

REMINISCENCES  
OF  
CHARLES BRADLAUGH

BY  
G. W. FOOTE

*President of the National Secular Society*

AND

*Editor of "The Freethinker."*

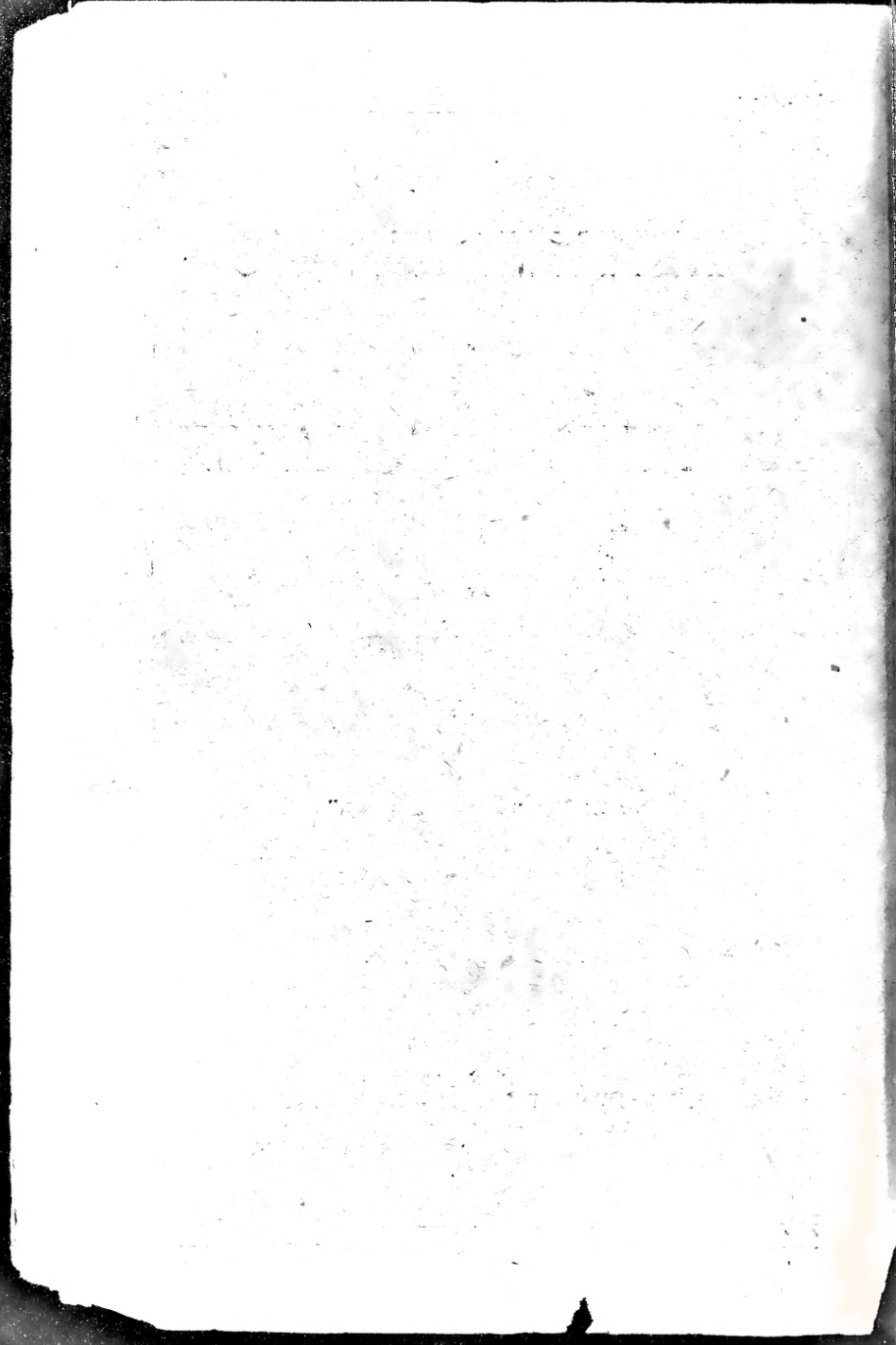
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### INTRODUCTION.

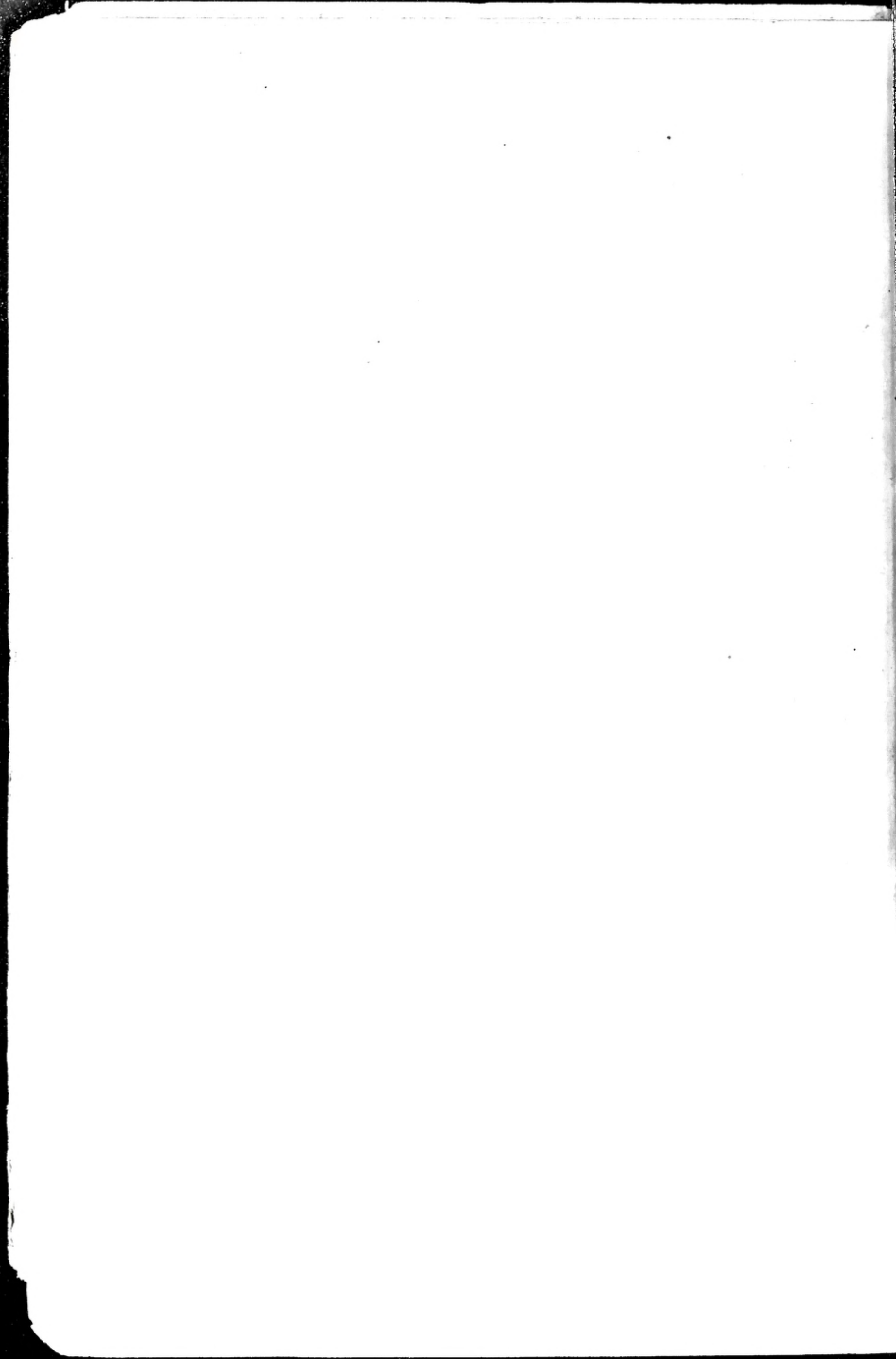
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THE following pages are reprinted, with some alterations and additions, from the columns of the *Freethinker*. They are neither methodical nor exhaustive. I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Bradlaugh more or less intimately for twenty years. I have worked with him in the Freethought movement and stood by his side on many political platforms. It seemed to me, therefore, that if I jotted down, even in a disjointed manner, some of my recollections of his great personality, I should be easing my own mind and conferring a pleasure on many readers. Beyond that I was not ambitious. The time for writing Mr. Bradlaugh's life is not yet, but when it arrives my jottings may furnish a point or two to his biographer.

G. W. FOOTE.

*March 30, 1891.*

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## Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh.

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WHEN I came to London, in January, 1868, I was eighteen years of age. I had plenty of health and very little religion. While in my native town of Plymouth I had read and thought for myself, and had gradually passed through various stages of scepticism, until I was dissatisfied even with the advanced Unitarianism of a preacher like the Rev. J. K. Applebee. But I could not find any literature in advance of his position, and there was no one of whom I could inquire. Secularism and Atheism I had never heard of in any definite way, although I remember, when a little boy, having an Atheist pointed out to me in the street. Naturally I regarded him as a terrible monster. I did not know what Atheism was except in a very vague way; but I inferred from the tones, expressions, and gestures of those who pointed him out to me, that an Atheist was a devil in human form.

Soon after I came to London I found out an old school-fellow, and went to lodge with his family. They were tainted with Atheism, and my once pious playmate was as corrupt as the rest of them. They took me one Sunday evening to Cleveland Hall, where I heard Mrs. Law knock the Bible about delightfully. She was not what would be called a woman of culture, but she had what some devotees of "culchaw" do not possess—a great deal of natural ability; and she appeared to know the "blessed book" from cover to

cover. Her discourse was very different from the Unitarian sermons I had heard at Plymouth. She spoke in a plain, honest, straightforward manner, and I resolved to visit Cleveland Hall again.

