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## LUCIFER

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❧ BIOGRAPHY ❧  
OF  
CHAS. BRADLAUGH, M.P.



By GEORGE STANDRING, Editor of "The Radical."

Printed & published at 9 Finsbury-st. London.—1889.

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# BIOGRAPHY

OF

*Charles Bradlaugh*

**I**T is not using the language of exaggeration to say that Charles Bradlaugh is one of the most extraordinary and interesting figures in the political arena of England. Despite difficulties and dangers that would have cowed the spirit and broken the hearts of ten ordinary men, Bradlaugh has succeeded in attaining the position which his great ability and earnestness have all along marked out for him—that of a member of the legislature of this mighty empire. He fills a position which no other man in this country could fill so efficiently; for he alone can claim to speak for the constituency which he represents, a constituency which is not even circumscribed by Britain's shores, for the freethinkers and republicans of our distant colonies look upon the junior member for Northampton as *their* mouthpiece and advocate within the walls of St. Stephen's.

## BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS.

Charles Bradlaugh has risen from the ranks of poverty and obscurity. His parents were persons in humble circumstances, and the infant Charles was born at Hoxton, on the 26th September, 1833. His father was a man whose abilities were fully taxed to provide a decently comfortable home and subsistence for his wife and children. He appears to have contributed some fugitive pieces to a London magazine, but his literary talent was of the smallest, and the material profits microscopical. The "education" of Charles was considered to be complete when he had reached the ripe age of twelve years, and the struggle of life began for him at that period. He was installed as errand boy in the solicitor's office where his father had passed his life in drudgery. After two years' experience in this capacity, he became wharf clerk and cashier to a firm of coal merchants. We note at this time the firm awakening of his mind to social problems, and his earliest

impressions were of a political nature. The Chartist movement was at that time agitating English society, and young Bradlaugh was induced—probably, at first, by motives of mere curiosity—to attend some open air meetings on the question. His feelings were excited and his sympathies aroused by the claims made on behalf of the people. He was led to reflect upon his own condition, and experienced an earnest desire to become fit to take part in public affairs. This state of mind resulted in a steady and serious attempt to attain for himself that which his meagre instruction had failed to provide; and he became an ardent student of both social and religious subjects. A member of the Church of England, he was one of the most earnest and successful teachers at the Sunday School at St. Peter's, Hackney Road. A careful study of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Four Gospels resulted in some doubts, and concerning these, he sought the assistance of his pastor, the Rev. Graham Packer. That gentleman, however, had more bigotry than sense; and, instead of meeting the young enquirer in a spirit of friendliness and help, he adopted measures which resulted in Bradlaugh giving up his home and situation, rather than suppress the doubts which had been so ingenuously put forward, so foolishly and disastrously met.

#### STRUGGLES FOR BREAD.

Homeless, penniless, and almost friendless, the boy Bradlaugh set himself resolutely to the task of obtaining for himself that subsistence and shelter of which intolerance had deprived him. He commenced business as a coal merchant: but, as he was obliged to obtain the money from his customers before he could execute their orders, his trade was necessarily very limited. Even in his small operations the hand of the enemy was laid heavily upon him. A baker's wife was his best customer, the profit on her orders amounting to the sum—an important one to him—of ten shillings weekly. Some kind friend explained to the woman that her young coal merchant was an "infidel," and the immediate result of this intimation was the refusal of any further orders from that source. At this time Bradlaugh's heresy was of the mildest kind, and he had not taken up any definite position with regard to the church and freethought: but the taint of infidelity implied in his theological inquiries was sufficient to turn against him the woman of dough, who indignantly told the young coal merchant that she "should be afraid her bread would smell of brimstone" if she used fuel obtained under such heterodox auspices. The

brimstone odor does not appear to have been previously noticed, but bigotry hates to chop logic, and Bradlaugh's best customer piously forswore him and his coals. Amidst such circumstances—petty and trivial, perhaps, to a well-fed reader, but full of sorest trial and trouble to a poor outcast—were the early years of Charles Bradlaugh passed. Some humble friends did, indeed, assist him to the best of their capacity; but Bradlaugh, though sensible of their kindly feeling and grateful for it, was as proud as poor. By his own exertions he preferred to win his bread.

