time-law as the prelude to a demand for a wage-law, he assailed the entire movement as illustrating the practical application of Socialist theory to practice, both democratic and despotic:—

"As you all know well, I have always been in favour of Trade Unions; as you know also, I have spoken for them, and I have worked with them. (Cheers.) But I say here, I am utterly against—and though it should cost me my seat in Parliament to-morrow, I would be against—the doctrine and opinion that Parliament could thus add one farthing to a man's wage, or one jot to a man's comfort. (Cheers.) What Parliament can do is, remove restrictions; what Parliament can do is, reduce expenditure; and what the Emperor of Germany had better do, instead of summoning a conference of the nations of the world, is to disarm twenty regiments (great cheering), and send back to the plough and to the machine a huge number of men who now live upon the labour of others, and lessen the wage of others, by being soldiers instead of working men. (Loud cheers.) I speak most strongly on this, because I feel most strongly on it. ('Hear hear.') I am not one of those, as you will know, who have ever yet, and I have passed too close to the end of my life to have any thought at anyrate to become one now—I am not one of those who have ever flattered the people, or striven to win their favour by telling them that from the Crown or from the Parliament that could be got which could not be got from themselves, by themselves. (Cheers.) I would impress upon you this. What the State gives to you, the State takes from you first; it further charges you with the cost of collection, and with the cost of distribution. ('Hear, hear.') Better by far for you that you should save for yourselves and spend for yourselves, than put into the purse of the State your earnings, of which only part can at best come back. (Cheers).[1]

Just after the Northampton meeting came the death of the man who had been his right hand in all his struggles there from the first—Thomas Adams, now ex-Mayor. Mr Adams had been a valued friend as well as a trusted agent, and his death came as another of the thickening blows of fate upon the rapidly aging man. In Parliament, all the same, he stuck sternly to his tasks. At the opening he had set down for himself important amendments to the Indian Councils Amendment Bill and to the Criminal Law

Practice Amendment Bill; a repetition of his motions as to waste lands and the expunging of the old resolutions excluding him; and a motion on behalf of the Financial Reform Association, calling for the abolition of the gold and silver duties and compulsory hall-marking; and he introduced besides an India Bill of his preparation. He at once resumed work, too, on the Royal Commission on Vaccination, on which he had done careful work in the previous year, charging himself as he did to watch over the case for the anti-vaccinators, though not committing himself definitely to their view of the facts. He had been left out of the previous Royal Commission (moved for by himself) on Market Rights and Tolls—partly, it was thought, because Her Majesty could hardly be asked to include the Republican and Atheist in a list of "trusty and well-beloved" counsellors; but in the Vaccination Commission the difficulty was somehow overridden.

In the House, his first long speech was in opposition to the motion of Mr Cunninghame Graham on the Address with regard to the restriction of adult hours of labour by international legislation, and the sending of a delegate to the "Berlin Conference" to support such proposals there. The speech was a very vigorous one, and besides exposing some bad blunders in Mr Graham's figures, argued strongly against the policy of a time-law as a crude and superficial treatment of a far-reaching economic problem. During the course of the year he developed this criticism in various review articles and otherwise; and a systematic treatment of it was to have made a large part of the book on "Labour and Law" on which he was engaged at his death. Among his other Parliamentary discussions he fought his colleague's battle on the occasion on which Mr Labouchere was suspended for persisting in the declaration: "I do not believe Lord Salisbury"—in connection with the escape of Lord Arthur Somerset from a criminal prosecution.

He continued to incur a fair share of the personal abuse of which he had had such ample experience. The *Observer* told him that he was an object of "loathing" to Hindoos on account of his religious and Malthusian views; Mr Hyndman described him and Mr Burt as "friends of the plundering classes;" Mr William Morris's *Commonweal* dubbed him a "renegade;" and Mr Cunninghame Graham, by way of retaliation for punishment, declared his work to have consisted mainly in fighting about the oath and the

existence of a Deity. The *Lady's Pictorial Journal* more subtly described him as "no longer the rough, rugged, carelessly-dressed man of the people, who once vainly sought admission to the popular Chamber, but a grave, dignified, and well-groomed senator;" and this legend of his "transformation" did duty with many as an exculpation of their own past brutalities. It almost seems heartless, as against such self-absolved penitents, to record the fact that in his costume he had always been the most conservative of men, and that he dressed in 1890 exactly as he had dressed in 1880 and 1870. The clerical stories of "awful examples" of ruined infidels, tacked on somehow to his name, and the more obviously knavish stories of his having been "shown up" or "confounded" on the platform, continued to have their customary circulation; and during his illness and his absence the libellous "Life," of which the surplus copies had *not* been destroyed, was more actively circulated.

Accustomed as he was to the steadfast repetition of religious fictions against him after all manner of refutation and contradiction, he was somewhat astonished at the length to which some of the labour leaders had contrived to mislead their followers as to his action in the House. At a Labour Electoral Congress at Hanley, in April, one speaker, who declared himself otherwise friendly, actually moved a resolution "That this Congress regrets the determined opposition of Mr Charles Bradlaugh to the Employers' Liability Bill, as the working men of this country desire it to be passed, and refuses to recognise him as a labour representative." As has been above told, he had been the strongest supporter of the Bill, whereas its rejection had been moved by Mr Broadhurst. The mover may have been under a hallucination in which the rôles of Mr Broadhurst and Bradlaugh were reversed; but the extent to which working men can go astray under such hallucinations was shown by the fact that the resolution was actually carried. The irrational hostility thus shown was of course not lessened when, in the debate on Mr Bartley's motion for an inquiry into profit-sharing, Bradlaugh administered another unsparing correction to Mr Cuninghame Graham, who in his excitement became so "interruptious" as nearly to get himself suspended. "The hon. member," said Bradlaugh among other things, "charged Liberals and Nationalists with having done nothing to prevent the starvation of one man whose terrible death he had brought before the

House; but what did he do himself except promote a strike in the district, one result of which was that many men were now without employment who had theretofore at least been kept from starving?" Mr Graham, with his youth and health, was no match for Bradlaugh, out of health.

While politics were thus growing increasingly contentious for him, he paradoxically found calm in new resorts to the theological controversy. A series of serenely trenchant papers on the question "Are the Hebrew Scriptures Impregnable?" in criticism of the treatise of Mr Gladstone—a criticism to which the right hon. gentleman offered no reply—were among his writings during the session. He had increasing satisfaction, too, in his work for India; and on the occasion of a reception at Northampton to the delegates of the Indian Congress, he delivered a most eloquent speech, full of his old fire, though towards the end he was fain to express the wish that he had the force and fire of the old years. In the House, in the course of the session, besides constantly pressing Indian needs on the Secretary of State, he made an important speech on the case of the Maharaja of Kashmir, whose high-handed deposition by the Indian Government, on the scantiest justification, had seemed to him as worthy of reprobation as wrongs to common folk. Republican as he was, he would never admit that an Imperial Government, which itself professed to rest on hereditary monarchy, had the right to tread underfoot at pleasure the titles of Indian princes; and he saw at once what the Imperialists are so slow to see, that a brutal disregard of the established titles of such princes is the surest way to breed disaffection to British rule, which has the least satisfactory title of all. The official Liberal press, of course, lectured him for his failure to see that the official course was the right one, and charged him with championing a corrupt native despot. The sufficient answer to such deliverances was and is that within three years the Maharaja of Kashmir was restored, just as the famine fund was restored on Bradlaugh's previous pressure. From such eloquent facts we may infer what he might have done for the reform of Indian administration had he lived, and what a loss to the cause was his death, just as his most important plans were coming within sight of effective discussion. In his last enfeebled years he did for India what some men might have reckoned good work for a lifetime.