Three or four weeks afterwards I heard Mr. Bradlaugh for the first time. It was a very wet Sunday evening, but as 'bus-riding was dearer then than it is now, and my resources were slender, I walked about three miles through the heavy rain, and sat on a backless bench in Cleveland Hall, for which I think I paid twopence. I was wet through, but I was young, and my health was flawless. Nor did I mind the discomfort a bit when Mr. Bradlaugh began his lecture. Fiery natural eloquence of that sort was a novelty in my experience. I kept myself warm with applauding, and at the finish I was pretty nearly as dry outside as inside. From that time I went to hear Mr. Bradlaugh whenever I had an opportunity. He became the "god" of my young idolatry. I used to think of him charging the hosts of superstition, and wish I could be near him in the fight. But it was rather a dream than any serious expectation of such an honor.

When the new Hall of Science was opened I became a pretty regular attendant. I heard Mr. Charles Watts, who was then as now a capital debater; Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Mr. C. C. Cattell, Mr. Austin Holyoake, and perhaps one or two other lecturers whom I have forgotten. Mr. Austin Holyoake frequently took the chair, especially at Mr. Bradlaugh's lectures, and a capital chairman he was, giving out the notices in a pleasant, graceful manner, and pleading for financial support like a true man. He was working hard for the success of the enterprise himself, and had a right to beg help from others.

Mr. Bradlaugh, however, was the great attraction in my case. Perhaps I was more impressionable at



that time, but I fancy he was then at his best as an orator. In later life he grew more cautious under a sense of responsibility ; he had to think what he should not say as well as what he should. He cultivated the art of persuasion, and he was right in doing so. But at the earlier period I am writing of he gave a full swing to his passionate eloquence. His perorations were marvellously glowing and used to thrill me to the very marrow.

Gradually I began to make acquaintances at the Hall. I got to know Mr. Austin Holyoake and his charming wife, Mr. and Mrs. Bayston, Mr. Herbert Gilham, Mr. R. O. Smith, and other workers. By and bye I was introduced to Mr. Bradlaugh and shook hands with him. It was the proudest moment of my young life. I still remember his scrutinising look. It was keen but kindly, and the final expression seemed to say, "We may see more of each other."

In 1870 I wrote my first article in the *National Reformer*. For a year or two I wrote occasionally, and after that with tolerable frequency. I was also engaged in various efforts at the Hall ; helping to carry on a Secular Sunday School, a Young Men's Secular Association, etc. Naturally I was drawn more and more into Mr. Bradlaugh's acquaintance, and when he found himself unable to continue the Logic Class he had started at the Hall he asked me to carry it on for him. Of course I was proud of the invitation. But the Class did not live long. It was not Logic, but Mr. Bradlaugh, that had brought the members together. Nor do I think they would have learnt much of the art from Mr. Bradlaugh, except in an empirical way. He had a very logical cast of mind, but as far as I could see he had little acquaintance with formal Logic as it is taught by Mill and Whately, whom I select as typical masters of Induction and Deduction,

without wishing to depreciate the host of other authorities. Mr. Bradlaugh really gave his class lessons in Metaphysics; his talk was of substance, mode, and attribute, rather than of premises and conclusions.

Mr. Bradlaugh and I were brought into closer acquaintance by the Republican agitation in England after the proclamation of the present French Republic. I attended the Republican Conference at Birmingham in 1871, when I first met my old friend Dr. Guest of Manchester, Mr. R. A. Cooper of Norwich, Mr. Daniel Baker, Mr. Ferguson the Glasgow Home Ruler, and other veterans of reform. We held our Conference on Sunday in the old meeting-place of the Secular Society, which was approached by very abrupt steps, and being situated over stables, was not devoid of flavor. On Monday the Conference was continued in one of the rooms under the Town Hall. A long political programme was concocted. I was elected Secretary, and had the honor of speaking at the public meeting in the large hall. It was my first appearance in such a perilous position. I was apprehensive, and I said so. But Mr. Bradlaugh put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to fear. His kind looks and words were an excellent tonic. When I rose to speak I thought next to nothing about the audience. I thought "Mr. Bradlaugh is listening, I must do my best." And now as I am writing, I recall his encouraging glance as I looked at him, and the applause he led when I made my first point. He was my leader, and he helped me in an elder-brotherly way. Nothing could exceed his considerate generosity. Other people did not see it, but I remember it, and it was typical of the man.

One incident at the Conference is worth noting. It occurred in the afternoon, when Mr. R. A. Cooper (I think) was in the chair. The question of Free Educa-

tion was being discussed. Mr. Bradlaugh did not quite like it, nor did I. He asked me to go with him into an ante-room and consider an amendment. What it was I can hardly remember, although I recollect that Mr. Cooper was very sarcastic about it. Since then my own opinion has changed, as I dare say Mr. Bradlaugh's had changed; and the incident would not be worth recalling if it did not throw a light upon Mr. Bradlaugh's philosophy. He was always in favor of self-help and individual responsibility, and he was naturally hostile to everything that might weaken those precious elements of English life.

During the years immediately after the opening of the Hall of Science, Mr. Bradlaugh was there a good deal. Sometimes he attended the week-night entertainments and gave a reading from Shelley or Whittier or some other poet. The audience applauded as a matter of course. They always applauded Mr. Bradlaugh. But he was no reader. He delivered his lines with that straightforward sincerity which characterised his speeches. He cultivated none of the graces or dexterities of the elocutionist. Besides, he was too original to be a successful echo of other men. I think he only did justice to Shelley's lines "To the Men of England." But this is a piece of simple and vigorous declamation; very fine, no doubt, but rather rhetoric than poetry.

Mr. Bradlaugh was anything but a cold man. I should say he was electric. But his tastes, so far as I could discover, did not lie in the direction of poetry. Certainly I heard him once, in those old days, read a great part, if not the whole of Shelley's "Sensitive Plant." He loved Shelley, however, as an Atheist and a Republican, and I suppose he took Shelley's poetry on trust. But I do not think, though I speak under correction, that he cared very much for poetry

*as such.* I could never discover from his conversation or writings that he had read a line of Shakespeare—the god of Colonel Ingersoll. His mind was of the practical order, like Oliver Cromwell's. He had a genius for public affairs. He was not only a born orator, but a born ruler of men. Naturally he had, as the French say, the defects of his qualities. And it may be that the terrible stress of his life tended to repress the poetical side of his nature, and less developed his subtlety than his strength. Yet his feelings were deep, and his heart was easily touched. When William O'Brien delivered that great speech in the House of Commons after his imprisonment by Mr. Balfour, with all its needless indignities, there were two men who could not restrain their tears. One was an Irish member. The other was Charles Bradlaugh. One who witnessed the scene told me it was infinitely pathetic to see that gigantic man, deemed so hard by an ignorant world, wiping away his tears at the tale of a brave man's unmerited suffering.

Mr. Bradlaugh used to attend the social parties pretty often in those old days. He did not dance and he stood about rather awkwardly. It must have been a great affliction, but he bore it with exemplary fortitude. Once or twice I saw Mrs. Bradlaugh there. She had a full-blown matronly figure. Miss Alice and Miss Hypatia came frequently. They were not then living in the enervating air of London, and they looked extremely robust. I also remember the boy Charles, of whom Mr. Bradlaugh seemed very proud. He was a remarkably bright lad, and full of promise. But he was carried off by a fever. Only a day or two after the lad's death Mr. Bradlaugh had to lecture at the Hall. I was away, and I wondered whether he would fulfil the engagement. He did fulfil it. A

friend wrote to me that Mr. Bradlaugh walked through the hall and mounted the platform with a face as white and rigid as that of a statue. He made no reference or allusion to his loss, but all could see he carried a bleeding heart. His lecturing in such circumstances was characteristic. Weaker men would have indulged their grief; he was made of sterner stuff, and would not let it interfere with what he deemed his duty.

Splendid as was his eloquence at that time, Mr. Bradlaugh did not draw the large audiences that flocked around him a few years later. The Hall of Science was at first but half its present size, the platform standing on the right as you entered, with a small gallery on the opposite side. Its holding capacity could not have been more than half what it is at present, yet I have seen the place far from full. But the audiences grew larger and larger, and eventually the hall was increased to its present proportions, although for a long time there was not cash enough to put on a proper roof, and the building was defaced by a huge unsightly beam, on each side of which there was an arch of corrugated iron.

Those were glorious times. Difficulties were great, but there was a spirit at the Hall that laughed at them. How the foremost men about the place did work! Mr. R. O. Smith and Mr. Trevilion, senior, could a tale unfold. Whenever Freethinkers are at all dejected they should have a chat with one of those gentleman. Perhaps it would make them ashamed of their dejection, and fill them with the spirit of the heroic days.

Friends have told me with what energy Mr. Bradlaugh fought the battles of the old Reform League. I *know* with what energy he threw himself into the Republican agitation that followed the downfall of

Napoleon III. He tried to get to Paris but failed. Jules Favre and his friends did not want him. Favre himself was an eloquent histrion, and no doubt he felt afraid of a man like Mr. Bradlaugh. But if Mr. Bradlaugh could not get to Paris he fought hard for France in London. Meetings at the Hall of Science did not suffice. There was money from French sources and St. James's Hall was taken for a big demonstration. The Positivists shared in the proceedings. Their chief man was Mr. Frederic Harrison. Mr. Bradlaugh and he were a tremendous contrast. In fact a London paper (I think the *Echo*) remarked that Mr. Bradlaugh spoke as well as Mr. Harrison wrote, and Mr. Harrison spoke as badly as Mr. Bradlaugh wrote. There was some truth in this, though like most epigrams it was not all true. Mr. Bradlaugh was a born orator, but not a born writer. Yet he often wrote with a forthright power, naked and unadorned, which could dispense with the aid of literary artifices.

During this English agitation on behalf of France, held firmly under German feet, Mr. Bradlaugh came into contact with a French countess, who, I believe, either supplied or was the channel of supplying the necessary funds. As the lady is mentioned in Mr. Headingley's *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, which was published with Mr. Bradlaugh's sanction, there is no reason why I should not refer to her. She came several times to the Hall of Science, and I was introduced to her. She had been a beauty, and although time was beginning to tell on her, she retained a good deal of charm and distinction, which, like a true Frenchwoman, she heightened by the art of dressing. Then as now, of course, foul tongues wagged in foolish heads, and Mr. Bradlaugh's enemies were not slow to point to the French countess with prurient grimaces. Unable to understand friendship between man and

woman, owing to their Puritan training or incurable rankness, they invited the orthodox in religion and politics to note this suspicious connection. Something of this malicious folly must have reached Mr. Bradlaugh's ears, but I imagine he was too proud and self-contained to let it disturb him.