#### YOUTHFUL ORATORY.

Living under the same roof with the widow and daughters of Richard Carlile, at the Warner Place Temperance Hall, Bradlaugh naturally attended the public meetings which were frequently held in that building. On other occasions he spoke in the small hall in Philpot Street, and at open-air meetings in Bonner's Fields. The eloquence which has been throughout his career one great source of his power, was displayed during his boyhood, though in a somewhat crude and juvenile manner; and numbers of people were always attracted by the youth's oratory. He took part in the movement in favor of Kossuth and the Hungarians, speak and writing in their behalf. He is supposed to have been guilty of perpetrating some verses, but the evidence is not very strong, and this circumstance can hardly be adduced with fairness against him. Certain is it that he soon made his mark as a speaker, and Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, then the acknowledged leader of the Freethought movement in this country, presided at one of his lectures in the Philpot Street Hall. So far, however, his popularity failed to produce the wherewithal to "keep body and soul together," and the record of the frugal manner in which the little family in Warner Street lived is full of pathos. The "extraordinary prominence of rice at their meals," relieved occasionally by the joint which a kindly friend provided under the pretence of inviting himself to dinner, marks the stringency of the poverty which clung around the youth and his friends. The desperate nature of his finances led to one important phase of his career, his term of service as

#### A PRIVATE IN THE ARMY.

Some Freethinkers who admired the young man's ability and earnestness, and knew the dire poverty against which he was struggling, organised a subscription on his behalf. His efforts to supply the deficiencies of his "education" had called

forth their hearty sympathy, and there was nothing in the circumstance that need have wounded his susceptibilities; but, as we have said, Bradlaugh was proud as well as poor, and the fact of his indigence was so painfully impressed upon him by the subscription that he resolved to "enlist." Accordingly he went to Charing Cross, and, after some negotiations, was duly enrolled in the 7th Dragoon Guards as a "full private." His military career is full of interest, but can only be glanced at here. He distinguished himself as an advocate of teetotalism, and won the good opinion both of his comrades and the officers. The former gave him the nickname of "Leaves," owing to the fact that he was almost constantly studying, coupled with the circumstance that *tea* was his principal beverage. The leisure afforded by his military profession was turned to good account, and Bradlaugh acquired by his own perseverance and capacity more erudition in the guard-room than ninety-nine men out of a hundred obtain with professional tuition at a university. In 1849, while he was stationed with his regiment at Ballincoig, County Cork, Bradlaugh was one of a troop detailed to "protect" the landlord's agent at an eviction near Inniscarra. The terrible scene of misery and barbarity which he there witnessed, Bradlaugh described, in eloquent and pathetic words, at a lecture delivered by him in America in 1873. It may be that the shame which a high-minded man must have felt in assisting, even as a passive instrument, in those shocking scenes, led Bradlaugh to abandon the military uniform. In 1853, after three years' service, he was enabled, by means of a small legacy, to purchase his discharge. He left the regiment heartily liked by his comrades, and the colonel gave him "a very good character" to take with him into the world.

#### A SOLICITOR'S ERRAND "BOY."

The period of struggle for a living was renewed when Bradlaugh left the army. In addition to the task—a sufficient formidable one—of maintaining himself, the young man took upon his shoulders fresh burdens. His father had recently died; and, though the conduct of Bradlaugh's parents might be fairly considered to have absolved him from any "duty" towards them, yet he voluntarily undertook to contribute towards the support of his widowed mother. His efforts to obtain employment were for some time fruitless; at last he enquired at the office of a Mr. Rogers, solicitor, in Fenchurch Street, whether the services of a clerk were required. Brad-

laugh did not obtain the situation he desired; and, as he was leaving the office, Mr. Rogers remarked that he wanted an errand boy—could the applicant recommend one? “What salary would you give the errand boy?” demanded the tall, thin, ungainly youth of twenty. “Ten shillings a week,” was the reply. “Then I’ll take it,” said Bradlaugh. He entered at once upon his new duties, and the ability which he displayed soon led his employer to promote his lanky errand boy to a position better worthy of his talents. Having acquired a knowledge of legal procedure, Bradlaugh was entrusted by Mr. Rogers with the management of the common law department of his business, and thus he gained the groundwork of that legal knowledge which has on so many occasions enabled him to overthrow the most redoubtable adversaries in courts of law. By utilising his leisure hours in the evenings, Bradlaugh soon attained a position that enabled him to marry and establish himself as a responsible and respectable member of society.