Weakened as he was, he entered on one undertaking during the

summer, which, in the state of his health, was anything but prudent. Mr John Burns, in a public speech, spoke vaguely of challenging him to a debate in some very large hall on the Eight Hours question; but on being asked to come to business, declared that nothing would meet his wishes short of an open-air debate which could be "heard" by 200,000 persons, who were to vote on the issue—a farcical proposition which made an end of the matter so far as Mr Burns was concerned. Mr Hyndman, however, who from endorsing Mr Burns' denunciations of Mr Bradlaugh had in due course passed to denouncing Mr Burns, wrote to Bradlaugh challenging him in Mr Burns' place. "I observe," he put it, "that John Burns imposes such terms in relation to his debate with you, that he obviously does not wish it to come off." After some contentious preliminaries, a debate on the Eight Hours question came off between Mr Hyndman and Bradlaugh in St James's Hall on the evening of 23rd July. It was, like most of the debates on Socialism held in London, a noisy scene, many of the Socialists present being disorderly in the extreme; and it was grievous to some of us to think that Bradlaugh, with his failing health and slackening nerves, should have the strain of such a meeting for such a grossly inconsiderate audience as made up the following of his opponent. The published report will serve to show whether the advocacy on the other side made the debate worth holding.

Twice in this year did Bradlaugh seek fresh strength on his fishing ground of Loch Long, far from the madding crowd. Failing still to build himself up to anything like his old standard of health, he grew more and more anxious about his money matters, the successful management of which depended so much on his keeping up his personal earnings. Physically unable to lecture so much as formerly, he sought by writing review articles to keep up a sufficient income to meet all his obligations. But on the other hand, he found himself at length obliged to close the Freethought Publishing Company's shop in Fleet Street, which meant too burdensome a cost for a bookselling business, even were that business not one-half boycotted by "the trade," and catering for only a section of the reading public. Appealing to that section to help him in the way of clearance sales, he wrote: "There are some folk who repeatedly say that I am rich. I should be a very happy man if to-morrow I could assign all my assets, except my

library, which I should not like to lose, to any one who would discharge my liabilities." The closing of the shop was made the occasion of another painful step—the dissolution (December 1890) of the partnership which had for so many years subsisted between him and Mrs Besant. They had diverged too far in thought to permit of the old community of interest, though to the last Mrs Besant continued to write for the *National Reformer*, and there was no cessation of friendly intercourse.

Hardly was the dissolution accomplished when once more the overwrought man was struck down by the malady which had barely let him go a year before, and which this time was not to be fought off. On the 10th of January 1891 he came home very ill indeed, hypertrophy of the heart having followed on the old Bright's disease. After the first seizure was over, he went to see his physician, who diagnosed the trouble. Still he did not take to bed, and about midnight on the 13th an attack of spasm of the heart, as he wrote in the last notes he penned or dictated, "nearly finished my chequered life." It was soon to end indeed. He rose to work as usual the next morning, and was unwilling even to have the doctor called in again; but on the day after he was persuaded to take to bed, though he went reluctantly, not dreaming at first that the end was so near. He had the best of doctoring and nursing; being attended by his old friend, Dr Ramskill, and by his near neighbour, Dr Bell; while he had in his daughter a nurse for whom the doctors had nothing but praise; but the case was past cure. He faced the end, as he had done twice before, with perfect tranquillity, sorry to close his work, but calm with the calmness of a perfectly brave and sane man. Coming from Scotland to see him a little before the end, I found him in the perfect possession of his judgment, occupying himself among other things by auditing the peculiar accounts of the Salvation Army, which he had mastered much more thoroughly than their framers liked; and at that time, though they had no hope, the doctors thought his illness would be a long one. He himself, I saw, was prepared for the worst. The one regret he expressed was that he probably should not be able to move once more the motion he had put down yet again at the beginning of the winter session, for the expunging from the journals of the House of the old resolutions excluding him. He had set his heart on carrying that motion, even as a similar one

had been carried after the lapse of years in the case of Wilkes. And, happily, across the very shades of death there came for him a light of comfort on this his last desire. Dr W. A. Hunter, M.P., on being appealed to without the dying man's knowledge, instantly and kindly consented to move the resolution on his behalf on 27th January, when its turn came; and Bradlaugh, when told of what had been arranged, declared that that was the very choice he should have made, and turned contentedly to his rest, though he did not suppose the motion would even now be carried.

Dr Hunter's success, however, was complete. The motion was opposed at great length by the Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke; but after Gladstone had delivered a conciliatory speech, the front bench agreed to accept the motion on condition that the words characterising the resolutions to be expunged "as subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors of the kingdom" should be dropped. These words had been copied from the motion in the Wilkes case, so as to follow precedent; but of course the essential thing was the consent to the expunging of the resolutions, which very sufficiently implied all that was said in the withdrawn words. So, after Sir Edward Clarke had protested against a deletion, which he admitted to be "a mark of ignominy," Mr W. H. Smith agreed to the motion; and although Mr De Lisle made a foolish speech in opposition, even he expressed his "deep regret at the illness of Mr Bradlaugh," while Sir Walter Barttelot not only deplored that there should be any lack of unanimity, but expressed his admiration of the straightforwardness Mr Bradlaugh had shown in the discharge of his duties as a member. "God grant that the junior member for Northampton might recover; but whatever happened, hon. members would feel that, by accepting this motion, they had done a generous act towards a man who had endeavoured to do his duty." So the motion was finally carried without dissent, amid cheers, and the wrongful resolutions were formally expunged.

Alas, when the news of the triumph was telegraphed by Dr Hunter, it was too late to tell the dying man. Day by day he had grown weaker, albeit cheerful and even sanguine when he drowsily talked of himself; and now he had sunk so low that his daughter dared not rouse him with so exciting a message. He

never fully regained consciousness; and those about him learned how bitter a thing it could be

"To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man."

The end came on the morning of 30th January 1891. He was fifty-seven years and four months old.

As in his previous illness, prayers had been offered up for him in many churches; and many were the tributes of those who had been opposed to him in religion and in politics; still more, of course, of those more in agreement with him. But his daughter had been driven to take the precaution of procuring signed testimony, from those who had been attending him, that during his illness he was never heard to utter one word "either directly or indirectly bearing upon religion or any religious subject." The eternal pretence of a "recantation" was already current afresh, as it had been after he resigned his presidentship of the National Secular Society, even while he was writing his arguments against Mr Gladstone's book, and re-stating his Atheism as explicitly as ever in his "Doubts in Dialogue." One of the last non-political lectures he had given, in November, had been a manifesto on "My Heresy now and Thirty-six Years ago;" and in December he had discoursed on "Life, Death, and Immortality" with no faltering in his doctrine.

The funeral was on 3rd February, at Brookwood Cemetery. He had never troubled himself as to how his body should be dealt with, so his daughter chose that it should be in the "earth to earth" fashion. At his express wish, written in a will dated some years before, the burial was perfectly silent—an arrangement which caused some regret among friends, and some characteristic phrases about "being buried like a dog" from others, who could not feel the pathos and solemnity of the silent sepulture, amid the uncovered multitude who had come to pay their last tribute at the grave of the man they had honoured and loved. As he had always disliked the shows of mourning and the badges of grief, those who knew his tastes wore none. But the grief of the thousands who filled the trains from London to the burial-place was such as needed no other attestation. They were of both sexes and all classes, from costermongers to right honourables; they came from all parts of England; and soldiers' red coats and the bronzed

faces of hundreds of Hindus gave a wide significance of aspect to the throng. Hundreds, many of them from Northampton, had brought the little tri-coloured rosettes they used to wear in the old fighting days; and many threw these in the grave, some saying as they did so that their work too was done, now that he was gone.

