BONNER HYPATIA BRADLAUGH,
ROBERTSON JOHN MACKINNON

CHARLES BRADLAUGH: A RECORD OF HIS LIFE AND WORK, VOLUME 1 (OF 2)

Hypatia Bonner

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Bonner H.

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Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner Charles Bradlaugh: a Record of His Life and Work, Volume 1 (of 2) / With an Account of his Parliamentary Struggle, Politics and Teachings. Seventh Edition

PREFACE

"I wish you would tell me things, and let me write the story of your life," I said in chatting to my father one evening about six weeks before his death. "Perhaps I will, some day," he answered. "I believe I could do it better than any one else," I went on, with jesting vanity. "I believe you could," he rejoined, smiling. But to write the story of Mr Bradlaugh's life with Mr Bradlaugh at hand to give information is one thing: to write it after his death is quite another. The task has been exceptionally difficult, inasmuch as my father made a point of destroying his correspondence; consequently I have very few letters to help me.

This book comes to the public as a record of the life and work of a much misrepresented and much maligned man, a record which I have spared no effort to make absolutely accurate. Beyond this it makes no claim.

For the story of the public life of Mr Bradlaugh from 1880 to 1891, and for an exposition of his teachings and opinions, I am fortunate in having the assistance of Mr J. M. Robertson. We both feel that the book throughout goes more into detail and is more controversial than is usual or generally desirable with biographies. It has, however, been necessary to enter into details, because the most trivial acts of Mr Bradlaugh's life have been misrepresented, and for these misrepresentations, not for his acts, he has been condemned. Controversy we have desired to avoid, but it has not been altogether possible. In dealing with strictures on Mr Bradlaugh's conduct or opinions, it is not sufficient to say that they are without justification; one must show how and where the error lies, and where possible, the source of error. Hence the defence to an attack, to our regret, often unavoidably assumes a controversial aspect.

A drawback resulting from the division of labour in the composition of the book is that there are a certain number of repetitions. We trust, however, that readers will agree with us in thinking that the gain of showing certain details in different relations outweighs the fault of a few re-iterations.

In quoting Mr Bradlaugh's words from the *National Reformer*, I have for the sake of greater clearness and directness altered the editorial plural to the first person singular.

I desire to express here my great indebtedness to Mrs Mary Reed for her help, more especially in searching old newspaper files with me at the British Museum.

Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner.

1894.

CHAPTER I
PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD

Although there has often been desultory talk among us concerning the origin of the Bradlaugh family, there has never been any effort made to trace it out. The name is an uncommon one: as far as I am aware, ours is the only family that bears it, and when the name comes before the public ours is the pride or the shame – for, unfortunately, there are black sheep in every flock. I have heard a gentleman (an Irishman) assure Mr Bradlaugh that he was of Irish origin, for was not the Irish "lough" close akin to the termination "laugh"? Others have said he was of Scotch extraction, and others again that he must go to the red-haired Dane to look for his forbears. My father would only laugh lazily – he took no vivid interest in his particular ancestors of a few centuries ago – and reply that he could not go farther back than his grandfather, who came from Suffolk; in his boyhood he had heard that there were some highly respectable relations at Wickham Market, in Suffolk. But so little did the matter trouble him that he never verified it, though, if it were true, it would rather point to the Danish origin, for parts of Suffolk were undoubtedly colonized by the Danes in the ninth century, and a little fact which came to our knowledge a few years ago shows that the name Bradlaugh is no new one in that province.

Kelsall and Laxfield,[1] where there were Bradlaughs in the beginning of the 17th century; Wickham Market and Brandeston, whence Mr Bradlaugh's grandfather came at the beginning of the 19th, and where there are Bradlaughs at the present day, are all within a narrow radius of a few miles. The name Bradlaugh commenced to be corrupted into Bradley prior to 1628, as may be seen from a stone in Laxfield Church, and has also been so corrupted by a branch of the family within our own knowledge. The name has also, I know, been spelled "Bradlough."

James Bradlaugh, who came from Brandeston about the year 1807, was a gunsmith, and settled for a time in Bride Lane, Fleet Street, where his son Charles, his fourth and last child, was born in February 1811. He himself died in October of the same year, at the early age of thirty-one.

Charles Bradlaugh (the elder) was in due course apprenticed to a law stationer, and consequently this became his nominal profession; in reality, he was confidential clerk to a firm of solicitors, Messrs Lepard & Co. The apprentice was, on the occasion of some great trial, lent to Messrs Lepard, and the mutual satisfaction seems to have been so great that it was arranged that he should remain with them, compensation being paid for the cancelling of his indentures. I have beside me at the moment a letter, yellow and faded, dated July 30th, 1831, inquiring of " – Batchelour, Esq.," concerning the character of "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh," with the answer copied on the back, in which the writer begs "leave to state that I have a high opinion of him both as regards his moral character and industrious habits, and that he is worthy of any confidence you may think proper to place in him."

Charles Bradlaugh stayed with these solicitors until his death in 1852, when the firm testified their appreciation of his services by putting an obituary notice in the *Times*, stating that he had been "for upwards of twenty years the faithful and confidential clerk of Messrs Lepard & Co., of 6 Cloak Lane." He married a nursemaid named Elizabeth Trimby, and on September 26th, 1833, was born their first child, who was named Charles after his father. He was born in a small house in Bacchus Walk, Hoxton. The houses in Bacchus Walk are small four-roomed tenements; I am told that they have been altered and improved since 1833, but I do not think the improvement can have been great, for the little street has a desperate air of squalor and poverty; and when I went there the other day, Number 5, where my father was born, could not be held to be in any way conspicuous in respect

[1] A friend studying the *Topographer and Genealogist* found the following extract in Vol. II.: —"Hoxne Hundred."Kelsall Church. Brass; no figure. John Parker, gent., who married Dorothy Bradlaugh, alias Jacob; died 24 April, 1605, aged 66."Laxfield Church. On a stone which had the figure of a man and two women still remains a shield with the arms of Bradlaugh alias Jacob.""A stone in the north wall of the vestry for Nicholas Bradley alias Jacob, buried 8th August, 1628."

of superior cleanliness. But in such a street cleanliness would seem to be almost an impossibility. From Bacchus Walk the family went to Birdcage Walk, where I have heard there was a large garden in which my grandfather assiduously cultivated dahlias, for he seems to have been passionately fond of flowers. Soon the encroaching tide of population caused their garden to be taken for building purposes, and they removed to Elizabeth Street, and again finally to 13 Warner Place South, a little house nominally of seven rooms, then rented at seven shillings per week.

The family, which ultimately numbered seven, two of whom died in early childhood, was in very straitened circumstances, so much so that they were glad to receive presents of clothing from a generous cousin at Teddington, to eke out the father's earnings. The salary of Charles Bradlaugh, sen., at the time of his death, after "upwards of twenty years" of "faithful" service, was two guineas a week, with a few shillings additional for any extra work he might do. He was an exquisite penman; he could write the "Lord's Prayer" quite clearly and distinctly in the size and form of a sixpence; and he was extremely industrious. Very little is known of his tastes; he was exceedingly fond of flowers, and wherever he was he cultivated his garden, large or small, with great care; he was an eager fisherman, and would often get up at three in the morning and walk from Hackney to Temple Mills on the river Lea, with his son running by his side, bait-can in hand. He wrote articles upon Fishing, which were reprinted as late as a year or two ago in a paper devoted to angling, and also contributed a number of small things under the signature C. B – h to the *London Mirror*, but little was known about this, as he seems usually to have been very reticent and reserved, even in his own family. He had his children baptized – his son Charles was baptized on December 8th, 1833 – but otherwise he seems to have been fairly indifferent on religious matters, and never went to church.

This is about all that is known concerning my grandfather up till about the time of his son's conflict with the Rev. J. G. Packer, and what steps he took then will be told in the proper place. His son Charles always spoke of him with tenderness and affection, as, indeed, he also did of his mother; nevertheless, he never seemed able to recall any incident of greater tenderness on the part of his father than that of allowing him to go with him on his early morning fishing excursions. Mrs Bradlaugh belonged undoubtedly to what we regard to-day as "the old school." Severe, exacting, and imperious with her children, she was certainly not a bad mother, but she was by no means a tender or indulgent one. The following incident is characteristic of her treatment of her children. One Christmas time, when my father and his sister Elizabeth (his junior by twenty-one months) were yet small children, visitors were expected, and some loaf sugar was bought – an unusual luxury in such poor households in those times. The visitors, with whom came a little boy, arrived in due course, but when the tea hour was reached, it was discovered that nearly all the sugar was gone. The two elder children, Charles and Elizabeth, were both charged with the theft; they denied it, but were disbelieved and forthwith sent to bed. They listened for the father's home-coming in the hope of investigation and release; there they both lay unheeded in their beds, sobbing and unconsoled, until their grandmother brought them a piece of cake and soothed them with tender words. Then it ultimately appeared that it was the little boy visitor who stole the sugar; but the children never forgot the dreadful misery of being unjustly punished. The very last time the brother and sister were together, they were recalling and laughing over the agony they endured over that stolen sugar.

At the age of seven the little Charles went to school: first of all to the National School, where the teacher had striking ideas upon the value of corporal punishment, and enforced his instructions with the ruler so heavily that the scar resulting from a wound so inflicted was deemed of sufficient importance some nine or ten years later to be marked in the enlistment description when Mr Bradlaugh joined the army. Leaving the National School, he went first to a small private school, and then to a boys' school kept by a Mr Marshall in Coldharbour Street; all poor schools enough as we reckon schools to-day, but the best the neighbourhood and his father's means could afford. Such as it was, however, his schooling came to an end when he was eleven years old.

I have by me some interesting mementoes of those same schooldays – namely, specimens of his "show" handwriting at the age of seven, nine, and ten years. The writing is done on paper ornamented (save the mark!) by coloured illustrations drawn from the Bible. The first illustrates in wonderful daubs of yellow, crimson, and blue, passages in the life of Samuel; in the centre is a text written in a child's unsteady, unformed script; and at the bottom, flanked on either side by yellow urns disgorging yellow and scarlet flames, come the signature and date written in smaller and even more unsteady letters than the text, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 7 years, Christmas, 1840." The second specimen is adorned with truly awful illustrations concerning "the death of Ahab," not exactly suggestive of that "peace and goodwill" of which we hear so much and sometimes see so little. The writing shows an enormous improvement, and is really a beautiful specimen of a child's work. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged 9 years, Christmas, 1842," is firmly and clearly written. The third piece represents the "Death of Absalom" (the teacher who gave out these things seems to have been of a singularly dismal turn of mind), with illustrations from 2 Sam. xiv. and xviii. The writing here has more character; there is more light and shade in the up and down strokes, as well as more freedom. As an instance of the humane nature of the teaching, I quote the text selected to show off the writing: "Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men of Joab's smote Absalom and slew him." As a lesson in sheer wanton cruelty this can hardly be exceeded. The signature, "Charles Bradlaugh, aged ten years, Christmas, 1843," which is surrounded by sundry pen-and-ink ornaments is, like the text, written with a much freer hand than that of the other specimens.

The boy's amusements – apart from the prime one of going fishing with his father, which he did when eight years old – consisted chiefly in playing at sham fights with steel nibs for soldiers, and dramatic performances of "The Miller and his Men," enacted by *artistes* cut out of newspaper. Then there was the more sober joy of listening to an old gentleman and ardent Radical, named Brand, who took a great affection for the lad, and used to explain to him the politics of the day, and doubtless by his talk inspired him to plunge into the intricacies of Cobbett's "Political Gridiron," which he found amongst his father's books, and from that to the later and more daring step of buying a halfpenny copy of the People's Charter.

CHAPTER II
BOYHOOD

Now came the time when the little Charles Bradlaugh should put aside his childhood and make a beginning in the struggle for existence. His earnings were required to help in supplying the needs of the growing family; and at twelve years old he was made office boy with a salary of five shillings a week at Messrs Lepard's, where his father was confidential clerk. In later years, in driving through London with him, he has many a time pointed out to me the distances he used to run to save the omnibus fare allowed him, and how if he had to cross the water he would run round by London Bridge to save the toll. The money thus saved he would spend in books bought at second-hand bookstalls, outside of which he might generally be found reading at any odd moments of leisure. One red-letter day his firm sent him on an errand to the company of which Mr Mark E. Marsden was the secretary. Mr Marsden, whose name will be remembered and honoured by many for his unceasing efforts for political and social progress, chatted with the lad, asking him many questions, and finished up by giving him a bun and half-a-crown. As both of these were luxuries which rarely came in the office boy's way, they made a great impression on him. He never forgot the incident, although it quite passed out of Mr Marsden's mind, and he was unable to recall it when the two became friends in after years.

The errand-running came to an end when my father was fourteen, at which age he was considered of sufficient dignity to be promoted to the office of wharf clerk and cashier to Messrs Green, Son, & Jones, coal merchants at Brittania Fields, City Road, at a salary of eleven shillings a week. About this time, too, partly impelled by curiosity and swayed by the fervour of the political movement then going on around him, but also undoubtedly with a mind prepared for the good seed by the early talks with old Mr Brand, he went to several week-evening meetings then being held in Bonner's Fields and elsewhere. It was in 1847 that he first saw William Lovett, at a Chartist meeting which he attended. His Sundays were devoted to religion; from having been an eager and exemplary Sunday school scholar he had now become a most promising Sunday school teacher; so that although discussions were held at Bonner's Fields almost continually through the day every Sunday, they were not for him: *he* was fully occupied with his duties at the Church of St Peter's, in Hackney Road.

At this time the Rev. John Graham Packer was incumbent at St Peter's; and when it was announced that the Bishop of London intended to hold a confirmation at Bethnal Green, Mr Packer naturally desired to make a good figure before his clerical superior. He therefore selected the best lads in his class for confirmation, and bade them prepare themselves for the important occasion. To this end Charles Bradlaugh carefully studied and compared the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the four Gospels, and it was not long before he found, to his dismay, that they did not agree, and that he was totally unable to reconcile them. "Thorough" in this as in all else, he was anxious to understand the discrepancies he found and to be put right. He therefore, he tells us, "ventured to write Mr Packer a respectful letter, asking him for his aid and explanation." Instead of help there came a bolt from the blue. Mr Packer had the consummate folly to write Mr Bradlaugh senior, denouncing his son's inquiries as Atheistical, and followed up his letter by suspending his promising pupil for three months from his duties of Sunday-school teacher.

This three months of suspension was pregnant with influence for him; for one thing it gave him opportunities which he had heretofore lacked, and thus brought him into contact with persons of whom up till then he had scarcely heard. The lad, horrified at being called an Atheist, and forbidden his Sunday school, naturally shrank from going to church. It may well be imagined also that under the ban of his parents' disapproval home was no pleasant place, and it is little to be wondered at that he wandered off to Bonner's Fields. Bonner's Fields was in those days a great place for open-air meetings. Discussions on every possible subject were held; on the week evenings the topics were

mostly political, but on Sundays theological or anti-theological discourses were as much to the fore as politics. In consequence of my father's own theological difficulties, he was naturally attracted to a particular group where such points were discussed with great energy Sunday after Sunday. After listening a little, he was roused to the defence of his Bible and his Church, and, finding his tongue, joined in the debate on behalf of orthodox Christianity.

The little group of Freethinkers to which Mr Bradlaugh was thus drawn were energetic and enthusiastic disciples of Richard Carlile. Their out-door meetings were mostly held at Bonner's Fields or Victoria Park, and the in-door meetings at a place known as Eree's Coffee House. In the year 1848 it was agreed that they should subscribe together and have a Temperance Hall of their own for their meetings. To this end three of them, Messrs Barralet, Harvey, and Harris, became securities for the lease of No. 1 Warner Place, then a large old-fashioned dwelling-house; and a Hall was built out at the back. As the promoters were anxious to be of service to Mrs Sharples Carlile, who after the death of Richard Carlile was left with her three children in very poor circumstances, they invited her to undertake the superintendence of the coffee room, and to reside at Warner Place with her daughters Hypatia and Theophila and her son Julian.

When my father first met her, Mrs Sharples Carlile, then about forty-five years of age, was a woman of considerable attainments. She belonged to a very respectable and strictly religious family at Bolton; was educated in the Church with her two sisters under the Rev. Mr Thistlethwaite; and, to use an expression of her own, was "quite an evangelical being, sang spiritual songs, and prayed myself into the grave almost." Her mind, however, was not quite of the common order, and perhaps the excess of ardour with which she had thrown herself into her religious pursuits made the recoil more easy and more decided. Be this as it may, it is nevertheless remarkable that, surrounded entirely by religious people, reading no anti-theological literature, she unaided thought herself out of "the doctrines of the Church." After some two-and-a-half-years of this painful evolution, accident made her acquainted with a Mr Hardie, a follower of Carlile's. He seems to have lent her what was at that time called "infidel literature," and so inspired her with the most ardent enthusiasm for Richard Carlile, and in a less degree for the Rev. Robert Taylor. On the 11th January 1832, whilst Carlile was undergoing one of the many terms of imprisonment to which he was condemned for conscience' sake, Miss Sharples came to London, and on the 29th of the same month she gave her first lecture at the Rotunda.

On the 11th of February this young woman of barely twenty-eight summers, but one month escaped from the trammels of life in a country town, amidst a strictly religious environment, started a "weekly publication" called *Isis*, dedicated to "The young women of England for generations to come or until superstition is extinct." The *Isis* was published at sixpence, and contains many of Miss Sharples' discourses both on religious and political subjects. In religion she was a Deist; in politics a Radical and Republican; thus following in the footsteps of her leader Richard Carlile. I have been looking through the volume of the *Isis*; it is all very "proper" (as even Mrs Grundy would have to confess), and I am bound to say that the stilted phrases and flowery turns of speech of sixty years ago are to me not a little wearisome; but with all its defects, it is an enduring record of the ability, knowledge, and courage of Mrs Sharples Carlile. She reprints some amusing descriptions of herself from the religious press; and were I not afraid of going too much out of my way, I would reproduce them here with her comments in order that we might picture her more clearly; but although this would be valuable in view of the evil use made of her name in connection with her kindness to my father, it would take me too far from the definite purpose of my work. In her preface to the volume, written in 1834, she thus defends her union with Richard Carlile: —

"There are those who reproach my marriage. They are scarcely worth notice; but this I have to say for myself, that nothing could have been more pure in morals, more free from venality. It was not only a marriage of two bodies, but a marriage of two congenial spirits; or two minds reasoned into the same knowledge of true principles, each seeking an object on which virtuous affection might rest, and grow, and strengthen. And though we passed over a legal obstacle, it was only because it could

not be removed, and was not in a spirit of violation of the law, nor of intended offence or injury to any one. A marriage more pure and moral was never formed and continued in England. It was what marriage should be, though not perhaps altogether what marriage is in the majority of cases. They who are married equally moral, will not find fault with mine; but where marriage is merely of the law or for money, and not of the soul, there I look for abuse."[2]

Of course, all this happened long before Mr Bradlaugh became acquainted with Mrs Carlile; when he knew her, sixteen or seventeen years later, she was a broken woman, who had had her ardour and enthusiasm cooled by suffering and poverty, a widow with three children, of whom Hypatia, the eldest, could not have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old at the most. I have been told by those who knew Mrs Carlile in those days that in spite of all this she still had a most noble presence, and looked and moved "like a queen." Her gifts, however, they said, with smiles, certainly did not lie in attending to the business of the coffee room – at that she was "no good." She was quiet and reserved, and although Christians have slandered her both during her lifetime and up till within this very year on account of her non-legalised union with Richard Carlile, she was looked up to and revered by those who knew her, and never was a whisper breathed against her fair fame.

Amongst the frequenters of the Warner Street Temperance Hall I find the names of Messrs Harvey, Colin Campbell, the brothers Savage,[3] the brothers Barralet, Tobias Taylor, Edward Cooke, and others, of whom most Freethinkers have heard something. They seem to have been rather wild, compared with the sober dignity of the John Street Institution, especially in the way of lecture bills with startling announcements, reminding one somewhat of the modern Salvation Army posters. The neighbourhood looked with no favourable eye upon the little hall, and I am told that one night, when a baby was screaming violently next door, a rumour got about that the "infidels" were sacrificing a baby, and the place was stormed by an angry populace, who were with difficulty appeased.

It was to this little group of earnest men that the youth Charles Bradlaugh was introduced in 1848, as one eager to debate, and enthusiastically determined to convert them all to the "true religion" in which he had been brought up. He discussed with Colin Campbell, a smart and fluent debater; he argued with James Savage, a man of considerable learning, a cool and calm reasoner, and a deliberate speaker, whose speech on occasion was full of biting sarcasms; and after a discussion with the latter upon "The Inspiration of the Bible," my father admitted that he was convinced by the superior logic of his antagonist, and owning himself beaten, felt obliged to abandon his defence of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, he did not suddenly leap into Atheism: his views were for a little time inclined to Deism; but once started on the road of doubt, his careful study and – despite his youth – judicial temper, gradually brought him to the Atheistic position. With the Freethinkers of Warner

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[2] In the *Gauntlet* for Sept. 22nd, 1833, Carlile, who had been formally separated from his wife nine months previously, says:—"Many months did not elapse before we stood pledged to a moral marriage, and to a resolution to avow that marriage immediately after my liberation. I took the first opportunity of doing it, as I now take the first of explaining the introduction. As a public man, I will be associated with nothing that is to be concealed from the public. Many, I know, will carp upon my freedom as to divorce and marriage; and to such persons I say, if they are worth a word, that I do so because I hate hypocrisy, because I hate everything that is foul and indecent, because I will not deceive any one. I have led a miserable wedded life through twenty years, from disparity of mind and temper; and, for the next twenty, I have resolved to have a wife in whom I may find a companion and helpmate… I will make one woman happy, and I will not make any other woman unhappy. Richard Carlile."*P.S.*– I would not have intruded this matter upon the public notice had it not been intended that the lady, as well as myself, will continue to lecture publicly. We are above deception. Our creed is truth, and our morals nothing but is morally and reasonably to be defended. Priestcraft hath no law for us; but every virtue, everything that is good and useful to human nature in society, has its binding law on us. We will practise every virtue and war with every vice. This is our moral marriage and our bond of union. Who shall show against it any just cause or impediment?"

[3] There were three of these brothers, all remarkable for their courage, pertinacity, or ability. One of them, John Savage, refused to pay taxes in 1833. The best of his goods were seized and, in spite of Mr Savage's protests, carried away in a van. There was so much feeling about the taxes at the time that no sooner did the people living in the neighbourhood (Circus Street, Marylebone) hear of the seizure than they collected in great numbers. The van was followed, taken possession of, and brought back to Circus Street. The goods were removed, the horse taken out of the shafts, and the van demolished. After the news spread throughout the metropolis the excitement became so great that the Horse Guards at the Regent's Park Barracks were put under arms. They had lively times sixty years ago.

Place he became a teetotaller, which was an additional offence in the eyes of the orthodox; and while still in a state of indecision on certain theological points, he submitted Robert Taylor's "Diegesis" to his spiritual director, the Rev. J. G. Packer.

