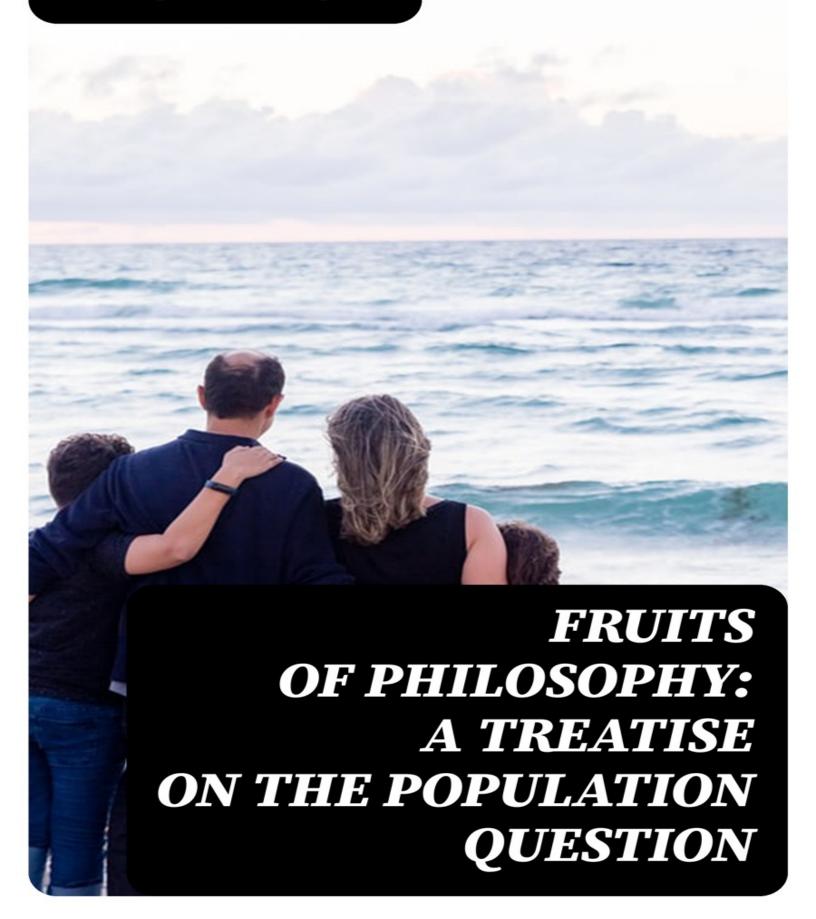
## CHARLES KNOWLTON



#### **Charles Knowlton**

# Fruits of Philosophy: A Treatise on the Population Question

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The pamphlet which we now present to the public is one which has been lately prosecuted under Lord Gampbell's Act, and which we republish, in order to test the right of publication. It was originally written by Charles Knowlton, M. D., whose degree entitles him to be heard with respect on a medical question. It was first published in England, about forty years ago, by James Watson, the gallant radical, who came to London and took up Richard Carlile's work, when Carlile was in jail. He sold it, unchallenged, for many years, approved it, and recommended it. It was printed and published by Messrs. Holyoake & Co., and found its place, with other works of a similar character, in their "Freethought Directory," of 1853, and was thus identified with freethought literature at the then leading freethought depot Mr. Austin Holyoake, working in con-junction with Mr. Bradlaugh at the National Reformer office, Johnson's Court, printed and published it in his turn, and this well-known freethought advocate, in his "Large or Small Families," selected this pamphlet, together with R. D. Owen's "Moral Physiology" and the "Elements of Social Science." recommendation. Mr. Charles Watts, succeeding to Mr. Austin Holyoake's business, continued the sale, and, when Mr. Watson died, in 1875, he bought the plates of the work (with others) from Mrs. Watson, and continued to advertise and to sell it until December 23, 1876. For the last forty years the book has thus been identified with freethought, advertised by leading freethinkers, published under the

sanction of their names, and sold in the headquarters of freethought literature. If, during this long period, the party has thus—without one word of protest—circulated an indecent work, the less we talk about freethought morality the better; the work has been largely sold, and, if leading freethinkers have sold it—profiting by the sale—through mere carelessness, few words could be strong enough to brand the indifference which thus scattered obscenity broadcast over the land. The pamphlet has been withdrawn from circulation in consequence of the prosecution instituted against Mr. Charles Watts, but the question of its legality or illegality has not been tried; a plea of "Guilty" was put in by the publisher, and the book, therefore, was not examined, nor was any judgment passed upon it; no jury registered a verdict, and the judge stated that he had not read the work.