Over an hour after the coffin had been laid in the earth, when it was thought that the multitude had passed away, the immediate friends and mourners of the dead went back to take a last look, and they found that a lingering band of devoted men had got the shovels from the workmen, and were one by one obtaining the last sad privilege of casting their handful of earth into the grave.

CONCLUSION.

If the foregoing volumes have not shown what manner of man Bradlaugh was, as well as what he did, they have been written in vain. But it may be fitting to attempt, in a closing page or two, some general estimate of his personality. The present writer is, indeed, conscious of unfitness for the task, were it only because of a personal affection which must somewhat bias criticism. But when a man has had so much evil said of him as Bradlaugh had throughout his life, the inclining of the balance a little way towards love and admiration may be forgiven. Indeed, most men would find it hard to write of him with perfect impartiality. He inspired, as a rule, either aversion or admiration, and the furious enmities of which these pages bear record were in a way the correlative of the intense devotion given to him by thousands.

Such a description would in some cases suggest an intensely passionate and ill-balanced nature, at once winning and grievously faulty; hardly a man of keenly analytic intellect, remarkable self-control, and extreme sagacity. Yet these latter qualities he certainly had. He was in truth a singular combination of chivalrous heroism and practical wisdom—a combination such as I cannot find a parallel for in memory. He had the quixotic ardour of a young enthusiast, an ardour which never left him to the end; and he combined it with a political foresight and judgment such as few modern English statesmen have exhibited. It was the ardour for justice and truth, the forthright sincerity and disregard of convenient conformities, that won him the love and allegiance

of men who possessed and valued courage; and it was his keen sagacity that kept their adherence. In modern England he stands out singularly as a powerful and prominent man who chose to set his face openly and systematically against what he held to be shams and delusions, though the impeaching of them brought him the bitterest hostility, the foulest calumny, and a perpetual struggle, where a mere tacit conformity would have meant manifold success, wealth, and ease. There is no country in which straightforwardness and single-mindedness are more belauded than in England, and perhaps none in which they are scarcer. The praise of them forms part of the "cant that does not know it is cant," which Carlyle denounced, and exemplified. Men declare their esteem for courage and sincerity; and when they meet a shining example of these virtues they cast their mud with the unthinking vulgar. No amount of reiteration of phrases about prophets who have been stoned by the Scribes and Pharisees can withhold the average moralist from joining the Scribes and Pharisees when the next prophet shows face. To panegyrise old prophets in platitudes is such a very different thing from recognising a new one in the market-place and taking him by the hand.

Of course, while men do unquestionably dislike an innovator and fighter for being more honest and plain-spoken than themselves, they do not openly put their enmity on those grounds. They must find sins and faults for him: what faults he has they will magnify and multiply. And as, of course, all of us who practise any self-criticism at all can realise that the hostilities we set up, however unjust we hold them to be, have a certain basis in our shortcomings, it is only reasonable to look for part of the pretext of Bradlaugh's enemies in his. What then were his faults? We have seen and heard enough of those falsely imputed: what was his real share of human infirmity? I have heard him accused, by people who were not rabidly hostile, of egoism, vanity, love of flattery, and a tendency to be overbearing. For perhaps all of these charges he would himself have more readily admitted a foundation than would his sympathetic friends. He used to make humorous allusion, in his speeches at Freethought gatherings, to his despotism in the chair. He ruled conferences with a rod, not of iron but of ivory—the rod of absolute technical law. He was the most swift and unyielding of chairmen; and men unwittingly out of order

called him not only hard but unjust. But some who had resented his way in these matters have been known spontaneously to wish for his ruling hand when it was still. In all matters where authority and command belonged to the situation, and he was in authority, he ruled with a military firmness and quickness; and as no man can miss making mistakes, he must have made some, though they would be hard to prove. Nay, he himself avowed a certain stress of nervous energy which, on bustling occasions, made him abrupt and impatient of meddling and dilatoriness. This overplus of energy came out quaintly in his inveterate habit of being much too early for a train. He had, in fact, the relative defect of the Napoleonic quality of swift decision and intense determination. Thus, as one Freethinker once told him, his manner was not always "economical;" and the hostilities he aroused were apt to be as intense as the admirations, and to be hindrances to his career. Most of his enemies were themselves certainly faulty men, and not a few were very bad men indeed; but he would not have denied that he might at times have made an honest man his unfriend. Such an abnormal will-power as his * cannot miss making some of the manifestations of excess of driving power in the human machine. But nothing could be more mistaken, or more unjust, than to make out that this stress of will-power made him an unjust or an inconsiderate man. On the contrary, tried by the decisive tests of his family life and his relation to his colleagues, he was the fairest and most tolerant of men. Of his family virtues his daughter has told: of his considerateness as an editor all who worked with him can speak. I never knew or heard of one who even came near him in his regard for the independence of his contributors, and in his concern to give the fullest hearing to opponents. In all the essentials of just-mindedness he was singularly well endowed; it was only in respect of physiological over-emphasis that he could ever be impeached. And even on that score, as has been above abundantly shown, it is utterly false that he was ever brutal in speech, or arrogant or discourteous in intercourse or controversy. He was even criticised at times for a certain old-world courtliness, more

* His head gave a remarkable corroboration to the classification of the old phrenology, now being revindicated by the posthumous work of Mr Mattieu Williams. It had a highly intellectual cast at the brow, but the whole head sloped up to the organ of will, which dominated everything in his skull outline as in his character.

continental than English, and this long before he had won general recognition. A thousand printed reports and testimonies go to dispose of vague and unsupported aspersions. I am told that in the last year or two of his life, when his nervous and vascular system was breaking up, he was at times sharply impatient of incompetent opposition on the secular platform, but that is a small matter against the self-control of a lifetime. Tried by, or in comparison with, his peers, he needs no vindication.

On the points of "egoism" and "vanity" I have heard him forestall criticism. He confessed that he sought power, and shaped his life to attain his ambitions—these being what they were. He had simply the egoism of an extremely powerful man with an end in view. But it was never the egoism of a Napoleon, stooping to meanness as readily as it hazarded battles. He was an honourable gentleman to the end. Those who deprecated his legal way of fighting legal battles simply failed to appreciate the lawyer's method. That he was a born as well as a trained lawyer many lawyers have admitted; and he fought technically, and thwarted his enemies by technicalities, because law was to him a technique. Nobody but a man with a genuine belief in it as a technical system would have gone to law as often as he did, even to resist gross injustice. On the point of "vanity," again, he frankly anticipated criticism. "Oh, don't say that: *I* am very vain," I once heard him say to Madame Venturi when she was protesting that a certain statesman's vanity was insufferable. Of course such a confession could not come from a really vain man. He once spoke of "the Irish part of my character" as something that his friends must allow for. A man who can thus detect foibles in himself is not badly swayed by them. As for the charge that he was susceptible to flattery—a variant on the trite and stupid charge of "love of notoriety"—it came latterly, I think, only from Liberals in the House who grudged his popularity among the Tories, they themselves seeing in him a stumblingblock to that species of success which both parties are so apt to set above pursuit of principle. The later Tories, having nothing to suffer in the esteem of the pious from friendship with him, showed him some consideration; while the official Liberals uneasily anticipated the demand from their supporters outside that Bradlaugh should be in the next Liberal Cabinet. It is painful to have to say that to such Liberals his death was a relief. And it is intelligible that they should