During all this time Mr Packer had not been idle. He obtained a foothold in my father's family, insisted on the younger children regularly attending Church and Sunday School, rocked the baby's cradle, and talked over the father and mother to such purpose that they consented to hang all round the walls of the sitting-room great square cards, furnished by him, bearing texts which he considered appropriate to the moment. One, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," was hung up in the most prominent place over the fireplace, and just opposite the place where the victim sat to take his meals. Such stupid and tactless conduct would be apt to irritate a patient person, and goad even the most feeble-spirited into some kind of rebellion; and I cannot pretend that my father was either one or the other. He glowered angrily at the texts, and was glad enough to put the house door between himself and the continuous insult put upon him at the instigation of Mr Packer. In 1860, the rev. gentleman wrote a letter described later by my father as "mendacious," in which he sought to explain away his conduct, and to make out that he had tried to restrain Mr Bradlaugh, senior. In illustration thereof, he related the following incident: —

> "The father, returning home one evening, saw a board hanging at the Infidels' door announcing some discussion by Bradlaugh, in which my name was mentioned not very respectfully, which announcement so enraged the father that he took the board down and carried it home with him, the Infidels calling after him, and threatening him with a prosecution if he did not restore the placard immediately.
>
> "When Mr Bradlaugh, senior, got home, and had had a little time for reflection, he sent for me and asked my advice, and I urged him successfully immediately to send [back] the said placard."

That little story, like certain other little stories, is extremely interesting, but unfortunately it has not the merit of accuracy. The facts of the case have been told me by my father's sister (Mrs Norman), who was less than two years younger than her brother Charles, and who, like him, is gifted with an excellent, almost unerring memory. Her story is this. One autumn night (the end of October or beginning of November) Mr Packer came to the house to see her father. He had not yet come home from his office, so Mr Packer sat down and rocked the cradle, which contained a fewdays-old baby girl. After some little time, during which Mr Packer kept to his post as self-constituted nurse, Mr Bradlaugh, sen., returned home. The two men were closeted together for a few minutes, and then went out together. It was a wild and stormy night, and Mr Bradlaugh wore one of those large cloaks that are I think called "Inverness" capes. After some time he came home, carrying under his cape two boards which he had taken away from the Warner Place Hall. He behaved like a madman, raving and stamping about, until the monthly nurse, who had long known the family, came downstairs to know what was the matter. He showed her the boards, and told her he was going to burn them. Mrs Bailey, the nurse, begged him not to do so, talked to him and coaxed him, and reminded him that he might have an action brought against him for stealing, and at length tried to induce him to let her take them back. By this time the stress of his rage was over, and she, taking his consent for granted, put on her shawl, and hiding the boards beneath it, went out into the rain and storm to replace them outside the Hall. The inference Mrs Norman drew from these proceedings was that Mr Packer had urged on her father to do what he dared not do himself. It is worthy of note that when Mrs Norman told me the story neither she nor I had read Mr Packer's version, and did not even know that he had written one.

When Mr Packer received the "Diegesis" he seems to have looked upon the sending of it as an insult, and, exercising all the influence he had been diligently acquiring over the mind of Mr Bradlaugh, sen., induced him to notify Messrs Green & Co., the coal merchants and employers of his son, that he would withdraw his security if within the space of three days his son did not alter his

views. Thus Mr Packer was able to hold out to his rebellious pupil the threat that he had three days in which "to change his opinions or lose his situation."

Whether it was ever intended that this threat should be carried out it is now impossible to determine. Mr Bradlaugh, who seldom failed to find a word on behalf of those who tried to injure him – even for Mr Newdegate and Lord Randolph Churchill he could find excuses when any of us resented their bigoted or spiteful persecution – said in his "Autobiography," written in 1873, that he thought the menace was used to terrify him into submission, and that there was no real intention of enforcing it. Looking at the whole circumstances, and from a practical point of view, this seems likely. One is reluctant to believe that a father would permit himself to be influenced by his clergyman to the extent of depriving his son of the means of earning his bread. His own earnings were so scanty that he could ill afford to throw away his son's salary, especially if he would have to keep him in addition. The one strong point in favour of the harsher view is that when the son took the threat exactly to the letter, the father never called him back or made a sign from which might be gathered that he had been misunderstood; and he suffered the boy to go without one word to show that the ultimatum had been taken too literally.

At the time, at any rate, my father had no doubt as to the full import of the threat. He took it in all its naked harshness – three days in which to change his opinions or lose his situation. To a high-spirited lad, to lose his situation under such circumstances meant of course to lose his home, for he could not eat the bread of idleness at such a cost, even had the father been willing to permit it. On the third day, therefore, he packed his scanty belongings, parted from his dear sister Elizabeth, with tears and kisses and a little parting gift, which she treasures to this hour, and thus left his home. From that day almost until his death his life was one long struggle against the bitterest animosity which religious bigotry could inspire. In the face of all this he pursued the path he had marked out for himself without once swerving, and although the cost was great, in the end he always triumphed in his undertakings – up to the very last, when the supreme triumph came as his life was ebbing away in payment for it, and when he was beyond caring for the good or evil opinion of any man.

It is now the fashion to make Mr Packer into a sort of scapegoat: his harsh reception of his pupil's questions and subsequent ill-advised methods of dealing with him are censured, and he is in a manner made responsible for my father's Atheism. If no other Christian had treated Mr Bradlaugh harshly; if every other clergyman had dealt with him in kindly fashion; if he had been met with kindness instead of slanders and stones, abuse and ill-usage, then these censors of Mr Packer might have some just grounds on which to reproach him for misusing his position; as it is, they should ask themselves which among them has the right to cast the first stone. The notion that it was Mr Packer's treatment of him that drove my father into Atheism is, I am sure, absolutely baseless. Those who entertain this belief forget that Mr Bradlaugh had already begun to compare and criticise the various narratives in the four Gospels, and that it was on account of this (and therefore after it) that the Rev. J. G. Packer was so injudicious as to denounce him as an Atheist, and to suspend him from his Sunday duties. This harsh and blundering method of dealing with him no doubt hastened his progress towards Atheism, but it assuredly did not induce it. It set his mind in a state of opposition to the Church as represented by Mr Packer, a state which the rev. gentleman seems blindly to have fostered by every means in his power; and it gave him the opportunity of the Sunday's leisure to hear what Atheism really was, expounded by some of the cleverest speakers in the Freethought movement at that time. But in spite of all this, he was not driven pell-mell into Atheism; he joined in the religious controversy from the orthodox standpoint, and was introduced into the little Warner Place Hall as an eager champion on behalf of Christianity.

Those persons too who entertain this idea of Mr Packer's responsibility are ignorant of, or overlook, what manner of man Mr Bradlaugh was. He could not rest with his mind unsettled or undecided; he worked out and solved for himself every problem which presented itself to him. He moulded his ideas on no man's: he looked at the problem on all sides, studied the pros and cons, and

decided the solution for himself. Therefore, having once started on the road to scepticism, kindlier treatment would no doubt have made him longer in reaching the standpoint of pure Rationalism, but in any case the end would have been the same.

CHAPTER III
YOUTH

Driven from home because he refused to be a hypocrite, Charles Bradlaugh stood alone in the world at sixteen; cut off from kindred and former friends, with little or nothing in the way of money or clothes, and with the odium of Atheist attached to his name in lieu of character. To seek a situation seemed useless: what was to be done? To whom should he turn for help and sympathy if not to those for whose opinions he was now suffering? To these he went, and they, scarce richer than himself, welcomed him with open arms. An old Chartist and Freethinker, a Mr B. B. Jones, gave him hospitality for a week, while he cast about for means of earning a livelihood. Mr Jones was an old man of seventy; and in after years, when he had grown too feeble to do more than earn a most precarious livelihood by selling Freethought publications, Mr Bradlaugh had several times the happiness of being able to show his gratitude practically by lecturing and getting up a fund for his benefit. Having learned something about the coal trade whilst with Messrs Green, my father determined to try his fortune as a "coal merchant;" but unhappily he had no capital, and consequently required to be paid for the coals before he himself could get them to supply his customers. Under these circumstances it is hardly wonderful that his business was small. He, however, got together a few customers, and managed to earn a sufficient commission to keep him in bread and cheese. He had some cards printed, and in a boyish spirit of bravado pushed one under his father's door. Mr Headingley, in the "Biography of Mr Bradlaugh" that he wrote in 1880, gives the story of the "principal customer" in pretty much the very words in which he heard it, so I reproduce it here intact: —

> "Bradlaugh's principal customer was the good-natured wife of a baker, whose shop was situated at the corner of Goldsmith's Road. As she required several tons of coal per week to bake the bread, the commission on this transaction amounted to about ten shillings a week, and this constituted the principal source of Bradlaugh's income. The spirit of persecution, however, was abroad. Some kind friend considerately informed the baker's wife that Bradlaugh was in the habit of attending meetings of Secularists and Freethinkers, where he had been known to express very unorthodox opinions. This was a severe blow to the good lady. She had always felt great commiseration for Bradlaugh's forlorn condition, and a certain pride in herself for helping him in his distress. When, therefore, he called again for orders she exclaimed at once, but still with her wonted familiarity —
>
> "'Charles, I hear you are an Infidel!'
>
> "At that time Bradlaugh was not quite sure whether he was an Infidel or not; but he instinctively foresaw that the question addressed him might interfere with the smooth and even course of his business; he therefore deftly sought to avoid the difficulty by somewhat exaggerating the importance of the latest fluctuation in the coal market.
>
> "The stratagem was of no avail. His kind but painfully orthodox customer again returned to the charge, and then Bradlaugh had to fall back upon the difficulty of defining the meaning of the word Infidel, in which line of argument he evidently failed to produce a favourable impression. Again and again he tried to revert to the more congenial subject of a reduction in the price of coals, and when, finally, he pressed hard for the usual order, the interview was brought to a close by the baker's wife. She declared in accents of firm conviction, which have never been forgotten, that she could not think of having any more coals from an Infidel.

"'I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone,' she added with a shudder."

It always strikes me as a little odd that orthodox people, who believe that the heretic will have to undergo an eternity of punishment – a punishment so awful that a single hour of it would amply suffice to avenge even a greater crime than the inability to believe – yet regard that as insufficient, and do what they can on earth to give the unbeliever a foretaste of the heavenly mercy to come. This little story of the kind-hearted woman turned from her kindness by some bigoted busybody is a mild case in point. Such people put a premium on hypocrisy, and make the honest avowal of opinion a crime.

In so limited a business the loss of the chief customer was naturally a serious matter; and although the young coal merchant struggled on for some time longer, he was at last obliged to seek for other means of earning his bread. For a little while he tried selling buckskin braces on commission for Mr Thomas J. Barnes. Mr Barnes gave him a breakfast at starting in the morning, and a dinner on his return at night, but as he could only sell a limited quantity of the braces he grew ever poorer and poorer.

Early in my father's troubles, Mrs Carlile and her children seem to have taken a warm liking for him. He shared Julian Carlile's bed, and there was always a place at the family table – such as it was – whenever he wanted it. He read Hebrew with Mr James Savage, and in turn taught Hebrew and Greek to Mr Thomas Barralet, then a young man of his own age, his particular friend and companion at the time. With the Carlile children he had lessons in French from Mr Harvey, an old friend of Richard Carlile's. These "French" days, I can readily believe, were altogether red-letter days. Usually, from motives of economy, the *menu* was made up on a strictly vegetarian basis; but when Mr Harvey came he invariably invited himself to dinner, and having a little more money than most of the others, he always provided the joint. Mr Bradlaugh says in his "Autobiography" that while with the Carliles he picked up "a little Hebrew and an imperfect smattering of other tongues." Then and with subsequent study he acquired a good knowledge of Hebrew; French he could read and speak (although with a somewhat English accent) as easily as his own tongue; he knew a little Arabic and Greek; and he could make his way through Latin, Italian, or Spanish, though of German and its allied languages he knew nothing.

It was whilst under Mrs Carlile's roof my father fell in love with Hypatia, Mrs Carlile's eldest daughter; and this fleeting attachment of a boy and girl (or rather, I should say of a boy *for* a girl, for I know that Miss Carlile laughed at my father's pretensions, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that she felt anything more than a sisterly affection for him) would hardly be worth alluding to had not a whole scandal been built upon it. As far as I can trace, the vile and iniquitous statements that have been made as to the relations between my father and Hypatia Carlile – he between sixteen and seventeen, and she a year or two younger – originated with the Rev. J. G. Packer and the Rev. Brewin Grant; and since Mr Bradlaugh's death there have not been wanting worthy disciples of these gentlemen, who have endeavoured to revive these unwarranted accusations. Mrs Carlile was also vaguely accused of making "a tool" of the lad, and involving him in money transactions! – It is not easy to sympathise with the temper which makes people so unable to understand the generous heart of a woman who, herself desperately poor, could yet freely share the crumbs of her poverty with one whose need was even greater than her own, and give a home and family to the lad who had forfeited his own purely for conscience' sake.

As after my father left home he was chiefly sheltered by the Carliles at 1 Warner Place, I cannot imagine what Mr Headingley[4] means by saying that Mr Bradlaugh was saved the anxiety of pursuit by his parents. There was no necessity for pursuit; he was never at any time far from home, and for the most part was in the same street, only a few doors off. His parents knew where he was; he was often up and down their street; and his sister Elizabeth would watch to see him pass, or would loiter

[4] Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

about near the Temperance Hall to catch a glimpse of her brother. She was peremptorily forbidden to exchange a word with him; and when they passed in the street, this loving brother and sister, who were little more than children in years, would look at each other, and not daring to speak, would both burst into tears. In spite of all this I never heard my father say an unkind or bitter, or even a merely reproachful word about either of his parents.

Having once begun to speak at the open-air meetings in Bonner's Fields, he continued speaking there or at Victoria Park, Sunday after Sunday, during the day, and in the evening at the Warner Place Temperance Hall, or at a small Temperance Hall in Philpot Street. I am also informed that he lectured on Temperance at the *Wheatsheaf* in Mile End Road. The *British Banner* for July 31st, 1850, contains a letter signed D. J. E., on "Victoria Park on the Lord's Day." The writer, after dwelling at length upon the sinfulness and general iniquity of the Sunday frequenters of the park, who, he affirmed, sauntered in "sinful idleness" … "willing listeners to the harangues of the Chartist, the Socialist, the infidel and scoffer," goes on to say of my father: —

> "The stump orator for the real scoffing party is an overgrown boy of seventeen, with such an uninformed mind, that it is really amusing to see him sometimes stammering and spluttering on in his ignorant eloquence, making the most ludicrous mistakes, making all history to suit his private convenience, and often calling yea nay, and nay yea, when it will serve his purpose. He is styled by the frequenters of the park as the 'baby'; and I believe he is listened to very often more from real curiosity to know what one so young will say, than from any love the working men have to his scoffings."

At the conclusion of a long letter, the writer says: —

> "It gives me great delight to state that the working men have no real sympathy with Infidels and scoffers, but would far sooner listen to an exposition of the Word of God. To give you an instance. One Sunday I opposed the 'baby' of whom I have spoken, and instantly there was a space cleared for us, and an immense ring formed around us. The Infidel spoke first, and I replied; he spoke again, and was in the midst of uttering some dreadful blasphemy, copied from Paine's 'Age of Reason,' when the people could suppress their indignation no longer, but uttered one loud cry of disapprobation. When silence had been obtained, I addressed to them again a few serious kind words, and told them that if they wish me to read to them the Word of God, I would do so; that if they wished me to pray with them, I would do so. Upon my saying this, nearly all the company left the Infidel, and repaired to an adjoining tree, where I read and expounded the Word of God with them for about an hour."

In this first press notice of himself Mr Bradlaugh had an introductory specimen of the accuracy, justice, and generosity, of which he was later to receive so many striking examples from the English press generally, and the London and Christian press in particular.

In attending Freethought meetings Charles Bradlaugh became acquainted with Austin Holyoake, and a friendship sprang up between these two which ended only with the death of Mr Holyoake in 1874. By Austin Holyoake he was taken to the John Street Institution, and by him also he was introduced to his elder and more widely-known brother, Mr George Jacob Holyoake, who took the chair for him at a lecture on the "Past, Present, and Future of Theology" at the Temperance Hall, Commercial Road. Mr G. J. Holyoake, in a sketch of my father's life and career written in 1891, says: —

> "It will interest many to see what was the beginning of his splendid career on the platform, to copy the only little handbill in existence. Only a few weeks before

his death, looking over an old diary, which I had not opened for forty-one years, I found the bill, of which I enclose you the facsimile. It is Bradlaugh's first placard: —

LECTURE HALL,PHILPOT ST., (3 DOORS FROM COMMERCIAL ROAD)

A LECTUREWILL BE DELIVERED BYCHARLES BRADLAUGH, JUN.,*On Friday, October the 10th, 1850*,SUBJECT: Past, Present, and Future of Theology

MR GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE,*Editor of the "Reasoner,"*will take the chair at eight o'clock precisely

A Collection will be made after the Lecture for the Benefit ofC. Bradlaugh, victim of the Rev. J. G. Packer, of St. Peter's,Hackney Road

"Being his first public friend, I was asked to take the chair for him. Bradlaugh's subject was a pretty extensive one for the first lecture of a youth of seventeen, who looked more like fourteen as he stood up in a youth's round jacket; but he spoke with readiness, confidence, and promise."

In May 1850, "at the age of 16 years 7½ months," Mr Bradlaugh wrote an "Examination of the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with remarks on the life and death of the meek and lowly Jesus." This he "altered and amended" in June 1854, but it was never published. In the preface, written in 1850, he says, "I think I can prove that there did exist a man named Jesus χρηστος the good man," but in 1854 he no longer adheres to this position, and adds a note: "I would not defend the existence of Jesus as a man at all, although I have not sufficient evidence to deny it." Through the kindness of a friend I am in possession of the MS. volume containing this "Examination," which, apart from its value to me personally, is extremely interesting as showing how carefully my father went about his work, even at an age when many lads are still at school. A month or so after writing this critical examination, "C. Bradlaugh, jun.," published his first pamphlet, entitled, "A Few Words on the Christian's Creed." To the Rev. J. G. Packer he dedicated his first printed attack upon orthodox Christianity, addressing him in the following words: —

"Sir, – Had the misfortunes which I owe to your officious interference been less than they are, and personal feeling left any place in my mind for deliberation or for inquiry in selecting a proper person to whom to dedicate these few remarks, I should have found myself directed, by many considerations, to the person of the Incumberer of St Peter's, Hackney Road. A life spent in division from part of your flock, and in crushing those whom you could not answer, may well entitle you to the respect of all true bigots. – Hoping that you will be honoured as you deserve, I am, Reverend Sir, yours truly,
C. Bradlaugh."

At the end of October in the same year he sent "a report of the closing season's campaign in Bonner's Fields, Victoria Park," to the *Reasoner*, from which I take an extract, not without interest for the light it throws upon the manners and methods then common at these out-door assemblies: —

"In May last, when I joined the fray, the state of affairs was as follows: In front of us, near the park gates, were stationed some two or three of the followers of the Victoria Park Mission, who managed to get a moderate attendance of hearers; on our extreme left was the Rev. Henry Robinson, who mustered followers to the amount of three or four hundred; on our right, and close to our place of meeting, was erected the tent of the Christian Instruction Society; sometimes, also, in our midst we have had the Rev. Mr Worrall, V.D.M., who gives out in his chapel one Sunday that infidelity is increasing, and that there must be fresh subscriptions for more Sunday-school teachers (who are never paid), and the next Sunday announces in the Fields that infidelity is dying away. Besides these, we have had Dr Oxley, and some dozens of tract distributors, who seemed to have no end to their munificence – not forgetting Mr Harwood, and a few other irregular preachers, who told us how wicked they had been in their youth, and what a mercy it was the Lord had changed them.

"When I first came out I attracted a little extra attention on account of my having been a Sunday-school teacher, and therefore had more opposition than some of our other friends; and as the Freethinking party did not muster quite so well as they do now, I met with some very unpleasant occurrences. One Monday evening in particular I was well stoned, and some friends both saw and heard several Christians urging the boys to pelt me. As, however, the attendance of the Freethinkers grew more regular, these minor difficulties vanished. But more serious ones rose in their place. George Offer, Esq., of Hackney, and Dr Oxley, intimated to the police that I ought not to be allowed to speak; and a Christian gentleman whose real name and address we could never get, but who passed by the name of Tucker, after pretending that he was my friend to Mrs Carlile, and learning all he could of me, appeared in the Park and made the most untrue charges. When he found he was being answered, he used to beckon the police and have me moved on… I happened to walk up to the Fields one evening, when I saw some of the bills announcing our lecture at Warner Place pulled down from the tree on which they had been placed. I immediately renewed them, and on the religious persons attempting to pull the bills down again I defended them; and one gentleman having broken a parasol over my arm in attempting to tear the bills, the congregation, of which Mr Robinson was the leader, became furious. The pencil of Cruikshank would have given an instructive and curious picture of the scene. They were crying out, men and women too, 'Down with him!' 'Have him down!' And here the scene would have been very painful to my feelings, for down they would have had me had not my own party gathered round, on which a treaty of peace was come to on the following terms, viz. that the man who tried to pull the bills down would guard them to keep them up as long as the religious people stayed there. Mr Robinson applied for a warrant against me, but the magistrate refused to grant it."

On another occasion, when some people whom he and Mr James Savage had been addressing in the Park had become unduly excited by a Scotch preacher, who politely informed them that they were "a generation of vipers," Mr Bradlaugh stepped forward in an attempt to pacify them, but much to his surprise was himself seized by police. Fortunately, several of the bystanders volunteered to go to the police station with him, and he was immediately released.

Nowadays the Parks and the Commons are the happy hunting-grounds for the outdoor speaker, where he inculcates almost any doctrine he chooses, unmolested by the police or the public.

CHAPTER IV
ARMY LIFE

But all his debating and writing, all his studying, did not fill my father's pockets; they, like their owner, grew leaner every day. With his increasing poverty he fell into debt: it was not much that he owed, only £4 15s., but small as the sum was, it was more than he could repay, or see any definite prospect of repaying, unless he could strike out some new path. My grandfather, Mr Hooper, who knew him then, not personally, but by seeing and hearing him, used to call him "the young enthusiast," and many a time in later years recalled his figure as he appeared in the winter of 1850, in words that have brought tears to my eyes. Tall, gaunt, white-faced and hollow cheeked, with arms too long for his sleeves, and trousers too short for his legs, he looked, what indeed he was, nearly starving. "He looked *hungry*, Hypatia," my grandfather would say with an expressive shudder; "he looked hungry." And others have told me the same tale. How *could* his parents bear to know that he had come to such a pass!

A subscription was offered him by some Freethinking friends, and deeply grateful as he was, it yet brought his poverty more alarmingly before him. One night in December, one of the brothers Barralet met him looking as I have said, and invited him into a coffee house close by to discuss some scheme or other. They went in and chatted for some minutes, but when the waiter had brought the food, it seemed suddenly to strike the guest that the "scheme" was merely an excuse to give him a supper, and with one look at his companion, he jumped up and fled out of the room.