#### COMMENCEMENT OF HIS PUBLIC CAREER.

Secure in the possession of a home and comfortable income, Bradlaugh turned his attention to the public work for which he had so decided a vocation. He spoke and wrote in advocacy of freethought, and again kind friends sought to ruin him. But Mr. Rogers was not to be played upon as the baker’s wife had been, and he turned a deaf ear to the representations of Bradlaugh’s enemies. The only request that he made—and it was certainly a reasonable one—was that Bradlaugh would not allow his propaganda to prejudice his employer’s business. The famous *nom de guerre*, “Iconoclast” (image-breaker), was therefore adopted by the young lecturer, and, under that thin veil, he carried on his public work for many years. He spoke two or three times every week at the Hall in Philpot Street, and at the old Hall of Science, besides spending much time and money in the production and publication of propagandist pamphlets, which invariably failed to secure wide circulation.

#### “THE HYDE PARK RIOTS.”

Bradlaugh made his first appearance before the general public in connection with the right of meeting in Hyde Park. A Bill designed to suppress Sunday trading—at any rate, among the poorer classes—was introduced into Parliament by Lord Robert Grosvenor, and this vexatious proposition aroused public resentment to a very high pitch. John Bedford Lenc



asked the people to meet in Hyde Park to see how the aristocracy passed *their* Sunday. A very large crowd gathered in response to the call, hissing and hooting the occupants of the luxurious carriages in the Row. Sir Richard Mayne, then chief commissioner of police, impudently and imprudently issued an official notice forbidding the people to assemble in the park, and stating that effectual measures would be taken to prevent any "disturbance of the public peace." Bradlaugh went into the legal phase of the question, and, after a careful investigation of the law, was convinced that Sir Richard had no authority such as he claimed to exercise. On the 1st July, 1855, large masses of people collected in the park, and the perfumed loungers in the Row were hooted and hissed as before. Horses were frightened, and accidents appeared probable; the police took advantage of this circumstance to charge the people. Many persons were injured, a great number arrested, and a general disturbance ensued. Several times on that eventful day Bradlaugh threw himself in the way of danger, and succeeded in mitigating the senseless violence of the police. He was subsequently examined before the Royal Commissioners appointed to enquire into the affair, and, at the conclusion of his evidence, he was publicly thanked by the Rt. Hon Stuart Wortley for his conduct on the occasion of the "riot."

#### FREETHOUGHT WORK.

For many years Mr. Bradlaugh devoted the greater part of his time and energy to the propaganda of Freethought by his lectures and writings. As the advocate of unpopular doctrines, expressed in a bold and uncompromising spirit, he found his path a rough and stony one. He was frequently assailed with the coarsest abuse, and on several occasions stood in peril of his life. But he courageously pursued his way, and has long been the recognised representative of English Secularism.

In 1859 Mr. Bradlaugh started the *National Reformer*, which, in conjunction with Mrs. Annie Besant, he still edits. The paper passed through many vicissitudes in early life; and, in addition to the struggle for existence which appears to be the lot of every journal, the *National Reformer* had to contend against a very determined effort on the part of the Government, in 1868-9, to crush it out of existence. After a long and severe struggle in the law-courts, the Government withdrew, tired out and beaten by one man's ability and resolution. The direct result of this contest was the repeal of the obnoxious statute by which every newspaper proprietor was obliged to give heavy

securities against "blasphemous and seditious libel." The *N. R.* has long enjoyed deserved prosperity.