prefer to see in his geniality and courtesy a fishing for Tory flattery rather than a manly merit. If after years of desperate strife, conscious of failing health, the aging fighter had been sedulous to win goodwill, it would have been small harm; but he was genial out of the very warmth of heart that had made him a fighter. Of his unwavering fidelity to the Radical principles of his life it would be vain to say anything here if the preceding pages have not made it clear. The respect which he won from political opponents in the House was no result of compromise on his part, or of his resistance to certain Socialist doctrines. He was in sharp collision with them on other issues to the last. A good testimony to the genuineness of their respect is that which comes from the late Mr W. H. Smith, in his biography by Sir Herbert Maxwell. It is there told that once in 1886 Mr Smith's private secretary, travelling in the same railway carriage with Bradlaugh, happened to mention the station at which he was going to stop. "Ah, you are going to stay with Mr Smith," said Bradlaugh. "Well, I don't suppose there is a man in the House of Commons or in England with whom I am more widely at variance on many subjects, yet there is none for whom I have more sincere respect." In the evening the secretary told his host that he had travelled down with Bradlaugh. "Indeed," said Smith. "Well, it's a strange thing; I don't believe there is a man whose opinions I hold in greater abhorrence than Bradlaugh's; but I cannot help feeling that there is not an honester man in Parliament." And I have myself heard Bradlaugh speak in private of the genuineness and simplicity of Smith's character—in respect of such a matter as private donations to churches—even at a time when he had penned humorous paragraphs on Smith's head-butler manner of leading the legislature. Both men were honest, and that was a ground of sympathy. And though the professor of the "religion of love" had to express "abhorrence" of the opinions he rejected, he called to make friendly inquiry when Bradlaugh lay on his deathbed—an attention paid by none of the Liberal leaders.

But this honesty, which won him the regard of antagonists when they came close enough to see it, was simply the manifestation in political life of the fundamental and propulsive love of truth and reason which made him an Atheist propagandist. He happened to care for truth and justice all round, where other men were satisfied with a measure of homage to one or two principles they cared to

recognise, or prejudices they cared to gratify. He had leapt forward, from his youth up, at the sound of the trumpet in every good cause, where they had mostly been careful to count the cost.

"No fetter but galled his wrist;
No wrong that was not his own."

And to his last days, he never learned the sordid lessons of prudent conformity even where they might have meant a serious lightening of his burdens. Once in the last year of his life, I commented jestingly, as laying down the code of commercial journalism, on his devotion of columns of his journal to dry details of the Indian grievances he took up, when he might have raised the circulation by lampooning his fellow-members. He felt so strongly on the subject of English disregard of Indian claims that even the jest disturbed him, and he met it with an *Et tu, Brute.* No man was saner in the adjustment of a necessary compromise in legislation; but no man was ever more innocent of the spirit of Nothingarianism. "Good God, Bradlaugh," said a friendly Conservative member to him one day, reproaching him for his quixotry, "what does it matter whether there is a God or not?" The amiable indifferentists who subscribe to that philosophy, though they may have been able to appreciate him as a companion, will never be able to understand the enthusiasm which Bradlaugh aroused in thousands of those who followed him, and even in some whose way of thought diverged far from his. I have heard of one eminent professional man who long wore Bradlaugh's portrait next his breast, and long hesitated between following him and turning Catholic. Men who never had any leanings that way could the more heartily give their devotion. Certain it is that Bradlaugh evoked a passion of love and loyalty from thousands, such as no other public man of his day called forth. His followers followed him as Nelson's men did Nelson. Mr Gladstone has the enthusiastic reverence of myriads; but men who would go through fire and water for their leader, and give up their tobacco to send him a weekly sixpence, were to be looked for rather in Bradlaugh's following than his.

Men turned instinctively to Bradlaugh as to a born leader. Had any great social convulsion arisen in his time, such as some foretell for the near future, he would infallibly have come to the front as none of his political contemporaries were fitted to do—as Cromwell

did and as Danton did. In him the faculty of action was not limited to the sphere of the forum and the bureau. It has been told* how, when in Spain, he offered to the Republican leaders to go with fifty horsemen and shoot the traitorous general in the north; and we may safely hold with the narrator of this episode that "he would have done it" had the offer been accepted, Among the many adventures of his younger days, the details of which will probably never now be put together, was a singular attempt in which he took part to secure the election of a Liberal Pope. He carried letters to and fro in Europe on behalf of Italian and other democrats who had conceived the scheme. All I learned from him was the fact of his positively taking part in the enterprise, which, of course, failed. In these and other journeys he ran many risks; and he told a funny story of how, travelling one night in a German train with a good deal of money in his possession, and being awakened from his sleep, with the train at full speed, by the conductor's lamp presented to his face, after the continental fashion, where on his lying down there had been no one else in the compartment, he in an instant had that startling and startled functionary by the throat in the opposite corner of the carriage. His army training and his later experiences had developed in him a remarkable turn for dealing promptly with physical emergencies; and persons who sought, in the old days, to block the "Reform" processions for the leading of which he was responsible, came to swift and serious confusion. To the last he had in him something of Cromwell's Berserker temper, though at his blood's hottest he could never have been guilty of the Puritan's ferocity. It came out in him in such acts as his personal seizure and expulsion of rowdies from his meetings. I saw him effect this dramatically enough at one of the great St James's Hall meetings he organised about 1886. Tories had come with forged tickets, but were detected and ejected; and these, or others, determined to give due trouble, took the course of keeping up a loud and distracting tapping on the glass door at the off end of one of the balconies. The disturbers being in great force outside, the doorkeepers were helpless; the loud click-click was disconcerting the speaker then on his feet; and the audience were growing more and more irritated and restless. Bradlaugh left the chair, passed down and then up

* *National Reformer*, February 8, 1891.

to the balcony, made his way along to the door, opened it sharply and disappeared, but in a moment re-entered, holding a man by the collar. This was the ringleader with the stick. Startled at the apparition of Bradlaugh, he had involuntarily raised that weapon; but in a flash it was out of his hands and broken across Bradlaugh's knee. The pale disturber was then taken by his captor—still by the collar—along the crowded balcony to the platform end, where he was ejected by the other doorway. He did not return: his followers broke up; and the meeting proceeded in peace, after a spontaneous expression of its satisfaction at the manner of the relief. That there was nobody like Bradlaugh for an awkward emergency, was the fresh verdict of his followers.

And these things, and his shaping of his life, were all of a piece with the extraordinary effectiveness of his oratory. In tempestuous power and intensity of feeling it surpassed any that it has ever been my lot to listen to: it roused men to great thrills of sympathy apart from any of that foregone approbation which swells the cheering for so many political leaders. He could make enthusiastic followers at one hearing, and keep them for a generation. Oratory was with him not an art, but an inspiration; he even misused his wonderfully powerful voice; but he sounded easily all the notes of eloquence, giving at times the whole gamut of effect, jest, pathos, gravity, reasoning, epigram, and thunderous vehemence, in a quarter of an hour's speech. The platform was pre-eminently his place; and no one who merely reads his articles written for reading, tersely strong as his style generally is, can know the extent of his power over language. It did not lie in any special sonority of vocabulary or choice of cadence, but in a volcanic sincerity and spontaneous fire of speech which yet never passed beyond the control of logic and judgment—something equally removed from the measured passion and forceful dignity of Bright, and the copious mellifluence of Gladstone. It was the oratory of unswerving conviction, grave or impassioned or satirical in turn, but always felt and never factitious. He spoke as he lived and fought, going straight for his mark, and staking all on the issue.