On Sunday, the 15th of December, he was lecturing in Bonner's Fields, and went home with the sons of Mr Samuel Record to dinner. They tell that while at dinner he threw his arms up above his head and asked Mr Record in a jesting tone, "How do you think I should look in regimentals?" The elder man replied, "My boy, you are too noble for that." Unfortunately, a noble character could not clothe his long limbs, or fill his empty stomach, nor could it pay that terrible debt of £4 15s.

With "soldiering" vaguely in his mind, but yet without a clearly defined intention of enlisting, he went out two days afterwards, determined upon doing something to put an end to his present position. He walked towards Charing Cross, and there saw a poster inviting smart young men to join the East India Company's Service, and holding out to recruits the tempting bait of a bounty of £6 10s. This bounty was an overpowering inducement to the poor lad; his debts amounted to £4 15s.; this £6 10s. would enable him to pay all he owed and stand free once more. As Mr John M. Robertson justly says in his Memoir,[5] this incident was typical: "All through his life he had to shape his course to the paying off of his debts, toil as he would." Mr Headingley[6] tells that

> "With a firm step, resolutely and soberly, Bradlaugh went down some steps to a bar where the recruiting sergeants were in the habit of congregating. Here he discerned the very fat, beery, but honest sergeant, who was then enlisting for the East India Service, and at once volunteered. Bradlaugh little imagined, when he stepped out of the cellar and crossed Trafalgar Square once more – this time with the fatal shilling in his pocket – that after all he would never go to the East Indies, but remain in England to gather around him vast multitudes of enthusiastic partisans, who, on that very spot, would insist on his taking his seat in Parliament, as the member for Northampton; and this, too, in spite of those heterodox views which, as yet, had debarred him from earning even the most modest livelihood.

[5] Labour and Law, by Charles Bradlaugh. With Memoir by John M Robertson.

[6] Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

> "It happened, however, that the sergeant of the East India Company had 'borrowed a man' from the sergeant of the 50th Foot, and he determined honestly to pay back his debt with the person of Bradlaugh; so that after some hocus-pocus transactions between the two sergeants, Bradlaugh was surprised to find that he had been duly enrolled in the 50th Foot, and was destined for home service. Such a trick might have been played with impunity on some ignorant country yokel; but Bradlaugh at once rebelled, and made matters very uncomfortable for all persons concerned.
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> "Among other persons to whom he explained all his grievances was the medical officer who examined him. This gentleman fortunately took considerable interest in the case, and had a long chat with Bradlaugh. He could not engage him for India, as he belonged to the home forces, but he invited him to look out of the window, where the sergeants were pacing about, and select the regiment he might prefer. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh was not particularly disappointed at being compelled to remain in England; he objected principally to the lack of respect implied in trifling with his professed intentions. He was, therefore, willing to accept the compromise suggested by the physician. So long as his right of choice was respected, it did not much matter to him in which regiment he served.
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> "After watching for a little while the soldiers pacing in front of the window, his choice fell on a very smart cavalry man, and, being of the necessary height, he determined to join his corps."

The regiment he elected to join proved to be the 7th (Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, and thus, through the kindly assistance of the doctor, at the age of "17-3/12 years," he found himself a "full private" belonging to Her Majesty's forces.

After he enlisted he sent word, not to the father and mother who had treated him so coldly, but to the grandmother who loved him so dearly. She sent her daughter Mary to tell the parents of this new turn in their son's affairs, and the news seems to have been conveyed and received in a somewhat tragic manner. A day or so before Christmas Day she came with a face of gloomy solemnity to tell something so serious about Charles that the daughter Elizabeth, who happened to be there, was ordered out of the room. She remained weeping in the passage during the whole time of the family conclave, thinking that her brother must have done something very dreadful indeed.

Then the father went to see his son at Westminster, and obtained permission for the new recruit to spend the Christmas Day with his family. It is only natural to suppose that this semi-reconciliation must have afforded them all some sort of comfort, while I have a very strong personal conviction that the whole affair preyed upon the father's mind, and that the harshness he showed his son was really foreign to his general temper. Anyhow, his character underwent a great change after he let himself come under the influence of Mr Packer. He who before never went inside a church, now never missed a Sunday; he became concentrated and, to a certain extent, morose, and at length, on the 19th August 1852, some twenty months after his son's enlistment, he was taken suddenly ill at his desk in Cloak Lane. He was brought home in a state of unconsciousness, from which he was only aroused to fall into violent delirium, and so continued without once recovering his senses until the hour of his death, which was reached on Tuesday the 24th. He was only forty-one years of age, and had always had good health previously, never ailing anything; and I feel quite convinced that the agony of mind which he must have endured from the time when his son was first denounced to him as an "Atheist" was mainly the cause of his early death.

The 7th Dragoon Guards was at that time quartered in Ireland, and Mr A. S. Headingley tells at length the tragic-comic adventures the new recruit met with at sea on the three days' journey from London to Dublin: —

"The recruits who were ordered to join their regiment were marched down to a ship lying in the Thames which was to sail all the way to Ireland. Bradlaugh was the only recruit who wore a black suit and a silk hat. The former was very threadbare, and the latter weak about the rim, but still to the other recruits he seemed absurdly attired; and as he looked pale and thin and ill conditioned, it was not long before some one ventured to destroy the dignity of his appearance by bonneting him. The silk hat thus disposed of, much to the amusement of the recruits, who considered horse play the equivalent of wit, a raid was made upon Bradlaugh's baggage. His box was ruthlessly broken open, and when it was discovered that a Greek lexicon and an Arabic vocabulary were the principal objects he had thought fit to bring into the regiment, the scorn and derision of his fellow soldiers knew no bounds.

"A wild game of football was at once organized with the lexicon, and it came out of the scuffle torn and unmanageable. The Arabic vocabulary was a smaller volume, and it fared better. Ultimately, Bradlaugh recovered the book, and he keeps it still on his shelf, close to his desk, a cherished and useful relic of past struggles and endeavours.

"His luggage broken open, his books scattered to the winds, his hat desecrated and ludicrously mis-shaped by the rough hands of his fellow recruits, Bradlaugh certainly did not present the picture of a future leader of men. Yet, even at this early stage of his military life an opportunity soon occurred which turned the tables entirely in his favour.

"The weather had been looking ugly for some time, and now became more and more menacing, till at last a storm broke upon the ship with a violence so intense that the captain feared for her safety. It was absolutely necessary to move the cargo, and his crew were not numerous enough to accomplish, unaided, so arduous a task. Their services also were urgently required to manœuvre the ship. The captain, therefore, summoned the recruits to help, and promised that if they removed the cargo as he indicated, he would give them £5 to share among themselves. He further encouraged them by expressing his hope that if the work were well and promptly done, the ship would pull through the storm.

"The proposition was greeted with cheers, and Bradlaugh, in spite of his sea-sickness, helped as far as he was able in moving the cargo. The ship now rode the waves more easily, and in due time the storm subsided; and, the danger over, the soldiers thought the hour of reckoning was at hand. The recruits began to inquire about the £5 which had been offered as the reward of their gallant services; but, with the disappearance of the danger, the captain's generosity had considerably subsided. He then hit on a mean stratagem to avoid the fulfilment of his promise. He singled out three or four of the leading men, the strongest recruits, and gave them two half-crowns each, calculating that if the strongest had a little more than their share, they would silence the clamours of the weaker, who were altogether deprived of their due.

"The captain had not, however, reckoned on the presence of Bradlaugh. The pale, awkward youth, who as yet had only been treated with jeers and contempt, was the only person who dared stand up and face him. To the unutterable surprise of every one, he delivered a fiery, menacing, unanswerable harangue, upbraiding the captain in no measured terms, exposing in lucid language the meanness of his action, and concluding with the appalling threat of a letter to the *Times*. To this day Bradlaugh remembers, with no small sense of self-satisfaction, the utter and speechless amazement of the captain at the sight of a person so miserable in appearance suddenly becoming so formidable in speech and menace.

> "Awakened, therefore, to a consciousness of his own iniquity by Bradlaugh's eloquence, the captain distributed more money. The soldiers on their side at once formed a very different opinion of their companion, and, from being the butt, he became the hero of the troop. Every one was anxious to show him some sort of deference, and to make some acknowledgment for the services he had rendered."

While serving with his regiment Mr Bradlaugh was a most active advocate of temperance; he began, within a day or so of his arrival in Ireland, upon the quarter-master's daughters. He had been ordered to do some whitewashing for the quarter-master, and that officer's daughters saw him while he was at work, and took pity on him. I have told how he looked; and it is little wonder that his appearance aroused compassion. They brought him a glass of port wine, but this my father majestically refused, and delivered to the amused girls a lecture upon the dangers of intemperance, emphasising his remarks by waves of the whitewash brush. He has often laughed at the queer figure he must have presented, tall and thin, with arms and legs protruding from his clothes, and raised up near to the ceiling on a board, above the two girls, who listened to the lecture, wineglass in hand. Later on, when he had gained a certain amount of popularity amongst his comrades, he used to be let out of the barrack-room windows when he could not get leave of absence, by means of blankets knotted together, in order to attend and speak at temperance meetings in Kildare. But the difficulty was not so much in getting out of barracks as in getting in again; and sometimes this last was not accomplished without paying the penalty of arrest. The men of his troop gave him the nickname of "Leaves," because of his predilection for tea and books; his soldier's knapsack contained a Greek lexicon, an Arabic vocabulary, and a Euclid, the beginnings of the library which at last numbered over 7000 volumes. Mr Bradlaugh remained a total abstainer for several years – until 1861. At that time he was in bad health, and was told by his physician that he was drinking too much tea; he drank tea in those days for breakfast, dinner, and tea, and whenever he felt thirsty in between. From that time until 1886 he took milk regularly for breakfast, and in 1886 he varied this regimen by adding a little coffee to his milk, with a little claret or hock for dinner or supper, and a cup of tea after dinner and at teatime. It has been said that he had a "passion for tea," but that is a mere absurdity. If he had been out, he would ask on coming in for a cup of tea, as another man would ask for a glass of beer or a brandy and soda, but he would take it as weak as you liked to give it him.

The stories of the energetic comment of the 300 dragoons upon the sermon of the Rev. Mr Halpin at Rathmines Church, and the assertion of a right of way by "Private Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.," have both been graphically told by Mr Headingley[7] and by Mrs Besant.[8]

> "On Sundays," relates Mr Headingley, "when it was fine, the regiment was marched to Rathmines Church, and here, on one occasion – it was Whit-Sunday – the Rev. Mr Halpin preached a sermon which he described as being beyond the understandings of the military portion of his congregation. This somewhat irritated the Dragoon Guards, and Bradlaugh, to their great delight, wrote a letter to the preacher, not only showing that he fully understood his sermon, but calling him to account for the inaccuracy of his facts and the illogical nature of his opinions.
>
> "It was anticipated that an unpleasant answer might be made to this letter, and on the following Sunday the Dragoons determined to be fully prepared for the emergency. Accordingly, they listened carefully to the sermon. The Rev. Mr Halpin did not fail to allude to the letter he had received, but at the first sentence that was impertinent and contemptuous in its tone three hundred dragoons unhooked their

[7] Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

[8] Review of Reviews, March 1891.

swords as one man, and let the heavy weapons crash on the ground. Never had there been such a noise in a church, or a preacher so effectively silenced.

"An inquiry was immediately ordered to be held, Bradlaugh was summoned to appear, and serious consequences would have ensued; but, fortunately, the Duke of Cambridge came to Dublin on the next day, the review which was held in honour of his presence diverted attention, and so the matter dropped."

I give the right-of-way incident in Mrs Besant's words. While the regiment was at Ballincollig, she says —

"A curiously characteristic act made him the hero of the Inniscarra peasantry. A landowner had put up a gate across a right-of-way, closing it against soldiers and peasants, while letting the gentry pass through it. 'Leaves' looked up the question, and found the right-of-way was real; so he took with him some soldiers and some peasants, pulled down the gate, broke it up, and wrote on one of the bars, 'Pulled up by Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII D. G.' The landowner did not prosecute, and the gate did not reappear."

The landlord did not prosecute, because when he made his complaint to the officer commanding the regiment, the latter suggested that he should make quite certain that he had the law on his side, for Private Bradlaugh generally knew what he was about. The peasants, whose rights had been so boldly defended, did not confine their gratitude to words, but henceforth they kept their friend supplied with fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and such homely delicacies as they thought a private in a cavalry regiment would be likely to appreciate.

After speaking of the difficulties into which my father might have got over the Rathmines affair, Mrs Besant[9] tells of another occasion in which his position

"was even more critical. He was orderly room clerk, and a newly arrived young officer came into the room where he was sitting at work, and addressed to him some discourteous order. Private Bradlaugh took no notice. The order was repeated with an oath. Still no movement. Then it came again with some foul words added. The young soldier rose, drew himself to his full height, and, walking up to the officer, bade him leave the room, or he would throw him out. The officer went, but in a few minutes the grounding of muskets was heard outside, the door opened, and the Colonel walked in, accompanied by the officer. It was clear that the private soldier had committed an act for which he might be court-martialled, and as he said once, 'I felt myself in a tight place.' The officer made his accusation, and Private Bradlaugh was bidden to explain. He asked that the officer should state the exact words in which he had addressed him, and the officer who had, after all, a touch of honour in him, gave the offensive sentence word for word. Then Private Bradlaugh said, addressing his Colonel, that the officer's memory must surely be at fault in the whole matter, as he could not have used language so unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Colonel turned to the officer with the dry remark, 'I think Private Bradlaugh is right; there *must* be some mistake,' and he left the room."

Many are the stories that might be told of these his soldier's days. One incident that I have often heard him give, and which may well come in here, is referred to in Mr Robertson's interesting *Memoir* appended to my father's last book, "Labour and Law." This was an experience gained at Donnybrook Fair, the regiment being then quartered near "that historic village." "When Fair time came near the peasantry circulated a well-planned taunt to the effect that the men of the Seventh would be afraid

[9] See Character Sketch *Charles Bradlaugh*. – Review of Reviews, March 1891.

to present themselves on the great day. The Seventh acted accordingly. Sixteen picked men got a day's leave – and shillelaghs. 'I was the shortest of the sixteen,'" said Mr Bradlaugh, as he related the episode, not without some humorous qualms, and *he* stood 6 feet 1½ inches. "The sixteen just 'fought through,' and their arms and legs were black for many weeks, though their heads, light as they clearly were, did not suffer seriously. But," he added, with a sigh, as he finished the story, "I *couldn't* do it now."

A further experience of a really tragic and terrible kind I will relate in my father's own words, for in these he most movingly describes a scene he himself witnessed, and a drama in which he took an unwilling part.

> "Those of you who are Irishmen," he begins,[10] "will want no description of that beautiful valley of the Lee which winds between the hills from Cork, and in summer seems like a very Paradise, green grass growing to the water side, and burnished with gold in the morning, and ruddy to very crimson in the evening sunset. I went there on a November day. I was one of a troop to protect the law officers, who had come with the agent from Dublin to make an eviction a few miles from Inniscarra, where the river Bride joins the Lee. It was a miserable day – rain freezing into sleet as it fell – and the men beat down wretched dwelling after wretched dwelling, some thirty or forty perhaps. They did not take much beating down; there was no flooring to take up; the walls were more mud than aught else; and there was but little trouble in the levelling of them to the ground. We had got our work about three parts done, when out of one of them a woman ran, and flung herself on the ground, wet as it was, before the Captain of the troop, and she asked that her house might be spared – not for long, but for a little while. She said her husband had been born in it; he was ill of the fever, but could not live long, and she asked that he might be permitted to die in it in peace. Our Captain had no power; the law agent from Dublin wanted to get back to Dublin; his time was of importance, and he would not wait; and that man was carried out while we were there – in front of us, while the sleet was coming down – carried out on a wretched thing (you could not call it a bed), and he died there while we were there; and three nights afterwards, while I was sentry on the front gate at Ballincollig Barracks, we heard a cry, and when the guard was turned out, we found this poor woman there a raving maniac, with one dead babe in one arm, and another in the other clinging to the cold nipple of her lifeless breast. And," asked my father, in righteous indignation, "if you had been brothers to such a woman, sons of such a woman, fathers of such a woman, would not rebellion have seemed the holiest gospel you could hear preached?"

[10] *National Reformer*, November 16, 1873. A speech on the Irish Question delivered in New York; reprinted from the *New York Tribune* of October 7th.

CHAPTER V
ARMY LIFE CONCLUDED

When his father died in 1852 Private Charles Bradlaugh came home on furlough to attend the funeral. He was by this time heartily sick of soldiering, and under the circumstances was specially anxious to get home to help in the support of his family. (This, one writer, without the slightest endeavour to be accurate even on the simplest matters, says is nonsense, because his family only numbered *two*, his mother and his brother!) His great-aunt, Elizabeth Trimby, promised to buy him out, and he went back to his regiment buoyed up by her promise. In September he was in hospital, ill with rheumatic fever, and after that he seems to have had more or less rheumatism during the remainder of his stay in Ireland; for in June 1853, in writing to his sister, apologising for having passed over her birthday without a letter, he says: "I was, unfortunately, on my bed from another attack of the rheumatism, which seized my right knee in a manner anything but pleasant, but it is a mere nothing to the dose I had last September, and I am now about again."

The letters I have by me of my father's, written home at this time, instead of teeming with fiery fury and magniloquent phrases as to shooting his officers,[11] are just a lad's letters; the sentences for the most part a little formal and empty, with perhaps the most interesting item reserved for the postscript; now and again crude verses addressed to his sister, and winding up almost invariably with "write soon." After the father's death Mr Lepard, a member of the firm in which he had been confidential clerk for upwards of twenty-one years, used his influence to get the two youngest children, Robert and Harriet, into Orphan Asylums. While the matter was yet in abeyance Elizabeth seems to have written her brother asking if any of the officers could do anything to help in the matter, and on March 14th he answers her from Ballincollig: —

> "I am very sorry to say that you have a great deal more to learn of the world yet, my dear Elizabeth, or you would not expect to find an officer of the army a subscriber to an Orphan Asylum. There may be a few, but the most part of them spend all the money they have in hunting, racing, boating, horses, dogs, gambling, and drinking, besides other follies of a graver kind, and have little to give to the poor, and less inclination to give it even than their means."

My father's great-aunt, Miss Elizabeth Trimby, died in June 1853, at the age of eighty-five. She died without having fulfilled her promise of buying her nephew's discharge; but as the little money she left, some £70, came to the Bradlaugh family, they had now the opportunity of themselves carrying out her intention, or, to be exact, her precise written wishes.[12]

The mother, in her heart, wanted her son home: she needed the comfort of his presence, and the help of his labour, to add to their scanty women's earnings; but she was a woman slow to forgive, and her son had set his parents' commands at defiance, and gone out into the world alone, rather than bow his neck to the yoke his elders wished to put upon him. She talked the matter over with her neighbours, and if it was a kindly, easy-going neighbour, who said, "Oh, I should have him home,"

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[11] Whether rightly or wrongly, my father thought he was treated with exceptional severity by his Captain during the first part of the time he was in the army; and this has been exaggerated into a story of how in his letters to his mother during the latter part of his army life he was "*constantly* informing her" that "unless she obtained his discharge he would put a bullet through this officer." The story, I need hardly say, is quite untrue, and to any one who knew my father must seem almost too absurd to need refutation. During Mr Bradlaugh's illness in 1889 Captain Walker, then General Sir Beauchamp Walker, called twice to inquire at Circus Road. My father was very dull and depressed one day as he lay in bed, and, thinking to cheer him. I mentioned the names of persons who I knew he would like to hear had inquired; and when I read the name from the card, and said that General Walker had told the maid to "tell Mr Bradlaugh that his old Captain had called," he was delighted beyond measure, and was for the moment the boy private again, with the private's feelings for his superior officer. The visit gratified him almost as much as if it had been one from Mr Gladstone himself.

[12] *National Reformer*, Feb. 10, 1884.

then she allowed her real desires to warm her heart a little, and think that perhaps she would; if, on the other hand, her neighbour dilated upon the wickedness of her son, and the enormity of his offences, then she would harden herself against him. Her daughter Elizabeth wanted him home badly; and whilst her mother was away at Mitcham, attending the funeral, and doing other things in connection with the death of Miss Trimby, Elizabeth wrote to her brother, asking what it would cost to buy him out. He was instructed to write on a separate paper, as she was afraid of her mother's anger when she saw it, and wished to take the favourable opportunity of a soft moment to tell her. She was left in charge at home, and thinking her mother safe at Mitcham for a week, she had timed the answer to come in her absence. One day she had to leave the house to take home some work which she had been doing. On her return, much to her dismay, her mother met her at the door perfectly furious. The letter had come during the girl's short absence, and her mother had come home unexpectedly! "How dared she write her brother? How dared she ask such a question?" the mother demanded, and poor Elizabeth was in sad disgrace all that day, and for some time afterwards. This was the answer her brother sent, on June 22nd, from Cahir —

> "As you wish, I send on this sheet what it would cost to buy me off; but I would not wish to rob you and mother like that.

For the Discharge	£30	0	0
Compensation for general clothing	0	17	6
Passage money home	1	16	0
	—	—	—
	£32	13	6

> or about £33.
>
> "I could come home in regimentals, because clothes could be bought cheaper in London, and I would work like a slave; but do not think, my dear sister, I want to take the money from you and mother, though I would do anything to get from the army.
>
> "We are under orders to march into the county of Clare to put down the rioters at Six Mile Bridge, in the coming election, and expect some fighting there."

The discharge was applied for in August, but I gather that Mr Lepard, who assisted my grandmother in the little legal matters arising out of Miss Trimby's death, was not very favourable to the project, and seems to have required some guarantee as to my father's character,[13] before he would remit the money.

However, it was at length definitely arranged that the aunt's promise should be kept, and that her money should purchase the discharge according to her intentions. A thoroughly boyish letter gives expression to Private Bradlaugh's sentiments on hearing the good news. It is dated from "Cahir, 6th October 1853: —

> "My Dear Mother, – When I opened your letter, before reading it I waved it three times round my head, and gave a loud 'hurra' from pure joy, for then I felt assured that all this was not a mere dream, but something very like reality. The £30 has not yet made its appearance on the scene. I shall be glad to see it, as I shall not

[13] Amongst some letters my father gave me some long time ago is one which must have satisfied even Mr Lepard. It is as follows: —"Cahir Barracks, September 23rd, 1853."Sir, – Having been informed by Private Charles Bradlaugh of the 7th Dragoon Guards, that you require some testimonials as to character, I beg to inform you that during the time this man has been in the regiment (since December 1850) his conduct has been extremely good, and I beg also to add that he is always considered to be a clever, well-informed, and steady young man. Should you require any further information, I shall be most happy to give [all] in my power. – I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,"E. T. Dowbiggin,Lieut. and Adjutant, 7th Dragoon Guards."J. Lepard, Esq."*P.S.*– I may observe that during the last eighteen months this man has been occupying rather a prominent situation in the regiment, being that of orderly room clerk, and has consequently been immediately under my notice."

feel settled till I get away. I am, however, rather damped to hear of your ill-health, but hope for something better. I have made inquiries about butter, but it is extremely dear, 1s. to 14d. per lb. in this county.

