ARREST AND PROSECUTION OF MR. BRADLAUGH

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, the editor, and Mrs. Annie Besant, subeditor, of the *National Reformer*, were arrested at ten o’clock yesterday morning on a charge of publishing what is alleged to an immoral book. The work in question is a pamphlet by the late Charles Knowlton, M.D., entitled “The Fruits of Philosophy,” which deals with the Malthusian theory as to population, and it is sold by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant at the Freethought Publishing Company’s premises, Stonecutter Street, E.C., at the price of six pence. Some few weeks ago Mr. Charles Watts, of 84, Fleet Street, who is also a freethought lecturer and publisher, was indicted at the Old Bailey Sessions for a like offence; and on his pleading that the work had been sold unchallenged for many years by him and others, and that he had not therefore taken the trouble to peruse it, but that as soon as the proceedings were commenced against him he had diligently read it, and found that he could not conscientiously defend it, and had thereupon stopped its sale, he was let off on payment costs, amounting to something like £200. Upon this Mr. Bradlaugh openly announced his intention to reprint and publish an edition of the work, as he considered that so far from containing anything of an objectionable nature, it dealt with matters of vital importance, and was really conducive to the best interest of society, and that in its prosecution and suppression a blow was dealt to the freedom of the press. He therefore said he was determined to contest the legality of the prosecution, and about a fortnight ago he commenced republishing what he called as amended edition of the work. Since that time many thousand copies of the work had been sold by Mr. Bradlaugh and his assistants, and the first two copies of the new edition Mr. Bradlaugh went and delivered personally to Mr. Martin, the chief clerk at the Guildhall Police Court, and to the authorities at the City detective office, at the same time stating to the latter that if it was found necessary to arrest him, he hoped they would do so at as convenient and hour as possible, to avoid the unpleasantness of his passing a night in a police cell. It seemingly has been found necessary to arrest him, and as will be seen below, he was brought up at the Guildhall Police Court yesterday.

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh of No. 10, Portland Place, St. John’s Wood publisher, and Mrs. Annie Besant, Oaklands, Mertimer Road, St. John’s Wood, described as a journalist, were brought before Alderman Figgens at Guildhall, London, yesterday afternoon on a warrant charging them with publishing an obscene book on 24th March last.

Mr. Bradlaugh asked that only formal evidence might be given and the case adjourned, as he was not prepared with the witnesses for his defence.

William Simmonds, a City detective-constable, said on Saturday, the 24th of March, he went to the Freethought Publishing Office, at No. 28, Stonecutter Street, about twenty minutes to five o’clock. It was an open publishing shop. He saw the two defendants in the publishing office, and asked Annie Besant for a copy of the pamphlet “The Fruits of Philosophy.” Mr. Bradlaugh was by her side behind the counter and could hear what witness said. Besant gave him the book, and he gave her 1s., and received 6d. change. On the 29th of March he went there again and purchased another copy of work from a young man in the shop, but neither of the defendants was there. (To Mr. Bradlaugh :) I was aware that you had given notice to the chief office of the City police that you would attend at your shop on the 24th of March, and sell the book from four to five o’clock.

Edwin Williams, detective officer of the City police, said that on Saturday, the 24th of March, about five o’clock, he bought a copy of the book from Besant, the other defendant standing by at the time.

Simmonds, recalled, produced two memoranda, one addressed to Detectives Sergeant Green at Old Jewry, and one to Mr. Martin, chief clerk at the Guildhall. He also produced a copy of the *National Reformer*, in which Mr. Bradlaugh advertised for persons to come forward to be bail for him in the event of his being arrested.

Mr. Bradlaugh said he maintained, whether rightly or wrongly, that the book was not an obscene book, and he wished to have the case properly tested. For that purpose he sent notice to the Chief Office, to the City solicitor, and to this justice-room, stating what he was going to do on the 24th of March.

Alderman Figgens said it appeared to him that this was not a case for a warrant, but for a summone.

Mr. Martin (chief clerk) said it was the usual course.

Mr. Bradlaugh said he had no right to complain, and he did not complain; and he must say that he had been treated by the police with the greatest courtesy consistent with the fact of the capture.

Detective-sergeant Outram then proved the arrest of the prisoners, and also that he went there with a search warrant. When he saw Mr. Bradlaugh he said there were no books there that would come under the search warrant. He had only five copies of the work at his private residence, and those he should require for his defence. He then took the two defendants to the Bridewell Police station, where they were charged.

Alderman Figgins suggested that they had gone as far as they could at the present, and that they had now better remand the case.

Mr. Bradlaugh said that was what he wished, and he would ask for as long an adjournment as possible, as he had about forty witness to call for his defence, many of whom were medical men, and it would take some time to serve the notice.

Alderman Figgins said that, as he should admit the prisoners to bail, they could have an adjournment for as long as they wished. He presumed the defendants were prepared with bail.

Mr. Bradlaugh said he had about sixteen persons present who were willing to become bail.

Mr. Martin said he had received four telegrams from Mr. Bradlaugh’s friends in the country offering to become bail.

Alderman Figgins then said that he would adjourn the case until Tuesday, the 17th instant, and admit the defendants to bail in two sureties of £100 each, and themselves in £200 each.

Dr. C. R. Drysdale, of Woburn Place, and Mr. Joannes Swaagman, of 26, Featherstone Street, became bail for Mrs. Annie Besant, and Mr. Edward Truelove, of 256, High Holborn, and Mr. William Bell of 44, Great Queen Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, bailed Mr. Bradlaugh. The parties then left the Court.