THE BRADLAUGH–BESANT PROSECUTION

THE VERDICT

The trial of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant was resumed to-day. Mr. Bradlaugh having summed up for the defence and the Solicitor-General briefly replied, the Lord Chief Justice said a more ill-advised, injudicious prosecution was never brought into a court of justice. When the Solicitor-General said the authorities were compelled to prosecute, he should, like to know, who the authorities were. The policeman seemed to be the prosecutor. So long as the Government thought fit to leave the administration of justice without a public prosecutor, so long every individual, however ill-advised, had a right to put the law in motion. He put it to the jury—was the purpose advocated in the work, and the purpose for which the details were given... inconsistant with public morals? If the jury considered the offence made out, no conviction that defendants had acted from a sense of public duty and a desire to do a public good, could justify that which was wrong. The jury, after an absence of an hour and thirty five minutes, returned, and the Foreman said—The jury are of opinion that the book is calculated to deprave public morals, but we entirely exonerate the defendants from may corrupt motive in publishing it. The Lord Chief Justice— I am afraid, gentlemen, I must direct you on that to find against them. Your exoneration of any corrupt intention will be taken into consideration, but I must direct you on the special verdict to find against the defendants. The jury accordingly found a verdict of guilty. The Lord Chief Justice--- Under the circumstances I will not pass sentence at present. Defendants were released on their own recognizances to come up this day week for judgment.