We republish this pamphlet, honestly believing that on all questions affecting the happiness of the people, whether they be theological, political or social, fullest right of free discussion ought to be maintained at all hazards. We do not indorse all that Dr. Knowles personally says: "Philosophical Proem" seems to us full of philosophical mistakes, and—as we are neither of us doctors—we are not prepared to indorse his medical views; but since progress can only be made through discussion, and no discussion is possible where differing opinions are suppressed, we claim the right to publish all opinions, so that the public, enabled to see all sides of a question, may have the materials for forming a sound judgment.

The alterations made are very slight, the book was badly printed, and errors of spelling and a few clumsy

grammatical expressions have been corrected; the subtitle has been changed, and in one case four lines have been omitted, because they are repeated word for word further on. We have, however, made some additions to the pamphlet, which are in all cases kept distinct from the original text. Physiology has made great strides during the past forty years, and not considering it right to circulate erroneous physiology, we submitted the pamphlet to a doctor in whose accurate knowledge we have the fullest confidence, and who is widely known in all parts of the world as the author of the "Elements of Social Science;" the notes signed "G. B." are written by this gentleman. References to other works are given in foot-notes for the assistance of the reader, if he desires to study up the subject further.

Old Radicals will remember that Richard Carlile published a work entitled "Every Woman's Book," which deals with the same subject and advocates the same object as Dr. Knowlton's pamphlet R. D. Owen objected to the "style and tone" of Carlile's "Every Woman's Book," as not being in "good taste," and he wrote his "Moral Physiology" to do in America what Carlile's work was intended to do in England. This work of Carlile's was stigmatized as "indecent" and "immoral," because it advocated, as does Dr. Knowlton's, the use of preventive checks to population. In striving to carry on Carlile's work, we cannot expect to escape Carlile's reproach; but, whether applauded or condemned, we mean to carry it on, socially as well as politically and theologically.

We believe, with the Rev. Mr. Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of existence, and that *some* checks must therefore exercise

control over population. The checks now exercised are semistarvation and preventable disease; the enormous mortality among the infants of the poor is one of the checks which now keep down the population. The checks that ought to control population are scientific, and it is these which we advocate. We think it more moral to prevent the conception of children than, after they are born, to murder them by want of food, air and clothing. We advocate scientific checks to population, because, so long as poor men have large families, pauperism is a necessity, and from pauperism grow crime and disease. The wages which would support the parents and two or three children in comfort and decency, is utterly insufficient to maintain a family of twelve or fourteen, and we consider it a crime to bring into the world human beings doomed to misery or to premature death. It is not only the hard-working classes which are concerned in this question. The poor preacher, the struggling man of business, the young professional man, are often made wretched for life by their inordinately large families, and their years are passed in one long battle to live; meanwhile, the woman's health is sacrificed and her life embittered from the same cause. To all of these we point the way of relief and happiness; for the sake of these we publish what others fear to issue; and we do it confident that if we fail the first time, we shall succeed at last, and that the English public will not permit the authorities to stifle a discussion of the most important social question which can influence a nation's welfare.

Charles Bradlaugh.

Annie Besant.

### PHILOSOPHICAL PROEM

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Consciousness is not a "principle" or substance of any kind, nor is it, strictly speaking, a property of any substance or being. It is a peculiar action of the nervous system, and the system is said to be sensible, or to possess the property of sensibility, because those sentient actions which constitute our different consciousnesses may be excited in it. The nervous system includes not only the brain and spinal marrow, but numerous soft white cords, called nerves, which extend from the brain and spinal marrow to every part of the body in which a sensation can be excited.

A sensation is a sentient action of a nerve and the brain; a thought or idea (both the same thing) is a sentient action of the brain alone. A sensation or a thought is consciousness, and there is no consciousness but that which consists either in a sensation or a thought.

Agreeable consciousness constitutes what we call happiness, and disagreeable consciousness constitutes misery. As sensations are a higher degree of consciousness than mere thought, it follows that agreeable sensations constitute a more exquisite happiness than agreeable thoughts. That portion of happiness which consists in agreeable sensations is commonly called pleasure. No thoughts are agreeable except those which were originally