**THE FRUITS OF PHILOSOPHY**

**THE TRIAL OF MR. BRADLAUGH AND MRS. BESANT**

In the Queen’s Bench Division, on Wednesday morning, before Lord Chief Justice Cookburn and a special jury, the trial of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant for publishing an indecent book was resumed. The Solicitor-General, Mr. Douglas Straight, and Mr. Mead appeared for the prosecution. The defendants conducted their own defence.

Mr. Bradlaugh continued his address, arguing that not one sentence in the pamphlet was directed against marriage, and that the subjects, in question were discussed quite as fully and less delicately in Carpenter’s Physiology, a book placed in the hands of boys and girls, and a work which the recorder of London, who charged the grand jury against him, had presented as a prize.

The Lord Chief Justice interposed, observing that the Solicitor-General’s contention was that details essential in a medical book were unnecessary in a book for the public, and might have an evil tendency.

Mr. Bradlaugh said the contention amounted to this, that a rich lady might obtain from her physician knowledge which it was criminal to communicate to the poor, to whom it was more essential. He concluded by intimating the nature of the evidence he should call. The first witness was

Miss Alice Vicary, who said, in answer to Mrs. Besant, that she was the first lady admitted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, a student of the Paris School of Medicine, and had had experience in regard to hospital practice. She considered the book a useful and important one, and that at the time the author wrote it he was certainly a competent person to deal with the subject. During her hospital practice she had found that there was a very great difficulty occasioned by large families amongst poor persons, and had found many evil results occurring through too rapid child-bearing. It was within her experience that poor married women adopted means to check too rapid child bearing. She had known instances where women had used means to prevent conception. Over lactation was one of those means, and she had known women suckle their infants for more than two years so that they might not have children so rapidly. That period, it was generally considered, should not be more than 12 months. If continued beyond that period, it had bad effects both on the mother and child. During her experience she had had women under her care suffering from the results of over lactation, those results being weakness and general debility. If pregnancy occurred, the result was injurious to the unborn as well as the living child. She had found that pregnancy had occurred despite over lactation, which as a matter of fact was not a preventative, although those people thought it was. In Paris she had very few women who had had more than two or three children. Her experience in Paris would not enable her to say much on obstetrics, her experience in that direction having mostly been gained in London. She had heard in Paris that women with the consent of their husbands used mechanical means to prevent conception. Her experience was that the knowledge of physiology by women had no bad effect on their minds, and was not used for improper purposes.

By Mr. Bradlaugh : With her experience she should state that the disease of women and their remedies were fairly state in the pamphlet, Speaking from her experience of medical treatises, she should say that the descriptions in the pamphlet were not highly coloured. In fact, the matters dealt with were very mildy put.

Dr. Charles Robert Drysdale said he was a graduate of medicine and consulting physician to the Farringdon Dispensary, and senior physician to the Metropolitan and the London Free Hospital. He had been in practice for many years. He had read the pamphlet in question more than 20 years ago. It was an old-fashioned book, which was always considered an excellent work, against which nothing had been said until now. He thought it was written by a most excellent man, with a full knowledge of the science of the day. Any man could say that the writer had a great knowledge of the science of the time.

By the Lord Chief Justice : He did not consider there was anything prurient in the book, which was an excellent production. He did not think there was anything in it to excite libidinous passions – on the contrary, he thought the effect of reading it would be the very reverse. (Laughter). He had had great experience amongst the poor in London, and had continually been obliged to wonder why there was so much sickness in the metropolis. He had been obliged to lament the rapidity with which the working classes brought children into the world, and he had noticed in the children the great evils which resulted from this. When a working man married, the first child or two would be healthy, but those that followed were less so, simply because with the increase of the family there had been a decreased amount of support. Rickets were a fruitful source of disease and death, and rickety children attached by certain disease died at once. He had read the essay on population by MR. Malthus, and lie believed the death rate in London was relatively greater than it was twenty years ago and the reason for it, he thought, was the large mortality of children amongst the working classes. Of 100,000 children amongst the richer classes, only 8,000 died in the first year of their life, whereas there were 15,000 died in the general population. It appeared to him that amongst the children of the poor in towns the mortality was still greater; in fact, that a very large number of children were simply brought into the world to be murdered. In France, he had considerable experience as to large and small families. Taking the average in France there were not more than two children to the family amongst the peasantry; in fact, there were few families where they would think of having more, (Laughter) Checks upon population were used all through France. The first check, that mentioned in page 38, he believed was employed by every man in Paris.

By Mrs. Besant : He had found in his experience a desire on the part of poor women to avoid large families, and he had discovered that prolonged lactation was used erroneously as a means to that end. Supposing that in such a case the mother was pregnant, the unborn child suffered from want of nourishment. He had read cases where a woman had had 20 or 21 children; and on a wage of 13s a week it would be a crime to bring so many children into the world. He had known very great injury accrue to woman through endeavouring to get rid of their progeny after conception, but he did not see any crime in preventing conception, otherwise all the women who remained unmarried would have to be prosecuted. (Laughter, in which his lordship joined.) he had seen a great many cases of overcrowding, and in the neighbourhood of Gray’s Inn-lane he had seen as many as six children and three adults crowded into one room. With large families there was great danger of disease. He believed that the overcrowding destroyed all sense of modesty. He believed that owing to large families amongst the working classes, children were sent to work too early, and were worked to death.

Mr. Henry George Bohn, the well-known publisher, was then called, and, in answer to Mr. Bradlaugh, said he published a book called “Animal Physiology,” by Dr. W. B. Carpenter, and knew it was largely used as a text book in schools. He was a publisher for upwards of 60 years, and 15 years entirely on his own account. He had read the pamphlet which formed the subject of the present indictment, and he could enumerate works which contained all it contained, and a great deal more. The facts in Dr. Carpenter’s book were substantially the same as those in the pamphlet, and there were a large number of works containing facts substantially the same as those in the pamphlet. None of these works had been prosecuted. He felt strongly on the subject.

By Mrs. Besant: He had never been prosecuted for publishing any physiological work.

Mr. Bradlaugh said that was all the evidence he proposed to call, and the court then adjourned.