To those whom his career leaves cold and whom his character cannot attract, it is enough to say that those who applaud the career and honour the character recognise in them, in their special kind, that invincible and unforgettable something which marks men for remembrance long after their immediate influence has passed

away—the something which in artists and poets and warriors we call genius. What Mr John Morley has called the dæmonic elements of character, but may perhaps better be called the dynamic elements, were present in Bradlaugh in a degree which gives a personality a lasting interest. Beside the cautious and merely judicious or clever men, he stands out as one of larger mould and greater fibre, a battling and conquering Titan, sure of the sympathetic retrospect of happier days. It is not merely that as a statesman he impressed friends and foes alike with his insight and his sagacity; and that he combined the fire of the orator with the exactitude of the scholar and the rigorous thinking of the born reasoner; but that in him sagacity never ceased to be heroic, and that his commanding powers rested on a character more commanding still. When, in September 1892, twenty months after his death, a gathering was held in his memory on the occasion of the completion of the bust for his grave, the enthusiasm was as strong, the throng as dense, the tributes as warm, the sympathy as keen, as on the day he was struck down. His name is verily not written in water. And the bronze bust on his tomb, recalling as it does the high front and the unflinching eye which his friends loved to associate with him, and seeming as it does to face fate with an immovable strength and firmness, will for many a year say to passers-by what has been sought to be told in these pages—"This was a man."

THE END.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

MR. BRADLAUGH'S BIRTHPLACE.

On p. 3 it is stated that Mr. Bradlaugh was born at No. 5, Bacchus Walk, Hoxton, but this appears to be an error. of which I only became aware in 1905. In that year the London County Council had under consideration the question of placing a tablet on the house in which my father was born, and they wrote me for the purpose of obtaining documentary or other evidence as to the identity of the house. As a result of careful inquiries I found that the birthplace of my father was No. 31, and not No. 5, as I had previously believed. As it was possible that the street had been renumbered, the London County Council undertook to try to find out, and Mr. Gomme, Clerk to the Council, subsequently wrote me that although this point could not be determined with exactitude:

"The probabilities are that the street had not been renumbered since the date of Bradlaugh's birth. If such is the case the house in which he was born has disappeared, for about 1883, No. 31 Bacchus Walk was with a block of other houses in the street demolished to provide a site for the present St. John's Road School, Hoxton. On my reporting these facts, the Committee of the Council dealing with the matter regretfully decided that under the circumstances they could take no further action with regard to this house.

"It will interest you to know that the Committee have also taken steps with a view to the erection of a tablet on No. 20, Circus Road, S. John's Wood, where your father died, after having resided there for a considerable period. The owner of the house, however, refused to consent to the erection of a tablet, and the Committee were thus compelled to abandon the idea of indicating this house."

H. B. B.

APPENDIX II.

LORD DUFFERIN AND CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

The following significant correspondence between Lord Dufferin and Mr. Bradlaugh is now (1908) included for the first time in this biography.

Lord Dufferin's letters are written throughout in his own handwriting, and the draft of my father's letter is written by his own hand. I am the more fortunate in having this, because it was very rare indeed for him either to make a draft of his letters

or to write at such length. The occasion was, however, one of more than usual importance. Lord Dufferin sent with his letter a copy of the speech he delivered at the St. Andrew's dinner, Calcutta, on November 30, 1888, ten days before he ceased to be Viceroy of India. It makes a booklet of 21 quarto pages, and it is to this that reference is made in the letters. H. B. B.

"Lord Dufferin presents his compliments to Mr. Bradlaugh, and, well knowing that even his bitterest opponents are ready to recognise not only Mr. Bradlaugh's ability, but also his perfect sincerity, uprightness and honesty of purpose, he takes the liberty of addressing him in reference to a lecture which Mr. Bradlaugh delivered in the Tyne Theatre at Newcastle on the subject of our Indian Empire. In that lecture, though Mr. Bradlaugh did not refer to Lord Dufferin in unduly harsh or unfriendly terms, he did certainly misrepresent both the words and the tenor of his Calcutta speech. This probably arose from the fact of the *Times* correspondent having only telegraphed those parts of the speech with which he himself especially sympathised. Under these circumstances, Lord Dufferin has taken the liberty of sending Mr. Bradlaugh a full copy of the speech as it was delivered. The statements in Mr. Bradlaugh's lecture to which Lord Dufferin particularly objects are:—First, that Lord Dufferin has misrepresented the avowed views of the Congress and its supporters. He can assure him that he has not done so. Mr. Bradlaugh may be quite certain that, before saying what he did, Lord Dufferin took every precaution to verify his references, and that the proceedings of the Congress and of the Committees whose conclusions the Congress adopted, were precisely what he described. It is true, at the last meeting, thanks to the friendly warnings which Lord Dufferin had given, the attitude and suggestions of the Congress were much more reasonable and moderate.

"The second statement in Mr. Bradlaugh's address to which Lord Dufferin objects, is where he says that Lord Dufferin asserted that these Congresses were seditious. Again he begs to assure Mr. Bradlaugh that he never, either directly or by implication, gave utterance to such an opinion. He has always referred to the Congress in terms of sympathy and respect, and treated the members with great personal civility. What he criticised was the distribution, amongst an ignorant population, under the auspices of some ill-advised persons who were not even natives, but with the authority of the Congress, of pamphlets which were calculated to excite the hatred of the people against her Majesty's Government in India.

"Mr. Bradlaugh also seems to imply that Lord Dufferin has opposed himself to the native demands for a reform in the Civil Service. So far from this being the case, before the Congress even put forward any such suggestions, Lord Dufferin had appointed a Commission, with Sir Charles Aitchison (one of the most liberal-minded men that have ever been in India) as chairman, and some leading natives as members, to propound a scheme for the larger admission of natives into the higher ranks of the Civil Service. This Commission has recommended that over 120 offices now closed to natives should be thrown open to them.

"However, if Mr. Bradlaugh will only read Lord Dufferin's speech, Lord Dufferin thinks he will see that it is conceived in a totally different tone and spirit from that which Mr. Bradlaugh has himself imagined, and he may tell Mr. Bradlaugh in confidence—though, of course, he would desire that it should remain unknown to anyone else—that he himself has been doing his very best to forward such a reform of the Provincial Councils in India as Mr. Bradlaugh appears to advocate. In further illustration of his position, Lord Dufferin may mention that Mr. Yule, the gentleman who acted as chairman of the last Congress at Allahabad, was present on the occasion on which Lord Dufferin delivered the speech which Mr. Bradlaugh has criticised, and, at its conclusion, went out of his way to thank him for it as being calculated to do the very greatest good.

"Mr. Bradlaugh has also fallen into an error in considering that Lord Dufferin's speech is likely to cause embarrassment to Lord Lansdowne. It was intended, on the contrary, to produce the very opposite effect, and to smooth Lord Lansdowne's way for him; and it is in this light that both Lord Lansdowne himself and his friends regard it; for it is obvious that Lord Dufferin having undertaken the disagreeable task of pointing out the extravagances into which the Congress was being insensibly led, there will remain to Lord Lansdowne the agreeable duty of inaugurating whatever concessions it may be possible to make.

"In conclusion, Lord Dufferin hopes Mr. Bradlaugh will understand what perhaps is not readily appreciated by those who have not lived in India; namely, that the Government of India is perpetually fighting, on behalf of the great masses of the population, against the encroachments and usurpations of what may be called the specialised interests; for, unlike almost all other Governments, it is unconnected by ties of prejudice or self-interest with any particular class or section of the community it governs.