After the Birmingham meeting, and the founding of the Republican League, of which Mr. Bradlaugh became president, and I secretary, he visited Spain on private business, taking with him a message from the Conference to Senor Castelar, the leading spirit of the short-lived Spanish Republic. I remember writing out the message in a clear, bold hand, and addressing the foolscap envelope in the same way. When Mr. Bradlaugh fell among the Carlists he cursed my calligraphy. Happily, however, the officer who scrutinised that envelope could not read at all, and Mr. Bradlaugh escaped the consequences of being known to carry about letters addressed to the devilish Castelar.

During Mr. Bradlaugh's first visit to America I was a frequent contributor to his journal, and I corresponded with him privately. I went down to Northampton and delivered a lecture at his request, under the auspices of his electoral committee. The old theatre—a dirty, ramshackle place as I recollect it—was crowded, and I had my first taste of the popularity of Mr. Bradlaugh in the borough. Every mention of his name excited the wildest enthusiasm.

While Mr. Bradlaugh was lecturing in the States a general election took place in England. It was impossible for him to return in time, but his friends looked after his interests. A committee was formed at the Hall of Science to raise the necessary funds, and Mr. Charles Watts and I went down to Northampton to conduct the election. We addressed outdoor meetings in the day, and crowded indoor meetings at night.

Again I saw what a hold Mr. Bradlaugh had on his Northampton followers. They sang "Bradlaugh for Northampton" in the Circus with all the fervor of Scotch Covenanters on their hillsides "rolling the psalm to wintry skies."

Mr. Watts and I did not win the seat for Mr. Bradlaugh, nor did he win it himself at the next election, but we managed to increase his vote, and he expressed his pleasure at the result.

Soon after the election Mr. Bradlaugh returned to England. Mr. Watts and I went down with him to Northampton. There was a crowded public meeting, I believe in the Circus; and I saw Mr. Bradlaugh, for the first time, in the presence of his future constituents. They were simply intoxicated with excitement. The shouts of "Bradlaugh" and "Charley" were deafening. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved in the air. The multitude rose to its feet and gave its hero a splendid welcome. Then we settled down to speech-making, but all that followed was somewhat tame and flat after that first glorious outburst of popular devotion.

The next election came quickly. It resulted in the return of a Tory majority for Benjamin Disraeli, and Mr. Gladstone went off to sulk in his tent. Two Tories were returned for Radical Northampton. Mr. Bradlaugh let them in. He was determined to have one of the Northampton seats. To get it he had to make himself inevitable. He had to prove that if Northampton wanted two Liberal members, one of them must be Charles Bradlaugh. It took him thirteen years to demonstrate this, but he succeeded, as he succeeded in most things. At last, in 1880, he ran as official Liberal candidate with Mr. Labouchere, and both were returned.

I assisted Mr. Bradlaugh during his second (1874)



election. It was then that I first saw Mrs. Besant. She had not yet taken to the platform, but she was writing for the *National Reformer*, and her pen was active during the contest. Mr. Watts was also there. Another figure I remember was Mr. George Odger, who labored among the Trade Unionists of Northampton in Mr. Bradlaugh's interest. George Odger was one of the ablest of all the working-class leaders I have ever met. He came from my own county, Devonshire, being born at Horrabridge, on the road between Plymouth and Tavistock. He was honest to the heart's core, as well as very able, but he was incurably indolent. You never could be sure of him at a public meeting. He had to be looked up beforehand, or he might forget the engagement and spend his time more agreeably. He was passionately fond of the theatre, and could talk by the hour on famous performances of old actors and actresses. During the daytime at Northampton I had long chats with him. He objected to fine hotels, and he objected to walking; so I had to sit with him in the garden of a semi-rural public-house, where our conversation was altogether out of proportion to our liquor. Odger liked beer; not much of it, but just enough; it suited his palate and his purse; and as I drank next to nothing, the landlord must have thought us unprofitable customers.

Mr. Bradlaugh had rooms at the George Hotel. It was the Tory house, but he preferred it, and Mrs. Besant, Mr. Watts, and the rest of us, fed and slept there during the election. This gave rise to a good deal of silly talk among Mr. Bradlaugh's enemies. One evening we were returning from a Town Hall meeting, and the Tories had been holding a small meeting at the "George." As we reached the foot of the stairs, we encountered a knot of Tories. One of them was Mr. Merewether, the Tory candidate. He

was nearly of the same height as Mr. Bradlaugh, and well built. His friends were holding him back, but he broke from them, exclaiming, "Hang it! I *will* have a look at him." He stood at the very foot of the staircase and looked hard at Mr. Bradlaugh ascending. His expression was one of good-tempered insolence. After a long look at Mr. Bradlaugh, he returned to his friends, shouting, "Well, I'm damned if he's as bad-looking as I thought."

I left Northampton before the close of the poll. Mr. Bradlaugh was leaving the same night for America, having barely time to catch the boat at Liverpool. I drove round with him before leaving, on a visit to some of the polling stations. He had paid me a modest sum for my services, but he found he had hardly enough to take him across the Atlantic, and he asked me to lend him what money I had. I fished seven or nine pounds out of my pocket—I forget which—and handed it to him. It was paid back to me by his order a few weeks subsequently; and the incident would not be worth mentioning if it did not throw a light on the libellous nonsense of Mr. Bradlaugh's enemies that he was rolling in wealth.

While at Northampton with Mr. Bradlaugh, and on other occasions, I saw something of his personal tastes and habits. He struck me as an abstemious man. He was far from a great eater, and I never noticed him drink anything at dinner but claret, which is not an intoxicating beverage. On the whole, I should say, it is less injurious to the stomach and brain than tea or coffee. He was rather fond of a cup of tea seventeen years ago, and latterly his fondness for it developed into something like a passion. More than once I found him at St. John's Wood drinking a big cup of pretty strong tea, and was seduced by his genial invitation into joining him in that reckless indulgence.

He used to smoke too in the old days, but he afterwards gave up the practice for several years. About seven years ago, however, he resumed it. I do not think he ever attained to the dignity of a pipe. He smoked cigars. Some time in April, 1889, I spent an hour with him at the House of Commons. He got the Speaker's leave to take me into the lower smoke-room, and we "discussed" a cigar and some claret while discussing some Freethought business. The claret he seemed indifferent to, but he puffed the cigar with an air of enjoyment.

During the Northampton election times I used to take a good stiff daily walk. All through my youth I had plenty of exercise in the open air, and I still grow desperately fusty without a brisk tramp at least once in the twenty-four hours. Mr. Bradlaugh generally took a drive, and I remember telling him with youthful audacity that he ought to walk for his health's sake. Of course it was difficult for him to walk in the streets. His stature and bulk made him too noticeable, and mobbing was very unpleasant. But he might have driven out of town and trudged a mile or two on the country roads. My opinion is that his neglect of physical exercise helped to shorten his life. Occasional bouts of fishing were very well in their way, but *daily* exercise is the necessary thing. I do not forget the tremendous labor, physical as well as mental, of lecturing on burning questions to large audiences. All that, however, goes on in hot, crowded rooms, full of vitiated air; and it gives no proper exercise to the legs and loins or the lower vital organs.

After one of my remonstrances Mr. Bradlaugh invited me to play a game of billiards. It was the only time I ever played with him. His style with the cue was spacious and splendid. The balls went flying about the board, and I chaffed him on his flukes. He

had not the temperament of a billiard-player. Still, I have heard that he played a fair game at St. Stephen's; but I can hardly believe it without first-hand testimony. I am willing to believe, however, that he was a good chess-player. Certainly he had a head for it. But chess is a vile game for a brain-worker, whose recreations should never involve a mental strain.

When I first knew Mr. Bradlaugh he was living at Tottenham. I never visited him there, but I often called on him at his later lodgings in Turner-street, Commercial-road. He occupied the ground floor, consisting of two rooms. The back was his bedroom, and the front his library and workshop. It was what the Americans call a one-horse affair. Shelves all round the room were filled with books. Mr. Bradlaugh sat at a desk with his back to the fireplace. On his right was the door communicating with his bedroom, facing him the door opening on the passage, and on his left the street window. The room itself could hardly have been more than twelve or thirteen feet square. I once told him he was too near the fireplace, and he said it was sometimes good to have the poker handy. At that I stared, and he told me the following story.

One day a gentleman called on him and was invited to take a chair. He sat down facing Mr. Bradlaugh, and explained that he wanted advice on a very particular matter. God Almighty had told him to kill someone, and he had a difficulty in selecting a victim. Mr. Bradlaugh put his hand behind him and quietly grasped the poker. The inspired gentleman put the problem as a knotty one, and begged the assistance of the clever Iconoclast. "Well," said Mr. Bradlaugh, keeping quite cool, "what do you say to the Archbishop of Canterbury?" "The very man!" exclaimed the inspired gentleman. He got Mr. Bradlaugh to

give him the Archbishop's address, and said, "Good-day," with a profusion of thanks. Mr. Bradlaugh went to the door to look for a policeman, but none was visible, and the inspired gentleman was soon out of sight.

"So you see," said Mr. Bradlaugh, "It's good to have the poker handy. I never saw or heard of the man again, and I knew he couldn't get near the Archbishop. There are too many flunkeys in the way."

Those were my struggling days, and Mr. Bradlaugh was very kind to me. I remember the Sunday evening when I told him I thought of taking to the Freethought platform. He pointed out the hard and thorny path I should have to tread, but when he saw I was resolved on the attempt, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "There is no young man in the movement I would sooner welcome."

In the very same room, on another Sunday evening a little later, I first saw James Thomson. He came down to the Hall of Science with Mr. Bradlaugh, in whose employment he then was, and I gave him the article I had brought for the *National Reformer*. He shook hands very cordially, and I was delighted to meet one for whose poetry I had a profound admiration.