Amongst the many services that Mr. Bradlaugh has rendered to Freethinkers, his work in removing the most grievous of the legal disabilities that weighed upon them stands conspicuous. The Evidence Amendment Acts of 1869-70 were due to a contest into which Mr. Bradlaugh deliberately entered for the purpose of removing the gross injustice to which Freethinkers were then subject. Being objected to as a witness in a case in which he was plaintiff, Mr. Bradlaugh determined to fight the matter through every possible court. He personally argued the case before Lord Chief Justice Bovill; and, with the aid of the present Mr. Justice Denman and the late Lord Chancellor Hath-erley, the law was twice altered in Parliament. A long and expensive course of litigation, together with a skilful agitation outside, resulted in the passing of the Acts named above. The enormous costs crippled Mr. Bradlaugh financially, and imposed upon him a heavy burden of debt; but the old-time scandals were made impossible, and the conscientious unbeliever was no longer subject to the outrage of being rejected as incompetent to give evidence in a court of law.

Mr. Bradlaugh has been for many years the President of the National Secular Society, an extensive and important organisation with branches in London and all parts of the country.

#### CONTESTS NORTHAMPTON.

It is now nearly twenty years since Mr. Bradlaugh took his first step on the path leading to St. Stephen's. In 1868 he contested the borough of Northampton; and, despite all the adverse influences that were arrayed against him, he polled no less than 1036 votes. Mr. Charles Gilpin, one of the successful candidates, joined with the Mayor in testifying to the fairness with which Mr. Bradlaugh and his friends conducted the contest. With characteristic resolution, Mr. Bradlaugh returned to the charge at the General Election of 1874 (polling 1653 votes), and again in October of that year (polling, at a bye-election, 1766 votes); but it was not until the General Election of 1880 that his energy and perseverance were at last crowned with success. He was then returned (polling 3827 votes) as the colleague of Mr. Labouchere; and Northampton gained the distinction of being represented in Parliament by two sturdy Radicals. The successful issue of the election was celebrated by a complimentary banquet at the Hall of Science, London, when a handsome cafetière was presented to the new member.

### THE RIGHT OF PUBLICATION.

In 1876 the so-called "Society for the Suppression of Vice" prosecuted a publisher for selling a work (written many years before by Dr. Knowlton, of America) dealing with the Population Question. The publisher compromised the matter in a way that not only involved an ignominious surrender, but also constituted a serious menace to the right of free discussion of social subjects. Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant thereupon assumed responsibility by publishing the work, as a means of sustaining the right that had been so pusillanimously abandoned. Proceedings were taken against the new publishers by the City authorities, and the case was heard in the Court of Queen's Bench before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn. After a long trial, in which the co-defendants pleaded their cause with great force and eloquence, the jury returned a verdict of guilty so far as publishing was concerned, but exonerating the defendants as to any evil intent. The Lord Chief Justice offered to pass a nominal sentence if the defendants would undertake not to sell the pamphlet in future. Mr Bradlaugh promptly declined to do this, and sentence was passed of six months imprisonment and a heavy fine. Execution was stayed for legal points to be argued on appeal, and Mr. Bradlaugh ultimately succeeded in quashing the whole of the proceedings.

### THE PARLIAMENTARY OATH.

The tide of success at the poll did not float Mr. Bradlaugh into a smooth and peaceful harbor. He struck on the Oath Rock. On May 3rd, 1880, he presented himself at the table of the House of Commons, and claimed to be allowed to affirm as a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath, and he stated, in answer to a question from the Clerk, that he claimed by virtue of the Evidence Amendment Acts, 1869 and 1870. The Speaker, not considering himself justified in determining the point raised, referred the matter to the judgment of the House. A Select Committee was thereupon appointed to consider the question and to report. On May 20th the Committee reported that, in their opinion, an affirmation could not be accepted in lieu of an oath in the House of Commons. On the following day, Mr. Bradlaugh attended to make and subscribe the oath; but Sir Henry Drummond Wolff (a Conservative member of small importance) interposed with a motion to prevent him from doing so; and, after a long debate, the vexed question was referred to another Select Committee. The result was a recommend-

ation to the effect that Mr. Bradlaugh should not be allowed to take the oath, but should be permitted to affirm at his own risk at law. Mr. Labouchere moved that that course should be adopted, but the motion was ultimately rejected in favor of a proposition that Mr. Bradlaugh should neither be allowed to affirm nor take the oath.

