**THE CHARGE AGAINST MR. BRADLAUGH**

Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant surrendered to their recognisances yesterday, at the Guildhall, London, before Mr. Alderman Figgins, charged with having published an obscene book, entitled “Fruits of Philosophy; being an Essay on the Population Question. By Charles Knowlton, M.D.” The court was again densely crowded, but it is a noticeable fact that none of the ladies whom presence Mr. Bradlaugh on the last occasion demanded as a right were in court. It was understood that no application had been made on the subject, but that Mr. Bradlaugh had undertaken that no ladies, except the defendant, should be present.

Mr. Bradlaugh said, after grave consideration, and recognizing the extreme courtesy shown him by the learned counsel for the prosecution and the pains the alderman had taken, himself and Mrs. Besant had determined to abridge the case as much as possible, especially as the alderman had decided that it would be his duty to commit for trial.

Dr. Charles Robert Drysdale, of the Royal College of Surgeons, was then called. He said he was the author of several medical works. He read the pamphlet, the subject of the present charge, twenty years ago.

Mr. Bradlaugh : As a medical man, what is your opinion of that work?

Mr. Straight objected, and after some discussion the alderman decided that the evidence could not be received.

Mr. Bradlaugh then proceeded with his defence, comparing other passages in the pamphlet complained of with some in a work by Miss Marian Sims, entitled “Clerical Notes,” and with passages in Savage’s “Pelvic Organs,” contending 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 in regard to a work by ………………………exposed on all the bookstalls of Messrs. W.H. Smith and Son, and sold by that firm, entitled, “Hints ……..Mothers,” both being obtainable in paper covers, and at a small price. Having finished these comparisons, Mr. Bradlaugh said, let them look around the country and see the thousands of miserable and squalid children which crowded their streets, and alleys, and then ask whether it was a crime to place in the hands of the poor information which would prevent their bringing into the world progeny which inherited the disease of the parents, and rendered their lives a misery. He and his co-defendant conscientiously believed that they were doing their duty in putting 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 this direction he had been thanked by John Stuart Mill in his works; by Lord Amberley, and other leading men. Now, when wages were on the decrease throughout the land, when taxation and cost of living were increasing, if he could not tell these poor men and women how they were to prevent hungry children growing up in misery and want, ………… was to come the remedy? A short adjournment here took place to enable Mrs. Besant to prepare her defence.

The Alderman on returning into court said he did not believe the book was not published in the interacts of science, but that the object of it was, as had been stated, to limit the families of married women, and that it pointed out how unmarried persons might satisfy their passions without fear of the consequence. As to whether it was in impure and libidinous book within the meaning of the words of Lord Campbell, it would be for the jury to say. He thought there was sufficient to enable him to commit the defendants for trial.

Mrs. Besant then proceeded to read a long defence, observing that Mr. Bradlaugh’s case and her own were a joint one. She complained of the indignities to which she had been subjected by her arrest, and expressed her content to know that she would have another opportunity given her in a higher court of removing any passing slur which this harsh procedure might have temporarily exist upon her. After going over many of the arguments of Mr. Bradlaugh, she said that she desired to put on record their ………….conviction that the fact of over-population, ought to be recognized, and that the difficulties arising from it ought to be fairly and honestly considered. They had both made themselves acquainted with the misery which, alike in large town and country village, arose from too many mouths and too little food. They had seen the wretched homes, the repulsive food, the drunkenness, the recklessness which grew out of the hopeless despair of comfort arising from over large families. They had seen how children were born but to die, and how women’s health was sacrificed by the drain of a too constantly recurring child hearing. It ought to be accepted as an axiom that no persons should have more children than they could support and educate, and that unhealthy persons should not weaken the next generation by perpetuating their own …………………… Yet it would be cruel to deny to these the happiness of home and the comfort of mutual love. Since people must marry they must be taught, they should be taught, morality in marriage, and to conceive children foredoomed to poverty or to disease was a sin. The returns of the registrars showed the terrible amount of infant mortality amongst us – mortality arising from preventable causes – but even these and records told ……………. of the many who were not even fortunate enough to die, but who lingered on from year to year ……………., crippled, and helpless, nor did they show the …………………………………..where abortion was sought in order to avoid the pressure of an unwelcome addition to an already crushing burden. It was not right that about one half of our children should be born only to die, and, to put it with an almost brutal planners, we had only two possibilities before us, either to prevent the over-conception of children, or to murder them after birth by overcrowding, by disease, and by starvation. They (the defendants), preferring the former alternative, believing it to be the more moral, the more humane, the more rational, had determined to spread such knowledge amongst the people as should make that alternative possible, and for so doing they stood committed for trial on a criminal charge.

On resuming her ………., Mrs Besant was loudly applauded.

In answer to the magistrate, Mr. Mead, on behalf of the prosecution, said that he was quite content to take the personal recognisances of the defendants.

Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant were then formally bound over in their own recognisances to appear at the Central Criminal Court.