It was also at the Hall of Science, about the same time, that I met the eccentric Mr. Turberville, brother to Mr. Blackmore, the novelist. He was a man of parts with a bee in his bonnet. He claimed kinship with Turberville, a minor poet of the sixteenth century, and he loved to talk of poetry. His knowledge of Shakespeare was profound and minute. He admired Mr. Bradlaugh's perorations immensely, as well as his bold defence of Freethought. He made out a will in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor, but he subsequently made another will, and died in circumstances that necessitated an inquest. By agreement, however,

Mr. Bradlaugh obtained £2,500 from the estate, and the windfall came opportunely, for his struggles and litigations had involved him in considerable debt. I know he often had to borrow money on heavy interest. One day, at Turner-street, he told me that a creditor of this species had coolly invited him to dinner. "Hang it," he said, "you can't dine with a man who charges you sixty per cent."

Another recollection I have of Mr. Bradlaugh is in connexion with the funeral of Mr. Austin Holyoake. The death of this gentleman was a great loss to the Freethought cause. He was highly respected by all who knew him. The geniality of his disposition was such that he had many friends and not a single enemy. For some years he was Mr. Bradlaugh's printer and publisher, and a frequent contributor to his journal. He was foremost in every good work, but he was one of those modest men who never get the credit of their labors. He died at 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, in an upstairs room above the printing office, where his devoted wife had for many weeks nursed his flickering life. The funeral was a notable event. Those of us who could afford it rode in the undertaker's coaches, and the rest walked in procession to Highgate Cemetery. I can still see Mr. Bradlaugh in my mind's eye, bustling about on the ground floor, taking everything as usual on his own shoulders. He sorted us in fours for the coaches, my *vis à vis* being James Thomson. At the graveside, after the reading of Austin Holyoake's own funeral service by Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Bradlaugh delivered a brief address which he had written for the occasion. On the whole it was too much a composition, but one sentence was true "Bradlaugh," and it sounds in my ears still:—"Twenty years of friendship lie buried in that grave."

How such scenes are impressed on one's memory! As I write I see the set face of Charles Bradlaugh. I behold the sob-shaken back and bowed head of Herbert Gilham just in front of me. I hear and feel the cool, rustling wind, like a plaintive requiem over the dead.

Once again, years afterwards, I saw Mr. Bradlaugh in the same cemetery, supporting the helpless figure of Mrs. Ernestine Rose as she left the open grave of the dear partner of her long life of labor for the cause of human redemption.

Owing to circumstances, into which I need not enter, I saw little of Mr. Bradlaugh between 1875 and 1880. When he was returned for Northampton I rejoiced, and when he was committed to the Clock Tower I saw my duty sun-clear. It was to participate as I could, and might, in the struggle. My contributions to Mr. Bradlaugh's journal were resumed, and I spoke at meetings in his behalf. In May, 1881, I started the *Freethinker*, my oldest living child. Mr. Bradlaugh acted with his natural generosity. He advertised my bantling gratuitously in his own journal, and gave it every possible facility. This was not known at the time, but I ought to state it now.

Throughout that long, terrible struggle with the House of Commons I was with Mr. Bradlaugh on every point. If he made a single mistake I have yet to see it indicated. My article in the first number of the *Freethinker* was entitled "Mr. Bradlaugh's Advisers." Its object was to show the absurdity of the plentiful advice offered him, and the absolute justice of the course he was pursuing.

Three weeks afterwards the bigots convened a ticket meeting at Exeter Hall. The chief promoters were Earl Percy, Sir Bartle Frere, and a butcher Varley. Mr. Bradlaugh was afraid the meeting would have a pre-

judicial effect on public opinion in the provinces. The fact of the *tickets* would be kept back, and the report would go forth that a vote was unanimously passed against him at a big London demonstration. It was necessary, therefore, that the meeting should be *spoiled*. And it *was*. Mr. Bradlaugh gave me the task of moving an amendment. We had a chat in his library at St. John's Wood, and as we parted he said, "I rely on you, Foote." He looked at me steadily, holding my eyes as though to read the depths.

We got tickets somehow. But the Protestant Alliance smelt mischief, and Mr. Bradlaugh's supporters had to fight their way in. Two hundred and fifty police were not enough to keep them all out. I was naturally a marked man, and fighting had to be supplemented by diplomacy. When the noble Smithson (Earl Percy), had driven for a few minutes as chairman, and the resolution against Mr. Bradlaugh had been proposed and seconded by Sir John Kennaway and Canon Taylor, I rose to move an amendment. But the amendment was refused. The resolution was put, and the Christians stood up and voted, while the organ played "God Save the Queen." Then, at a signal, our people jumped on the forms, and rent the air with cheers for "Bradlaugh." At another signal they all trooped out, went off to Trafalgar-square with the big crowd outside, and passed resolutions in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor. The bigots' meeting was completely spoiled. They had to barricade the doors and keep out their own people as well as the enemy; the hall was never half full, and their resolution was passed after refusing an amendment, amidst loud execrations. Such a lesson was taught the bigots that they never made another attempt. Mr. Bradlaugh had trusty lieutenants and stern supporters, and the bigots knew he would spoil every *private* meeting that pro-



fessed to be *public*. He acted with wisdom and determination, and the result showed he knew the stake he was playing for when he said, "I rely on you," with that steady Napoleonic look.

Mr. Bradlaugh's legal exploits, if properly recorded, would fill a good-sized volume. When his life is adequately written, as it will be some day, this department will have to be entrusted to a skilled lawyer. No other person could do anything like justice to a most important part of the career of one whom the Tories used to call "that litigious man," when they were trying to ruin him in the law courts and he was only defending himself against their base attacks.

Those who had only known Mr. Bradlaugh as a platform orator had some difficulty in recognising him when they first met him in one of our "halls of justice." His whole manner was changed. He was polite, insinuating, and deferential. His attitude towards the judges was admirably calculated to conciliate their favor. I do not mean that *he* calculated. He had quite a superstitious veneration for judges. It was perfectly sincere and it never wavered. He would not hear a word against them. When he pleaded before them his personal sentiments ran in a line with his best interests; for although judges are above most temptations, their vanity is often sensitive, and Mr. Bradlaugh's manner was intensely flattering.

Had he followed the legal profession, Mr. Bradlaugh would have easily mounted to the top and earned a tremendous income. I have heard some of the cleverest counsel of our time, but I never heard one to be compared with him in grasp, subtlety and agility. He could examine and cross-examine with consummate dexterity. In arguing points of law he had the tenacity of a bull-dog and the keenness of a sleuth-hound. He

always fortified himself with a plethora of "cases." The table in front of him groaned with a weight of law. Here as elsewhere he was "thorough." An eminent jurist once remarked to me, "there is little gleaning to be done after Bradlaugh."

As a pleader before juries, however, I doubt whether he would have achieved a great success. He was too much of a born orator. He began well, but he soon forgot the limited audience of twelve, and spoke to a wider circle. This is not the way to humor juries. They like to feel their own importance, and he succeeds best who plays upon their weakness. "Remember," their looks say, "you are talking to *us*; the other gentlemen listen accidentally; *we* make you or damn you."

My first recollection of Mr. Bradlaugh in the law courts is twenty-two years old. How many survivors are there of the friends who filled that dingy old court at Westminster where he argued before a full bench of judges in 1869? He was prosecuted for not giving sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in his paper. The law was resuscitated in his single case to crush him; but he fought, as he said he would, to the bitter end, and the Gladstone Government was glad to repeal the obsolete enactments. The Crown retired from the suit with a *stet processus*, and Mr. Bradlaugh was left with the laurels—and his costs.

I obtained an hour or two's leave from my employment, and heard a portion of Mr. Bradlaugh's argument. It gave me a new conception of his powers. That is the only impression I retain. The details have dropped out of my memory, but there remains as fresh as ever the masterful figure of Charles Bradlaugh.

The best view I ever had of Mr. Bradlaugh in litigation was in the old Court of Queen's Bench on

Tuesday and Wednesday, July 19 and 20, 1881, when he cross-examined poor Mr. Newdegate. For a good deal of the time I sat beside him, and could watch *him* closely as well as the case. By raising the point whether the writ against him for penalties had been issued before or after he gave his vote in the House, he was able to put all the parties to the prosecution into the witness-box and make them give an account of themselves. Mr. Newdegate was one of the victims, and the poor man made confessions that furnished Mr. Bradlaugh with ground for a successful action against him under the law of Maintenance.

Mr. Newdegate was a hard-mouthed witness, but he was saddled, bridled, and ridden to the winning-post. His lips opened literally, making his mouth like the slit of a pillar-box. Getting evidence from him was like extracting a rotten cork from the neck of a bottle, but it all came out bit by bit, and the poor man must have left the witness-box feeling that he had delivered himself into the hands of that uncircumcised Philistine. His cross-examination lasted three hours. It was like flaying alive. Once or twice I felt qualms of pity for the old man, he was such an abject figure in the hands of that terrible antagonist. Every card he held had to be displayed. Finally he had to produce the bond of indemnity he had given the common informer Clarke against all the expenses he might incur in the suit. When this came out Mr. Bradlaugh bent down to me and said, "I have him." And he *did* have him. Despite the common notion that the old law of Maintenance was obsolete, Mr. Bradlaugh pursued him under it triumphantly, and instead of ruining "Bradlaugh," poor Newdegate was nearly ruined himself.

What a contrast to Mr. Newdegate was Mr. Bradlaugh! He was the very picture of suppressed fire, of rampant energies held in leash: the nerves of the face playing

like the ripple on water, the whole frame quivering, and the eyes ablaze. It was wonderful how he managed to keep his intellect alert and his judgment steady. Six hours of such work as he had in court that day were enough to tax the greatest strength. Before it was over I saw bodeful blood-rims under his eyes. It did not surprise me, on meeting him at the Cobden Workmen's Club the next evening, to learn that he had been frightfully ill. "Mr. Bradlaugh," I wrote at the time, "is a wonderfully strong man, but the Tories and the bigots are doing their best to kill him, and if this sort of thing is to continue very much longer they may succeed." Alas, they *did* succeed. That terrible struggle killed him. No man ever lived who could have passed through it unbroken.

Mr. Bradlaugh was clearly right on the point raised, but the jury went against him, apparently out of sheer prejudice. When he went out into Westminster Hall he was loudly cheered by a crowd of sympathisers, who, as the *Times* sneered, "applauded as lustily as though their champion had won." Precisely so. Their applause would have greeted him in the worst defeat. He was not a champion on whom they had "put their money." He represented their principles, and the *Times* forgot, if it ever knew, that men are devoted to leaders in proportion to the depth of the interests they espouse. Conviction "bears it out even to the edge of doom."

