I attended the Guildhall Police-court yesterday to hear Mr. Bradlaugh’s case. The arrest was such a surprise to all, except those in the secret, that scarcely anybody knew the fate that had befallen the editor and subeditor of the National Reformer until they saw in the evening papers a statement that they were in custody, and had undergone a preliminary examination at the Guildhall. Consequently, the court contained only a few of Mr. Bradlaugh’s friends and supporters, and a handful of those curiously constituted individuals who appear to spend the best part of their lives in handing about the law courts. The arrest was made about ten o’clock in the morning, but it was not until two in the afternoon that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant were placed on their trial. In the interval between the two events they were detained in the cells beneath the court. It is not altogether surprising that Mr. Bradlaugh should have complained that a warrant was employed to secure their attendance, instead of a summons, but I do not know that the inconvenience could have been avoided, as the offence charged against the defendants is one in which a warrant is invariably issued.

After a “lady forger” – so called – had been remanded, and a number of trumpery cases disposed of by Mr. Alderman Figgins (who has heretofore been known to Mr. Bradlaugh only as a respectable type founder), the defendants were placed at the bar, Mr. Bradlaugh on the right, Mrs. Besant next to him, and the detective who made the arrest, on the left. No doubt the face and form of the arch-priest of free thought are known to some of your readers, but for those who have never seen him a rough outline sketch may be interesting. As he leaned, or rather lounged over the railing of the dock, Charles Bradlaugh was a striking figure. He stands 6ft. 1 ½ in. in height, and possesses a face peculiarly striking. His high, broad, convex forehead over shadows a sharp, dark, restless eye and a curved eyebrow running at an unusually sharp angle towards his temples. He is clean shaved, and his hair, which is brown, with a reddish tinge in it when struck by the sunlight, and a dash of grey near the ears, falls behind at considerable length, and terminates in an outward wave. His nose is shapely though not large, and his jaw betokens great resolution of character. But the striking feature of his face is his upper lip. Hard and sharply cut, its every movement – and it is never idle for a moment – is full of expression. Mr. Bradlaugh’s complexion is brown, inclined to yellow, with a ruddy glow on the checks. Altogether he is American in his appearance, though as regards his eyes and eyebrows he might almost be a Chinaman. As a matter of fact he was born in London. His dress was studiously plain.

Mr. Bradlaugh’s companion, Mrs. Besant, is a little, inoffensive looking woman of 28, whom one would never take to be a prominent apostle of the doctrine of free thought. If she had been pointed out to me as the wife of a small tradesman, and the mother of half a dozen children. I should have said “Indeed!” and neither felt nor expressed surprise. But that this plainly dressed, homely little female should be a pitiless opponent in argument, a keen logician, and the disseminator of views upon religious matters which cause the blood of every professed Christian, however lax, to run cold, is surprising. Both defendants watched the proceedings with the keenest interest; took voluminous notes in brand-new pocket-books; and Mr. Bradlaugh was armed in addition with several strongly bound, musty, legal looking tomes. The defendants, notwithstanding their unpleasant position, were remarkably cheerful throughout, and burst into a hearty laugh when the detective-sergeant state that after he arrested them “he conveyed them to Bride well street Station,” and spoke of the National Reformer as the “Natural” Reformer.

I do not intend to follow the course of the trial, for your readers have been furnished with a report of that already. The defendants, I am bound to say, were treated with the utmost courtesy; and when Mr. Bradlaugh spoke, which was frequent, he was listened to with marked attention.

When the time came to bail the defendants, an amusing incident, which I have not seen mentioned in any of the newspapers, occurred. It was suggested that, to save time, Mrs. Besant’s sureties, who were sworn first, should also act as bail for Mr. Bradlaugh. But Dr. Dalrymple, who had entered into sureties for the lady, is a Scotchman and when the suggestion was put forth, he promptly replied with the touch of the national caution, “Na, na! I’m thinking that Mrs. Besant will be quite enough for me.” Whereat, of course, there was a guffaw.

I am given to understand that immediately on Mr. Bradlaugh’s arrest he despatched a telegram to his supporters in most of the large provincial towns, and even went to the expense of sending a long telegram to the Boston Investigator. By that paper it was communicated to every other journal of importance in the United States. While the court was sitting, telegrams of sympathy with Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant came pouring in. They were opened, according to custom, by the presiding alderman, and upon the defendants being admitted to bail were handed over to them.

Tomorrow’s issue of Mr. Bradlaugh’s paper will contain a list of those who have subscribed to the defence fund. Although the defendants were only arrested yesterday, the fund has already reached a substantial figure.

Colonel Stuart is now, I suppose, a full-fledged member of Parliament. How long he ahs graced the benches of St. Stephen’s I am really afraid to say: but hitherto, it must be confessed, his career has been rather placid.