The contest which was commenced by the motion of Sir H. D. Wolff extended over so long a period, and assumed so many aspects, that the barest outline of its course can be given here. A few days after the passing of the excluding resolution, Mr. Bradlaugh, in righteous defiance of a tyrannical order, presented himself at the table of the House to take the oath and his seat. The Speaker, as in duty bound, directed him to withdraw. Mr. Bradlaugh "respectfully refused," protesting that the order of the House was illegal; and he was thereupon committed to the Clock Tower, but released on the following day. The public excitement aroused by this action induced the Premier (Mr. Gladstone) to move that the suggestion of the second committee be adopted; and this motion, after a protracted debate, was carried on July 2nd, 1880.

Mr. Bradlaugh then affirmed and took his seat. His risk at law was put to the test (1881) by a bigoted Tory member, Mr. Newdegate, who, through the medium of a petty shopkeeper, sued Mr. Bradlaugh for penalties (under an Act of 1866) for sitting and voting without having taken the prescribed oath. A new writ was issued for Northampton, and the electors returned their persecuted member by 3437 votes. On April 26th, 1881, Mr. Bradlaugh appeared at the House, tendered his polling register, and prepared to take the oath, when Sir Stafford Northcote, acting on behalf of the Tory party, moved that the junior member for Northampton be not allowed to take the oath. This was carried by a majority of 208 to 175, and thus Mr. Bradlaugh was arbitrarily excluded from the seat to which his constituents had twice returned him. On April 28th, 1881, Mr. Bradlaugh made a manly, eloquent, but fruitless appeal for justice, at the bar of the House.

The Government had promised, in June, 1880, to introduce a Parliamentary Oaths Bill, and, in expectation of this promise being redeemed, Mr. Bradlaugh refrained from "disturbing the proceedings" of the House that had wronged him and insulted his constituents. Meanwhile, he carried on a powerful agitation outside. He held a large number of meetings in London, and an enormous Demonstration in Trafalgar Square. Five hundred public meetings were held at which he was not

present, and many of these gatherings were called by religious bodies. It was at this juncture that the Government stated, in July, 1881, that the Oaths Bill would not be proceeded with during that session. Mr. Bradlaugh then informed the Speaker, in writing, that he would again present himself, on Aug. 3rd, to take the oath. He kept his word. Mr. Labouchere moved that the resolution of exclusion be withdrawn. The motion was defeated, and Mr. Bradlaugh was ordered to withdraw. He refused to do so, and was forcibly ejected—but it required the utmost efforts of more than a dozen policemen and messengers were drag, hustle, and carry the stalwart member through Westminster Hall and out into Palace Yard. It was a shameful scene, but all of the shame was upon one side. Mr. Bradlaugh was treated so roughly that he was confined to his room for some weeks by erysipelas in the arm.

The litigation in which Mr. Bradlaugh became involved through the oath question was simply enormous. Newdegate's action for penalties involved a trial at *Nisi Prius* lasting several days, many motions before the High Court of Justice, four arguments before the Court of Appeal, and a final argument of two days before the House of Lords in 1883, when the "common informer" suit was decided in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor. In turn, he took proceedings against Newdegate for "maintenance." This was ridiculed when first brought forward at the police-court, but the case was ultimately decided in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor by Lord Coleridge, who spoke very strongly in condemnation of Newdegate's conduct. The Government litigation against Mr. Bradlaugh was still existing when he took his seat in the new Parliament of 1885. Heavy penalties were claimed; but, when once he had taken his undisputed seat as a legislator, the action mysteriously disappeared. Mr. Bradlaugh states that it died a natural death; but, if that is so, the Tory Attorney-General was discreetly silent as to the manner of its decease. One thing is certain: Mr. Bradlaugh never asked for any favor or remission.

This brief account of the oath struggle necessarily leaves much untold. The limits of space are inexorable; and to the historian with fuller opportunities must be left the recital of this eventful story in all its details. In 1880 Mr. Bradlaugh confronted a hostile majority of the House of Commons—an unholy combination of theological bigotry and political privilege. For five years he fought his foes, at the bar of the House, in the country, and in the law-courts; and in 1885 he took his seat—the victor in the fight.

## PARLIAMENTARY CAREER.

It is generally admitted that the growth of Mr. Bradlaugh's reputation as a legislator has been unexampled in the present Parliament. His fame has sprung up like the prophet's gourd; but happily there is no reason to believe that its existence will be as brief as that of the legendary vegetable. He has gained his present position by assiduous attention to his duties, and by the natural ability which has raised him from obscurity to a prominent position in English political life.