Now let me mention something that shows Mr. Bradlaugh's tact and consideration. My work on the *Freethinker* brought me no return. I had just read the proof of an article for Mr. Bradlaugh's paper. While we were waiting for the jury's verdict he referred to the article, and guessing my need he said, "Shall I give you the guinea now?" My answer was an expressive shrug and a motion of the eye-brows.

Taking the two coins out of his pocket, he wrapt them in a piece of paper *under the table*, and presently slipped the packet into my hand. The whole proceeding touches me deeply as I recall it. He might well have thought only of himself in that time of suspense ; but he thought of me too, and the precautions he took against being seen to pay me money were expressive of his inbred delicacy. Reader do not say the incident is trivial. These little things reveal the man.

Little did I dream, as I watched Mr. Bradlaugh fighting bigotry in the law courts, that the time would come when he and I would be included in a common indictment and stand in a criminal dock together. But as the French say, it is always the unexpected that happens. Early in July, 1882, I was served with a summons from the Lord Mayor of London, ordering me to appear at the Mansion House on the following Tuesday and take my trial on a charge of Blasphemy. Two other gentlemen were included in the summons, and all three of us duly appeared. We were all members of the National Secular Society, and Mr. Bradlaugh attended to render any possible assistance. The case was adjourned to the following Monday, by which time a summons had been served on Mr. Bradlaugh, who took his place beside us in the dock. After an animated day's proceedings we were committed for trial at the Old Bailey.

The object of this prosecution was, of course, to stab Mr. Bradlaugh in the back. He had fought all the bigots face to face, and held them all at bay ; so they put a stiletto into Sir Hardinge Giffard's hands, and paid him his blood-money to attack the hero from behind.

Mr. Bradlaugh had to play the fox again. He wanted to gain time, and he wanted to be tried, if at all, in the Court of Queen's Bench. He always told me that

being tried at the Old Bailey was going like a lamb to the slaughter, and that a verdict of guilty there would certainly mean twelve months' imprisonment. The obvious resource, therefore, was to obtain a writ of *certiorari* removing our indictment to the superior court. Happily it was in the long vacation, and application had to be made to a judge in chambers. By another piece of good luck, it was Mr. Justice Stephen who sat behind the table on the fatal morning when the writ had to be finally granted or refused. It was obtained on July 29, 1882. Poor Mr. Maloney, who represented the prosecution, was no match for Mr. Bradlaugh, who treated him like a child, and only let him say a word now and then as a special favor.

Roaming the law courts with Mr. Bradlaugh, I was able to see his intimate knowledge of legal practice. He threaded the labyrinth with consummate ease and dexterity. We went from office to office, where everything seemed designed to baffle suitors conducting their own cases. Our case, too, was somewhat peculiar; obsolete technicalities, only half intelligible even to experts, met us at every turn; and when we got out into the open air I felt that the thing was indeed done, but that it would puzzle omniscience to do it in exactly the same way again. Seven pounds was spent on stamps, documents, and other items, and securities for costs had to be given to the extent of six hundred pounds. As I walked home I pondered the great truth that England is a free country. I had seen with my own eyes that *there is* one law for rich and poor. But I could not help reflecting that only the rich could afford it, and that the poor might as well have no law at all.

Mr. Bradlaugh next moved to quash the indictment. He argued that the public prosecutor's fiat was bad, as it did not name the persons who were to be proceeded

against, and thus resembled a general warrant, which in the famous Wilkes case the judges had held to be invalid. On this point, however, two judges, one of them being Sir James Stephen, gave judgment against him. The case was argued on Mr. Bradlaugh's part, the judges said, with "great power and learning." For my part, I think he showed a greater knowledge of "cases" than both the legal luminaries on the bench, who laid their heads close together over many a knotty point of the argument.

Beaten on the main issue, Mr. Bradlaugh was successful, however, on the subsidiary one. Two counts were struck out of the indictment. The excision made no difference to me, but a great deal of difference to him. Two numbers of the *Freethinker* were thus disposed of bearing the imprint of the Freethought Publishing Company—under which name Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Beasant traded—and owing to the lapse of time it was impossible to open a fresh indictment. Of course I saw what Mr. Bradlaugh was driving at, and I could not but admire the way in which he made light of this point, arguing it baldly as a formal matter on which, as their lordships would see at a glance, he was absolutely entitled to a judgment. They would see that he was still open to all the other counts of the indictment, and therefore it might make very little difference, but right was right and law was law. Under the spell of his persuasive speech, it was amazing to see the judges smoothing their wrinkled fronts. I fancy they gave him his second point the more readily because they were against him on the first; indeed, they seemed to think it a pity, if not a shame, that all his learning and ability should be displayed for *nothing*.

Our indictment went into the list of Crown Cases Reserved, and did not come on for trial till the following April. Meanwhile I was prosecuted again, and failing

to get a writ of *certiorari*, owing to the flagrant bigotry of Baron Huddleston and Justice North, I was tried at the Old Bailey, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment like a common thief—as Mr. Bradlaugh had predicted.

During my trouble Mr. Bradlaugh lent me every assistance, furnishing me with legal books and advice, and visiting me in Newgate between the first and second trials, while Judge North's underlings were preparing a more pliant jury than the one which had declined to return a verdict of guilty.

In Holloway Gaol I lost sight of Mr. Bradlaugh and everyone else, except persons I had no desire to see. But one morning, early in April, 1883, the Governor informed me that Mr. Bradlaugh was going to pay me a visit, having the Home Secretary's order to see me on urgent business. The same afternoon I was marched from my cell into one of the Governor's offices, where Mr. Bradlaugh was waiting. Compared with the pale prisoners I saw day by day, he looked the very picture of health. Fresh, clean-shaven, neatly dressed, he was a most refreshing sight to eyes accustomed to rough faces and the brown convict's garb. And it was a friend too, and I could take his hand and exchange human speech with him. How vivid is my recollection of him at that moment! He seemed in the prime of life, little the worse for his terrible struggles, only the gray a trifle more decided about the temples, but the eyes full of light, and the mobile mouth full of vitality. And now he is dead! Dead! It is hard to realise. But I rang the muffled bell as he lay fighting his last battle, and I followed his corpse to the grave; and I know that the worm is busy about those leonine features, and the rain trickles through with a scent of faded flowers. Yes, it is true; he *is* dead. Dead like the king and dead like the



clown ; yet living truly beyond the dust of death in the lives of others, an inextinguishable light, a vivifying fire, a passionate hope, an ardent aspiration.

Till the Future dares  
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be  
An echo and a light unto eternity.

On the morning of April 10, 1883, I put on my own clothes and was driven in a four-wheeler from Holloway Gaol to the Law Courts, in company with Warder Smith, who superintended the wing of the prison in which a grateful country lodged and boarded me at its own expense. It was lovely spring weather, and I felt like a man new-born.

Inside the court where the great Blasphemy case was to be tried I found Mr. Bradlaugh with his usual load of law books. The court was crowded with friends of the defendants and legal gentlemen anxious to witness the performance.

Mr. Bradlaugh applied for a separate trial, on the ground that as there was no charge of conspiracy it was unjust to prejudice his case by evidence admitted against his co-defendants ; and Lord Coleridge, who obviously meant to see fair play, granted the application.

Mr. Bradlaugh's position was, in one sense, the most perilous he had ever stood in. Just as his long litigation with respect to his seat in Parliament was drawing to a close, and as he believed to a *successful* close, he had to defend himself against a charge which, if he were proved guilty, would entail upon him the penalty of imprisonment. Of course it would not have been such imprisonment as I was suffering, for Queen's Bench prisoners are generally sent to the civil side of Holloway Gaol. But *any* imprisonment at such a moment gravely imperilled his prospects of success in the mighty struggle with wealth, bigotry, and political

prejudice. A sense of this fact weighed heavily upon him, but it did not impair his energy or intellectual alertness ; indeed, he was one of those rare men whose faculties are sharpened by danger.

I need not dwell upon the evidence of the prosecution. It was most unsatisfactory, and failed to connect Mr. Bradlaugh with the *Freethinker*. Sir Hardinge Giffard, therefore, almost entirely confined himself to playing upon the prejudices of the jury.

Mr. Bradlaugh was perfection itself in examining and cross-examining, and was soon on the windward side of the judge, but his address to the jury was too boisterous. He *felt* too much. His adversary was not under this disadvantage, and Sir Hardinge Giffard's address to the jury, considered merely as a tactical display, was better than Mr. Bradlaugh's.

On the second day of the trial (it lasted for three days) there occurred a curious episode. Just before the adjournment for luncheon Mr. Bradlaugh intimated that when the Court re-assembled he would call his co-defendants as witnesses. Lord Coleridge replied in a low, suggestive tone, "Do you think it necessary?" Mr. Bradlaugh rose and for the first time I saw him tremble. "My lord," he said, "you put upon me a grave responsibility." "I put no responsibility upon you," said Lord Coleridge, "it is for you to decide." And the stately judge glided away in his robes of office.

If Mr. Bradlaugh put his co-defendants in the witness-box, one of two things might happen. They might decline to give evidence, as every answer would tend to criminate themselves ; or they might exculpate Mr. Bradlaugh and procure their own damnation.