"Lord Dufferin is quite satisfied that Mr. Bradlaugh will forgive him for troubling him with this short letter of explanation.

"British Embassy, Rome.

"*7th February*, 1889."

(*Draft Letter.*)

"Mr. Bradlaugh, in acknowledging Lord Dufferin's 'private and confidential' letter of February 7th, desires to specially recognise the frank and more than kindly tone of that letter, and trusts that in the observations which Mr. Bradlaugh feels called upon to submit to Lord Dufferin's consideration, he may be pardoned if he ventures sometimes to wholly differ, even on statements of fact, from one so eminent, and one whose recent Viceregal position entitles him to special respect and attention in matters concerning India. It is true that at the time of the Newcastle speech and until the receipt of the letter of February 7th, Mr. Bradlaugh had only seen the Calcutta speech as given in the *Times*, and he is exceedingly obliged to Lord Dufferin for the more accurate and complete report enclosed in his Lordship's letter. Perhaps Mr. Bradlaugh may be permitted to add that

although the report of his own Newcastle speech as given in the *Newcastle Daily Leader* is very full and, on the whole, fairly accurate, it is necessarily not verbatim, and has appeared without any correction. The report in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* was less full, and though fair, has, in abbreviating, occasionally varied the meaning. This observation is only offered because of the importance the speech acquires by Lord Dufferin's notice of its purport. Mr. Bradlaugh, in charging Lord Dufferin with misrepresenting the avowed views of the Congress, was careful to express his opinion that Lord Dufferin had been misled by inaccurate information, and if now Mr. Bradlaugh had alone the Calcutta speech to guide him, he would still incline to that view; for the words on p. 9, line 26, 'the ideal authoritatively suggested, as I understand' seem to imply that Lord Dufferin spoke rather on information received than on his personal knowledge, but in view of Lord Dufferin's declaration that 'he took every precaution to verify his references, and that the proceedings of the Congress and of the Committees whose conclusions the Congress adopted were precisely what he described,' Mr. Bradlaugh trusts that he may be permitted to justify and maintain his criticism of Lord Dufferin's words as follows (Calcutta speech, p. 9, line 20, to p. 10, line 1):—

"'Some intelligent, loyal, patriotic, and well-meaning men are desirous of taking, I will not say a further step in advance, but a very big jump into the unknown—by the application to India of democratic methods of government and the adoption of a Parliamentary system, which England herself has only reached by slow degrees and through the discipline of many centuries of preparation. The ideal authoritatively suggested, as I understand, is the creation of a representative body or bodies in which the official element shall be in the minority who shall have the power of the purse, and who through this instrumentality shall be able to bring the British Executive into subjection to their will.'

"On this Mr. Bradlaugh ventures to refer Lord Dufferin to the only authoritative suggestion of which he is aware, *i.e.*, the actual resolutions of the Congresses defining their 'tentative suggestions' of reform and which seem to him to so essentially contradict the understanding arrived at by Lord Dufferin that Mr. Bradlaugh requotes their tenor from Resolution 4, with its sub-sections, as printed in the report of the Calcutta Congress, which, he respectfully submits, completely justify his Newcastle speech; he believes that these resolutions were precisely re-affirmed at Madras and Allahabad:—

"'(1.)—The number of persons composing the Legislative Councils, both Provincial and of the Governor-General, to be materially increased. Not less than one-half the Members of such enlarged Councils to be elected. Not more than one-fourth to be officials, having seats *ex-officio* in such Councils, and not more than one-fourth to be Members, official or non-official, nominated by Government.

"'(2.) The right to elect members to the Provincial Councils to be conferred only on those classes and members of the com-

munity, *primâ facie*, capable of exercising it wisely and independently.'

And, after suggesting possible elective bodies, it concludes:—

"'But whatever system be adopted (and the details must be worked out separately for each province) care must be taken that all sections of the community and all great interests are adequately represented.'

In sub-section 6 providing that:—

"'All legislative measures and all financial questions, including all Budgets, whether these involve new or enhanced taxation or not, to be necessarily submitted to, and dealt with by, these Councils.'

And giving right of interpellation, it is

'provided that if the subject in regard to which the inquiry is made involves matters of foreign policy, military dispositions or strategy, or is otherwise of such a nature that, in the opinion of the Executive, the public interest would be materially imperilled by the communication of the information asked for, it shall be competent for them to instruct the *ex-officio* Members, or one of them, to reply accordingly and decline to furnish the information asked for.'

And by sub-section 7 it is expressly declared that:—

"'The Executive Government shall possess the power of overruling the decision arrived at by the majortiy of the Council in every case in which, in its opinion, the public interests would suffer by the acceptance of such decision.'

"As it was on the faith of his reading of these resolutions, which he had in his hand when speaking at Newcastle, that Mr. Bradlaugh made the statement to which Lord Dufferin objects, he ventures to submit that such resolutions show clearly (1) that there is no attempt whatever at 'the application to India of democratic methods of government'; or (2) at 'the adoption of a Parliamentary system which England herself has only reached by slow degrees'; (3) there is no creation of a representative body or bodies, there is simply the proposal that an existing body shall be enlarged and half of it made representative under special limitations of electorate; (4) the Executive is only mentioned to preserve it as paramount and with overruling power over the Legislative Councils which alone are meant or referred to; (5) though it is true that it is proposed that the purely 'official element' shall be a minority, as sitting *ex-officio*, it is also stated that a moiety of the Legislative Council shall be non-elected Government nominees, such nominees being either official or non-official as the Executive may decide.

"Mr. Bradlaugh notes that Lord Dufferin considers that 'the attitude and suggestions of the Allahabad Congress were much more reasonable and moderate,' and as Mr. Bradlaugh has not yet received any authorised report of that Congress he differs from Lord Dufferin with great hesitation; but so far as he is able to judge from the newspaper reports, and from the comparison of these with the official reports of the three previous Congresses,

the attitude in each case was that of moderate statement of grievances with explicit declaration of loyalty to the British Empire. Mr. Bradlaugh feels that on this point Lord Dufferin, who tendered hospitality to the Congress of 1886, speaks with more perfect knowledge than himself, but, judging as an outsider, from the official reports and guided by the extremely amicable relations between Lord Dufferin as Viceroy and the Congress of 1886, Mr. Bradlaugh, whilst gladly recognising the justice of Lord Dufferin's judgment that the attitude and suggestions of the Congress just held were reasonable and moderate, can find no ground for supposing that there was any difference in these respects at Allahabad from the former Congresses at Bombay, Calcutta, or Madras.

"Mr. Bradlaugh is in the highest degree grateful to Lord Dufferin for his repudiation and contradiction of the view urged by Mr. Bradlaugh at Newcastle, that Lord Dufferin had described the Congresses as seditious. Mr. Bradlaugh trusts that he may be permitted to point out that in a question put on the notice paper of the House of Commons by Mr. J. M. Maclean, M.P., immediately on the publication in the *Times* of the telegraphic summary of Lord Dufferin's Calcutta speech, Mr. Maclean claimed, under cover of that speech, to describe the Congress as one which 'aims at destroying the security of English Rule in India.' On this point Mr. Bradlaugh, in speaking in the future, will take care that it shall be clearly understood that Lord Dufferin 'has always referred to the Congress in terms of sympathy and respect,' and Mr. Bradlaugh tenders to Lord Dufferin his sincere apology that, misled by the *Times* version and by Mr. Maclean's gloss, he attributed to Lord Dufferin any views hostile to the Congress. With reference to the publications to which Lord Dufferin refers, but which he does not specifically quote, it would ill become Mr. Bradlaugh, without more complete information, to do more than submit that he is unaware of any pamphlets issued by the authority of the Congress 'calculated to excite the hatred of the people against her Majesty's Government in India.' If Lord Dufferin refers to 'the Catechism,' Mr. Bradlaugh observes that the author appeals to the people 'to lay aside their petty jealousies and race antipathies and learn their duties as loyal citizens of the British Empire.'