In the House of Commons returned by the General Election of 1880, Mr. Bradlaugh sat from July 2nd in that year till March 29th, 1881. During that brief span he voted in more than 200 divisions, some of which were of great importance. His Parliamentary work for these months included the Perpetual Pensions question, upon which petitions, containing in the aggregate, over 250,000 signatures, were presented to the House. Mr. Bradlaugh secured March 15th for the discussion of the motion which stood in his name; but, in deference to a special appeal by Mr. Gladstone (then Premier), he waived his right to precedence, as the state of public business was urgent. Earlier in the year, Mr. Bradlaugh succeeded in removing an irritating disability connected with religious education in Board Schools. In respect to the perennial Irish question, he also did much good work. At the beginning of the Session of 1881, he voted in favor of an amendment, moved by Mr. Parnell, to the effect that the peace and tranquility of Ireland could not be promoted by the suspension of the constitutional rights of Irishmen—the amendment being directed against the Coercion Bill introduced by Mr. Forster. On February 8th, Mr. Bradlaugh moved the rejection of the Coercion Bill; on the following night he voted against its second reading; and he strenuously maintained his opposition to it at every stage.

During a considerable portion of the Session of 1881, Mr. Bradlaugh was, by the action of the House, prevented from sitting and voting; but he attended with great regularity, and was present during 129 divisions. Although excluded from the possession of his seat and the performance of his duty, there can be no doubt that Mr. Bradlaugh exercised a great amount of influence by his presence and communications with other members.

Since 1885, when Mr. Bradlaugh resumed his seat, he has been unremitting in attention to his duties as a member of the House. In the short-lived Parliament of 1886, an Affirmation

Bill was introduced, nominally by Mr. Serjeant Simon; but, as a matter of fact, nearly the whole of the work attending the measure fell upon the shoulders of Mr. Bradlaugh. The Bill never got beyond its formal first reading, and it was presented to the House in a form which, resulting from certain compromises, was felt to be unsatisfactory by Mr. Bradlaugh. In consequence of the ill-health of Sir John Simon, Mr. Bradlaugh has now become the avowed sponsor of the Bill, which in its present form is a sweeping measure conferring the option of affirmation in all cases and under all circumstances in which an oath is or may be required. It is noteworthy that on a test division Mr. Bradlaugh obtained a majority of 103 for the Bill.

The record of Mr. Bradlaugh's Parliamentary work includes already the establishment of a Government Labor Bureau, its duty being the collection and publication of statistics and information relating to labor. The resolution directing the formation of the Bureau was carried unanimously.

Mr. Bradlaugh conducted the case on behalf of workmen in the investigation concerning the operation of the Employers' Liability Acts. The work involved here was exceedingly arduous, requiring, as it did, two or three days' attendance per week at the sittings of the Select Committee, besides much time devoted to the collection and preparation of evidence bearing upon the subject. Mr. Bradlaugh also raised the question of the interference of peers in Parliamentary elections, and served on a Select Committee appointed by the House to enquire into the matter. His old subject of Perpetual Pensions is still being investigated by a Select Committee, of which Mr. Bradlaugh is a member; and he conducts nearly all the examinations of witnesses. This duty naturally requires an enormous amount of research, inquiry, and verification, for Mr. Bradlaugh does none of his Parliamentary duty in slipshod fashion. One important result of his action in regard to Perpetual Pensions is that no less than 320 of these "perpetual" robberies have been commuted. Perhaps the remedy of commutation is little better than the disease of interminable pensioning; but the responsibility for this rests upon the Treasury authorities, and not upon Mr. Bradlaugh. It is hardly likely that the junior member for Northampton would have permitted the Duke of Marlborough to commute *his* perpetual pension of £4,000 at twenty-seven years' purchase!

