MRS. BESANT AND MR. BRADLAUGH

The extraordinary trial of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh for publishing a physiological book entitled the "Fruits of Philosophy,” terminated in a verdict which acquits the defendants of the gravest part of the charge. The jury expressed an unhesitating belief that the book was calculated to deprave public morals, but they entirely exonerated the defendants from any corrupt motive in publishing it. This qualification was not accepted by the Court as affecting the verdict, though it might affect the sentence, as it would be taken into account when the prisoners came up for judgment that day week. Mr. Bradlaugh has a point of law to argue with the Court. He contends that the Indictment was imperfect, and that the defendants ought not to have been tried under it. The Lord Chief Justice ruled that the trial must proceed, but his Lordship reserved the point which the defendant will be allowed to argue before judgment is passed. If he succeeds in his argument, there will be an end of the case. The Lord Chief Justice condemned the prosecution for the publicity which it had given an objectionable book. It would have taken a hundred years and more to have sold the number at the rate at which the philosophers ware purchasing it before it was heralded from the housetops by the prosecution. Seven hundred copies a year was the average rate of sale; the prosecution had ran the sale up to 120,000 in a few months. The Registrar-General's figures a year hence may be worth studying. The Lord Chief Justice handled this unpleasant business with masterly tact. He had before him a brace of enthusiasts who fancied that they had a minion to improve Society in a very odd sort of way. One can imagine people becoming seriously imbued with the Malthusian doctrine. The impression which it makes on the thoughtful mind is painful and abiding. Many years have elapsed since we read the cold, calm conclusion which he drew from observation of a wide range of facts—that some wretched beings were sent into the world to find no place at Nature's board for them. There was not food enough in the world. Population always pressed on production. This tight little island could muster its increase by millions after every interval of a few years, but the acreage did not increase, the food could not be produced in equal proportions, some must die of starvation. The man who expounded the law was a clergyman of the Established Church, and "old Radicals" kicked at it as blasphemy against the Providence of God. They would not have it to be a law—till all the land was occupied; and the vast range of fertile lands which had hardly then begun to be colonised, gave the Radicals an answer to this wicked parson. Malthus was a worthy man, a well-intentioned man, and his Enquiry was of great public service, but owing to the perversity of the popular mind it was thought that the parson wrote as he wished. A more equitable judgment now prevails, and the defendants in this case are sufferers for Malthus' sake. If at the time to which we refer any one had said, the day will come when Malthus will be received as a prophet and a forerunner of the new moral world, and Mrs. Anne Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh, two thorough-going free thoughters, will stand up for the truth as it is in Malthus—it would not have been believed. But sich is life, as Sairey Gamp says. We don't think, however, that the Malthusians make out their case so long as there is abundance of fertile land waiting for men to till it. There are means of constantly increased facilities for taking people from over-peopled lands to new countries, which it will take ages to populate. We must apply all our means for distribution of people before we rail at Providence for sending beings into the world, for whom no place is found at Nature's Board. It is not our object, however, to reconcile old Malthus and young Radicalism. We intended to observe upon the way in which the Solicitor-General was prosecuting the defendant in this case, and the way in which his coadjutor, the Attorney-General, was getting out of the duty of prosecuting the Confessors for their obscene book, on the same day. When Mr. Cowen in the House of Commons called the attention of the government on Thursday to the obscene book, " the Priest in Absolution," The Attorney-General said, "it was not the "moral," and that the Government had nothing whatever to do with the prosecution of "The Fruits of Philosophy," With regard to the obscene book , of the Ritualists, the Attorney-General went on to say there were special reasons why that book should not be prosecuted by the Government, and that was that it was confined to the clergy and kept out of the hands of the laity. This is a pretty doctrine that her majesty's Government were lint censers of the public morals. What is the basis of all legislation but to promote the well-being of Society by the advancement of public morals, and the correction and extirpation of vice? Will the House of Commons accept this excuse for not prosecuting the heads of the Confederacy who distribute the obscene book of the Church? Are they to be let off because they contrive to do the utmost possible mischief with the book? They use it on the sly, and therefore cannot be got at. They use it as priests who have got into the confidence of families, and therefore cannot be interfered with! All this makes it doubly necessary to probe the whole matter to the bottom. Is it an obscene book of which scoundrels may make the worst possible use? That such an obscene book is used by ministers of the Established Church who are servants of the State, so far from being a reason why the Tory Attorney-General should shut his eyes and shirk the duty of facing the consequences of the conspiracy—it is a double reason why he should bring into action ail the resources of the law to suppress the nuisance and protect the rising generation from the pollution commenced in secret, and now accidentally brought to light.