I do not blame Lord Coleridge for looking at the matter in this way. But I naturally looked at it in a different light. Mr. Bradlaugh was my general, and

I was his lieutenant, and it was clearly my duty to sacrifice myself. I could release him from danger with half a dozen words, and why should I hesitate to say them or he to exact them? I was already in prison, and another conviction could add little to my misfortune, whereas he was still free, and his continued freedom was just then absolutely indispensable to our common cause. For my part, I had not a moment's hesitation. But Lord Coleridge's words sank into Mr. Bradlaugh's mind, and after luncheon he announced that he would *not* call his co-defendants. His lordship looked pleased, but how he frowned when Sir Hardinge Giffard complained that *he* was deprived of an opportunity! Lord Coleridge did not say, but he *looked*—“Have you no sense of decency?” Sir Hardinge Giffard, however, was thick-skinned. He relied on Mr. Bradlaugh's sense of honor, and made it the basis of an artificial grievance. He even pretended that Mr. Bradlaugh was *afraid* to call his co-defendants. But he overreached himself by this hypocrisy, and obliged Mr. Bradlaugh to put his co-defendants into the witness-box. We were formally tendered as witnesses, Mr. Bradlaugh going no further, and leaving Sir Hardinge Giffard to do as he would. Of course he was obliged to interrogate us, or look foolish after his braggadocio, and in doing so he ruined his own case by giving us the opportunity of declaring that Mr. Bradlaugh was never in any way connected with the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Bradlaugh, of course, did not in any sense sacrifice me. It would have been contemptible on my part to let him bear any responsibility for my own deliberate action, in which he was not at all implicated, and if I had not been tendered as a witness I should have tried to tender myself.

After half an hour's deliberation the jury found Mr.

Bradlaugh not guilty. Standing up for the verdict, with pale set face, the grateful little "not" fell upon his ear, and his rigidity relaxed. Tears started to *my* eyes, and I saw the tears in *his* eyes as I squeezed his hand in speechless congratulation.

My own trial followed Mr. Bradlaugh's, and I was not found guilty. Three members of the jury held out against a verdict that would have disgraced a free country; and as the prosecution despaired of obtaining a verdict while Lord Coleridge presided at the trial, the Attorney-General was asked to allow the abandonment of proceedings. This he granted, the case was struck off the list, and I returned to my prison cell at Holloway.

Let me now go back to the crowning incident of that long struggle between Charles Bradlaugh and the House of Commons. On May 10, 1881, the House passed a resolution authorising the Sergeant-at-Arms to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh from entering. On June 20, the jury gave a verdict in Mr. Newdegate's favor for the £500 penalty and costs. A motion for a new trial failed, and Mr. Bradlaugh appealed to the country. Enthusiastic meetings were held in his behalf, and he prepared a fresh *coup*. It had to be something striking, and it was. On the morning of August 3 Palace Yard and Westminster Hall were thronged with his supporters. Every one was armed with a petition, which he had a legal right to take to the House of Commons. Mr. Bradlaugh himself drove up in a hansom cab, and entered the precincts of the House by the private door. He made his way to the door of the House itself and tried to enter by a sudden effort, but he was seized by fourteen officials and stalwart policemen, picked for the work, and thrust back through the private passage into Palace Yard. Not

expecting such indignity, he contested every inch of the ground. Inspector Denning said he never thought that one man could have offered such resistance. The small muscles of both his arms were ruptured, and a subsequent attack of erysipelas put his life in jeopardy.

When he was finally thrust on to the pavement in Palace Yard his coat was torn and the rest of his garments were disarranged. His face was livid with the intense exertion when I saw him a minute afterwards. There he stood, a great mass of panting, valiant manhood, his features set like granite, and his eyes fixed upon the doorway before him. He seemed to see nothing but that doorway. I spoke to him, and he seemed not to hear. I believe a mighty struggle was going on within him, perhaps the greatest struggle of his life. He had suffered a frightful indignity, he must have been tempted to avenge it, and he had but to hold up his hand to bring around and behind him the myriads who stood outside the railings. The action would have been impolitic, but what a temptation he crushed down, and what an effort it necessitated! Never was his heroic nature more sorely tried. He justified his mastery of others by his mastery of himself. How small in comparison seemed the mob of his enemies! I never admired him more than at that moment. He was superb, sublime. They had wound their meshes about him, and the lion had burst them. One swift, daring stroke had frustrated all their plans. He who was to be quietly suppressed by resolutions of the House had cut the knot of their policy asunder, made himself the hero of the hour, and fixed the nation's eyes on his splendid audacity.

Reaction set in after that terrible struggle, and he accepted a chair that was brought him. Several members passed as he sat there. One of them was the coward, Frank Hugh O'Donnell. He had a lady on

his arm, and he passed with her between himself and Mr. Bradlaugh, so that her dress trailed over the hero's feet. It was a wretched display of insolence and cowardice. But the lady must be exonerated. She looked annoyed, her cheeks reddened, and her eyelids fell. It is so hard for a woman to resist the attraction of courage, and the coward by her side must have suffered in her estimation.

There was a crowded meeting that evening at the Hall of Science, at which I had the honor of speaking. Mr. Bradlaugh's greeting was tremendous. Two days afterwards he was seriously ill.

During that great constitutional struggle I was present at many "Bradlaugh" meetings, and I never witnessed such enthusiasm as he excited. No man of my time had such a devoted following.

The last "Bradlaugh" demonstration I attended was on February 15, 1883, in Trafalgar-square. Seventy or eighty thousand people were present. There were four speakers, and three of them are dead, Joseph Arch being the sole survivor. Mr. Adams, of Northampton, lived to see his old friend take his seat and do good work in the House of Commons, became himself Mayor of Northampton, and died universally respected by his fellow-townsmen; William Sharman, a brave, true man, is buried at Preston; and Charles Bradlaugh sleeps his long sleep at Woking.

For another twelve months I attended no public meetings except the silent ones on the exercise ground of Holloway Gaol. But I saw Mr. Bradlaugh at several demonstrations on various subjects after my imprisonment, and I could perceive no abatement of his popularity. He had his enemies and detractors, but the spontaneous outburst of feeling at his death proved his hold on the popular heart.

. . . . .

I must now leap forward to that dreadful illness which left him a broken man. Years before, in 1882, when we were roaming the Law Courts together, he tapped his chest as he coughed, and seeing my anxious expression he told me that he brought up a good deal of phlegm in the morning, and that strangers who heard him clearing his chest would fancy he was very ill. But he looked so well that I soon dismissed the unpleasant fact, though it returned before his breakdown when I saw he was obliged to cancel engagements. I heard in 1884, though not from himself, that he had some heart trouble. But I was far from prepared for the shattering illness that laid him low in October, 1889.

When I called to see him after his partial recovery I was shocked by his appearance. He looked twenty years older, grey, and infirm. I sat down half-dazed. Theoretically I knew he was mortal, but I did not realise it as a fact until I saw him thin and pale from the valley of the shadow of death. His mind was clear enough, however; and although everything about him was pathetic he was quite self-collected.

One thing he said to me I shall never forget. There had been talk of his wavering in his Freethought, and as he referred to this folly he spoke in grave impressive tones. Pointing to the humble bed, he said, "When I lay there and all was black the thing that troubled me least was the convictions of my life."

Words and accents were alike solemn. The cold shadow of death seemed to linger in the room. A moment or two later he said with a broken voice, "The Freethought party is a party that I love."

The memory of that interview will always be a precious possession. I treasure it with the sacred things of my life. I had seen and touched the naked sincerity of a great soul.

When Mr. Bradlaugh returned from India I called on him, and found him greatly improved by his voyage. I waited for him a few minutes in his library, as he was at lunch, and the doctors attached great importance to regularity in his meals. He came into the room with a most genial smile. His air was fresh and buoyant, and he walked over to me quickly, holding out his hand all the way. I took it heartily, and had a good look at him, which satisfied and yet dissatisfied me. He was certainly better, but I could not help feeling that his constitution was irrecoverably broken. Never again could I hope to see the grand Bradlaugh of the old fighting days. His mind was as brave and alert as ever, but the body was too obviously disabled.

He showed me some of his Indian presents, of which he was justly proud, and then we sat down to chat. He was full of his voyage and the kindness he had experienced on every side. His reception in India had exceeded his highest anticipations, and he was looking forward to work in the House of Commons on behalf of our great Dependency.

Speaking of his financial prospects, he told me he had received offers of work from several magazine editors. But he added, "one doesn't know how long it will last; 'tis a precarious business." His face clouded for a moment, and I saw he was more troubled than he cared to say.

One thing he told me which I had no right to repeat while he lived, but I may repeat it without a breach of confidence now that he is dead.

During his brief stay in India he could have had plenty of money if he had been less scrupulous. There was nothing very dishonourable in accepting money from rich Hindoos, for he was poor and broken in health, and he was fighting for their best interests. But he was too proud to take it, and when wealthy natives



were calling on him, he always took the precaution to have an English friend in the room.

"No," he said to me, "I cannot do that. I'll live like the old Bradlaugh, or I'll go under."

He lived like the old Bradlaugh, and he went under. He took to the platform again to earn a livelihood, and it killed him, as his doctors had foreseen. I implored him at the time not to resume the lecturing. He was going to fulfil an old-standing engagement at Manchester in the vast St. James's Hall, and I begged him to cancel it. He replied that he could not afford to forfeit twenty pounds. "What is that to your life?" I asked. He only smiled grimly. His mind was made up, and he was not to be bent by advice.

On Sunday morning, February 16, 1890, Mr. Bradlaugh resigned his presidency of the National Secular Society, which he had held for so many years. The Hall of Science was packed with members, chiefly from the London district, but many of them from the provinces.

The scene was infinitely pathetic. One sentiment reigned in every heart. The Old Guard was taking leave of its General. Some of them had fought around him for thirty years, and the farewell was a mutilation of their very lives. Tears were streaming down strong faces; and they coursed down the strongest face of all, the face of Charles Bradlaugh, and plashed on the table before him. For a while he let them fall, and then he controlled his grief and rose to speak. But the words would not come. His frame shook with a great sob, and he sat down again. A second time he rose and failed. But the third time his strong will prevailed, and he began to speak in low, trembling tones.

- Never was I so struck with his oratorical powers as on this occasion. Without once lifting his voice above

the note of conversation, he swayed the meeting for a full half-hour, as easily and universally as the wind billows a cornfield.

In resigning the presidency he thought it his duty to nominate a successor, and his choice was ratified by the meeting. He handed me the president's hammer after a solemn, impressive apostrophe, in which he expressed his hope that he might thank me, after many years, for good, loyal work as leader; and when I had acknowledged the lofty honor he rose to vacate the chair. Naturally I declined to let him do anything of the kind, and for a moment the two Presidents stood together in friendly altercation. But for once he gave way, and Charles Bradlaugh filled the chair to the last.