"When the £30 arrives I will write to let you know the day I shall be home. Till then, believe me, my dearest mother, your affectionate Son,
Charles Bradlaugh.

"Love to Elizabeth, Robert, and Harriet."

He did not have to wait long for the appearance of the £30 "on the scene," which speedily resulted in the following "parchment certificate: " —

"7th (Princess Royal's) Regiment of Dragoon Guards

"These are to certify that Charles Bradlaugh, Private, born in the Parish of Hoxton, in or near the Town of London, in the County of Middlesex, was enlisted at Westminster for the 7th Dragoon Guards, on the 17th December 1850, at the age of 17-3/12 years. That he served in the Army for two years and 301 days. That he is discharged in consequence of his requesting the same, on payment of £30.
"C. F. Ainslie, Hd. Commanding Officer.

"Dated at Cahir, 12th October 1853.
"Adjutant General's Office, Dublin.

"Discharge of Private Charles Bradlaugh confirmed.

"14th October 1853. J. Eden,[14] 7th D. G.
"Character: Very Good.
"C. F. Ainslie, 7th D. Guards."

The merely formal part of the discharge is made out in his own handwriting as orderly room clerk.

These three years of army life were of great value to my father. First of all physically: for a little time before he enlisted he had been half starved, and his health was being undermined by constant privation just at a time when his great and growing frame most needed nourishing. In the army he had food, which although it might be of a kind to be flouted by an epicure, was sufficiently abundant, and came at regular intervals. The obnoxious drill which he had to go through must have helped to broaden his chest (at his death he was forty-six-and-a-half inches round the chest) and harden his muscles, and so gave him the strength which served him so well in the later years of his life. He learned to fence and to ride, and both accomplishments proved useful in latter days. Fencing was always a favourite exercise with him and, in after days, when alone, he would also often exercise his muscles by going through a sort of sword drill with the old cavalry sabre, which is hanging on my wall to-day. Riding he at first abhorred, and probably any London East End lad would share his sentiments when first set upon a cavalry charger with a hard mouth; he was compelled to ride until the blood ran down his legs, and before these wounds had time to heal he had to be on horseback again. When he was orderly room clerk, and was not compelled to ride so often, then he took a liking for it, and then he really learned to sit and manage his horse. Often and often during the last years of his life he longed to be rich enough to keep a horse, so that he might ride to the House and wherever his business might take him within easy distance, and thus get the exercise of which he stood so urgently in need.

[14] This signature is almost illegible.

It was, too, while with his regiment in Ireland that Mr Bradlaugh first became acquainted with James Thomson, an acquaintance which soon ripened into a friendship which lasted for five-and-twenty years. In the quiet nights, whilst the private was on sentry duty, he and the young schoolmaster would have long serious talks upon subjects a little unusual, perhaps, amongst the rank and file; or in the evening, when Thomson's work was done, and Private Bradlaugh could get leave, they would go for a ramble together. They each became the confidant of the other's troubles and aspirations, and each was sure of a sympathetic listener.

That his regiment happened to be stationed in Ireland during the whole time he belonged to it was of immense importance to him. He learned the character and the needs of the Irish peasantry as he could have learned it in no other way. The sights he saw and the things he heard whilst he was in Ireland, as the story I cited a few pages back will show, produced in him such a profound feeling of tenderness and sympathy for the Irish people, that not all the personal enmity which was afterwards shown him by Irishmen could destroy or even weaken.

CHAPTER VI
MARRIAGE

Barely three short years away, yet how many changes in that short time. My father found, father, aunt, and grandmother dead; his little sister and brother – of five and eight years – in Orphan Asylums. Even his kind friend Mrs Carlile was dead, and her children scattered, gone to the other side of the Atlantic, to be lost sight of by him for many years. Of their fate he learned later that the two daughters were married, while Julian, his one time companion, was killed in the American War.

On his return my father's first endeavour was, of course, to seek for work, so that he might help to maintain his mother and sisters; but although he sought energetically, and at first had much faith in the charm of his "very good" character, no one seemed to want the tall trooper. After a little his mother, unhappily, began to taunt him with the legacy money having been used to buy his discharge; and although he thought, and always maintained, that the money was morally his, to be used for that purpose, since it was carrying out the intentions of his aunt expressed so short a time before her death, he nevertheless determined to, and in time did, pay every farthing back again to his mother, through whose hands the money had come to him. He was offered the post of timekeeper with a builder at Fulham, at a salary of 20s. a week; this Mrs Bradlaugh objected to, as taking him too far away from home.

One day he went, amongst other places, into the office of Mr Rogers, a solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, to inquire whether he wanted a clerk. Mr Rogers had no vacancy for a clerk, but mentioned casually that he wanted a lad for errands and office work. My father asked, "What wages?" "Ten shillings a week," replied Mr Rogers. "Then I'll take it," quickly decided my father, feeling rather in despair as to getting anything better, but bravely resolved to get something. Not that he was in reality very long without work, for his discharge from the army was dated at Dublin, October 14th, 1853, and I have a letter written from "70 Fenchurch Street" on January 2nd, 1854, so that he could not have been idle for more than about two months at the most. There is no reference whatever in the letter to the newness of his situation, so that he had probably been with Mr Rogers some weeks prior to the 2nd January 1854. The solicitor soon found out that his "errand boy" had considerable legal knowledge and, what was even more important, a marvellous quickness in apprehension of legal points. At the end of each three months his salary was increased by five shillings, and after nine months he had intrusted to him the whole of the Common Law department. Very soon he was able to add a little to his income by acting as secretary to a Building Society at the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

As soon as my father found himself in regular employment he began to write and speak again; but even as the busybodies turned the kind-hearted baker's wife against him a few years before, so now again they tried to ruin his career with Mr Rogers. Anonymous and malicious letters were sent, but they did not find in him a weak though good-hearted creature, with a fearful apprehension that the smell usually associated with brimstone would permeate the legal documents; on the contrary, he was a shrewd man who knew the value of his clerk, and treated the anonymous letters with contempt, only asking of my father that he should "not let his propaganda become an injury to his business."

Thus it was he took the name of "Iconoclast," under the thin veil of which he did all his anti-theological work until he became candidate for Parliament in 1868; thenceforward he always spoke and wrote under his own name, whatever the subject he was dealing with. Any appearance of concealment or secrecy was dreadfully irksome to him, though in 1854 he had very little choice.

About Christmas 1853 my father made the acquaintance of a family named Hooper, all of whom were Radicals and Freethinkers except Mrs Hooper, who would have preferred to have belonged to Church people because they were so much more thought of. She had great regard for her

neighbours' opinion, and for that reason objected to chess and cards on Sunday. Abraham Hooper, her husband, must on such points as these have been a constant thorn in the dear old lady's side: he was an ardent Freethinker and Radical, a teetotaller, and a non-smoker. All his opinions he held aggressively; and no matter where was the place or who was the person, he rarely failed to make an opportunity to state his opinions. He was very honest and upright, a man whose word was literally his bond. He had often heard my father speak in Bonner's Fields, and had named him "the young enthusiast." He himself from his boyhood onward was always in the thick of popular movements; although a sturdy Republican, he was one of the crowd who cheered Queen Caroline; he was present at all the Chartist meetings at London; and he was a great admirer of William Lovett. On more than one occasion he was charged by the police whilst taking part in processions. He once unwittingly became mixed up with a secret society, but he speedily disentangled himself – there was nothing of the secret conspirator about him.

He was what might be called "a stiff customer," over six feet in height, and broad in proportion; and he would call his spade a spade. If you did not like it – well, it was so much the worse for you, if you could not give a plain straightforward reason why it should be called "a garden implement." "Verbosity" was lost upon him; he passed it over unnoticed, and came back to his facts as though you had not spoken. In his early old age he had rather a fine appearance, and I have several times been asked at meetings which he has attended with us, who is that "grand-looking old man." Although in politics and religion he was all on the side of liberty, in his own domestic circle he was a tyrant and a despot, exacting the most rigorous and minute obedience to his will.

His passionate affection for my father was a most beautiful thing to see. He had heard him speak, as a lad, many a time in Bonner's Fields, and from 1854 had him always under his eye. "The young enthusiast" became "my boy Charles," the pride and the joy of his life; and he loved him with a love which did but grow with his years. My father's friends were his friends, my father's enemies were his enemies; and although "Charles" might forgive a friend who had betrayed him and take him back to friendship again, *he* never did, and was always prepared for the betrayal – which, alas! too often came. He outlived my father by only five months: until a few years before his death he had never ailed anything, and did not know what headache or toothache meant; but when his "boy" was gone life had no further interest for him, and he willingly welcomed death.

And it was the eldest daughter of this single-hearted, if somewhat rigorous man, Susannah Lamb Hooper, whom my father loved and wedded. I knew that my mother had kept and cherished most of the letters written her by my father during their courtship, but I never opened the packet until I began this biography. These letters turn out to be more valuable than I had expected, for they entirely dispose of some few amongst the many fictions which have been more or less current concerning Mr Bradlaugh.

At the first glance one is struck with the quantity of verse amongst the letters. I say struck, because nearly, if not quite, all his critics, friendly and hostile, have asserted that Mr Bradlaugh was entirely devoid of poetic feeling or love of verse. With the unfriendly critics this assumed lack seems to indicate something very bad: a downright vice would be more tolerable in their eyes; and even the friendly critics appear to look upon it as a flaw in his character. I am, however, bound to confirm the assumption in so far as that, during later years at least, he looked for something more than music in verse; and mere words, however beautifully strung together, had little charm for him. His earliest favourites amongst poets seem to have been Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law rhymer, and, of course, Shelley. As late as 1870 he was lecturing upon Burns and Byron; later still he read Whittier with delight; and I have known him listen with great enjoyment to Marlowe, Spenser, Sydney, and others, although, curiously enough, for Swinburne he had almost an active distaste, caring neither to read his verse nor to hear it read. It is something to remember that it was my father, and he alone, who threw open his pages to James Thomson ("B. V.") at a time when he was ignored and unrecognised and could nowhere find a publisher to recognise the fire and genius of his grand and gloomy verse.

But to return to his own verses: he began early, and his Bonner's Fields speeches in 1849 and 1850 more often than not wound up with a peroration in rhyme; in verse, such as it was, he would sing the praises of Kossuth, Mazzini, Carlile, or whatever hero was the subject of his discourse. His verses to my mother were written before and after marriage: the last I have is dated 1860. I am not going to quote any of these compositions, for my father died in the happy belief that all save two or three had perished; but there is one that he sent my mother which will, I think, bear quoting, and has an interest for its author's sake. Writing in July 1854, he says: "I trust you will excuse my boldness in forwarding the enclosed, but think you will like its pretty style. I begged it from my only literary acquaintance, a young schoolmaster, so can take no credit to myself" —

"Breathe onward, soft breeze, odour laden,
And gather new sweets on your way,
For a happy and lovely young maiden
Will inhale thy rich perfume this day.
And tell her, oh! breeze softly sighing,
When round her your soft pinions wreathe,
That my love-stricken soul with thee vieing
All its treasures to her would outbreathe.

"Flow onward, ye pure sparkling waters
In sunshine with ripple and spray,
For the fairest of earth's young daughters
Will be imaged within you this day.
And tell her, oh! murmuring river,
When past her your bright billows roll,
That thus, too, her fairest form ever
Is imaged with truth in my soul."

The "young schoolmaster" was, of course, James Thomson; and these verses express the thought which occurs again so delightfully in No. XII. of the "Sunday up the River."[15]

Another current fiction concerning my father is that he was coarse, rude, and ill-mannered in his young days. Now, to take one thing alone as a text: Can I believe that the love letters now before me that he wrote to my dear mother could have been penned by one of coarse speech and unrefined thought? The tender and respectful courtesy of some of them carries one back to a century or so ago, when a true lover was most choice in the expressions he used to his mistress. No! No one with a trace of coarseness in his nature could have written these letters.

Another and equally unfounded calumny, which has been most industriously circulated, concerns my father's own pecuniary position and his alleged neglect of his mother. I am able to quote passages from this correspondence which make very clear statements on these points; and the silent testimony of these letters, written in confidence to his future wife, is quite incontrovertible. In a letter written on the 17th November 1854, he says: —

> "My present income at the office is £65, and at the Building Society £35, making about £100 a year, but I have not yet enjoyed this long enough to feel the full benefit of it. I am confident, if nothing fresh arises, of an increase at Christmas, but am also trying for a situation which if I can get would bring me in £150 per annum and upwards. Your father did not tell me when I saw him that I was extravagant, but he said that he thought I was not 'a very saving character,' so that you see, according

[15] The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems. By James Thomson ("B. V.").

> to good authority, we are somewhat alike… I do not blame you for expecting to hear from me, but I was, as the Americans say, in a fix. I did not like to write, lest your father might think I was virtually taking advantage of a consent not yet given.
>
> "You will, of course, understand from my not being a very careful young man why I am not in a position of healthy pockets, purse plethora, plenum in the money-box, so necessary to one who wishes to entangle himself in the almost impenetrable mysteries of 'house-keeping.'
>
> "I don't know whether you were ever sufficiently charmed with the subject to make any calculations on the £ s. d. questions of upholstery, etc. I have, and after knocking my head violently against gigantic 'four posters,' and tumbling over 'neat fender and fire-irons,' I have been most profoundly impressed with respect and admiration for every one who could coolly talk upon so awful a subject."

From the foregoing letter it would appear that Mr. Hooper would not give a definite consent to the marriage; and a little later my father writes that he had again asked for the paternal approval, and draws a picture of "C. B." kneeling to the "krewel father." The consent asked for was apparently given this time, and plans and preparations for the marriage were made. On 20th March 1855 my father writes: —

> "I also thought that it seemed a rather roundabout way of arriving at a good end, that I should take upon myself the bother of lodgers in one house, while mother at home intended to let the two upstairs rooms to some one else. I also thought that supposing anything were to happen either to separate me from the Building Society or to stop its progress, I might be much embarrassed in a pecuniary point of view with the burden of two rents attached to me. It therefore struck me, and I suggested to mother and Lizzie, whether it would not be possible, and not only possible but preferable, that we should all live in the same house as separate and distinct as though we were strangers in one sense, and yet not so in another. Mother and Lizzie both fully agreed with me, but it is a question, my dearest Susan, which entirely rests with you, and you alone must decide the question. I have agreed to allow mother 10s. per week, and if we lived elsewhere, mother out of it would have to pay rent, whilst ours would be in no way reduced. Again, if you felt dull there would be company for you, and I might feel some degree of hesitation in leaving you to find companionship in persons utterly strangers to both of us. There are doubtless evils connected with my proposal, but I think they are preventible ones. Mother might wish to interfere with your mode of arrangements. This she has promised in no way whatever to do. I leave the matter to yourself – on the ground of economy much might be said – at any rate my own idea is that we could not hurt by trying the experiment for a time; but do not let my ideas influence you in your decision: I will be governed by you: believe me, I only wish and endeavour to form a plan by which we may live happy and comfortably."

In April we have the first recorded lawsuit in which Mr. Bradlaugh took part as one of the principals, though earlier than this, soon after quitting the army, he had shown much legal acumen and practical wisdom in a case that I cannot do better than quote here in his own words: —

"While I was away," he says, "a number of poor men had subscribed their funds together, and had erected a Working Man's Hall, in Goldsmith's Row, Hackney Road. Not having any legal advice, it turned out that they had been entrapped into erecting their building on freehold ground without any lease or conveyance from the freeholder, who asserted his legal right to the building. The men consulted me, and finding that under the Statute of Frauds they had no remedy, I recommended them to offer a penalty rent of £20 a year. This being refused, I constituted myself into a law court; and

without any riot or breach of the peace, I with the assistance of a hundred stout men took every brick of the building bodily away, and divided the materials, so far as was possible, amongst the proper owners. I think I can see now the disappointed rascal of a freeholder when he only had his bare soil left once more. He did not escape unpunished; for, to encourage the others to contribute, he had invested some few pounds in the building. He had been too clever: he had relied on the letter of the law, and I beat him with a version of common-sense justice."

To return to my father's first suit in law. He brought an action for false imprisonment against a solicitor named Wyatt. It appeared that a person named Clements had assigned a wharf and certain book debts and books to Messrs. Carr, Lamb & Co., and Mr Rogers, their solicitor, sent Mr Bradlaugh, then his clerk, to Mr Wyatt's office, Gray's Inn, to fetch away the books. Mr Wyatt refused to give them up: Mr Bradlaugh seized them and carried them (an immense pile) to a cab he had waiting. Mr Wyatt appeared on the scene with a clerk, and endeavoured to regain possession of the books. After much resistance, in which my father's coat was torn and hands cut, Mr Wyatt, unable to get the books, called a policeman, and gave his adversary into custody on a charge of "stealing the books;" this he withdrew for another – "creating a disturbance and carrying off books." My father was locked up (whether for minutes or hours I know not) with a boy who had been apprehended whilst picking pockets. When he was brought before the magistrate he was discharged, because no one appeared to prosecute. He wrote a number of letters to Mr Wyatt demanding an apology, but received no answer, and at length brought an action against him for false imprisonment. The case came on before Mr Justice Crompton, and much to his delight, he won a verdict, with £30 damages.

The foregoing is, I think, the only case in Mr Bradlaugh's career in which he kept damages awarded him for his own personal use. In every other case the damages were given to some charity – in later years, always to the Masonic Boys' School. This time however the damages awarded him by the jury were used in a purely personal manner, for the money enabled him to hasten his marriage, and on June 5th, 1855, he and my mother were married at St. Philip's Church, in the Parish of Stepney, he barely 22 years of age, and she two years his senior.

They went to live at Warner Place, as was suggested in a letter I have quoted; and my mother, who had been in very poor health for some time previous to her marriage, seems to have gone with her sister-in-law to Reigate for a few days at the end of the following July. How very straitened their circumstances were, the following extract from a letter of my father's to his wife will show: —

> "Carr and Lamb have not settled with me, and I am much pinched for cash, in fact, so much so that, as mother seems to wish to come to Reigate, I have thought of letting her come on Sunday, and staying at home myself, as I cannot manage both. If you feel well enough, I would like you to come home about next Thursday or Friday, as I begin to feel rather topsy-turvy… If I do not come, I will send you money to clear you through the week. Do not think me in the least degree unkind if I stay away, because I assure you it is a great source of discomfort to me; but the fact is, if you want to spend thirty shillings, and have only twenty, there arises a most unaccountable difficulty in getting your purse and programme to agree. Had Carr and L., as I anticipated, closed accounts with me on Monday, all would have gone on smoothly, but as it is I am cramped. I have also been disappointed in the receipt of two or three other small sums which, coupled with an increased expenditure, all help to draw me up short."

The newly-married couple did not stop very long at Warner Place. Mrs Bradlaugh senior and her daughter-in-law did not get on comfortably together, and so husband and wife removed to 4 West Street, Bethnal Green, where their first child, my sister Alice, was born on April 30, 1856. At the outset my parents were devotedly attached to one another, an attachment which was not in the least degree diminished on my mother's part until the hour of her death; and had they remained pinched

by the same close grip of poverty as at first their union might have remained unbroken; who can say? My father was essentially a "home" man, and when not called away on business preferred his own fireside to that of any other man. People have taken it upon themselves to describe my mother's personal appearance, some by one adjective and some by another; but to my eyes, at least, she was comely to look upon. She was a brunette, with hair which was black and silky, and the finest I ever saw; she was nearly as tall as my father, and carried herself well, although in her later years she was much too stout. She was good-natured to a fault, generous to lavishness, and had an open ear and an open pocket for every tale of sorrow or distress. During my recollection our home was never without one or more needy visitors: my father's brother and youngest sister, her own brother and sister, Mr James Thomson, and others too numerous to mention, all partook of the open-hearted hospitality which was lavished upon them. She shone at her best in entertaining my father's political friends, and her good-natured amiability made her a general favourite. She was passionately attached to her children, and was rewarded by her children's devotion, which endured through fair weather and foul; as, indeed, was only her just due, for in all points save one she was the best of mothers.

And it was this one point which, overbalancing all the rest, ruined our home, lost her my father's love and her friends' respect, and was the cause of her own sufferings, unhappiness, and early death. As soon as fortune and success began to shine ever so feebly on my father's labours, there did not lack the usual flatterers to his wife, and panderers to her unhappy weakness. In a terribly short time, by the aid of thoughtless, good-natured evil-doers and intentional malice, this weakness developed into absolute and confirmed intemperance, which it seemed as though nothing could check. With intemperance came the long train of grievous consequences; easy good nature became extravagant folly, and was soon followed by the alienation of real friends and a ruined home. My father was gentleness and forbearance itself, but his life was bitterly poisoned; he had his wife treated medically, and sent to a hydropathic establishment, but all to no purpose. When our home was finally broken up in 1870, and the closest retrenchment was necessary, my father decided that it was utterly impossible to do that with dignity as long as my mother remained in London; so she and we two girls – my brother was at school – went to board with my grandfather at Midhurst, Sussex. It was intended as a merely temporary arrangement, and had it proved beneficial to my mother we should, when better times came, have had a reunited home; but, alas! it was not to be. At first my father came fairly frequently to Midhurst, but there was no improvement, and so his visits became fewer and fewer; they brought him no pleasure, but merely renewed the acuteness of his suffering. At length he, always thoughtful for those about him and recognising the terrible strain upon us his daughters in the life we were then leading, arranged for us each to spend a month alternately with him at his London lodgings, but not continuously, as he was anxious not to separate us. Sometimes it was contrived for us both to be in London together, and these were indeed sun-shiny days. We wrote letters for him, and did what we could, and he made us happy by persuading us that we were his secretaries and really useful to him; we tried to be, but I fear our desires and his loving acceptance of our work went far beyond its real merits. With time my mother became a confirmed invalid, and in May 1877 she died very unexpectedly from heart disease engendered by alcoholism.

Malevolent people have made a jest of all this, but the tragedy was ours; others even more malevolent have endeavoured to make my father in some way blameworthy in the matter – they might just as well blame me! Any one who knows the story in all its details, with its years of silent martyrdom for him, will know that my father's behaviour was that of one man in a thousand. Some also have said that my mother was in an asylum. Perhaps the following quotation from a letter written by her from Midhurst, a few days before her death, to us who were in London getting my father's things straight in his new lodgings, will be the best answer, and will also show a little the kind of woman she was: —

> "My chest is so bad. I really feel ill altogether; if either of you were with me, you could not do me any good. I shall be glad of a letter to know how Hypatia gets on.

"Do not neglect writing me, my darlings, for my heart is very sad. With great love to dear Papa, and also to your own dear selves. – Always believe me, your faithful mother,
S. L. Bradlaugh."

I have in this chapter said all I intend to say as to the relations between my father and my mother. I shall perhaps be pardoned – in my capacity as daughter, if not in that of biographer – for leaving the matter here, and not going into it more fully. It is a painful subject for one who loved her parents equally, and would fain have been equally proud of both. Honestly speaking, I think I should never have had the courage to touch upon it at all had I not felt that my duty to my father absolutely required it. He allowed himself to be maligned and slandered publicly and privately on the subject of his alleged separation from his wife, but he never once took up the pen to defend himself. Hence it becomes my unhappy duty to give the world for the first time some real idea of the truth.

