THE CHARGE AGAINST MR. CHARLES BRADLAUGH AND MRS. BESANT

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant surrendered to their recognisances at the Guildhall Police Court, this morning, before Mr. Alderman Figgins, charged with publishing an obscene book entitled, “Fruits of Philosophy, an essay on the population question.” The court was again crowded. Ladies were not admitted. No order was issued by the magistrates in regard to their exclusion, but Mr. Bradlaugh undertook that ladies should not be present. At the sitting of the court it was decided to waive the question of admissibility of certain evidence which it was proposed to call for the defence. Dr. Charles Robert Drysdale, F. R. C. S., 17, Woburn-place, was accordingly called. He deposed that he read “Fruits of Philosophy.” Mr. Bradlaugh then put the question, “As a medical man what is your opinion of the work! “ ---- Mr. Straight (who with Mr. Meade, again appeared for the prosecution, Mr. Bradlaugh conducting the defence), objected to this question. He said it was the intention of the defendants, upon committal, to move a Judge at Chambers or the full court for leave to have the case tried in the Queen’s Bench Division. It was therefore necessary to place on the depositions the question put, the objections offered, and the rejection of the evidences. The objections to the question put were that it invited witness to decide the question which the tribune itself had to decide; that the reply to this question did not involve the experience of the witness from scientific knowledge, but simply related to the question of the fact whether the book was or was not obscene, and that was a question for magistrate to decide. The magistrate after some further observation from Mr. Straight to Mr. Bradlaugh, decided that the evidence was inadmissible. Dr. Drysdale accordingly retired from the witness box, and Mr. Bradlaugh proceed with his speech, which remained unfinished at the last hearing. He compared passages in “Fruits of Philosophy” with science in Dr. Carpenter’s “Human Physiology,” and said that the balance in chasteness and language was in favour of the former. It must be remembered that Dr. Carpenter’s work was a prize book for young people, sanctioned by Education Department, and that he should prove at the trail by the aid of the evidence of young pupils of both sexes. Mr. Bradlaugh then compared of with some in a work by Miss Marian Sims, entitled “Clinical Notes,” and with passages in Savage’s “Pelvic Organs,” contenting in each case that the language in “Fruits of Philosophy” was more chaste than in the unprosecuted works to which he had referred. He also drew attention and used the same argument with regard to a work by Chevasse exposed on all the bookstalls of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, and to one sold by that firm entitled “Hints to mothers,” both being obtainable in paper covers, and at a small price. Having finished these comparisons, Mr. Bradlaugh said that he now come to the close of his remarks. Let them look around the country, with its thousands of miserable and starving children, and then ask themselves whether it was a crime to place in the hands of the poor information which would prevent them bringing into the world progeny which inherited the disease of their parents, endangered by misery and want, and which would have to contend with misery throughout their wretched existence. He and his co-defendant conscientiously believed that they were doing their duty in outing the information into the hands of the people. The cause in which the pamphlet was issued he had advocated for years, and for his exertions in that direction he had been thanked by John Stuart Mills in his works, and by other leading men. Now, when wages were on the decrease throughout the land, when taxation and the costs of living were increasing, if he could not tell these poor men and women how they were to prevent hungry children growing up in the misery and want whence was to come the remedy? These remarks, which brought Mr. Bradlaugh’s speech to a close, met with some applause, which was instantly suppressed. A short adjournment here took place to enable Mrs. Besant to prepare the speech which she proposed to deliver if committed for trial. After the adjournment, Mr. Bradlaugh complained of the tone of a portion of the public press with regard to the matter, and the magistrates expressed an opinion that such comments should not be made when the matter was still under decision. The magistrate committed the defendants to take their trail at the next Sessions of the Central Criminal Court, holding that the pamphlet was impure, and not published in the interest of sciences. Mr. Bradlaugh reserved his defence. Mrs. Besant then addressed the Court at some length. In the course of her remarks she said that Mr. Bradlaugh’s defence being accepted as a joint defence for the alleged misdemeanour with which they were jointly charged, it now fell to her lot to make the final statement which they proposed to place before the Court. The charge could never have been brought against them had the former publisher done his duty in defending the book he had issued. The pamphlet could not be considered obscene. It was a medical work, and no medical work dealing simply physiological details could be fairly considered an obscene. The plain dry statement of physiological facts did not tend to produce lustful desires, and the perusal of medical treatises did not threw a seductive charm over the over the sex opposite to that of the reader, The pamphlet was entirely free from any set of suggestiveness, and was a medical treatise written by a physician of high character, and stood exactly on the same grounds as the works of Drs. **Unreadable Text** Carpenter etc. Mrs. Besant, in the course of her further remarks, said that the question is to the **Unreadable Text** prices of Dr. Carpenter’s books and of the “Fruits of Philosophy” should not be **Unreadable Text** own bodies, threw many a young men and **Unreadable Text** women in to the hands of

**Unreadable Text** lived upon the ignorance of the poor **Unreadable Text** another advantage in such a publication as that to question which she as a woman felt very strongly, although **Unreadable Text** by the fact thatthey **Unreadable Text** turn to doctors of their own sex. Mostly young newly married women would prefer **Unreadable Text** points for instance as the signs of **Unreadable Text** book instead of a male doctor, and **Unreadable Text** specially attacked points of the book was one which was most valuable to woman. The fact of overpopulation ought to be recognized and the **Unreadable Text** arising from it ought to be fairly and honestly considered. It ought to be accepted as an **Unreadable Text** persons should have more children than they could support educate, and persons should not weaken their generation by **Unreadable Text p**eople must marry they should be taught to morality in marriage and to **Unreadable Text**