**THE BRADLAUGH – BESANT PROSECUTION FOR OBSCENITY.**

THE trial of Mr. BRADLAUGH and Mrs. BESANT, for publishing an obscene book, entitled The Fruits of Philosophy, closed yesterday afternoon, the jury finding, on the verdict, that the book was calculated to deprave public morals, but they exonerated the defendants from corrupt motives. This verdict may be taken as one of guilty, with a recommendation to mercy. Several legal points having been ruined in the course of the trial, these will form the subject of consideration before the Lord Chief Justice COCKBURN delivers sentence. The Judge seems, however, to be against the BRADLAUGH-BESANT contention both on the law and on the fact – holding in getting terms, that whoever publishes an obscene or immoral book must be taken to have the intention to do so. This may seem an extreme rendering of the law applicable to obscenity and immorality, but it is clearly the only bound interpretation possible. If motive was an ingredient, and a necessary ingredient, to conviction for the publication of an immoral book, it would be extremely difficult ever to secure a conviction, because every guilty person would plead purity of motive, and evidence to the contrary would be almost impossible. Purity of motive is, however, a good justification for a nominal sentence, when the question of obscenity and immorality in disputed. The Fruits of Philosophy is the work of an American physician, named KNOWLTON, and was practically forgotten, except among the new generation of secularists, who ingeniously blend Saint Simonianism with infidelity of the TOM PAINE pattern. The English history of the book is not very savoury. It was introduced to London by a noted ……………..-thinker called WATSON, and sold among others by Mr. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, who, in a letter to the London Daily News admits that he disapproved of it. At the Bristol Assizes, some years ago, a person was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for vending it, whereupon a noted secularist named WATTS took it up, only to find himself in the meshes of the law. When WATTS was brought up for trial at the Old Bailey, he pleaded that the book had been sold unchallenged for years; that he had never read it; that when the proceedings were commenced he read it and could not defend it; that he had destroyed all the copies remaining unsold, and that he was generally contrite and would not offend again. He was let off with a fine of £200. Mr. GRONOE LEWI (check the name) junr, the well-known solicitor, advised Mr. WATTS, so it may be taken for granted that there was not much to be said in the publisher’s favour. In the face of all this, BRADLAUGH and BESANT undertook not only to defy the law, but to adopt a well-worn French plan of forcing the obscene book into circulation by the thousand. Intimating to the police that they meant to print and publish The Fruits of Philosophy, and desiring to know when they were to be arrested, they were in due course brought before a London Stipendiary, when the reports of the proceedings found their way into the London newspapers, and being reproduced in the provincial press, created a demand for the book, which Mrs. BESANT admits has run up to 125,000 copies. During the proscriptive times of the Empire, wily authors contrived to get their books “seized” by the police. A sensation was thereby created, and the forbidden books being published in Belgium, found their way into France by the thousand. This has been actually the history of the book in the hands of Mr. BRADLAUGH and Mrs. BESANT, and the financial result must have been to put from £3,000 to £4,000 into the joint purse of Mr. BRADLAUGH and his con-partner. This will sustain a substantial fine and the costs of the trial, but the cry of martyrdom will be raised, and poor dear Mrs. BESANT will be overwhelmed with subscriptions from strongminded mothers, while much injured Mr. BRADLAUGH will enhance his chance for Parliamentary honours among the Northampton knights of the lapstone with a craze for talking infidelity and the religion of the sexes. That the Fruits of Philosophy has been looked upon as an obscene book by sellers of French or obscene photographs – just as it ahs been dubbed “depraved” by the jury – was clearly proved six months ago. A Birmingham youth, named WILLMOTT, who was regularly engaged in the French obscene print trade, was looked after by the Birmingham detectives. Under the name of “James Schwartz,” they asked for a supply of the “funny things,” French coloured prints and “spicy photos” WILLMOTT was reputedly selling. Here is his reply :- “DEAR SIR,” – I have no French prints left; and I enclose two photos, at 3d each, in the place of the print ordered. I have Fruits of Philosophy, very useful book, is; Nursery Rhyme, is 6d; spicy song, is 6d; and classical photos, made subjects, unmounted, at 2 ½d each, 2s dozen; mounted, 3d each, 2s 6d dozen. I can supply anything in the spicy line at least 40 per cont cheaper than any one else. I shall be happy to receive orders, on the prompt execution of which you may rely. Yours respectfully, A.C. WILMOTT.” On a separate piece of paper was written “Two very spicy books, 04 pages each, with very spicy illustration, on hire at ……..per week; 20s (part value) to be deposited with me, and I return balance on receipt of books back.” This, to our mind, is conclusive of the true character of the book, measured by the soundest of tests – commercial value and status. As to the doctrine of population which it ………….to teach, that originated with Dr. MALTHUS. The Church of England has to answer for the Malthusian theory, but HAZLITT supposed, with considerable truth, that MALTHUS filched it fromWALLACE’S Prospects of Mankind, the author of that work