"Mr. Bradlaugh does not think that, either at Newcastle or elsewhere, he has ever implied that Lord Dufferin was opposed to Indian Civil Service Reform, and he is glad to know that the natives of India may count on Lord Dufferin's powerful help. Mr. Bradlaugh has not yet had the opportunity of fully considering the report, and may possibly underrate its favourable character to the natives. The recommendations to open some 108 offices to natives must be considered with reference to the contention that, under the statutory service rules, at least 150 offices should be so open. Mr. Bradlaugh pleads guilty to a little confusion as to dates, probably the result of insufficient knowledge. Lord Dufferin speaks of the Commission (appointed October 4th, 1886) as 'before the Congress ever put forward any such suggestions.' Mr. Bradlaugh ventures to think that Lord Dufferin has overlooked the

resolution on this subject of the Bombay Congress, December, 1885.

"As desired by Lord Dufferin, Mr. Bradlaugh has most carefully read the authorised report of his Lordship's Calcutta speech, and especially thanks Lord Dufferin for the confidential intimation 'that he himself has been doing his very best to forward such a reform of the Provincial Councils in India as Mr. Bradlaugh appears to advocate'; this Mr. Bradlaugh assumes is intended by the parts underlined by Lord Dufferin on p. 18; but it is respectfully submitted that the words on p. 17 might, without Lord Dufferin's kindly confidential assurance, not unreasonably have been held to imply that his Lordship charged the Congress with seeking to effectuate constitutional changes by a stroke of the pen and without deliberation, when, in fact, the very first resolution of the first Congress asked for enquiry by Royal Commission, and it is for such an enquiry that Mr. Bradlaugh has already placed a notice on the order book of the House of Commons.

"Mr. Bradlaugh is pleased to learn that he has fallen into error in considering that Lord Dufferin's speech was likely to cause embarrassment to Lord Lansdowne, and he entirely accepts Lord Dufferin's assurance that it was intended to produce the opposite effect; but, in justice to himself, he thinks it right to submit that confidential information from India leads him to the belief that same embarrassment has actually already arisen.

"Mr. Bradlaugh fears that, although he has left many points untouched, he will already have exhausted Lord Dufferin's patience, but he trusts that the generous disposition and courteous frankness which prompted Lord Dufferin's letter of the 7th will serve as excuse for any *brusquerie* in Mr. Bradlaugh's present letter."

"5, Upper Berkeley Street, W.
"22nd Feb., 1889.

"My dear Mr. Bradlaugh,—

"I hope you will forgive me for taking the liberty of addressing you in the above direct manner; but I am so sensible of the friendly tone of your letter of the 19th, and so shocked at having given so much trouble to a busy man like yourself, that I presume to slip into the more familiar way of writing.

"With regard to the points you raise in your letter:—one thing has evidently escaped your observation, namely, that my remarks in the main were not addressed specially to the Congress, but to 'some of our friends, who, etc., etc.,' and in this category I embraced all those, whether speakers, writers, or other persons, who (for the sake of briefness) I may denominate the advanced party in India. Again, where I said 'the idea authoritatively suggested as I understand,' I referred to a speech, or rather, I think, a letter of Mr. Hume's. Mr. Hume is the Chief Secretary of the Congress, and certainly speaks with authority, if not in the name of the Congress itself, at all events in that of the Congress party. I also had in my mind the speeches of the two previous Presidents of the Congress, as well as the manifestoes put forth by the Congress

Press. The only respect in which I criticised the conduct of the Congress itself was in regard to its official sanction to the distribution of the pamphlets, and I do not think anybody can say that the terms I used were very severe. However, I am most unwilling to give you any further trouble in writing, but I should esteem it a great pleasure if I might be allowed to make your acquaintance, and to have an opportunity of talking over some of these matters with you. I make this suggestion because I believe I could not be doing a greater service both to India and to the public than by placing myself at your disposal in regard to any information you may desire to have about India. I shall be in town till next Thursday, when I return to Rome; but I shall be happy to wait upon you at any day or hour you may name, or to receive you here, if that should be more convenient to you. On Sunday I shall be engaged; but every other day up to the date of my departure I shall be free.

"Believe me, my dear Mr. Bradlaugh,

"Yours sincerely,

"DUFFERIN AND AVA."

"5, Upper Berkeley Street, W.

"Feb. 24, 1889.

"My dear Mr. Bradlaugh,—

"Many thanks for your kind little note of to-day. It will give me the greatest pleasure to receive you here at 1.15 to-morrow, Monday.

"Yours sincerely,

"DUFFERIN AND AVA."

"British Embassy, Rome,

"2nd April, 1889.

"My dear Mr. Bradlaugh,—

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness in sending me the notice of your motion. There are already indications of the willingness, both of the present Viceroy and of the Government at home, to modify the existing régime in India, and I have no doubt that you will obtain some satisfactory assurances in regard to, at all events a portion of your suggestions. I am strongly of opinion, however, that for the present it would be wiser to apply whatever reforms may be found desirable to the Provincial Councils, and to leave the Governor-General's Council untouched, except so far as allowing the Budget to be discussed, and giving to the members the right of asking questions under certain specified conditions. The Supreme Council of the Governor-General is almost always engaged in the consideration of large Imperial questions, in regard to which it would not be likely to receive any great assistance from the native members who might be added to it; and, even if this were not the case, it would be well to watch how the proposed changes in the Provincial Councils had worked. Moreover, I think our efforts should be applied rather to the decentralisation of our Indian Administration than to its greater unification, and I made considerable efforts in India to promote and expand this principle. In any event, I am sure the discussion

which you will have provoked will prove very useful; and I am very glad that the conduct of it should be in the hands of a prudent, wise, and responsible person like yourself, instead of having been laid hold of by some adventurous *franc-tireur*, whose only object might possibly have been to let off a few fireworks for his own glorification.

"Yours sincerely,

"DUFFERIN AND AVA."

APPENDIX III.

A NOTE ON THE MOTION TO EXPUNGE THE RESOLUTIONS OF EXCLUSION FROM THE JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE.

When, with the kind help of his ever-devoted friend, Mr. John M. Robertson, I was writing this record of my father's life and work, there was one matter upon which neither of us felt able to enter very fully. I refer to the carrying of the motion to expunge from the journals of the House the resolution to exclude him passed on the 22nd of June, 1880.

I believe that the time has now come when I may, without unfairness to anyone, and without the slightest violation of confidence, state exactly what took place in regard to the moving of that resolution.

It may be remembered that Mr. Bradlaugh fell ill on January 10th, 1891, and that some five days later he had to take to that bed from which he never rose again. Mr. John M. Robertson was at the time in Edinburgh, on the staff of the *Scottish Leader*, and on the evening of Friday, the 16th, a mutual friend told me that Mr. Robertson had desired to know if Mr. Bradlaugh became worse, and that if he could be of any service he would come to London at a moment's notice. "Send for him now, then," I said, "for my father is dying."