In the first Parliamentary Session of 1886 Mr. Bradlaugh raised the question of Compulsory Cultivation of Land, and

introduced a Bill, which came under debate on its second-reading stage on April 14th; but at the close of the discussion it was withdrawn as being unfit, in its then shape, to reach all the evils against which it was aimed. Mr. Bradlaugh has devoted a great deal of time and trouble to the collection of facts bearing upon the question; and these will be found detailed in a pamphlet entitled "Compulsory Cultivation of Land: What it means and why it should be enforced" (price 3d.).

Mr. Bradlaugh induced the Government to make special investigations into the working of the Truck Acts in Wales and Scotland, the result being that a special report was issued, showing grave abuses, the existence of which had been very frequently and positively denied. A Bill—the principle of which has been accepted—is before the House, for the purpose of remedying the now admitted evils. This question is one that had not been raised by any member during the last seventeen years, until Mr. Bradlaugh called attention to it.

On the 22nd of April, 1887, Mr. Bradlaugh introduced a motion for a Royal Commission to enquire as to Market Rights and Tolls. The object of the motion, Mr. Bradlaugh stated, was to diminish the cost of food to the poor, to increase the facilities of the poor for obtaining good food at moderate prices, and to encourage the augmentation, by increased cultivation, stimulated by early sale, of home food produce. The Cobden Club published a report of the speech made by Mr. Bradlaugh in introducing this motion, and circulated over 250,000 copies. It may be mentioned that the work of collecting and verifying the facts detailed in the speech occupied two years and a half. We may add that, on this matter, Mr. Bradlaugh opposed the bill brought forward on behalf of the Great Eastern Railway Company; and, after a hard fight, succeeded in reducing the tolls levied at Stratford and Bishopsgate markets to less than one-third of the original sum charged; and, in addition, obtained a proviso that when the tolls are taken over by the local authorities, no compensation whatever shall be claimed by the railway companies.

A few lines only can be devoted here to the good work done by Mr. Bradlaugh in exposing certain corrupt practices of the City Corporation, and in fixing the odium thereof upon the responsible persons. The facts in this matter will be familiar to every reader who follows the course of political events. After the initial statement in the House of Commons, by Mr. George Howell, a Select Committee was appointed to enquire into the charges made against the Corporation. Mr. Bradlaugh



acted as counsel for the prosecution, and he conducted his case with consummate skill. Day after day he devoted his time to work in the committee room, examining and cross-examining witnesses; and this, of course, involved an enormous amount of labor apart from the public sittings. The general opinion, alike in the House and throughout the country, was that Mr. Bradlaugh displayed extraordinary ability in his management of the case, and that, in his hands, the indictment against the Corporation had been put as forcibly and completely as it was possible for any man to put it. The report of the Select Committee established the truth of many serious charges against City officials; and the public has by no means yet heard the last of this case.

It would not be possible here to refer in detail to all the matters of public welfare to which Mr. Bradlaugh has devoted his time and attention in his capacity as a legislator. Suffice it to say that in the present session of Parliament he has, amongst other work, brought to the notice of the Post Office authorities certain grievances of provincial employés, and has on several occasions taken action with regard to the conduct of the Government in relation to the ruby mines of Burmah, thus exposing a very flagrant "job."

Throughout the whole of his Parliamentary career, Mr. Bradlaugh has paid special and persistent attention to the Estimates, criticising, and moving reductions of the votes whenever necessary. This work does not cover a man with popular glory; but it is extremely arduous, and its value to the nation cannot be over-estimated. All departments of the public service have a chronic tendency towards extravagance; they are all daughters of the horse-leech, ever crying, Give, Give; and their expending ardor can only be held in check by minute attention to the claims—often excessive, and sometimes outrageous—which they make upon the national exchequer. This drudgery, which many "brilliant" members of Parliament religiously shirk, has never been neglected by Mr. Bradlaugh, whose influence has always been exercised in the direction of reasonable economy.

Long may Charles Bradlaugh live to urge the just claims and to guard the true interests of the people! His whole life has been devoted to their cause, his ambition is bound up with their welfare. His is the voice which speaks for the dumb, toiling millions of our countrymen, burdened and oppressed by privilege and injustice. That voice has never been silent when it should have been heard, and it has never uttered a false note.

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MR. GLADSTONE in REPLY to COLONEL  
INGERSOLL on CHRISTIANITY.

By CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

In the early days of the *National Reformer* there was some reason to believe that, despite his enormous work and his utterly distressing views, Mr. Gladstone was not unfrequently a reader of some of the papers appearing in his columns. Later there was on one occasion a very remarkable piece of evidence handed from the publishing office of the late Mr. Austin Holyoake, the veteran statesman did not pass it without notice. I do not know if Mr. Gladstone has, during the last dozen years or so, had time or inclination for similar acquaintance with the utterances of advanced freethought in this country—though his is clear that he watches heraldic utterances across the Atlantic, for in the *North American Review* for May, Mr. Gladstone, referring to a correspondence going on between the Rev. Dr. Field and Colonel R. D. Ingersoll—takes up his pen against the alleged American. I have hesitated very much as to whether to publish a personal review for Mr. Gladstone is very great. I know how very far from one another we are on questions of religion, and believing that any other feeling influencing him, I can respectfully worded. Yet I am sure that Mr. Gladstone's position writes all he says to most attentive auditors, and my duty to those in the Free Thought ranks who trust me compels me that I should tender some words of comment. I venture

acted as counsel for the prosecution, and he conducted his case with consummate skill. Day after day he devoted his time to work in the committee room, examining and cross-examining witnesses; and this, of course, involved an enormous amount of labor apart from the public sittings. The general opinion, like in the House and throughout the country, was that Mr. Bradlaugh displayed extraordinary ability in his management of the case, and that, in his hands, the indictment against the corporation had been put as forcibly and completely as it was possible for any man to put it. The report of the Select Committee established the truth of many serious charges against city officials; and the public has by no means yet heard the rest of this case.

It would not be possible here to refer in detail to all the matters of public welfare to which Mr. Bradlaugh has devoted his time and attention in his capacity as a legislator. Suffice it to say that in the present session of Parliament he has amongst other work, brought to the notice of the Post Office authorities certain grievances of provincial employes, and has on several occasions taken action with regard to the conduct of the Government in relation to the rabby mines of Barnab, which exposing a very flagrant "job."

Throughout the whole of his Parliamentary career, Mr. Bradlaugh has paid special and persistent attention to the Estimates, criticising, and moving reductions of the vote whenever necessary. This work does not cover a man with popular glory; but it is extremely arduous, and its value to the nation cannot be over-estimated. All departments of the public service have a chronic tendency towards extravagance; and their expending order can only be held in check by Give; and minute attention to the claims—often excessive, and sometimes outrageous—which they make upon the national exchequer. This diligence, which many "brilliant" members of Parliament religiously shirk, has always been exercised in the direction of reasonable economy.

Long may Charles Bradlaugh live to urge the just claims and to guard the true interests of the people! His whole life has been devoted to their cause, his ambition is bound up with their welfare. His is the voice which speaks for the dumb, tolling millions of our countrymen, burdened and oppressed by privilege and injustice. That voice has never been silent when it should have been heard, and it has never uttered a false note.

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In the early days of the *National Reformer* there was some reason to believe that, despite his enormous work and his utterly differing views, Mr. Gladstone was not unfrequently a reader of some of the papers appearing in its columns. Later there was on one occasion a very remarkable piece of evidence that, whilst considering as "questionable" the literature issued from the publishing office of the late Mr. Austin Holyoake, the veteran statesman did not pass it without notice. I do not know if Mr. Gladstone has, during the last dozen years or so, had time or inclination for similar acquaintance with the utterances of advanced Freethought in this country—though his critique on a recent novel gives affirmative probability—but it is clear that he watches heretical utterances across the Atlantic; for in the *North American Review* for May, Mr. Gladstone—intervening in a correspondence going on between the Rev. Dr. Field and Colonel R. G. Ingersoll—takes up his pen against the eloquent American. I have hesitated very much as to publicly noticing the *North American Review* article, for my personal reverence for Mr. Gladstone is very great. I know how very far from one another we are on questions of religion, and believing that the religious side or bent of Mr. Gladstone's mind is stronger than any other feeling influencing him, I can conceive that I may offend much in my criticism, however respectfully worded. Yet I am sure that Mr. Gladstone's high position entitles all he says to most attentive audience, and my duty to those in the Freethought ranks who trust me compels me that I should tender some words of comment. I venture