having written the chapter on “Population at a bar to human improvement,” as an exercise for the disputatious and speculative wits of some Edinburgh debating society. MALTHUS elaborated the idea, and, will it be believed, received a pension from the Government of the day for so doing! This precious specimen of Episcopal philosophy, fortified, as Vicar ANCHER of Newport would say, by a commission from an unbroken line since the establishment of the Christian Church, lectured the poor of his time on economy, on morality, the regulation of their passions (which, he says, at other times are amenable to no restraint), and on the ungracious topic that “the laws of picture, which are the laws of GOD, have …………….them and their families to starve for …………of a right to the smallest portion of food beyond what their labour will supply, or some charitable hand may hold out in ………………….At this time of day such arguments, if from the lips of a clergyman, would be skin to blasphemy, and a ……………………………..of the purposes of a beneficent ………………..The God given command was, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it.” The Malthusian cry is, “Be not over-fruitful, but regulate child-hearing by the food supplies.” APAN SMITH, who was infinitely a greater and sounder philosopher than MALTHUS, laid down the broad principle that population is wealth, and that the riches of a country are not to be measured by their gold and silver supplies, but by the productive and re-productive power of the population. The French, who adapted the Malthusian ……………………….still ……………….it, now…………the results. Their population is numerically at a standstill, while English speaking people, who were fewer than Frenchmen forty years ago, are now something like double that of our ……………… neighbors. It is absurd to contend, as BRADLAUGH did, in addressing the jury, that the heavy infantile death rate is the fruit of over-population. Of course, if the normal birth rate is checked by filthy expedients of who Fruits of Philosophy type, the death rate will be necessarily lessened. The great bulk of our infantile death rate is caused by ignorance, carelessness, inexcusable neglect, or deliberate inhumanity on the part of mothers. So-called soothing medicines have much to answer for; exposure to …………….weather is another cause of children’s death. The infantile death rate for 1870 was 222 per thousand, or an excess of 22 percent. Liverpool and Leicester are the two …………………….towns in the country for excessive deaths among children – the rate in the former being 220 per thousand, and in the latter 228. It is computed that no less that 3,000 infants are annually suffocated, under the bedclothes. The modern Malthusian school embraces some well-known names, such as JOHN STUART MILL, CA…………….., DARWEN, Professor LEOXI LEVI, Professor FAWCETT, and the Quarterly Rey………; and ROSSI, SAY, DUNOCER, and GA…………, on the Continent. They argue that the working class over-populates, and that so long as this over population continues, wages must be regulated from the semi-starvation point, and that in old countries every increase of population tends to diminish the reward of labour. They further argue, and Mr. BRADLAUGH did so in his speech, that most of the …………………………………..little of the ……………………………….from …………………………………………..We deny that there is over population. It is not enough to suppose that England, in itself, and by itself, furnishes every………..Take the Canada, Australia, and Africa alone, and it will require thousand of years to populate them all on the existing English rate of population per …………Every unfair and artificial interference with the normal laws of population is therefore a violation of natural laws. So far as food supplies are concerned, the United States alone, in this their initiatory stage of skilled agriculture, could furnish food enough to feed the whole population of the liabitable globe. The Canadas, since their territorial limits were extended, are actually greater in acreage than the United States. Add to this the future food supplies of South America, and Australia, and beyond that, calculate on the marvelous …………….of Africa – not to speak of parts of the Eastern World barely touched with the ploughshare of civilization, and the question of food supply in connection with the numerical growth of population becomes one of the problem to be discussed a thousand years hence. It is disgraceful to our Governments, Liberal and Conservative, that they have not aided in the work of colonial development in the interest of the English working classes. Here are the people – willing and able to work as no people in this earth have ever toiled – on the other side of the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Ocean, lie millions of acres of virgin soil, crying out yearly “Come and tell us.” Over-populated indeed, when our Colonial Parliament are spending thousands of pounds yearly in conveying passage-paid emigrants to the newer Englands, which our ……………..countrymen are forming. The very idea is monstrous. Whatever the “fruits” of the BRADLAUGH -BESANT teaching may be, its “philosophy” is summed up in the well-known lines:-

“Let God attend to things which God must know;

Man’s ……………….cart relates to things below.”

This philosophy teaches the lower, not the higher morality – the gospel of …………. The gospel of redemption. As to “the liberty of the press,” it will never be narrowed by the suppression of sixpenny pamphlets of an obscene character. What, however, in justice, should now be done by Sir HARDISGE GIFFARD, the Solicitor General, is to prosecute, on the responsibility of Government, the vendors and users of that filthy book, The ………………….in …………………………… What is ……..for the BRADLAUGH-BESANT …………………., should be ………………..for the Ritualist gander.