CHAPTER VII
HYDE PARK MEETINGS, 1855

In the summer of 1855, Mr Bradlaugh for the first time took part in a great Hyde Park meeting. He went, like so many others, merely as a spectator, having no idea that the part he would be called upon to play would lead him into a position of prominence. In order to get a little into the spirit of that Hyde Park meeting, I must recall a few of the events which led up to it.

A Bill had been introduced into the House of Commons by Lord Robert Grosvenor which was called the New Sunday Bill or the Sunday Trading Bill, and had for its object the prevention of the whole of that small trading by poor vendors, with which we are familiar in certain parts of the metropolis to-day. Who has not seen or heard of the Sunday marketing in Petticoat Lane, Leather Lane, Golden Lane, Whitecross Street, and many such another place? This small trading is very useful, and in many cases absolutely necessary to the very poor, who, being at work all the week, would not otherwise have time for the purchase of the Sunday dinner – the one real dinner of the week – shoes, or such other articles of clothing as decency compels them to have even when their slender purses almost forbid the purchase. Lord Robert Grosvenor's Bill fell amongst these like a bombshell, causing the wildest excitement and indignation.[16]

Then it was that the excitement of the people needed to find some expression in action, and J. B. Leno, the working man poet, and others, turned the popular feeling to account by directing it into the form of an unmistakable protest against this class of legislation. Amongst the handbills put in circulation was the following, calling a meeting for June 24th: —

> "New Sunday Bill to put down newspapers, shaving, smoking, eating and drinking of all kinds of food, or recreation for body or mind at present enjoyed by poor people. An open-air meeting of the artizans, mechanics, and lower orders of the metropolis will be held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon next, to see how religiously the aristocracy observe the Sabbath, and how careful they are not to work their servants or their cattle on that day (*vide* Lord Robert Grosvenor's speech). The meeting is summoned for three o'clock on the right bank of the Serpentine, looking towards Kensington Gardens. Come and bring your wives and families with you,

[16] The following handbill, which was circulated after the second reading of the Sunday Trading Bill, and put in evidence at the Royal Commission subsequently held, will give a good idea as to the extent of the proposed measure."Tyrannical attack upon the Liberty of the people. Proposed prohibition of Sunday trading. The New Bill brought in by Lord Robert Grosvenor, Lord Ebrington, and Mr M. Chambers proposes to prevent trading on Sundays within the Metropolitan Police District and city of London, and the liberties thereof. It enacts 'that all persons selling, offering, or exposing for sale, or causing to be sold or exposed for sale (on Sundays) any goods, chattels, effects, or things whatsoever, shall, on summary conviction thereof, be fined 5s., and on a second conviction, this fine may be increased to 40s.; and the fines will be cumulative, and every separate act of selling will be a separate offence. The act will not apply to the sale of medicines or drugs, nor to the selling or crying of milk or cream before 9 a.m. or after 1 p.m., nor to the selling or offering of any newspaper or periodical before 10 a.m., nor to the sale of fruit, cooked victuals, or any unfermented beverage before 10 a.m. and after 1 p.m., nor to the sale of meat, poultry, fish, or game, before 9 a.m., from the 31st of May to the 1st of October in each year, nor to the exercise of the ordinary business of a licensed victualler or innkeeper. Butchers and others delivering meat, fish, or game, after 9 a.m. on Sundays, will be liable to the penalties above mentioned. Nor will that useful class of the community, the barbers and hairdressers, be exempted, if they presume to 'do business' after ten o'clock on Sunday mornings, in which case they may be fined 5s., and 20s. for a second offence. It appears, however, that the payment of one penalty will protect the offending barber from any further fine on the same day. Clause 6 saves servants from the operation of the Act, and visits their disobedience on their masters or mistresses. The police are required to enforce the provisions of the Act. Penalties and costs may be levied by distress, and imprisonment may be inflicted in default of payment for 14 days in the common gaol or house of correction. The penalties will be appropriated to the expenses of the police force. No informations are to be quashed for informality, or to be removed by *certiorari* into the Court of Queen's Bench. The Act (is) to commence (if passed) on the 1st day of November, or All Saints' Day, 1855. A more tyrannical measure was never attempted to be forced upon the people of this country, and if this 'Saints' Bill' is allowed to pass, a much more stringent Act will doubtless follow."

> that they may benefit by the example set them by their betters. —*A Ratepayer of Walworth.*"

The outcome of all this was that large numbers of people found their way into Hyde Park on Sunday, June 24th. They came with the intention of holding a meeting of protest. A space was set aside for the meeting, and a Mr James Bligh called upon to preside. He began by addressing the people in very temperate language, but was soon interrupted by an Inspector of Police, who "politely told him he was authorised by the Commissioner of the Police to prevent any meeting being held in the Park; inasmuch as the Park was not public property, it would be illegal." The Inspector said that his orders were imperative, and if the speaker continued speaking he would be obliged to take him into custody. Sir Richard Mayne was present with a Superintendent of Police, and although the meeting was broken up, nevertheless many thousands remained in the Park. These lounged along the carriage ways and greeted the carriages with groans and hooting, or chaffing and good-humoured sarcasm, each according to his feelings. The aristocracy and wealthy commoners, who were taking their Sunday afternoon airing at their ease in the Park, did not at all approve of the attendance and attention of the multitude. The ladies and gentlemen reclining in their carriages were asked why they allowed their servants to work on Sunday, or were told to "go to Church," an order which some met by shaking their Church Services in the faces of the throng, or by sneers; whilst others, such as Lord and Lady Wilton, Lady Granville, and the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, were so frightened that they got out of their carriages at the demand of the crowd and trudged it on foot.

This little taste of the delights of showing the wealthy their power and of giving them a little bit of a fright only inflamed the people the more. During the week following the 24th the excitement continued to increase, and more handbills and placards were distributed. A very witty placard issued by the "Leave us alone Club," and some amusing lines, are quoted in Mr Headingley's Biography; while another which met with great success was in the following terms: —

"GO TO CHURCH!"

> "Lord Robert Grosvenor wishes to drive us all to church! Let us go to church with Lord Grosvenor next Sunday morning! We can attend on his Lordship at Park Lane at half-past ten: 'go to church' with him, then go home to dinner, and be back in time to see 'our friends' in Hyde Park. Come in your best clothes, as his lordship is very particular."

In the House, Lord Grosvenor fanned the flames of the popular excitement outside by an express refusal to withdraw the Bill, and by stating his fixed determination to press the measure. The signs of the increasing agitation amongst the people were so marked that Sir Richard Mayne, Commissioner of Police, became alarmed, especially as the police superintendents of various districts reported to him that large numbers of people were likely to attend the Park on the Sunday; and on June 29th he communicated with Sir George Grey, then Home Secretary, from whom, as he stated later on to the Commission, he received instructions to draft a document forbidding the meeting.

This notice was printed in one or two newspapers on the morning of Saturday the 30th, but not issued in the form of a handbill until the afternoon. It was then also posted throughout the metropolis, and on Sunday morning at the Park Gates.

In common with the rest of the London public, Mr Bradlaugh read this police notice, and directly he read it he felt convinced that the Commissioner of Police had no power to prevent a meeting in the Park. He therefore, after due consideration, resolved not to submit to this order, but to take part in the general concourse – one can hardly call it a meeting, since any attempt to form in a mass and listen to speeches had been prevented on the previous Sunday – in the Park, and if necessary to resist in his own person any active interference on the part of the police.

The 1st of July arrived, and people from every district of London and all round about flocked to the Park, crowding particularly towards the north side of the Serpentine. Although showing every disposition to be in the main quiet and orderly, the temper of the crowd was much less good-humoured than on the previous Sunday; the police placards had acted as a very successful irritant, and this feeling of irritation was kept up and augmented by the sight of the wealthy ones parading up and down in their carriages. As on the former Sunday, they were greeted with groans and hooting, and so much vigour was thrown into the groans that in two or three cases the high-spirited horses took fright, and serious accidents appeared probable. At this point the police charged the people, and naturally enough rioting (so-called) was the result. Many persons were hurt, and seventy were taken prisoners. The police accommodation at the Marlborough Street Police Station proved totally inadequate for so large a number of prisoners, and the condition of the cells was compared with that of the Black Hole in Calcutta. My father was in the Park with my grandfather, Mr A. Hooper, and what he did there may be learned a little later on from his own words.

This demonstration in Hyde Park produced such an impression that on the following day, the 2nd of July, Lord Robert Grosvenor, in answer to a question put to him in the House of Commons, said he was in "rather an awkward predicament," a statement which we can readily believe. His Bill, the Honourable Member insisted, was in reality intended to increase the amount of holiday possible to "the overtaxed thousands of the metropolis. But," he went on, "considering this is one of those measures which are peculiarly liable to misrepresentation and ridicule; considering also the late period of the session, and the formidable opposition I am threatened with, I think it would not be right to keep up the irritation that at the present moment exists for the bare chance of passing this measure during the present session."

This abandonment of his Sunday Bill in a fright by "Saint" Grosvenor, as he was nicknamed, was a tremendous triumph to all those whom it affected, a triumph happily not marred by any punishment being inflicted on the men arrested on various charges connected with the demonstration, for when these were brought into court on the Monday they were all discharged. At the John Street Institution a meeting was held to protest against the action of the police, to express sympathy with the injured, and to collect subscriptions on their behalf.[17]

A Royal Commission was appointed "to inquire into the alleged disturbances of the public peace in Hyde Park, Sunday, July 1st, 1855; and the conduct of the metropolitan police in connection with the same." This Commission sat continuously day by day from Tuesday, July 17th, to Thursday, August 2nd. The sittings were held in the Court of Exchequer, and the Commission heard eighty-six witnesses on the part of the complainants, and ninety-three for the police. Amongst the eighty-six witnesses was my father, who was examined on the 20th July. I quote the questions, with their often extremely characteristic answers, from the Parliamentary Blue Book.[18]

"Mr C. Bradlaugh examined by Mr Mitchell: —

"Where do you reside? – At No. 13 Warner Street South, Hackney Road.
"You are a solicitor's clerk? – I am.
"Were you in Hyde Park on the 1st of July? – I was.
"At what time? – From about half-past three to half-past six.

[17] Probably the re-formation of the National Sunday League on its present basis in the autumn of 1855 was in great degree owing to the attempted Sunday legislation of the summer; and it will perhaps be news to most of the Sunday Leaguers of to-day that in the March of 1856 Mr Bradlaugh was actively engaged in trying to form a branch of the League in the East End, of which he was the Secretary *pro. tem.*, and which was to hold its meetings in the Hayfield Coffee House, Mile End Road.

[18] Vol. XXIII. 1856, pp. 146, 147.

"Where did you walk during that time? I walked completely over the park, round by the carriage drive, and all round during that time.

"Did you see a man in a cab with several policemen? – Yes. I saw a man being driven along in a cab with three policemen in the cab, a man with no shirt on; he was without his shirt, he was trying to look out, and I saw a policeman strike him over the temple with his truncheon.

"There were three policemen in the cab? – Yes.

"Mr Stuart Wortley: A man without a shirt? – Yes.

"Mr Mitchell: Did you see anybody attacked? – Yes, I saw a rush made out on to the greensward. I went forward, and I saw four or five policemen striking a short man: his hat was knocked with a truncheon, and he held up his hands and said, 'For God's sake, do not hit me – take me!'

"Did they continue to hit him? – Yes; I ran forward, and put one truncheon back with my gloved hand, and I said, 'The next man that strikes I will knock him down!'

"What did they do then? – Then they left off striking him, and they put him between two policemen, and I suppose he was taken away in custody.

"They found that you were rather a strongish man? – They would.

"Were you attacked by the police? – I was standing on the grass just after that, and they made another sortie out from the roadway, and ordered the people to move on, and they moved as fast as they could. One of them came up to me, and began to push me with his truncheon, upon which I said to him: 'Do not do that, friend; you have no right to do it, and I am stronger than you are.' He then beckoned to two others, who came up, and I took hold of two of the truncheons, one in each hand, and I said to the centre one: 'If you attempt to touch me, I will take one of those truncheons, and knock you down with it.' I took the two truncheons, and I wrested them, and I showed them that I could do it.

"Did they then leave you alone? – Yes; the people that came behind me picked me up and carried me up about 100 yards back, cheering me.

"Mr Stuart Wortley. – Did they take you off your legs? – Yes, and I thought it was the police behind for a moment.

"Mr Mitchell. – You were in the Park for three hours? – Yes.

"How were the people behaving? – I never saw a large assemblage of people behaving so well.

"You were with your father-in-law, were you not? – Yes, I was.

"What time in the day was this particular occurrence? – About half-an-hour before I left.

"Mr Henderson. – The people gathered round you? – Yes. I did not want to be a self-constituted leader, and immediately I could I got away from the press and came away. I left about half-past six, a few minutes after or a few minutes before.

"Mr Stuart Wortley. – Had the excitement in the Park increased a good deal at that time? – Yes; I felt excited by seeing men, unable to defend themselves, knocked about.

"Mr Mitchell. – Did you see any other rush of the police at the people? – I saw several rushes. I could not understand the reason for them at all, except on one occasion; I saw one mounted superintendent stretch out his arm, and I saw a rush immediately in the direction that his arm went.

"What sort of a horse had he? – I could not see; I was on the sward. I only noticed a mounted man.

"You would not know him if you saw him again? – Yes; I think so: I should certainly know him if I saw him mounted.

"Can you say whether he had whiskers or not? – Yes; I think he had, but that is more an impression than anything else.

"Did you see them strike any woman? – I saw in the rush, in one of them, a man and two women thrown down, and I saw the police run over them. They did not strike them, but they ran right over them. I made a remark to my father-in-law: 'It is lucky they are no sisters of mine, or else they would stop to pick them up.'

"You did not go into the Park to resist the police? – Decidedly not. I went in consequence of seeing the notice of Sir Richard Mayne forbidding it, and to see what took place there.

"Out of curiosity? – Not exactly. I had heard it said that they were rabble, and I did not believe it, and I went to see for myself.

"Your indignation was not excited till you got there? – Not till some time after I had been there. At first I should have come away. The police were doing nothing, and at first everything seemed to be very quiet. There was no kind of meeting, except that there had been a large concourse of people. I should have come away but for those rushes of the police amongst the people.

"They were not a disorderly crowd? – No.

"Cross-examined by Mr Ellis: —

"You spoke of Sir Richard Mayne's proclamation as forbidding this meeting. Did you read it? – Yes.

"Does it forbid it? – The tenor of it seemed to me to be forbidding the assemblage, and I had not heard then, and have not heard now, that Sir Richard Mayne has any power to forbid my going into the Park; therefore I went.

"I think that the language of this proclamation is, that all well-disposed persons are requested to abstain. You do not call that forbidding? – When those police notices are put up I remember one place where I was requested to abstain from going to, some few years ago; and when I went there I found that the request to abstain was enforced in a precisely similar way, by striking the people with truncheons who went there. That was at Bonner's Fields.

"Were any persons struck with truncheons there? – Yes.

"Surely the police were armed with cutlasses? – I think I remember two being drawn as well; but I know some of them were struck with truncheons. I was struck with a truncheon myself, so that I am perfectly capable of remembering it.

"You were at Bonner's Fields? – I was.

"Mr Stuart Wortley. – Is there anything else that you wish to add? – Nothing.

"The witness withdrew."

In his "Autobiography"[19] Mr Bradlaugh says: "I was very proud that day at Westminster, when, at the conclusion of my testimony, the Commissioner publicly thanked me, and the people who crowded the Court of the Exchequer cheered me… This was a first step in a course in which I have never flinched or wavered."

[19] The Autobiography of Charles Bradlaugh. A page from his life, written in 1873 for the *National Reformer*.

Before dismissing this Sunday Trading question altogether, I may as well notice here that in the succeeding year my father made a short humorous compilation of some of the more striking "English Sunday laws" for the *Reasoner*. I am ignorant how many of these are still in force, but I repeat part of the article here: as a trifle from my father's pen, it will be welcome to some, and in others it may, perhaps, provoke inquiry as to how many of these restrictions are binding (in law) upon us to-day.

"Travelling in a stage or mail coach on a Sunday is lawful, and the driver is lawfully employed. Contracts to carry passengers in a stage coach on a Sunday are therefore binding, but the driver of a van travelling to and from distant towns, such as London and York, is unlawfully employed, and may be prosecuted and fined 20s. for each offence; and presuming that the laws of God and England are in unison, the driver of the van will be damned for Sabbath breaking and the driver of the coach will go to heaven for the same offence.

"Mackerel may be sold on Sunday either before or after Divine service.

"There is no offence against the common law of England in trading or working on a Sunday; therefore the statutes must be strictly construed. If a butcher should shave on a Sunday, he would commit no offence, because it would not be following his ordinary calling.

"Persons exercising their calling on a Sunday are only subject to one penalty, for the whole is but one offence, or one act of exercising, although continued the whole day. A baker, a pastrycook, or confectioner, is liable to be prosecuted if selling bread or pastry before nine or half-past one o'clock on the Sunday.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's cook, groom, footman, butler, and all other his men servants and maid servants do not each of them attend church every Sunday, they may be prosecuted and fined.

"If the Archbishop of Canterbury's coachman drive his master to church on Sunday, if his footmen stand behind his carriage, these being their ordinary callings and not works of charity or necessity, they may be prosecuted and fined 5s. each.

"Tobacconists may be prosecuted for selling tobacco and cigars on a Sunday.

"Railway officials may be punished for working on a Sunday; certainly on excursion trains.

"The stokers and men employed on the steamboats plying to Gravesend, etc., are also liable to prosecution, although a few watermen enjoy the privilege of Sabbath-breaking by Act of Parliament.

"Civil contracts made on a Sunday are void with some few exceptions, viz. a soldier may be enlisted on a Sunday. A labourer may be hired on a Sunday. A guarantee may be given for the faithful services of a person about to be employed. A bill of exchange may be drawn on a Sunday.

"Civil process must not be served an a Sunday, but an ecclesiastical citation may; therefore the Church reserves to itself the right of Sabbath breaking on all occasions.

"A cookshop may be open on a Sunday for the sale of victuals.

"Every person who should go to Hyde Park, or any of the other parks, to hear the band play, if out of his own parish, is liable to be fined 3s. 4d.

"If two or three go from out of their smoky city residences to the sea to fish, or to the green fields to play cricket, they may each be fined 3s. 4d. if out of the parish in which they reside."

CHAPTER VIII
THE ORSINI ATTEMPT

The first allusion which I can find to any lecture delivered by my father after his return from Ireland appears in the *Reasoner*, and is the briefest possible notice, in which no comment is made, either upon the speaker or upon his name, although I find the *nom de guerre* of "Iconoclast" and the subject (Sunday Trading and Sunday Praying) given. We may, therefore, conclude that by this time[20] he had become a tolerably familiar figure on the London Freethought platform. The next reference I come across relates to his first lecture, given on 24th August 1855, on behalf of Mr B. B. Jones, the aged Freethinker who sheltered him on his first leaving home, and for whose benefit he afterwards lectured every year during the remainder of the kindly old veteran's life.

In the latter part of 1856 my father's lectures are referred to in the reports of meetings with tolerable regularity, and I gather that even at that time he was lecturing four or five times a month. He lectured at a little hall in Philpot Street, Commercial Road; Finsbury Hall, Bunhill Row; at a hall in St George's Road, near the "Elephant and Castle," afterwards given up by the Freethinkers who were accustomed to hire it on Sundays, because they did not approve of the uses to which it was put during the week; at the Hoxton Secular Class Rooms, 101 High Street; and the John Street Institution, Fitzroy Square.

Amongst his many and varied occupations he yet contrived to make time for study, for in the same year he was lecturing on Strauss' "Life of Jesus," and Mahomet and the Koran, in addition to the more general questions of the Existence of God, Materialism, etc. And here I may cite a little instance showing that my father's power of repartee was a very early development. He happened to be lecturing upon "The God of the Bible," and in the discussion which ensued "a Christian gentleman, Mr Dunn, … informed his auditory that it was only by God's mercy they existed at all, as all men had been tried and condemned before their birth, and were now prisoners at large." My father in his reply promptly took "objection to this phrase, as implying that society was nothing more than a collection of 'divine ticket-of-leave men.'"

In 1856, too, Mr Bradlaugh once more ventured into print. His first essay in the publishing way, it may be remembered, was the little pamphlet on the "Christian's Creed," which he dedicated to the Rev. Mr Packer. This time he issued, in conjunction with John Watts and "Anthony Collins," a little publication called "Half-hours with Freethinkers," which came out in fortnightly numbers, and opened on October 1st with a paper on Descartes from the pen of "Iconoclast." Two series were ultimately issued, each of twenty-four numbers, but some time elapsed between the two; in fact, the second did not come out until 1864, and was edited by my father and Mr John Watts. These stories "of the lives and doctrines of those who have stood foremost in the ranks of Freethought in all countries and in all ages" met with a hearty welcome, and are in demand even to this day; several were at the time reprinted in America by the *Boston Investigator*.

The new year of 1857 opened with a promise of growing activity by an address from "Iconoclast" to a party of Secular friends who assembled in the hall at Philpot Street, to watch the New Year in, and by a course of ten (or twelve) lectures in criticism of the Bible, which he commenced on the following day. On the 12th of February, also, was held his first discussion, or at least the first I can find recorded, if we except the youthful encounters of Warner Place. The discussion between "Mr Douglas and Iconoclast" took place at the little Philpot Street Hall; but who Mr Douglas was I know not, for the report is limited to a mention of an allusion by the Christian advocate to Atheists

[20] July 1855.

as "monsters, brutes, and fools," which was – as we may well believe – "severely commented on by 'Iconoclast.'"

Another and more important work, however, was begun in the early spring of 1857. This was "The Bible: what it is: Being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelation." This work, advertised by my father as "intended to relieve the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge from the labour of retranslating the Bible, by proving that it is not worth the trouble and expense," it was arranged should be issued in fortnightly numbers by Holyoake & Co., whose "Fleet Street House," situate at 147 Fleet Street, was to a considerable extent maintained by the Freethought party. After the third number, Mr G. J. Holyoake declined to publish, on the ground that Mr Bradlaugh would probably go too far in his mode of criticism, and that by publishing the book he would be identified with it. This seemed an inadequate reason, since Mr Holyoake published Spiritualistic works, a "Criminal History of the Clergy," and other books, with which he was most certainly not identified. Later Mr Holyoake based his refusal to publish on the ground that a short passage in the third number referring to the suggestion that the third chapter of Genesis was intended as an allegorical representation of the union of the sexes, was obscene. Mr Bradlaugh was both surprised and indignant, as well he might be, and wrote a letter to the *Investigator*,[21] explaining his position fully. He was obliged henceforward to publish his work himself; Mr Edward Truelove, who then had a bookseller's business at 240 Strand, generously rendering every assistance in his power.