Mr. Robertson came by the night mail on Saturday. He asked what he could do, and I put my difficulty before him. Mr. Bradlaugh had secured the first place on January 27th to move the resolution rescinding the resolution of 1880; he now knew that he would not be able to go to the House on that day, and he was troubling very much about it. He had had small hope of carrying the resolution, but he expected to get a substantial vote, and that would have satisfied him for the present. My ideas of the standing orders and rules of the House were not very definite, and I consulted Mr. Robertson whether we could not get someone to move the resolution in his place. I suggested that if it were thought wise, I would go to Mr. Gladstone—for I knew well that a small man would not do—and urge him to do it. I, at least, could not take an impartial view of the "Bradlaugh incident," and, rightly or wrongly, thought that Mr. Gladstone owed my father some amends for certain expressions he had used, and also for not having taken a bolder and stronger position

from the very first. Mr. Robertson, however, was doubtful about Gladstone; other names were mentioned, and amongst them, that of Dr. Hunter. However, we were still ignorant of whether it would be possible to substitute anyone's name for my father's, and this we had to find out. I then returned to my father's bedside, and mentioning that Mr. Robertson had come on a flying visit to London, asked if he would like to see him for a few minutes. This my father was very pleased to do, and Mr. Robertson went to have a little chat with him. The subject of the resolution soon came up, and my father told Mr. Robertson how deep his vexation was that he would be unable to be in his place in the House, and, in answer to careful inquiries, said no other name could be substituted for his; but it happened that the impression was so general that he would take the whole time of the House that no one had thought it worth while to put his name down for the second place. Mr. Robertson left him without, of course, giving any hint of what was in our minds; it was so likely that we should fail that we did not wish to disturb him about it. If we should succeed that would be ample time to tell him; if we should fail, he would never know.

At the earliest possible moment on Monday morning Mr. Robertson went to see Dr. Hunter, and explained the whole matter to him. But before Mr. Robertson had actually reached the point of asking him to move the resolution, Dr. Hunter offered to do so if the second place was still open. Then I told my father of Dr. Hunter's offer, without, of course, saying anything of our share in inviting it. We had our reward in his delighted surprise. "Hunter will do it, you say? . . . . The very man I would have chosen." I was more than pleased, for I had aimed high in my thoughts, and was doubtful whether Dr. Hunter was big enough! A little later, in thinking it all over, he asked, "You think I can quite rely upon Hunter doing it?" On my answering in the affirmative, he dictated letters to Dr. Hunter and two or three other members of Parliament. When a day or two after it was rumoured that Gladstone was to speak, he was quite pleased, although, as he said, "If Gladstone speaks that settles it; the Government will be bound to take it up; and, of course, they hold the majority; but I shan't mind that."

On the morning of Friday, the 23rd, he was shockingly ill, and waited in restless anxiety until the messenger should bring the "Order Paper." When he found that Dr. Hunter had been able to secure the place for his motion, and that his name was actually down on the Paper for that purpose, he was satisfied, and after dictating a couple of letters he gave himself up to rest.

On Friday night came the hemiplegia and unconsciousness; my father's work was done. Letters came from friends in different parts of the country, telling how they were urging their members to be present in their places on the 27th; letters came from Members themselves, promising their support; but they came to a man who could no longer read them. At last

came the morning of January 27th, and with the first post the following letter from Dr. Hunter:—

"2, Brick Court, Temple,
"26/1/91.

"Dear Mrs. Bonner,—Mr. W. H. Smith has sent for me and speaking in the kindest manner of your father and of his appreciation of his valuable services in the House of Commons said that it would be extremely painful to him to discuss the motion, in the present state of your father's health. He is, therefore, prepared to give a day during the present Session so as to put the motion in as good a position as it is to-morrow, if I do not proceed to-morrow. I stated that, subject to Mr. Bradlaugh's own opinion, I considered it a fair offer, and personally would have no hesitation in leaving the motion to be taken up at a more convenient time by your father himself. You will exercise, of course, your discretion in consulting him on the subject, and I stated to the First Lord that I should let him know before business begins to-morrow what course I should follow. If you approve, or your father is well enough to enter upon the question and approves, kindly send me a telegram to 2, Brick Court, Temple, to-morrow morning.

"I am, yours very truly,
"W. A. Hunter."

I was in despair. Here was my father lying absolutely unconscious and dying. I knew that if that resolution was not moved that day it never would be moved. I had assured him positively that Dr. Hunter would do it; he had trusted me, and now I felt like a traitor. I sat down and wrote to Dr. Hunter, telling him that it was impossible for me to consult my father, since he was lying unconscious, that he had sunk into unconsciousness believing that this resolution would be moved, and, when he recovered, how was I to tell him that he had been deceived? I thanked Mr. Smith for his kindness, but I was firmly of opinion that the resolution should be moved whether it were carried or not; it was due to the treatment he had received from the Members of the House that Mr. Bradlaugh lay where he was, and they owed it to him to at least consider a resolution which should wipe out from the records of the House the resolution expelling him. I hardly knew what I wrote; I was so agitated. I hardly know now, except that it was to the effect as I have written, and through all my agitation I preserved two dominant ideas: first, to say all I could to induce Dr. Hunter to move the resolution; and, next, while picturing the very serious condition in which my father lay, not to let it be known that he was then actually dying.

The letter was despatched by special messenger, but after it was gone I felt I had not said half enough. My husband then went to find Dr. Hunter, and see him personally, but was unable to see him until about mid-day at the House. Dr. Hunter then said he had shown my letter to several members; they agreed, in consequence, that the resolution ought to be moved; and that he had decided to do so. Some of the members thought that the letter ought to be read to the House, but in any case he wished

to know if I had any objection to its being shown to Mr. Smith. Dr. Hunter then saw Mr. Smith, who not only withdrew all opposition to the moving of the resolution, but also agreed to withdraw the Government opposition to the resolution itself. This decision was arrived at so late that it was (so it was said) unknown to the Solicitor-General when he got up to oppose the resolution.

When the telegrams of congratulation—the first, if I recollect rightly, was from Sir John Mowbray—began to pour in, and he to whom they were addressed lay there unconscious of all, the tragedy of it seemed almost more than one could bear.

On the same evening Dr. Hunter considerately wrote me this further letter, acquainting me with what had taken place:—

"National Liberal Club,
"Whitehall Place, S.W.,
"27/1/91.

"Dear Mrs. Bonner,—I cannot say how glad I am that the House has unanimously accepted your father's Resolution. I trust that he will have improved sufficiently to be made acquainted with the news.

"After seeing your husband I had no scruple in showing your letter to Mr. Smith, and, without assuming any violent assumption, I think it had something to do with the result. On taking his place this afternoon, he nodded to me significantly, as much as to say he recognised the necessity of my proceeding with the Resolution. The soundness of your opinion has been shown by the result.

"Many members spoke to me, all expressing their deepest sympathy, and on both sides there was a general feeling of relief that an agreement was come to.

"The reports in the papers will, when you have time, fully inform you of the course of the debate; but I may add that Mr. Gladstone was extremely gratified, on many grounds, and turning round offered me his warmest congratulations.

"There is but one universal feeling among members of all sections of opinion—an earnest desire and hope that your father may be spared to continue his services to the State.

"Yours very truly,
"W. A. HUNTER."

Those who have followed the story of my father's life will be interested in learning how narrowly this resolution failed to be moved and carried. That it turned out as it did was owing, in the first place, to Mr. Robertson, who found the man to move it, in the next, to Dr. Hunter who carried it through, and, finally, to the real goodness of heart of Mr. W. H. Smith.

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER.

April, 1906.

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