HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER
J. M. ROBERTSON

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF CHARLES BRADLAUGH

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Table of Contents

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

"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.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

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 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.

Table of Contents

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 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.