By this time also he had become a regular contributor to the *Investigator*, and his first articles were upon the "Lives of Bible Heroes" – Abraham, Moses, David, and Cain, each following in turn.

On the 22nd of February 1858 Mr Truelove was arrested by Government warrant for the publication of a pamphlet written by Mr W. E. Adams, "Is Tyrannicide Justifiable?" in which was discussed the attempt made by Orsini upon the life of the French Emperor.

Referring to this, my father wrote some notable words in his Autobiography of 1873. "I became," said he, "Honorary Secretary to the Defence, and was at the same time associated with the conduct of the defence of Simon Bernard, who was arrested at the instigation of the French Government for alleged complicity in the Orsini tragedy. It was at this period I gained the friendship of poor Bernard, which, without diminution, I retained until he died; and also the valued friendship of Thomas Allsop, which I still preserve. My associations were thenceforward such as to encourage in me a strong and bitter feeling against the late Emperor Napoleon. Whilst he was in power I hated him, and never lost an opportunity of working against him until the *déchéance* came. I am not sure now that I always judged him fairly; but nothing, I think, could have tempted me either to write or speak of him with friendliness or kindliness during his life. *Le sang de mes amis etait sur son âme.* Now that the tomb covers his remains, my hatred has ceased; but no other feeling has arisen in its place. Should any of his family seek to resume the Imperial purple, I should remain true to my political declarations of sixteen years since, and should exert myself to the uttermost to prevent France falling under another Empire. I write this with much sadness, as the years 1870 to 1873 have dispelled some of my illusions, held firmly during the fifteen years which preceded. I had believed in such men as Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, Victor Hugo, as possible statesmen for France. I was mistaken. They were writers, talkers, and poets; good men to ride on the stream, or to drown in honest protest, but lacking force to swim against, or turn back, the tide by the might of their will. I had believed too in a Republican France, which is yet only in the womb of time, to be born after many pangs and sore travailing."

When Mr Bradlaugh acted as Secretary for the Defence, his duties were performed in no merely formal way, but with the utmost energy and enthusiasm. In order to give more time to this work, he suspended the publication of his Commentary on the Bible, and in issuing the "Appeal" for the

[21] The *Investigator*. A Journal of Secularism, edited by Robert Cooper.

Defence fund wrote in earnest entreaty for his staunch and fearless friend, saying truly enough, "It would be a stain on us for years if we left poor Truelove to fight the battle of the press alone."

But my father's sympathies were all his life long on the side of the weak and oppressed, and in this particular instance he came in personal contact with the friends and associates of Orsini, if not with Orsini himself (which, indeed, I am under the impression was the case), so that the whole tone of his surroundings was anti-Napoleonic. Felice Orsini must have been personally known to many of the advanced thinkers in England, for I notice that in the winter of 1856 he was lecturing at Woolwich (and probably elsewhere) on "Austrian and Papal Tyranny in Italy." Those who knew him, even those who could not approve his deed, yet honoured and revered him as a hero and a martyr.

My father spoke of him as "the noble, the brave, the true-hearted Orsini." In 1859, writing of him: "One year since and his blood was scarce dry! Bernard was a prisoner; Allsop a fugitive. Now Orsini lives: the spirit of his greatness passed into a hundred others, and the dead hero lives. Priests in their masses say, 'Pray for the memory of the dead;' we say, 'Work for the memory of the dead!' Orsini needs a monument o'er his grave. He is buried in the hearts of the freemen of Europe, and his monument should be indestructible Republicanism throughout France, Italy, Hungary, and Poland." Alas! for my father's dreams of a Republic for those striving and oppressed nations. Poland still lies at the feet of Russia, Hungary is held in the iron grasp of Imperial Austria, and but a year or so ago Republican France and Monarchical Italy were ready to fly at one another's throats.

The result of the prosecution of Mr Truelove, which is told more fully at the end of this chapter by an abler pen than mine, was the abandonment by the Government of all proceedings on certain conditions; and although Mr Truelove, as well as his friends, would have preferred a trial and acquittal to a withdrawal on the conditions accepted by his counsel, nevertheless it was an undoubted triumph for the principle of the liberty of the press and free discussion. When at length the struggle ended it was proposed to raise a sum of money to compensate Mr Truelove for the loss he must have sustained in his business, but this Mr Truelove, with true public spirit, chivalrously refused.

Dr Bernard, in the conduct of whose defence Mr Bradlaugh was also associated, seems to have been personally a most lovable man. I do not think that I myself recollect him, but he was so often spoken of in our family, and always with affection and regret, and his photograph so proudly kept, that he seems a familiar figure in my early memories; there was a tradition, of which as a child I was immensely proud (as though I had played a conscious and important part in the matter!) that the evening on which I was born, the 31st of March, my father was delivering an oration upon Orsini in some Hall in London; at the conclusion he was followed home by the police, and, being aware of the fact, he led his pursuers a pretty chase. The notes of this address were afterwards written out on thin paper and ironed, by an expert laundress attached to my father and mother, into the folds of Dr Bernard's shirt and conveyed to him in prison. In a notice which he wrote of a meeting of the Political Reform League in the October of the same year, Mr Bradlaugh alludes to the presence of "Simon Bernard, who with his frank and good-humoured bearing seems quite unlike a conspirator." He not infrequently took the chair at Dr Bernard's meetings at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, and elsewhere, returning home on one occasion with sundry rents in his coat, the result of Catholic objections to Dr Bernard's strictures on the Pope, aided by the rancour of persons friendly to Louis Napoleon.

Mr Headingley[22] says that when Dr Bernard was tried, great anxiety was felt as to the verdict; and when it was known that one of the jurymen was a friend, he was sent into the jury box with his pocket full of sandwiches, so that he should not yield for want of food. But this proved a needless precaution, for the jury returned with a verdict of *Not guilty* after a consultation of less than an hour-and-a-half. Amongst other exciting incidents of the time, which he learned from my father's own lips, Mr Headingley relates that —

[22] Biography of Charles Bradlaugh.

"Before the trial, and while Bernard lay in prison awaiting his fate, considerable fear was entertained lest he should be surreptitiously given up to the French authorities. A watch was therefore instituted over the prison; communications, in spite of all regulations to the contrary, were established with the prisoner; and the Defence Committee kept informed as to everything that happened within the walls. Had Bernard been removed, there were friends ever close at hand, both night and day, ready to give the alarm. A riot would very probably have ensued, and an attempt made to rescue Bernard in the confusion."

He goes on to say that "the organization of all these precautionary measures involved a great deal of labour, and required much tact. The presence of French police spies was supplemented by the interference of English spies; and against these it was necessary for Bernard's friends to be on the alert. On one occasion some mounted police followed Bradlaugh to his home in Cassland Road, Hackney. At another time he entered a restaurant near Leicester Square with Dr Bernard and Mr Sparkhall, an old and trusty friend, who subsequently joined and helped to organize the English legion that fought so well for Garibaldi. While they were discussing a French spy came in, and sitting down in the next compartment, soon pretended to be asleep. Bradlaugh, recognising the individual, leaned over the compartment, took a long spill, as if to light a cigar, and held the burning paper under the spy's nose. As the man was only pretending to be asleep, this treatment did not fail to awake him most promptly. Further, this manner of dealing with him left no room for doubt as to his having been recognised, and he therefore simply rose and quietly left the restaurant, without even protesting against the burn inflicted on his most prominent feature. So numerous were the foreign spies in London at that time, that popular irritation was excited, and once Bernard himself was mistaken by a mob in the Park, and attacked as a French spy. His friends had great difficulty in shielding him and in persuading his aggressors that they were mistaken."

Thomas Allsop,[23] mentioned by Mr Bradlaugh in the same sentence with Bernard, was also present at the Reform League meeting, and he is described by my father as "a straightforward old gentleman, carrying his years well, and apparently untroubled by the late harassing events; his head gives you an idea of power and dogged determination – it is worth more than £200." These last words refer, I believe, to a reward of £200 which was offered for the apprehension of Mr Allsop in connection with the Orsini matter. Apart from the striking personality it represents, the name of Thomas Allsop will always bear a peculiar interest to admirers of Charles Bradlaugh, for it was he who bestowed upon the, even then, "strong man and strenuous fighter" the motto "Thorough," which his after life so amply justified, and of which he was so proud, saying, "When my work is over, and the stone covers the spot wherein I lie, may I be entitled to have the word 'Thorough' carven upon its face."

It was during these years of political excitement that my father became acquainted with Mazzini, Crispi, de Boni, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, and W. J. Linton.

The author of the "Tyrannicide" pamphlet has been so good as to write for me his "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh;" and as the references to this period are very interesting, I cannot do better than incorporate them here just as he sent them to me: —

"It was in 1858," Mr W. E. Adams tells us, "that I first made the personal acquaintance of Charles Bradlaugh. Mr Bradlaugh was at that time known only as 'Iconoclast,' the general public having, I think, a very indistinct idea what his real name was. I had heard him as 'Iconoclast' at

[23] Mr Allsop will be known to the English public as the author of the "Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge." He died a few years before my father, and he lies near his friend at Brookwood.

the old John Street Institution, where many another dead and gone controversialist had won plaudits from the listening crowd: Dr Mill, Henry Tyrrell, Samuel Kydd, Robert Cooper. There, too, the veteran Thomas Cooper had recited 'Paradise Lost,' or told the eloquent story of the cause of the Commonwealth. Iconoclast, then a tall, slender, yet powerful young man, with a face stern enough for an adjutant, and a carriage equal to that of an Elizabethan hero, was beginning to claim admission to the ranks of the leaders of advanced thought.

"The year 1858 was the year of Felice Orsini's attempt on the life of Louis Napoleon. I was at that time, and had been for some years previously, a member of a Republican association, which was formed to propagate the principles of Mazzini. When the press, from one end of the country to the other, joined in a chorus of condemnation of Orsini, I put down on paper some of the arguments and considerations which I thought told on Orsini's side. The essay thus produced was read at a meeting of one of our branches, the members attending which earnestly urged me to get the piece printed. It occurred to me also that the publication might be of service, if only to show that there were two sides to the question 'Tyrannicide.' So I went to Mr G. J. Holyoake, then carrying on business as a publisher of advanced literature in Fleet Street. Mr Holyoake not being on the premises, his brother Austin asked me to leave my manuscript and call again. When I called again Mr Holyoake returned me the paper, giving among other reasons for declining to publish it that he was already in negotiation with Mazzini for a pamphlet on the same subject. 'Very well,' said I, 'all I want is that something should be said on Orsini's side. If Mazzini does this, I shall be quite content to throw my production into the fire.' A few days later, not hearing anything of the Mazzini pamphlet, I left the manuscript with Mr Edward Truelove, with whom I have ever since maintained a close and unbroken friendship. Mr Truelove seemed pleased with the paper, offered to publish it, and proposed to get it printed. The essay, as I had written it, was entitled 'Tyrannicide, a Justification.' Mr Truelove, however, suggested that it should be called 'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable?' Then there was no name to the production, which, I need not say, bore many marks of the immaturity of the author. Mr Truelove said it would be as well to adopt a *nom de plume*. But if any name was to appear to the pamphlet, I said I was disposed to think that it should be my own. And so it came to pass that the pamphlet appeared with the title – 'Tyrannicide: is it Justifiable? by W. E. Adams. Published by Edward Truelove, 240 Strand, London.' Two or three days after the announcement of the publication, when only a few hundred copies had been sold, Mr Truelove was arrested, brought before the Bow Street magistrate, and held to bail for publishing a seditious libel on Louis Napoleon. As a matter of course, nobody knew the author. It was suspected indeed that the name attached to the pamphlet was a fiction, and that the essay was the production of a French exile.

"The arrest of Mr Truelove was regarded as an attack upon the liberty of the press – an attempt to restrict the right of public discussion. So regarding it, a number of gentlemen, prominently identified with advanced opinions, formed what was called a 'Truelove Defence Fund.' Mr Bradlaugh, who was among the first to volunteer assistance, was appointed secretary of the committee; the late James Watson accepted the office of treasurer; and contributions and other help were received from John Stuart Mill, W. Cunningham, M.P., Dr Epps, Arthur Trevelyan, Professor F. W. Newman, W. J. Fox, M.P., Jos. Cowen, junr., Abel Heywood, P. A. Taylor, Harriet Martineau, etc. Six months after Mr Truelove had been arrested, the whole affair came to a most 'lame and impotent' conclusion. It was at the instance of Sir Richard Bethel, Attorney-General under Lord Palmerston, and probably at the instigation of the Government of Louis Napoleon, whom the pamphlet was alleged to have libelled, that the prosecution was commenced. The case was withdrawn by Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Attorney-General under the Government of Lord Derby, on the understanding that Mr Truelove would sell no more of the pamphlets. Down to the evening preceding the day fixed for the trial, Mr Truelove, though he had doubts as to the result, fully expected that the matter would be fought out. On that evening, however, when it was too late to instruct other counsel, Mr Truelove was informed that the counsel already retained for the defence announced that the affair would have to be compromised. So it came to

pass that Chief Justice Campbell, six months after the prosecution had been instituted, dismissed Mr Truelove with many words of caution. It need not be said that Mr Bradlaugh was as much disgusted with this termination of the case as Mr Truelove himself. The secret of the collapse, I think, was this: – Edwin James, who was retained for the defence, and who had political ambitions which were never fully realised on account of misdeeds which compelled him to retire from public life and from his own country, practically sold his client in order that the Government might be relieved from a distasteful and unpleasant position."

CHAPTER IX
EARLY LECTURES AND DEBATES

I do not know at what date or at what place my father delivered his first provincial lectures, but the earliest of which I can find any record occurred in January 1858, when on the 10th of that month he delivered two lectures at Manchester, a town in which, as we shall see later on, he was not altogether unknown, although in a totally different capacity. In reading the little there is to read about these early lecturing days I have been impressed with the fact that while in London his lectures were favourably received, and he was evidently gaining goodwill as he went from one hall to another, in the country he seems to have touched the hearts and the feelings of his audiences for or against him wherever he went. At these first Manchester lectures the reporter writes: "His manly, earnest, and fearless style of advocacy were much admired, and evidently produced a deep impression. Everybody who heard him wished to hear him again." In the April following he lectured in Sheffield, and from that time forward his visits to the provinces were very frequent. Sheffield almost adopted him, and he went there again and again; in 1858 and 1859 he went also to Newcastle, Sunderland, Bradford, Northampton, Doncaster, Accrington, Blackburn, Halifax, Bolton, and other towns, leaving a trail of excitement in his wake wherever he went. The descriptions of his personal appearance and the comments on his lectures at this time are more or less amusing. The first I will note here shall be one from his own pen, written to Mr Alfred Jackson in 1858, on the occasion of his earliest visit to Sheffield. He says: "You ask me to tell you how you may know me. I am 6 ft. 1 in. in height, about twenty-five years of age, dress in dark clothing, am of fair complexion, with only the ghost of a prospective whisker."

In a brief account of his Sheffield lectures that year my father says that when he reached the Temperance Hall a copy of the *Sheffield Independent* was put into his hands, in which the Rev. Brewin Grant announced his intention to take no notice of him. But Mr Grant proved to be of a rather fickle temper, for on the morning following this first lecture "a small bill was printed and industriously circulated, entitled 'Iconoclast clasted,' being a challenge to myself from this very Brewin Grant who had previously determined not to notice me." On the first night Mr Bradlaugh had "a perfect crowd of opponents;" on the second he found that fresh troops had been levied against him. These "were led to the fray by the Rev. Eustace Giles (a stout Dissenting minister with a huge black bag). After the lecture this gentleman rose to reply, and commenced by extracting from his bag three huge volumes of Van der Hooght's Hebrew Bible, which he declared was the original Word of God, and which he requested me to read aloud to the audience. I complied by reading and translating a verse, to each word of which Mr Giles and his coadjutors nodded approval."

Going to Newcastle in September, my father found that the description of his personal appearance had so preceded him that the gentleman who met him, Mr Mills, came "straight to me on the platform as though we were old acquaintances instead of meeting for the first time." In Newcastle he lectured twice in the Nelson Street Lecture Hall (which has quite recently, I believe, been turned into a market), and was fairly, if briefly, reported by the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. While in the town he took the opportunity of listening to a lecture delivered by "J. Cowen, jun.," as Mr Joseph Cowen was then styled.

From Newcastle he went to Sunderland, where a person who came from the Rev. Mr Rees, a clergyman of that place, brought him a parody of the Church service entitled "The Secularist's Catechism," which was intended as some far-reaching and scathing sarcasm on the Secularist's "creed," but which is really as pretty a piece of blasphemy as ever issued from the pen of a Christian minister. Mr Bradlaugh tells how the person who brought it "gave it to me in a fearful manner, keeping as far away from me as possible, and evidently regarding me as a dangerous animal; he backed towards

the room door after putting the paper in my hand, and seemed relieved in mind that I had not in some manner personally assaulted him."

On his next visit to Sheffield, where he was announced to deliver three lectures on three successive evenings, the walls were covered with bills advising the people to keep away, and the clergy in church and chapel publicly warned their congregations against attending the lectures. In spite of all these precautions (or was it because of them?) the lectures were a decided success, the audiences increasing with each evening, until on the last evening "the large Temperance Hall was full in every part, the applause was unanimous, and not one opponent appeared." The visit of "Iconoclast" to Bradford produced a great flutter in the clerical society of that town; and after he left we hear that "almost every missionary and clerical speaker opened fire upon him," and one sensitive gentleman wrote to the *Bradford Observer* expressing his grief that the Teetotal Hall should be "prostituted" by being let to the Freethought lecturer.

In his *Autobiography* my father himself puts the date of his first lecturing visit to Northampton as the year 1857, and this year is again given in the little book issued as a *souvenir* of the unveiling of the statue of their late member by the Northampton Radical Association in June 1894; but I am inclined to think that this is a mistake, that my father's memory misled him a little, and, that he put the date a few months too early. In any case, although I have made diligent inquiry, the first lectures of which I can find any note took place on Sunday and Monday, January 30th and 31st, 1859, in the large room of the Woolpack Inn, Kingswell Street. On the Monday evening the chair was taken by the late Mr Joseph Gurney, J.P., who, in company with his old friend Mr Shipman, had already heard Mr Bradlaugh lecture at the John Street Institution in London, and had been much impressed by the ability and earnest eloquence of the young speaker. The people crowded the street outside the Woolpack Inn for some time before the doors of the lecture-room were open, and the room was packed in a few moments. I wonder how many times after that did Mr Gurney preside at densely packed meetings for Mr Bradlaugh! Mr Gurney himself subsequently attained all the municipal honours Northampton could bestow upon her deserving townsman, nominated Charles Bradlaugh seven out of eight times that he contested the borough, and only did not nominate him on the eighth occasion because his position as chief magistrate prevented him.

In the following March it was arranged that my father should lecture in the Guildhall, at Doncaster. Doncaster, with its reputation as a race town, was also in those days the abode of the "unco' guid." Some of the inhabitants appear to have been much put out at the proposed lecture, and certain "Friends of Religion," as they called themselves, issued a "Caution to the public, especially the religious portion," in which they, the "People of Doncaster," are entreated to give "Iconoclast the extacy (*sic*) of gazing on the unpeopled interior of the Guildhall." The "Friends of Religion" prefaced their entreaty by announcing that "the juvenile destroyer of images" had been engaged as a "grand speculation!" Presumably this "Caution" resulted in a famous advertisement, for the *Doncaster Herald* says that the Guildhall was "crowded to excess," and in writing his account of the lecture, which he says was a "frantic panegyric in honour of hell and a blasphemous denunciation of heaven," the reporter to this journal seems to have worked himself up into a fine frenzy. One can almost see him with his tossed-back hair, his rolling eyes and gnashing teeth, as he hurled these dynamitic words at the readers of the *Herald*: —

> "There boldly, defiantly, recklessly – with the air of the dreadnought bravo or the Alpine bandit – stood the creator's work [elsewhere styled 'clayformed ingrate'] toiling, sweating, labouring strenuously, to heap slander upon his creator, and to convert into odious lies the book by which that creator has made himself known to the world!.. Need we go further to express our more than disgust – our horror – at the fact of a young and accomplished man standing forth in crowded halls, and, while the beauteous moon marches aloft in the vast and indefinable firmament, and the myriad of silvery stars shoot their refulgent rays upon the desecrated lecture-

> room, actually telling the people that no God lives! no Supreme hand fretted the brave o'erhanging firmament with golden fire – no Jehovah made the wide carpet of fair nature bespangled with laughing flowers – no God made roaring seas and mighty rivers – no God revealed the Bible – no God made man!"

One really needs to draw breath after all that: the lecture-room lighted by star rays, the firmament fretted with golden fire, the laughing flowers and roaring seas, must surely have carried conviction. The *Doncaster Chronicle*, if more prosaic, is not the less hostile. Its report thus describes the lecturer: —

> "He is a tall, beardless, whiskerless young man, with a pale face, and has rather a harmless and prepossessing appearance" – [compare the *Herald's* 'Alpine bandit!'] – "certainly not the fierce individual we had previously imagined him to be from the elements of destruction indicated in his name – 'the image breaker!' He is a person possessing great fluency of speech, of ready wit, and the declamatory style of his oratory is well calculated to excite and carry away a popular audience."

And the *Chronicle*, in a vain endeavour to outvie its colleague in choice epithets, winds up by styling the arguments of Atheists as "the miserable sophistry of these 'filthy dreamers,'" the delicate wording of which phrase would be hard for even a "coarse" Atheist to match, and urges that "for the sake of the youth of our town, the municipal authorities will not again lend the Guildhall for such an object." In Sheffield Mr Bradlaugh was rapidly growing in popularity; lecturing there again immediately after his Doncaster lecture, he had an audience of 2000 persons to hear his address on "Has Man a Soul?"

Later in the year he was again in Doncaster, and this time the "Friends of Religion" had succeeded so far in their endeavours that the Granby Music Hall was refused, and it was rumoured that the lectures would not be permitted. A temporary platform was however erected under the roof of the Corn Market, and, in lieu of the electric light of to-day, the lecturer was made dimly visible to his audience by means of a lamp raised upon a pole. The audience was said to number about 4000, "the hollow and partly arched roof of the Corn Market served as a sounding board, and the tones of Iconoclast, whilst speaking, were distinctly heard through the surrounding streets. Although the town was in a state of considerable excitement, the meeting was on the whole very orderly." It was a beautiful evening; and when the lecture was over several hundred persons escorted "Iconoclast in a sort of triumphant procession" to his lodgings. As this was not exactly in accordance with the anticipations of the "Friends of Religion," my father was informed by the Mayor that several magistrates had protested against the use of the Corporate property (the Corn Market), which they had occupied without the express permission of the Corporation, and in consequence the lectures must be given elsewhere. Accordingly, a large open yard near the market was obtained for that night; and although no fresh announcement was made, the news rapidly spread throughout the town. At half-past seven Mr Bradlaugh began to speak from a waggon. The subject was that of the "History and Teaching of Jesus Christ," and the audience, which increased every moment until it spread into the grounds of the adjoining Corn Market, ultimately numbering between 7000 and 8000 persons, was very quiet and attentive. Missiles were thrown from a neighbouring house, and fireworks also were thrown into the midst of the assemblage; they were soon put out, but "one cracker was kept by the lecturer and placed among other Christian evidences." On returning from the meeting to his lodgings, "a large stone was thrown, which partially stunned Iconoclast, and cut his head slightly."