Resigning the Presidency did not mean retirement from the National Secular Society. At his own suggestion Mr. Bradlaugh was elected a life-member. He was thus a member of the Society up to the last moment of his life. Nor was he an inactive one. I frequently had occasion to consult him, and one of his last bits of work was the drawing up of a long document for the Society on Secular Burials.

Months rolled by, and the evening came for the great debate on the Eight Hours Bill between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Hyndman. St. James's Hall was packed to suffocation. I sat on the platform near my old leader, and I saw how the effort was telling on him. His opponents in the meeting behaved with incredible brutality. Some of them laughed aloud when he said, "Believe me, this has tried me more than I had thought." But now the hero they laughed at is dead, and they *know* that he spoke the truth.

The last time I saw Mr. Bradlaugh in public was on Wednesday evening, December 10, 1890, when he lectured at the Hall of Science on behalf of the Forder

Testimonial Fund. I believe that was the last lecture he delivered there, if not the last lecture he delivered anywhere. He dealt with the Evidences of Christianity, in reference to Archdeacon Watkins' lectures on the Fourth Gospel, and assuredly he was as firmly sceptical as ever. At the close of the lecture he spoke of his theological position, and declared that he could not conceive of any such change of mind as glib gossipers were asserting of him.

The weather was extremely foggy, and Mr. Bradlaugh was ill. He ought not to have been there at all. After struggling painfully through the lecture, he sat down and waited for discussion. A Christian opponent rose, and Mr. Bradlaugh replied; but, being in the chair, I would not allow a second speech, and I was glad to see him well wrapt-up, and once more in the care of his devoted daughter.

Having concluded my reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh in relation to the *events* of his life, I shall wind up with a little personal talk of a more general character.

I have already referred to Mr. Bradlaugh's extraordinary knowledge of the law. This was strikingly illustrated after the so-called Trafalgar-square riots. The Tories made a wanton aggression on the right of public meeting in London, and found a ready instrument of tyranny in Sir Charles Warren. No doubt there is much to be said against promiscuous meetings in Trafalgar-square at all hours of the day and night, but it was a high-handed act of brutality to prohibit *all* meetings directly it was known that the London Radicals were convening a Sunday demonstration on the Irish question. While the Radicals were chafing under this insult they held several stormy meetings to discuss their best policy, and at last a Committee was

appointed to find out, if possible, the legal rights of the people and the Crown. I was a member of that committee, and I am able to state that although we waited on several eminent lawyers, it was only from Mr. Bradlaugh that we obtained any light. The others talked vaguely about the right of public meeting, and the primary and secondary uses of public thoroughfares, but Mr. Bradlaugh gave us the *facts* of the case. Trafalgar-square was Crown property, its control was vested in the Commissioner of Works, and at any moment it could be absolutely closed to the British public.

This had escaped the other lawyers, who did not find it in the Statutes at Large, from which the Trafalgar-square Act, probably as being a private one, had been excluded. Nor was it known to the Government when Sir Charles Warren issued his first proclamation. As Chief Commissioner of Police he had no authority over the Square, and until he obtained the order of its proper guardians, which he did a week later, his proclamation was only a piece of waste paper. Mr. Bradlaugh saw this, though he said nothing, when the demonstration committee called upon him a few days before Bloody Sunday. He told them that he had an engagement in the provinces on that day, but if they would postpone the demonstration until the following Sunday he would himself lead it to Trafalgar-square. His offer was not accepted, however ; for the committee resented the condition he stipulated, namely, that he should have absolute control of the arrangements. They thought he was taking too much upon himself. They did not reflect that if he who takes power without responsibility is a despot, he who takes responsibility without power is a fool. It was their action, and not his, that lost the battle.

Mr. Bradlaugh made no public parade of his brave

offer. It was not his way. But it is due to his memory that it should be put on record, so that posterity may know the extent of his generous courage.

There can be no doubt, I think, that Mr. Bradlaugh was less popular with the working-classes in London after he took peaceable possession of his seat in Parliament. The London masses love a fighter, and while he was battling for his seat he was, in my opinion, the most popular figure in the metropolis. The Radical workmen never tired of his demonstrations. He could bring fifty or a hundred thousand of them together at a few days' notice. And the other speakers were, for the most part, only padding to fill up the time. It was "Bradlaugh" the multitude came for. They waited to hear him speak, they applauded him to the skies, and when he had done they dispersed. And on such occasions he was magnificent. No one can conceive the power of the man who never saw him at one of these demonstrations. He stood like a Pharos, and the light of his face kindled the crests of the living waves around him.

But he was out of sympathy with the Socialist movement, which began to spread just as he took his seat; and being assiduous in Parliament, he was drawn more and more from "the Clubs," where his libellers and detractors wagged their tongues to some purpose. His strong individualism, as well as his practical good sense, made him bitterly hostile to the mildest proposals for putting the people's industrial interests into the hands of Government departments. And being a man of most positive quality, it was natural that he should excite the hatred of the more fanatical Socialists; a sentiment which, I cannot help thinking, he exasperated by his apparent denial of the generosity of their aims. There are men in the Socialist camp (and I say it without being a Socialist) who are neither "poets"

nor "fools"—though it is no disgrace to be the former; men who have studied with severity and sincerity, who have made sacrifices for conviction, and who were sometimes hurt by his antipathy. But, on the other hand, he was bitterly goaded by Socialist adversaries, who denied his honesty, and held him up to undeserved scorn as the hireling of "the classes"—a charge which the more sensitive among them must now repent, for his death has revealed his poverty.

Mr. Bradlaugh was naturally irritable, but the irritability was only on the surface. The waves were easily raised, but there was plenty of quiet sea beneath. Though giants are often phlegmatic, his big frame embedded highly-strung nerves. When he was put out he could storm, and he was misunderstood by those who took the mood for the man. Had they seen him in the melting mood they would have learnt that Charles Bradlaugh was a more composite personality than they imagined.

During the last year or two of his life he underwent a wonderful softening. A beautiful Indian-summer light rested upon him. He was like a granite rock, which the sweet grass has overgrown, and from whose crevices peep lovely wild flowers.

As President of the National Secular Society he did a great work. I do not think he had a pronounced faculty for organisation. But he was a firm, sagacious leader, with the personal magnetism to attract devotion. That he was never overbearing I will not affirm. But it is easy to organise sheep. One good dog will do it. Mr. Bradlaugh had to hold together a different species, with leaping legs, butting horns, and a less gregarious tendency.

He was a splendid chairman to push through a mass of business, but he shone less on ordinary occasions.

An ideal chairman, when not promoting his own schemes, should be like a midwife ; he should aim at a quick delivery and a safe birth. Mr. Bradlaugh did not always observe this rule. But every man has the defects of his qualities, and even the sun must be taken with its spots.

Mr. Bradlaugh's speeches at the annual Conferences of the National Secular Society are better reading than his political speeches. Being less in the world of practice there, and more in the world of principle, he gave play to his ideal nature, his words took color, and metaphors flashed like jewels in the sword of his orations. It was a signal proof of his power, that after a whole day's exhausting work, both to himself and his audience, he never failed to rouse the wildest enthusiasm.

Now that Mr. Bradlaugh is dead I do not hesitate to repeat what I said during his lifetime, that his Free-thought work was the most fecund and important. Even his great battle against the House of Commons was for religious freedom against bigotry, and his one great legislative achievement was the Act dealing with Oaths and Affirmation. His staunchest political supporters were his Freethought followers. His lectures, his personal influence, and his reputation, leavened the public mind more than his orthodox enemies suspected, and he created a vast quantity of raw material to be utilised by his successors in Secular organisation.

In the foregoing pages I have attempted no complete sketch of Charles Bradlaugh. I have written, not a monograph, but a number of rough jottings. Yet I hope I have conveyed an impression of the man, in some degree faithful, to those who may have been imperfectly acquainted with him ; and I trust the

features I have presented, however baldly outlined, will be recognised by those who knew and loved him.

When all is said and done, I think the final impression one retains of Charles Bradlaugh is his *heroism*. His was cast in a great mould of mind and character, as well as body. Like every hero the world has ever seen, he had his defects and failings, for it is given to no man to be perfect. But positive excellence, with all its drawbacks, is far above negative merit. "Thou shalt" is loftier virtue than "thou shalt not," and the hero is superior to the saint.

