THE PRESS ON THE BRADLAUGH TRIAL.

*The Daily Telegraph,* summing up a severe condemnation of “The Fruits of Philosophy,” says:--- The liberty of the press is, and always has been, dear to every Englishman; but between the liberty of the Press and the right which has now been publicly claimed to deprave the imaginations of households, no connection is possible. No matter how the motive may have been, the act done by those who published and sold and sold this vile work is far worse in its tendency and effects than if they had offered poisoned food for sale in markets, or thrown deadly drugs into wells and drinking fountains. The greatest public and private wrongs have been perpetrated in the name of “good intentions,” and we can conceive no greater wrong than that which, through the medium of a cheap and easily accessible publication, and under the guise of a philosophical treatise, pollute the mind and degrades the morals of the young ignorant.

*The Times says*:—The plea of arresting the excessive increase of population ought not to be allowed to pass without more challenge than it has received from the court and jury. We may be ready to admit, indeed we must admit, for so the doctors and their female coadjutors often pronounce, that there are many cases in which it is expedient that the command to increase and multiply ought to be modified in some way or other. But this can only be in most exceptional cases. To make them the law of society, or even the prevalent usage, would be in fact to subordinate all that is good and healthy and strong in society to all that is bad and sickly and weak. We might as well treat all the world as incurable patients because some are out of health, all the world as paupers because some can hardly earn their own bread, all the world as mad because some are not quite rational, and all the world as utterly wicked because some are wanting in stability of character, as believe this a proper book to be put into the hands of the majority of people or its advice good for the world generally. Of course, after the verdict especially, we have no wish to call in question the intentions of the publishers. They may believe the book the best present they could make to a young man or voting woman, indeed to a whole family, about to enter life upon a career of utility and honour, on the other hand, we are also aware that there are persons who sincerely believe the greatest service they can render their innocent neighbours is to strip them of everything they fondly regard as a virtuous sentiment of right principle of action. There certainly are persons who think that they are only opening our eyes and breaking our fetters when they reduce goodness, and even affection, to a calculation of material consequences. Indeed, some do not leave us the trouble of a calculation, for they tell us, and think it the very best of good tidings, that we grow out of our antecedents and upon them by laws so irresistible and uniform as to save us from responsible action. happily, the real truth is that the world is greater than one man or one opinion, and since we have to choose between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant on the one hand, and certain reserves and proprieties surrounding the first laws of nature and the domestic hearth on the other, we are glad to find that this well-intentioned pair are not held to have established right to dictate new rules of action and new conditions of existence to a reluctant and, as it feels, an insulted world.

The *Standard* says the verdict is substantially a just and proper one. There will be few right-minded persons who will not deplore the fact that such a prosecution was ever instituted, and the Lord Chief Justice, in speaking of it as an ill-advised proceeding, only expressed a truth which those who wish to prevent such matters from being brought under the public notice at all will be the first to admit. The immediate effect of the publicity thus given to the work for which Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant have assumed the responsibility has been to dispose of a hundred and twenty thousand copies, instead of the seven hundred or so which constituted previously its yearly average circulation. The figures are those given by Mrs. Besant herself, and no one who has had the means of observing the universal and unhealthy interest which the case has aroused will doubt their substantial accuracy. Nor is this all the mischief that has been done. The streets have been flooded with imitations and piracies of the original work, published for the sake of profit alone, suggesting and repeating all that is objectionable in Dr. Knowlton's pamphlet without the veil of utilitarian morality or the colour of excuse. Placards have been publicly exposed in the streets whose authors have contrived to insinuate more grossness in half-a-dozen words than is expressed in the whole of the condemned essay ; and that which was before scarcely hinted at in quasi-scientific coteries has become everywhere matter for objectionable gossip and half-educated discussion. The very reports of the trial and of the speeches made by the defendants in support of their cause which the public journals have had no option but in some measure to reproduce have done more to disseminate the theories which the prosecution so loudly condemns than the unassisted circulation of the pamphlet itself would have been able to accomplish in a generation. Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant will probably be well satisfied with the martyrdom of a conviction which has done so much to promote and extend the discussion of the peculiar views of which they are the advocates.