In April he should have lectured at Accrington, but the proprietor of the hall was a publican, and the clergy and magistrates of the town had so worked upon his fears by threatening to refuse his license at the next Sessions that he drew back from his agreement. No other room was to be obtained; and as numbers of people had come from long distances to hear my father, he got leave to address them from a showman's waggon; but when the showman – notorious for his intemperance all over

the district – "found that Iconoclast approached spiritual subjects less freely than himself," he, too, retracted his permission. Not to waste his time altogether, however, Mr Bradlaugh attended a meeting of the Accrington Mutual Improvement Society, at which, as it happened, the subject of the essay for the evening was "Jesus Christ." At Bolton the Concert Hall was engaged for his lectures on the 20th and 21st September; but when Mr Bradlaugh came from London to deliver the lectures, he found the walls placarded with the announcement that the lectures would not be permitted to take place. He brought an action against the Bolton Concert Hall Company for £7 damages for breach of contract, the £7 representing the expense to which he had been put. The jury, however, after being absent a considerable time, gave a verdict for the defendants. Needless to say that the closing of the Concert Hall did not prevent Mr Bradlaugh from lecturing in Bolton. Shortly afterwards the Unitarian Chapel, Moore Lane, was obtained, and he delivered three lectures on successive evenings, instead of two, as formerly announced.

At Halifax, in this year, his lectures produced the usual excitement. The town missionary rushed into verse upon the subject of "Iconoclast and the Devil," and issued his polite reflections in the form of a handbill. The lectures also resulted in a set debate between "Iconoclast" and the Rev. Mr. Matthias, which I shall notice later on. The story goes that at one of my father's lectures Mr Matthias was present, and wished to offer some opposition at the conclusion. His friends sought to dissuade him, and even to hold him in his seat, but the reverend gentleman was so much in earnest, and was so excited, that he shook off the restraining hands, crying, "Unhand me, gentlemen. By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me."

In Glasgow, that autumn, Mr Bradlaugh was threatened with prosecution for blasphemy, with the result that his lectures at the Eclectic Institute were better attended than they had been before. A little later the Procurator Fiscal informed him that the prosecution was in his hands, and that "in the course of law" he would have to answer for his offence in Glasgow "against the Holy Christian religion." I cannot find that the matter was carried beyond this, however, so I suppose the Glasgow pietists contented themselves with empty threats.

Although thus actively engaged in the provinces during 1858 and 1859, my father by no means neglected work in London. He lectured at various halls on theological and political subjects, and took part in more general public work. In the spring of 1858 he was elected President of the London Secular Society in the place of Mr G. J. Holyoake, and those who know anything of his unremitting labours as President of the National Secular Society will comprehend that he was no mere figure-head, or President in name only. Amongst other things, he immediately set about issuing a series of tracts for distribution, of which he himself wrote the first.

On May 16th Mr Bradlaugh spoke at the John Street Institution at the celebration of Robert Owen's 88th and last birthday, and a little thing happened then which he was always proud to recall. It was Mr Robert Cooper's custom to read Mr Owen's papers to the public for him; but on this particular evening he was himself in ill-health; and had already exhausted his strength in addressing the meeting. Mr Owen had prepared a discourse on the "Origin of Evil," which Mr Cooper commenced to read as usual; but he being unable to continue, it fell to my father's lot to take up the reading. This was the last paper of Mr Owen's read in public, and almost the last public appearance of the aged reformer, who died on the 17th of the following November.

In the provinces there was often considerable difficulty in the matter of hiring halls or in keeping the proprietor to his contract after the hall had been hired, but in London there was either less intolerance or more indifference, and the trouble arose less frequently. On one occasion, however, in March 1859, when Mr Bradlaugh was to have lectured in the Saint Martin's Hall on "Louis Napoleon," he recalls in his *Autobiography* that "the Government – on a remonstrance by Count Walewski as to language used at a previous meeting, at which I had presided for Dr Bernard – interfered; the hall was garrisoned by police, and the lecture prevented. Mr Hullah, the then proprietor, being indemnified by

the authorities, paid damages for his breach of contract, to avoid a suit which I at once commenced against him."

In the winter of 1858 my father became editor of the *Investigator*, originally edited by Robert Cooper, and he was full of enthusiasm and belief in his ability to make the little paper a success. It had at that time a circulation of 1250, and he estimated that it needed twice that number to enable it to pay its printing and publishing expenses.

He commenced his conduct of the paper by a statement of his policy, and by a trenchant letter to Louis Napoleon. From the former I take the opening and concluding words as giving his first editorial utterance:[24]—

"We are investigators, and our policy is to ascertain facts and present them to our readers in clear and distinct language. If we find a mind bound round with Creeds and Bibles, we will select a sharp knife to cut the bonds; if we find men prostrating themselves, without inquiry, before idols, our policy is iconoclastic – we will destroy those idols. If we find a rock in our path, we will break it; but we will not quarrel with our brother who deems his proper work to be that of polishing the fragments. We believe all the religions of the world are founded on error, in the ignorance of natural causes and material conditions, and we deem it our duty to endeavour to expose their falsity. Our policy is therefore aggressive. We are, at present, of opinion that there is much to do in the mere clod-crushing sphere, in uprooting upas trees, hewing down creed-erected barriers between man and man, and generally in negating the influence of the priest. Our policy is of a humble character; we are content to be axebearers and pioneers, cutting down this obstacle and clearing away that. We respect the sower who delights in the positive work of scattering seed on the ground, but we fear that the weeds destroy much of the fruit of his labours…

"There is no middle ground between Theism and Atheism. The genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures are questions relevant to Secularism. It is as necessary for the Secularist to destroy Bible influence as for the farmer to endeavour to eradicate the chickweed from his clover field. We appeal to those who think our work fairly done to aid us in our labours; to those who will not work with us we simply say, do not hinder us.

"Our only wish and purpose is to make man happy, and this because in so doing we increase our own happiness. The secret of true happiness and wisdom lies in the consciousness that you are working to the fullest of your ability to make your fellows happy and wise. Man can never be happy until he is free; free in body and in mind; free in thought and in utterance; free from crowns and creeds, from priest, from king; free from the cramping customs created by the influences surrounding him, and which have taught him to bow to a lord and frown upon a beggar. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! That true liberty, which infringes not the freedom of my brother; that equality which recognises no noblemen but the men of noble thoughts and noble deeds; that fraternity which links the weak arm-in-arm with the strong, and, teaching humankind that union is strength, compels them to fraternise, and links them together in that true brotherhood for which we strive."

The second number of the *Investigator* under his editorship is interesting to-day, as containing his earliest printed views upon "Oath-taking;" the third is also notable for its paper on "Emerson," the first article from the pen of "B. V." (James Thomson); and in the fourth Mr W. E. Adams commenced his contributions. It is evident that my father spared no effort to make the paper "undoubtedly useful," as he put it; but in spite of all his energy and his able contributors the *Investigator* did not pay its way. In April, too, he fell ill from a very severe attack of rheumatic fever, and was laid up for many weeks; so that at length, "being unable to sustain any longer the severe pecuniary burden cast upon him, and not wishing to fill his pages with appeals for charitable assistance," the journal was, with much regret, discontinued in August 1859. In the final number he pens a few "last words," which are worth the reading, and in which he says that his reason for the discontinuance is very simple –

[24] *Investigator*, November 1st, 1858, p. 124.

"I am poor" – and in a rarely despondent mood he bids his readers "farewell," as he may perchance never address them again.

Delivering Freethought lectures and editing a Freethought journal undoubtedly absorbed much of Mr Bradlaugh's time, but these occupations engrossing as they were did not make him unmindful of his duties as a good citizen, and he was always taking some part or other in the political movements going on around him. At a meeting held in the Cowper Street Schoolroom in November 1858, to advocate the principles of the Political Reform League, at which the League was represented by Mr Passmore Edwards and Mr Swan, and the Chartists by Ernest Jones, Mr Bradlaugh is reported as seconding a resolution in an "earnest, lucid, and eloquent manner," and as having "enforced the duty of every man to preserve the public rights, by unitedly demanding and steadfastly, peaceably, and determinedly persevering to obtain that position of equality in the State to which they were as men entitled;" now, as always hereafter, urging the *peaceful* demand of constitutional rights: a point I am anxious to lay stress upon, as this is the time when some of my father's later critics assert that he was rude, coarse, and, above all, violent.

The chairman of the meeting, who was also the churchwarden of Shoreditch, and a man apparently much respected, at the close quaintly said "he had not met that young man (Mr Bradlaugh) before that night, but he was most highly pleased to find in him such an able advocate of principle; he hoped he would be as good and faithful an advocate when he became old."

On the first Sunday in March 1859, the working men of London held a great meeting in Hyde Park to protest against the Government Reform Bill. They were very much in earnest, and although the time for the speaking was fixed for three o'clock in the afternoon, long before that hour the Park was thronged with people. About half-past two a man was hoisted on the shoulders of two others, and was greatly cheered by the crowd, who thought this was the opening of the proceedings. When, however, the person so elevated proclaimed to his listening auditors that "those who dared to take part in a political meeting on the Sabbath would be grossly offending the Almighty," the cheering was changed to uproar and confusion, which only the advent of the real chairman sufficed to calm. The *Times* says that after the meeting had been duly opened, "Mr Bradlaugh, a young man well known in democratic circles, came forward and addressed the meeting." The report which follows is probably the first vouchsafed to Charles Bradlaugh by the great daily; and, judging from the number of "Cheers" and "Hear, hears," and even "Loud cheers" that the reporter managed to include in his score of lines of report, it was much more generous to him in '59 than at any later period. This meeting, like so many of its kind, and like the great majority of those with which my father was concerned, was remarkable for its orderliness; there was no police interference at any of the groups (several meetings were held simultaneously), and there was hardly a constable visible. On the Friday following, the 11th, a meeting was held at the Guildhall "to consider the measure of Parliamentary Reform introduced by the Ministry." The chair was taken by the Lord Mayor, and the speakers included Baron Rothschild, one of the three members for the City, Samuel Morley, P. A. Taylor, and Serjeant Parry. Ernest Jones, who rose to move an amendment, was refused a hearing – under a misapprehension, it is said. When Baron Rothschild began to speak he was considerably interrupted. "Loud calls," said the *Times* on the following day (when it was a trifle less polite than on the previous Monday), "were also raised for 'Bradlaugh' – a youthful orator who seemed a great favourite with the noisier Democrats." The poor Lord Mayor vainly tried to restore order, but louder grew the tumult and "more deafening" the calls for "Bradlaugh." Baron Rothschild was at length obliged to limit his speech to "I beg to second the motion;" and even these few words were only audible to those within two or three yards of him. When the meeting was drawing to a close, and the usual vote of thanks to the chair had been proposed —

> "The Lord Mayor acknowledged the compliment, at the same time expressing his deep regret that persons should have come to the hall bent on creating a disturbance. At this juncture a young man, with fair hair and thin but intelligent features, was seen gesticulating vehemently at the extreme end of the platform, to

> which he had worked his way unobserved amid the general confusion. His name, it appeared, is Bradlaugh, and his object evidently was to gratify his admirers by delivering an harangue. His words were, however, drowned by the conflicting clamour from the body of the hall. The Lord Mayor seemed to beckon him to the rostrum, as though his claim to speak were to be allowed; but a minute or two of indescribable confusion intervening, his Lordship came forward and then declared the meeting to be dissolved. This announcement had hardly been made when Mr Bradlaugh reached the part of the platform for which he had been struggling. His triumph was, however, very short lived. In an instant the Lord Mayor, though having one of his arms in a sling, was upon the refractory Chartist leader, and collared him with the energy and resolution of a Sir William Walworth. Two of the city officers promptly seconding his Lordship's assertion of his authority, Mr Bradlaugh was dragged forcibly to the back of the platform, and fell in the scuffle. All this was but the work of a moment, yet the uproar which it provoked continued after every occupant of the platform had retired. The undaunted orator found his way to the body of the hall unhurt, where he addressed such portions of the crowd as had not dispersed in frantic and excited eloquence. A considerable time elapsed before the building was cleared, during which Anarchy and Bradlaugh had undisputed possession of the scene."

How much of fact and how much of fiction there is in this lively account the *Times* only knoweth. The idea that a "Sir William Walworth" with one arm in a sling could "collar" a man of my father's herculean strength is sufficiently ridiculous. I myself saw him as late as 1877 at a stormy meeting take two unruly medical students in one hand and one in the other, and force them down the hall to the door, where he cast them out. His resistance to his fourteen assailants on August 3rd, 1881, is historic. It is hardly probable that a man who could do these things when he had passed the fulness of his strength would, when in the height of his vigour, have tamely submitted to be "collared" by a one-armed man and then dragged back and thrown to the ground by two "city officers;" and all "the work of a moment!"

Gatherings opposing the Government Reform Bill were held in different parts of London and the country; and Mr Joseph Cowen, himself President of the Northern Reform Union, writing to a friend in reference to them, on the 16th March, says incidentally: "Bradlaugh is a clever young fellow – full of vigour and daring – and is altogether a likely man to go ahead if he has any backing."

Considering the limited time at his disposal, there is really a tremendous record of public work for these two years, 1858 and 1859; for in addition to that which I have already mentioned, my father held several debates, some of them continuing for three or four nights in succession. He had his first formal encounter in June 1858. Prior to this, he had gained a little practice in discussing with the numerous opponents who used to rise after his lectures; then there was the more extended, but apparently informal, debate with Mr Douglas, to which I referred some time ago; and also, in the early part of 1858, Mr Bradlaugh seems to have arranged to speak at considerable length in opposition to the lectures given by Thomas Cooper in the Hall of Science, City Road; but the brief notices of these which appeared do not enable one to form any opinion, beyond remarking a decided irritability on the part of Mr Cooper, who permitted himself to use distinctly unparliamentary language. The first formally arranged debate in which he took part was a four nights' discussion with the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., then a dissenting minister at Sheffield, and was held in that town on the 7th, 8th, 14th, and 15th June. In 1873 my father, writing of this occasion, said: "Mr Grant was then a man of some ability, and, if he could have forgotten his aptitudes as a circus jester, would have been a redoubtable antagonist." The audiences were very large; the numbers of persons present on the different nights ranged from eleven to sixteen hundred; and, considering the heat of the weather and the still greater heat of the discussion, my father's testimony is that they "behaved bravely." Writing

shortly afterwards, he says: "The chairmen (both chosen by Mr Grant) behaved most courteously to me, and, in fact, the only disputed point of order was decided in my favour." He seems to have been particularly impressed by Alderman H. Hoole, the Chairman for the first two nights, who by an act of kindly courtesy quite outside the debate, showed that the gibes and sneers in which Mr Grant so freely indulged had little weight even with his own friends.

A friend in Sheffield has lent me the report of the discussion, printed at the time by Mr Leader of the *Sheffield Independent*, and which both disputants agreed was a very fair representation of what was said. According to the arranged terms, Mr Bradlaugh led the first night, and the Rev. Brewin Grant on each succeeding evening. The proposition to be affirmed by "Iconoclast" on the first evening was: "The God of the Bible, revengeful, inconstant, unmerciful, and unjust. His attributes proven to be contradicted by the book which is professed to reveal them." His opening speech was made in clear, concise language, was directly to the point, and was listened to with the utmost attention. He drew the picture of the Deity who, reviewing his creation, pronounced everything that he had made "very good" (Gen. i. 31); "yet in a short period the same Deity looks round and declares that man is so bad that he repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart [Gen. vi. 6]; and in consequence God, to relieve himself from this source of grief, determined to destroy every living thing, and he did destroy them by deluge, for it repented him that he had made them, because man was so very wicked." He dwelt upon this at some length; then passed on to the selection of Noah and his family, "part of the old stock of mankind having personal acquaintance with all pre-existing evil," to re-people the earth; and concluded his first half-hour by asking where was the love, where the justice towards the Amalek, against whom "the Lord hath sworn" to have war "from generation to generation"? It was now the turn of the Rev. Brewin Grant to reply to this terrible indictment against the Deity whose professed servant he was; and it is interesting to mark the manner in which he set about his task. He commenced by unburdening himself of a few minor personalities against my father, and when a few of these petty sneers – the only possible object of which could be to provoke ill feeling – were off his mind, he indulged his overwhelming passion for raising a laugh. For this he made an opportunity in dealing with the causes which led to "the Flood," asking whether "Iconoclast imagines that, because God knew of these sins before they were committed, he should have drowned men before they were created." This, of course, provoked the desired merriment, and, temporarily satisfied, Mr Grant proceeded to his argument with acuteness and ability. Unfortunately, his peculiar temperament would not allow him to keep this up for very long; and while still in his first half-hour speech he drew a comparison of God's repentance with that of a merchant who repents him of engaging a certain clerk, and made the merchant say, "Wherein can you find fault? Am I a Secularist that I should lie, or an infidel committee-man that I should violate a ratified agreement?" "Iconoclast" is once more taunted with blindness and ignorance; and "infidels" with amusing "auditors in holes of progress;" and so the reverend (never was a title more meaningless) gentleman's speech came to a conclusion. It would have been small wonder if a young, hotly enthusiastic man as my father then was, had been roused to angry retaliation, and so turned aside from the real points in dispute; but he did not so soon lose the coolness with which he had started. He made a few short answers to the personalities, and proceeded at once to deal with the arguments urged by Mr Grant; and, these disposed of, continued to build up his own position. The greater part of Brewin Grant's next speech was argumentative, but not all; he made an opportunity to tell his antagonist that his strength lay "not in his logic, but in his lungs;" that one of his objections was "too foolish," but he (Grant) "condescended to notice it;" and further, that "no class of men with which I am acquainted has had all honesty so thoroughly eaten out by trickery and falsehood as the infidel class." The next quarter of an hour fell to my father, who hardly noticed Mr Grant's gibes; but when the latter made his speech, the final one of the evening, he still interlarded it with innuendoes against the "infidel." The propositions affirmed by Mr Grant on the succeeding nights were shortly as follows: The Creation story consistent with itself and with science; the Deluge story consistent with

itself and physically possible; and finally, "Iconoclast" as a commentator on the Bible, "deficient in learning, logic, and fairness." But the story of the first night was merely repeated on the later evenings; as feeling grew a little warmer, or there was something more than usually offensive in Mr Grant's personalities, Mr Bradlaugh was once or twice evidently roused to anger; but after reading the debate I only wonder that he had the patience to carry it through to the end.

I have dwelt upon this debate much longer, as I am well aware, than it really deserves; but I have done so for two reasons: (1) That being the first set debate, formally arranged and fairly reported, it should have a special interest, inasmuch as we should expect it to show to a certain extent the measure of Mr Bradlaugh's debating powers at the age of twenty-six; and (2) because the idea has been so diligently spread abroad, and possibly received with credence by those who were not personally acquainted with either disputant, that Mr Bradlaugh found in the Rev. Brewin Grant a powerful opponent. By my father's testimony, Mr Grant was a man of ability; by his own – as shown by quotations I have here given – he was an unscrupulous slanderer. He had a power, it is true, and that power consisted in his willingness to weary and disgust his antagonist and his audience (friends as well as foes) by low jests and scandalous personalities. In the course of this debate he scornfully told his audience that he was not speaking to them but to the thousands outside: by those thousands, if perchance he has so many readers, will he be judged and condemned.

In March 1859 a debate between Mr Bradlaugh and Mr John Bowes was arranged at Northampton. My father describes Mr Bowes as "a rather heavy but well-meaning old gentleman, utterly unfitted for platform controversy." The *Northampton Herald*, which professed to give an "outline" of this debate, announced that the "mighty champion" of the Secularists was "a young man of the name of Bradlaugh, who endeavoured to impose upon the credulity of the multitude by arrogating to himself the high-sounding title of 'Iconoclast.'" Mr John Bowes the *Herald* put forward as a "gentleman well known for his contests with the Socialists and the Mormonites." The *Herald's* outline-report was reprinted in the *Investigator*, with a few additions in parentheses; but a note is appended that it is very imperfect, and my father having by this time fallen ill with rheumatic fever, he was unable to revise it. There is just one passage in Mr Bradlaugh's opening speech which is given fairly fully, and which it is desirable to repeat here, for in it he lays down his position as an Atheist, a position to which he adhered until his last hour.

"He did not deny that there was 'a God,' because to deny that which was unknown was as absurd as to affirm it. As an Atheist he denied the God of the Bible, of the Koran, of the Vedas, but he could not deny that of which he had no knowledge."

This statement Mr Bradlaugh made, in varying words, over and over again, and yet over and over again religious writers and speakers have described, and probably they always will describe, the Atheist as "one who denies God."

In the years 1859 and 1860, despite the fact that in the former year he lay for many weeks very seriously ill, discussions, as he himself says, grew on him "thick and fast." "At Sheffield I debated with a Reverend Dr Mensor, who styled himself a Jewish Rabbi. He was then in the process of gaining admission to the Church of England, and had been put forward to show my want of scholarship. We both scrawled Hebrew characters for four nights on a black board, to the delight and mystification of the audience, who gave me credit for erudition because I chalked the square letter characters with tolerable rapidity and clearness. At Glasgow I debated with a Mr Court, representing the Glasgow Protestant Association, a glib-tongued missionary, who has since gone to the bad; at Paisley with a Mr Smart, a very gentlemanly antagonist; and at Halifax with the Rev. T. D. Matthias, a Welsh Baptist minister, unquestionably very sincere."

I have not been able to get a report of the debate with Dr Mensor, and indeed I do not think one was ever printed. The discussion with the Rev. T. D. Matthias was for many years on sale with other Freethought publications, and has doubtless been read by many. The subject of the debate was "The Credibility and Morality of the Four Gospels," and it was continued for five successive

nights – October 31st, November 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 1859. It grew, as we have already seen, out of lectures delivered in Halifax by Mr Bradlaugh, and was with one or two exceptions conducted with such calmness, courtesy, and good feeling, that at the conclusion each gentleman expressed his appreciation of the other. The Court debate was not held until 1860, and was a four nights' debate, terminating on March 20. The use of the City Hall was refused on the ground "that such meetings tend to riot and disorder," and the discussions were therefore held in the Trades' Hall, which on each evening was crowded to the door. The chair was taken by the late Alexander Campbell, whom Mr Bradlaugh speaks of as "a generous, kindly-hearted old Socialist missionary, who, at a time when others were hostile, spoke encouragingly to me, and afterwards worked with me for a long time on the *National Reformer*." Mr Campbell edited the *Glasgow Sentinel*, and in the issue of March 17, 1860, there is an allusion to the debate then being carried on between "Iconoclast" and Mr Court, of "The Protestant Layman's Association." Says the *Sentinel*, "Few Scottish clergymen are fit for the platform. The pulpit, indeed, unfits for logical debate, but the Protestant community ought to feel well pleased that in Mr Court … they have a skillful and redoubtable champion of Christianity." The *Glasgow Daily Bulletin*, giving a few words to the final night, says that "the speaking during the evening was excellent and occasionally excited, but the conduct of the audience was orderly in the extreme. Mr Bradlaugh was animated and forcible, and exhibited many of the traits of a great speaker. Mr Court's university career is evidently polishing and improving him." The audience passed a resolution of censure upon the authorities who refused the City Hall, regarding it as involving a slander upon the community of Glasgow. A friend, after much searching, came across and sent to me a fragment of the published debate; but as it contains only one complete speech from each disputant and parts of two others, one cannot say much about it. Mr Court seems to have been unusually smart, and the *Daily Bulletin's* reference to his "university career" accounts for the numerous literary quotations which adorned his speech.