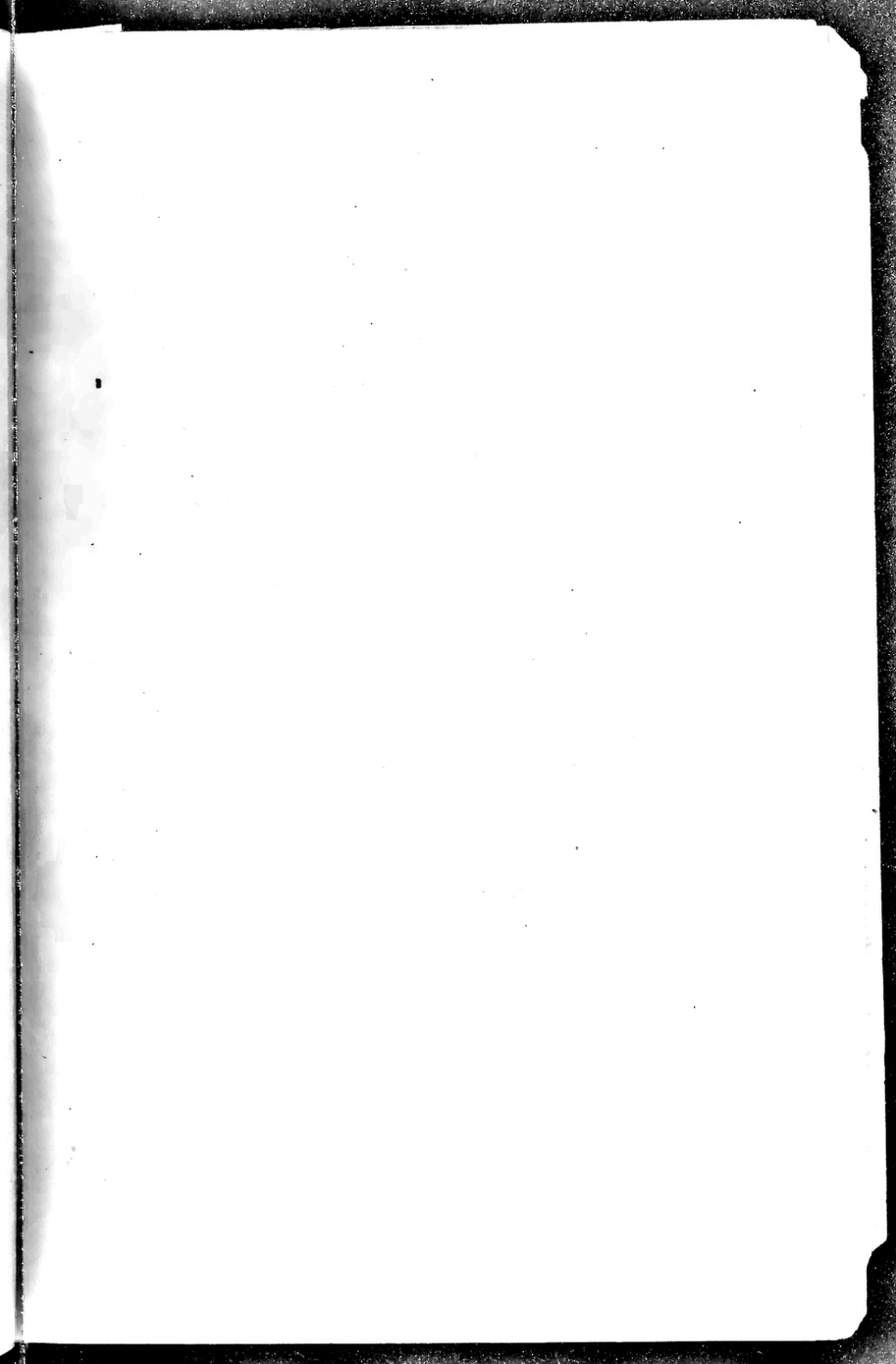
Charles Bradlaugh was a colossus of manhood. He was one to design, and dare, and do. The beaten path of mediocrity had no attraction for that potent spirit. He belonged to the heroic type which seeks perilous ways and fresh conquests. Like the hero of one of Browning's poems, he was "ever a fighter." In stormy times he naturally rose to the top. He was one of the select few, not of those who enrich the world with great discoveries, or new principles, or subtle perceptions of beauty—but those who appeal to the heroism of man's nature, without which he is at best but a splendid beast, and who minister to that sense of dignity which is the supreme necessity of our race.

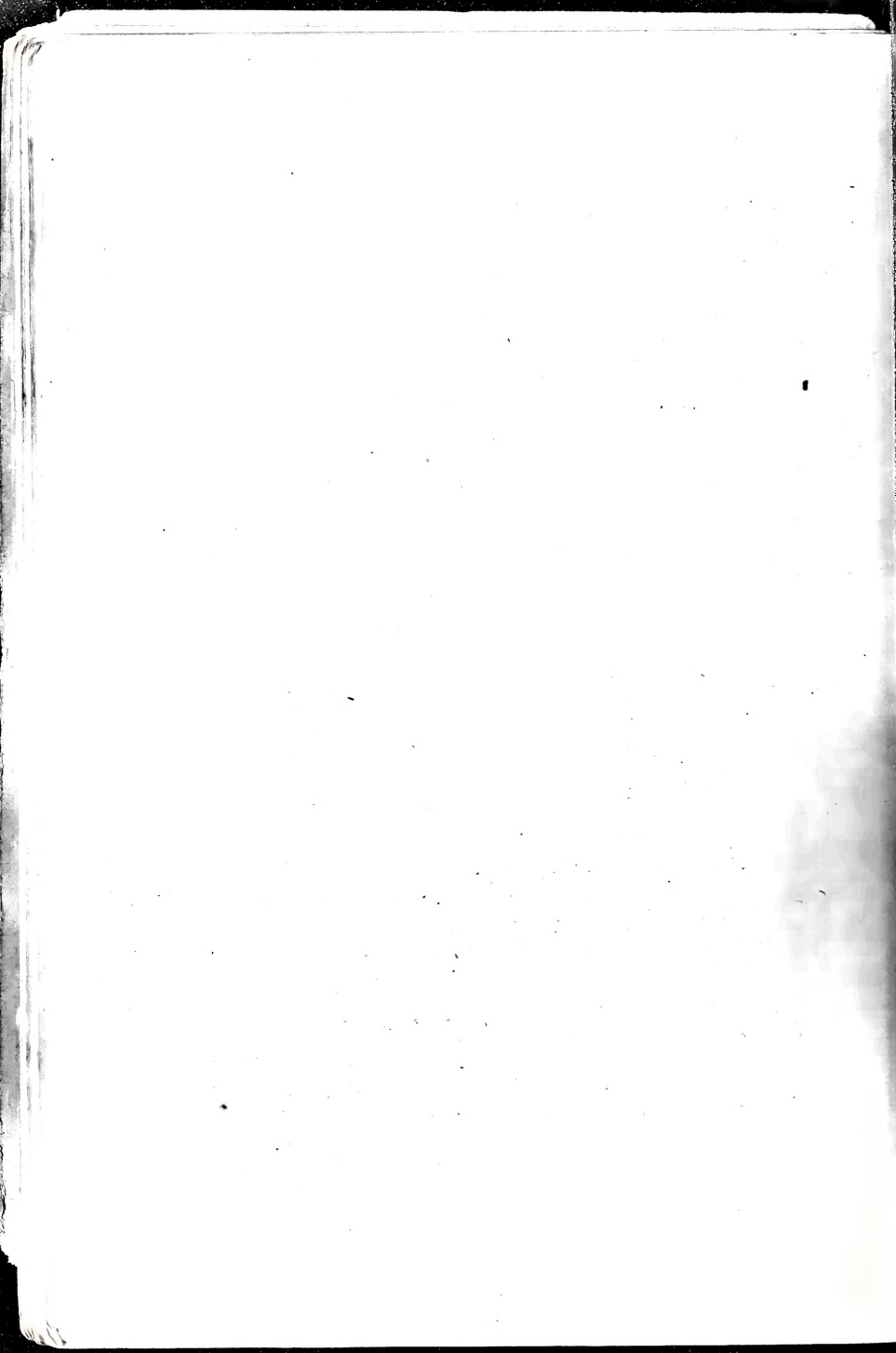
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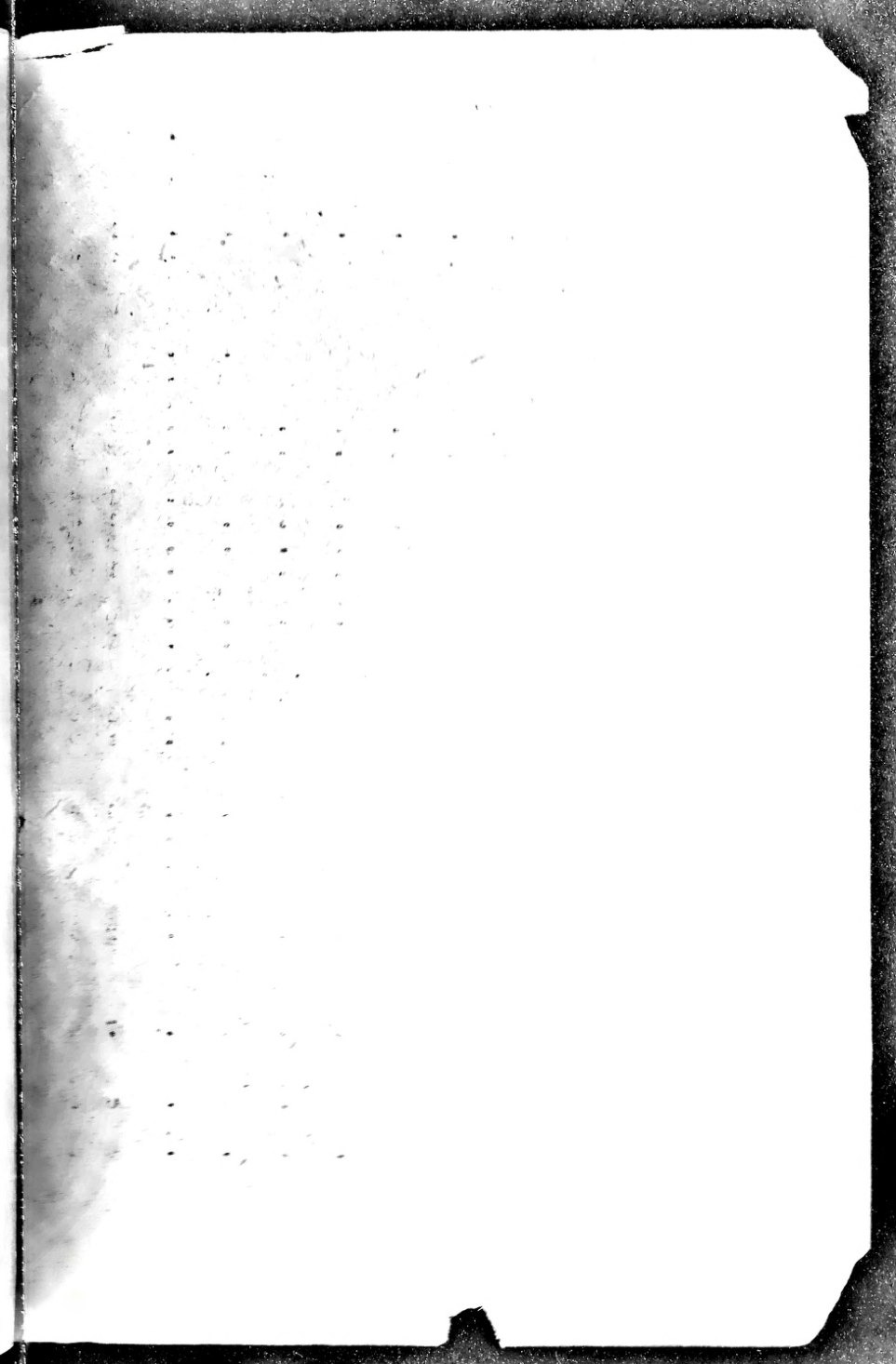
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

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