The *Paisley Journal* gives a short notice of the debate with Mr John Smart of the Neilson Institute, which was held for two successive nights in the Paisley Exchange Rooms in March 1860. Speaking of the first night's audience, it says it "was the largest we ever saw in the Exchange Rooms, the whole area, gallery, and passages being crowded;" on the second night the audience was estimated at between 1100 and 1200. The discussion for the first night was upon the four Gospels; and the editor remarks: "Of course, there will be differences of opinion as to which of the debaters had the best of the argument; but those who could clear their minds of partisanship will perhaps be of opinion that Mr Bradlaugh's speeches displayed boldness and vigour, with great information on the subjects at issue; that Mr Smart showed himself as an accomplished scholar, with a mass of knowledge ever ready to bring up in illustration of his views; and that each had a foeman worthy of his steel." The subject for the second night was a consideration of the teachings of Christ. The *Journal* thought that "both speakers brought their best arguments and greatest powers of intellect into the subject." Mr Bradlaugh enforced his objections "in powerful voice and vigorous language, and with telling effect. In his own quiet scholarly way – closely, tersely, and clearly, Mr Smart took up most of the objections and discussed them *seriatim*." It will be seen that the *Paisley Journal*, at least, tried to clear its mind of "partisanship," and to hold the scales evenly.

CHAPTER X
HARD TIMES

The question will probably have presented itself to many minds, If Mr Bradlaugh was giving up so much time to public work, to lecturing, reform meetings, debating, etc., how was he living the while? what was his home life, and in what way was he earning his bread? It will be remembered that, after leaving the army in 1853, he was before the year was out in the employ of Mr Rogers, solicitor, of 70 Fenchurch Street, first as "errand boy" at 10s. a week, and then as clerk at a slowly increasing salary. After a few months at Warner Place, he and my mother went to live in a little four-roomed house at No. 4 West Street, Cambridge Heath, where my sister Alice was born. In the previous January my father had had a very troublesome piece of litigation to conduct for his firm at Manchester. Often and often has he told us the story of it, and he used to work us up into a state of excitement by his graphic account of his capture of two men at night from a common lodging house in one of the low parts of Manchester; of his interview at the Albion Hotel with Mr Holland, a surgeon implicated in the case, who, when my father rose to ring the bell for some lemonade, mistaking the intent, rose in alarm, and cried, "For God's sake, don't!" These and other episodes in the case remained clearly enough in my memory, but when I wished to retell the story in a connected form, I found myself altogether at a loss. First of all, I could not remember that my father ever mentioned the date of these legal adventures, and without the date I could do little in the way of searching for press reports. However, I found a clue to this in the following letter, which was amongst those papers of my mother's which, as I have said, I looked through quite recently for the first time: —

"North Camp, Aldershot,"
29th January 1856.

"Madam, – Mr Bradlaugh has been kind enough to send me, during the last few days, some Manchester newspapers containing reports relative to the case of suspected poisoning. Not knowing where to address him now, I take the liberty of writing to you. Will you be so kind as to convey to him my thanks for the papers, and my hearty congratulations on his having obtained the management of the prosecution; it is an opportunity of distinguished service. With his wonderful acuteness and energy (Mr Bradlaugh and myself are such old and close friends that we do not mince words in speaking of or to each other) he will surely distinguish himself, and thus, as I suppose and hope, begin a fair way for promotion, as we phrase it. Watching the case with great interest, I thought his cross-examination of Mr Holland, the surgeon, extremely good and well conducted; but as this is merely an unprofessional opinion, he will not care much for it, although so favourable.

"Trusting that yourself and the other members of the family are enjoying good health, I have the honour to be, Madam, yours most respectfully,
Jas. Thomson, Schoolmaster."Depôt. 1st Rifles.

"Mrs C. Bradlaugh."

Apart from the subject, this letter has in itself a special interest to personal admirers of "B. V.": the handwriting – the earliest specimen in my possession – is singularly unlike Mr Thomson's writing of later years, so unlike that it was not until I had looked at the signature that I realised who was the writer, although I am so familiar with his writing that I should not have thought it possible that I could hesitate in recognising it.

The poisoning case must have aroused considerable attention in Manchester at the time. It arose in this way: – An insurance company called The Diadem Life Insurance Company had reason to believe that frauds were being practised upon them in Manchester through their agent, and consequently instructed their solicitor to investigate one case which they deemed unusually suspicious. The solicitor happened to be Mr Rogers, and he sent his clerk, Mr Bradlaugh, to Manchester to conduct the proceedings there. A man named John Monahan, a waterproof worker, had become insured in the Diadem Office for £300; and after paying the premiums he died, leaving a will securing the £300 to his son James Monahan. Certain facts had been kept back from the Insurance Company at the time of taking out the policy, and the man's age had also been wrongly given. Investigations led, first, to the belief that the will had not been written until three weeks after the testator's death – and this was subsequently sworn to by witnesses, one of whom wrote out the will – and finally, to the possibility that the old man, John Monahan, had been poisoned. Two men implicated in the matter Mr Bradlaugh himself captured and handed over to the police in the middle of the night, and, in consequence of the evidence sworn to, an order was made for the exhumation of the body of Monahan. As there was no record of the place of burial, the details of the exhumation were revolting in the extreme. For four days a gang of men were employed in digging up bodies in an almost haphazard manner under the vague directions, first, of the sexton and next of a niece of the deceased. Mr Bradlaugh, after consulting with the coroner, contracted with a Mr Sturges to undertake the work with more system. Sixty or more bodies were dug up, and at length one of these was identified as that of Monahan. Under the circumstances one cannot believe that the identification was very precise; the body had been lying in a common grave for between five and six months, and no one's memory seems to have been clear enough even to point out the spot where the old man was buried. Mr Bradlaugh was always of opinion that they did not get the right body after all, although in the body found there were traces of poison. These traces the medical evidence did not judge sufficient to justify a charge of poisoning, and this count therefore fell to the ground. The counsel engaged on behalf of the accused son, James Monahan, was very indignant that my father should be allowed to conduct the prosecution; he protested that heretofore the rule in that court was that no one should be allowed to practise in that court unless an attorney, or solicitor, or barrister. On the last occasion, the counsel went on, as the prisoners had been apprehended only the night before, and therefore, as there was not perhaps time to instruct a professional man, Mr Bradlaugh had been allowed to appear. Other clerks had been refused to appear, and he could not see why a different rule should be adopted in this case. To expedite the business, he suggested that the case should, according to ordinary practice, be conducted by a solicitor or barrister. Mr Bradlaugh said he had appeared to conduct cases for his employer in London police courts, and this was a matter entirely within the discretion of the Court. He urged that he alone was in possession of all the facts of the case, and that he could not communicate his knowledge to any other person. Mr Maude (the magistrate) remarked that it had been the general rule in that court that parties should be represented either by counsel or solicitor, but there was no rule without an exception, and looking at the peculiarity of this case, he thought it would be very inconvenient now not to allow Mr Bradlaugh to elicit the facts.

At a later stage of the proceedings a Mr Bent, who was watching the case on behalf of another of the prisoners, objected, on the part of the solicitors practising in the court, to Mr Bradlaugh, an attorney's clerk, being allowed to appear, but the Bench overruled his objection. In consequence of the medical evidence as to the condition of the exhumed body, the charge of poisoning had, of course, to be entirely abandoned, but in the March following James Monahan and two others were charged with having, on 3rd August 1855, "feloniously forged a will purporting to be the last will and testament of John Monahan, and with having uttered the same, knowing it to be forged," and another was charged with having feloniously been an accessory after the fact. The jury found Monahan guilty, but acquitted the others. Keefe, the fourth man, was then charged with having taken a false oath, and to this he pleaded guilty.

In September 1857 my father moved from West Street to 3 Hedgers Terrace, Cassland Road, Hackney, where I was born in the March of the following year. He now began to think it was quite time to take some definite steps towards the advancement of his position in life, and with that object in view he wrote the following letter to Mr Rogers: —

> "Dear Sir, – I have been in your employ above four years, and am now twenty-five years of age. I have a wife and child, beside mother and sisters, looking to me for support; under these circumstances it is absolutely necessary that I should make the best position I can for myself. My object in now addressing you is to ascertain if there is any probability of my obtaining my articles from you, and if so, at what period? You must not be offended with me for this, because we are in the position of two traders. I have my brains for sale, you buy them. I naturally try to get the best price – you perhaps may think I sell too high. I have already this year refused three situations offered to me. The first (although it was £160 a year) I refused because it came just after my last increase of salary; the second because it did not involve the articles; and the third because it was made to me immediately prior to the death of Mr Rogers, and I thought it would be indelicate then to trouble you. My question to you now is, Do you feel willing to give me my articles? Of course, I need not say that I have not the means to pay for the stamp, and the matter therefore involves the question of an advance of £80. I would, however, gladly serve you for the five years at the salary I now receive, and I would enter into any bond, however stringent, to prevent loss of practice to you in the future. If you feel inclined to do this, name your own time within six months: if, on the contrary, you think I set too high a value on my capabilities, or have determined not to give articles to any clerk, I shall be obliged by an early reply.
>
> "Whatever may be the result of this application, I trust you will believe that I am grateful for the many past kindnesses you have shown me, and that the good feeling at present existing may not be lessened between us. I have my way in life to make – yours to a great extent is smooth and easy; but as you have struggled yourself, I am willing to hope you will not blame me for trying hard to make a step in life. – Yours very respectfully,
> *"(Signed) Chas. Bradlaugh.*
>
> "Thos. Rogers, Esq."

This letter is undated and without address; and it will be noted as a curious point of interest, in one so very business-like and practical, that Mr Bradlaugh rarely did put his address or date on the letters he wrote with his own hand. If the address happened to be stamped on the paper, well and good, if not, he rarely wrote it; and his nearest approach to dating his letters was to put upon them the day of the week. I do not, of course, say that he never went through the customary form of putting the date or address, but that he more often than not omitted it. This habit, contracted early in life, he retained until his death, and in fact the very last letter entirely written with his own hand was merely dated with the day of the week.

The precise reply to this appeal I do not know; that it must have been in the negative, and that my father had to seek for some one else who would give him his articles on the terms indicated in his letter is clear. This person he thought he had found in Mr Thomas Harvey, solicitor, of 36 Moorgate Street, and he quitted Mr Rogers in order to be articled to him. The draft of the articles of agreement found amongst my father's papers bears the date November 16th, 1858. This connection proved to be a most unfortunate one for my father; for Mr Harvey shortly afterwards fell into money difficulties, in which Mr Bradlaugh also became involved. My father's troubles – as troubles ever seem to do – came, not singly, but in battalions; he was now not only without regular employment and in serious

pecuniary difficulties, but rheumatic fever seized upon him, and laid him for many weeks in the spring and early summer of 1859 on his couch in his little room at Cassland Road. In August, still weak, poor, and full of care, he was, as I have said, obliged to stop the *Investigator*, and give up for the time his cherished project of editing a Freethought journal.

When poor people are ill, necessity compels them to curtail the period of convalescence, so before my father was able to go out he strove to do writing work at home, although the rheumatism lingering in his right hand rendered the use of the pen painful and difficult. As soon as he could get about again he began once more lecturing and debating (as we have seen) with renewed energy. Anyhow the stories are legion of the fortunes he made upon the platform and through his publications, though a few small incidents will show the amount of truth there is in these oft-repeated tales.

Just before the birth of my brother Charles, on the 14th September 1859, we moved from Hackney to a little house at Park, near Tottenham, called Elysium Villa; and while we lived here, when my father had to make a journey to the North he was obliged to start from Wood Green station, a distance of about three and a half miles from our house. The only way to get there was to walk – omnibuses there were none, and a cab was out of the question on the score of expense. Mr Bradlaugh had no portmanteau in those days; his books and his clothes were packed in a square tin box, which to the "curious observer" – to use a phrase much favoured by novelists – would have given a hint of his profession, inasmuch as it was uncommonly like a deed box. The maid Kate, assisted by someone else, carried this box from home to the station at Wood Green over night, and my father would get up early in the morning and walk the three and a-half miles to catch the first train to the North. It must be borne in mind that my father did not, like many young men, like walking for walking's sake, and the long walk, followed by a still longer train ride in one of the old comfortless third-class compartments in a slow train, finishing up with a lecture or debate, made a fairly heavy day's work.

Before going farther I must stay to say a word about Kate, because I want to give some idea of the devotion my father inspired at home as well as in the hearts of men who could only judge him by his public acts. Kate came to us from the country, a girl of sixteen, when I was but a few months old; she stayed with us until our home was broken up and my brother died, in 1870. Many a time her wages were perforce in arrears; and in 1870 she would, as she had done before, have patiently waited for better times and shared with us, had we not been compelled to do without her. Her loyalty was absolute. When we three children were babies she cheerfully bore poverty with us; and well do I remember – as a picture it stands out in my mind, one of my earliest recollections – the carpetless floor and scantily furnished room. In the days when there was arrest for debt she kept the door against the sheriff's officer: when one of Mr Thomson's sad periods of intemperance overwhelmed him, she, with my mother, searched the purlieus of London for him, found him in some poor den, and brought him home to be nursed and cared for. Kate lives to-day, and with unabated loyalty never allows an opportunity to pass of saying a word in praise, or in defence, of her dead but much-loved master.

A letter to my mother (undated, but certainly written early in the sixties) giving some description of one of my father's journeys to Yarmouth, reminds us that the old-fashioned windowless third-class carriage left many things to be desired, and in these days of luxurious travelling such hardships would be thought unendurable: —

> "I am safely landed here[25] with sevenpence in my pocket. It has snowed nearly all the journey, and if it continues I expect all the bloaters will be turned into whitings. The ride was a cold one, for the E. C. R.[26] parliamentary carriage combined the advantage of ventilation with that of a travelling bath, wind, rain, and snow gaining admission and accompanying us without payment – which was not fair.

[25] The letter is headed, "Yarmouth, Thursday."

[26] "Eastern Counties," now "Great Eastern" Railway.

> "You asked me to write, and I will therefore describe the incidents of the journey. Park to Broxbourne: carriage full, darkness prevailed; Broxbourne: spent 1d. on *Daily Telegraph*, which read to myself lying on the broad of my back, the carriage being more empty; the view was mist in the clouds of snow. Cambridge: bought 3d. of biscuits and a [*Morning*] *Star*, ate one and read the other till I arrived at Ely, with an occasional glance at Buckle on Civilisation. Ely to Norwich: cold, and discontented with my lot in life; Norwich: met Adams and Roberts, talked sweet things about confectionery for ten minutes, then straight on here, where I fulfil my promise of writing you."

The letter is ornamented with several drawings of himself under the different circumstances indicated in his letter.

The story he also relates in his "Autobiography," "for the encouragement of young propagandists," is a forcible example of the little profit his lectures often brought, and the difficulties his poverty sometimes forced upon him.

"I had," he says, "lectured in Edinburgh in mid-winter; the audience was small, the profits microscopical. After paying my bill at the Temperance Hotel, where I then stayed, I had only a few shillings more than my Parliamentary fare to Bolton, where I was next to lecture. I was out of bed at five on a freezing morning, and could have no breakfast, as the people were not up. I carried my luggage (a big tin box, corded round, which then held books and clothes, and a small black bag), for I could not spare any of my scanty cash for a conveyance or porter. The train from Edinburgh being delayed by a severe snowstorm, the corresponding Parliamentary had left Carlisle long before our arrival. In order to reach Bolton in time for my lecture, I had to book by a quick train, starting in about three-quarters of an hour, but could only book to Preston, as the increased fare took all my money except 4½d. With this small sum I could get no refreshment in the station, but in a little shop in a street outside I got a mug of hot tea and a little hot meat pie. From Preston I got with great difficulty on to Bolton, handing my black bag to the station-master there, as security for my fare from Preston, until the morning. I arrived in Bolton about a quarter to eight; the lecture commenced at eight, and I, having barely time to run to my lodgings, and wash and change, went on to the platform cold and hungry. I shall never forget that lecture; it was in an old Unitarian Chapel. We had no gas, the building seemed full of a foggy mist, and was imperfectly lit with candles. Everything appeared cold, cheerless, and gloomy. The most amusing feature was that an opponent, endowed with extra piety and forbearance, chose that evening to specially attack me for the money-making and easy life I was leading."

Writing in April 1860, he also gives some idea of his profits as an editor and a publisher: – "When," he writes, "I relinquished the editorship of the *Investigator*, I was burdened with a printing debt of nearly £60; this has been reduced a little more than half by contributions, leaving about £26 still due. I have, in addition, paid out of my own pocket, for Freethought printing, during two years, more than £100, for which I have yet no return. During the last eight months I have been actively engaged in lecturing… When you learn that at some places I took nothing away, and paid my own expenses, and that at nearly every place I only received the actual profit of my lectures; and when, in addition, you allow a few days for visits to my wife and family, which have been few and far between; and also reckon for more than a week of enforced idleness through ill health, you will perceive that I am not amassing a fortune."

In 1861 he again wrote: "During the past twelve months I have addressed 276 different meetings, four of which each numbered over 5000 persons; eighty of these lectures have involved considerable loss in travelling, hotel expenses, loss of time, etc. I have during the same time held five separate debates, two of these also without remuneration."

It is very likely that even in these early years my father cherished the hope of being able to earn enough by his tongue and his pen to devote himself entirely to that Freethought and political work which he had so much at heart; but as his own words show us, the day for that was not yet come,

and the fortune he was accused of amassing existed then, as always, only in the heated imagination of his detractors.

CHAPTER XI
A CLERICAL LIBELLER

Some lawsuits in which Mr Bradlaugh was interested brought him into contact with a solicitor named Montague R. Leverson, who had indeed been engaged in the defence of Dr Bernard. The acquaintance thus begun resulted in an arrangement between them in January 1862 that Mr Leverson should give my father his articles. It was agreed that Mr Leverson should pay the £80 stamp duty and all expenses in connection with the articles, and that my father should serve him as clerk for five years at a salary of £150 per annum for the first three years and £200 for the final two. The articles were drawn up and duly stamped on 25th June of the same year. For the convenience of business, my father gave up his house at Park, and went to live at 12 St Helen's Place, Bishopsgate. This connection, which opened so favourably, and gave my father the opportunity, as he thought, of making a settled position in life, lasted only for two years or less. Mr Leverson got into difficulties, and the business was broken up. Vague accusations had been brought against my father for the manner in which he is supposed to have treated Mr Leverson. Nothing definite is stated, but the slanderous "know-all's," who really know nothing, try to make out a case by means of hint and innuendo. With a view of disposing of even such paltry slanders as these, I quote the following letter written in reference to Mr Montague R. Leverson: —

"Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London, W."
7th January 1867.

"My Dear Sir, – As written words remain when those spoken may be forgotten, I desire to place on record my sense of the kindly interest and alacrity you have recently displayed in your endeavours to serve a person with whom, despite anterior intimate relations, you had a short time previously been on antagonistic terms.

"Your earnest and energetic zeal on a former occasion had commanded my respect and that of my wife, who witnessed some of your untiring efforts, and I regret that your friendly services have not met their full and due appreciation.

"I feel sure, nevertheless, that should an opportunity occur where your good offices would be required, you would not withhold them. – I remain dear Sir, yours most truly,
George R. Leverson.

"Chas. Bradlaugh, Esq."

When Mr Bradlaugh quitted Mr Leverson he also quitted St Helen's Place, and went back to Tottenham to live, where, indeed, my sister and I had remained at a school kept by two maiden ladies during the greater part of the intervening time. He took the house, Sunderland Villa, next door to the one we had previously occupied, and for business purposes he rented an office in the city first at 23 Great St Helen's, and later at 15 and 16 Palmerston Buildings, Old Broad Street. A company was formed called the "Naples Colour Company," of which he was the nominal principal, and in which he was very active. This enterprise arose out of the discovery that iron and platinum were to be found in the sand of the beach at Castellamare, a little place on the coast not far from Naples. From this sand, steel of the finest quality was manufactured, and paint peculiarly suitable for the painting of iron ships, inasmuch as it would not rust. I have a razor in my possession manufactured from this steel, and I remember that while we were at Midhurst my grandfather still had some of this paint, with which he loyally painted hen-coops, troughs, sheds, and every article in his possession that could be reasonably expected to stand a coat of paint. Everything in connection with the company was done

in my father's name: the Italian Government granted the concession in his name; some stock in the Grand Book of Italy, at one time held in his name, was in connection with this company; Foundry, warehouses, and other buildings were raised; there were factories at Granili, Naples, and Hatcham New Town, London; steel and paint, especially the latter, were duly turned out, and were pronounced first-class; but somehow the business was a failure – perhaps partly because those engaged in it may not have been sufficiently versed in the "colour" trade (I do not know that this was so, but think it very probable), and also certainly because of my father's name. I well recollect his telling us how on one occasion a large order came for paint; the paint was duly taken down to the wharf to be shipped, when at the last moment came a telegram, followed by a letter countermanding the order. In the interval the intending purchaser had learned that the Bradlaugh of the "Naples Colour Company" was also Bradlaugh the Atheist, so, of course, he could not think of doing business with him.

In the city my father also fell into business connection with gentlemen who were concerned in the conduct of financial operations, and he himself took part in negotiating municipal loans, etc. I only remember two incidents in connection with these undertakings: one the loan to the city of Pisa, told by Mr John M. Robertson in his Memoir,[27] and the other a negotiation he was conducting to supply the Portuguese Government with horses. His business was nearly concluded to his satisfaction when he was recalled by telegram to London. Overend, Gurney & Co. had failed, and "Black Friday" had come; Mr Bradlaugh lost his contract; there was the terrible financial panic, and a fatal blow was struck to my father's business career. Mr Robertson quotes him saying, "I have great faculties for making money, and great faculties for losing it;" and these words were very true.

[27] "Once, as a financier, he was intrusted with the negotiation of a loan for the city of Pisa, with some of whose authorities he had become acquainted in some of his various journeys to Italy. His percentage, small in name, was to be considerable in total, on a loan of £750,000. He duly arranged matters with a certain London financier, who thereupon sent off a clerk to Pisa to offer the money at a fraction less than Bradlaugh was to get, provided he got the whole commission. Bradlaugh, however, had been secured in the conduct of the transaction up to a given date. He instantly went to Rothschilds, who allowed no commission, and put the loan in their hands. The other financier thus got nothing; but so did Bradlaugh." – John M. Robertson, "Memoir," pp. xxxvi. xxxvii.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.