

Charles Bradlaugh.

BY F. M. HOLLAND.

Clergymen, like Transcendentalists, in England were generally conservative, or reactionary; and the friends of reform were much more irreligious than in America. Their appeal against the authority of Church and Bible was not to intuition but to science; and they were aided by Lyell's demonstration in 1830, that geology had superseded Genesis. Working men were warned in lectures, tracts and newspapers against immorality in the Old Testament; and even the New was said to discourage resistance to oppression and efforts to promote health, comfort and knowledge.

The most popular of these champions against superstition and tyranny was Bradlaugh. He began to lecture in 1850, when only seventeen, and continued for forty years to speak and write diligently. His atheism obliged him to undergo poverty for many years, and much hardship. He charged no fee for lecturing, went willingly to the smallest and poorest places, and was satisfied with whatever was brought in by selling tickets, often for only twopence each. He once travelled six hundred miles in forty-eight hours, to deliver four lectures which did not repay his expenses. Many a hall which he had engaged was closed against him; and he was thus obliged to speak in the open air one rainy Sunday, when he had two thousand hearers. At such times his voice pealed out like a trumpet; his information was always accurate; opposition quickened the flow of ideas; and he had perfect command of the people's English. His great physical strength was often needed to defend him against violence, sometimes instigated by the clergy. He had much to say against the Old Testament; but no struggle for political liberty, whether at home or abroad, failed to receive his support, and he was especially active for that great extension of suffrage which took place in 1867. His knowledge that women would vote against him did not prevent his advocating their right to the ballot; but it was in the name of "the great mass of the English people" that he was an early supporter of the cause of Union and Liberty against the slave-holders who seceded.

In 1866 he became president of the National Society of Secularists, who believe only in "the religion of the present life." Most of the members were Agnostics; and one of Bradlaugh's many debates was with Holyoake, the founder of Secularism, on the question whether that term ought to be used instead of Atheism. The society was so well organized that only a tele-

gram from the managers was needed to call out a public meeting anywhere in England. Among Bradlaugh's hearers in America in 1873 were Emerson, Sumner, Garrison, Phillips and O. B. Frothingham. He won soon after a powerful ally in a clergyman's wife, who had been driven from her home by her husband because she would not partake of the communion. Mrs. Besant began to lecture in 1874, and with views like Bradlaugh's; but her chief interest was in woman suffrage. Both held strict views about the obligation of marriage; and their relations were blameless.

Bradlaugh's place in history is mainly as a champion of the right of Atheists to sit in Parliament. He was elected by the shoemakers of Northampton in 1880, when oaths of allegiance were exacted in the House of Commons. Quakers, however, could affirm, and he asked the same privilege. As this was refused, he offered to take the oath, and declared that the essential part would be "binding upon my honor and conscience." This, too, was forbidden; but there was much discussion, not only in Parliament, but throughout England, as to his right to affirm. His friends held two hundred public meetings in a single week, and sent in petitions with two hundred thousand signatures during twelve months. The Liberal newspapers were on his side; but the Methodist and Episcopalian pulpits resounded with denials of the right of Atheists to enter Parliament on any terms. Among the expounders of this view in leading periodicals were Cardinal Manning and other prominent ecclesiastics. They had the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as of many petitions from Sunday-schools. Public opinion showed itself so plainly that Bradlaugh was finally allowed by a close vote to make affirmation and take his seat. He was soon forced to leave it by an adverse decision of the judges, but was promptly re-elected.

Again he offered in vain to take the oath. After several months of litigation, and many appeals to audiences which he made almost unanimous, he gave notice that he should try to take his seat on August 3, 1881, unless prevented by force. It took fourteen men to keep him out; and he was dragged downstairs with such violence that he fainted away. His clothes were badly torn; and the struggle brought on an alarming attack of erysipelas. A great multitude had followed him to Westminster Hall, and there would have been a dangerous riot, if it had not been for the entreaties of Mrs. Besant, who spoke at Bradlaugh's request. His next move was to take the oath without having it properly administered. He was expelled in consequence, but re-elected at once.

Thus the contest went on, until the Speaker decided that every member had a right to take the oath which could not be set aside. Bradlaugh was admitted accordingly, on January 13, 1886; and two years later he brought about the passage of a bill by which unbelievers were enabled to enter Parliament by making affirmation. The Irish members had tried to keep him out; but this did not prevent his advocating home rule for Ireland, and also for India. From first to last he fought fearlessly and steadily for freedom of speech and of the press. His beauty of character increased his influence. Mrs. Besant is right in saying: "That men and women are now able to speak as openly as they do, that a broader spirit is visible in the churches, that heresy is no longer regarded as morally disgraceful—these things are very largely due to the active and militant propaganda carried on under the leadership of Charles Bradlaugh."—[Liberty in the Nineteenth Century.

Davenport's Pheasants.

Homer Davenport, the cartoonist, stood on the Red Star pier Saturday afternoon, and anxiously watched the operations of several tugs that were pushing the steamer Southwark into the dock.

"I've come down to meet twenty-six passengers," he said. "They're not people; something better—they're pheasants. When I get them out to my home in Jersey I shall own the biggest and finest collection of pheasants in this country."

The tall and quaint Oregonian was certainly the happiest man who boarded the vessel to meet friends. He chased down a companion-way and, as if by instinct, found the route to the birds and satisfied himself that they were all right.

"Look at that Ternmichs tragopans," the cartoonist cried enthusiastically, pointing to a gorgeous pheasant that looked amiably at his new master.

"Look at that which?" asked a friend.

"Oh," said Mr. Davenport, "I suppose to you it's just a pheasant, but to me it's a Ternmichs tragopans, and the only one in this country. The other bird in the same crate is a 'Mrs. T. T.' Those birds live on the snow line of the Himalayas and drink ice water. You'll always find them where the snow melts. I shall put an ice water tank in their pen, but I'm afraid my New Jersey home won't look the same as India to them.

"All those birds I secured from the Zoological Society at Antwerp, and they cost me a large number of pounds sterling and nine shillings and eleven pence three farthings. I now have twenty-five

varieties of pheasants. My biggest rival is the Philadelphia Zoo, which has five.

"Those beautiful birds in that other crate are the Argus pheasants. They come from the jungles of Southern Asia.

"The Argus pheasant is a bachelor bird. He fits up for himself a sort of stage where he does a kind of cake walk every day of the year for the benefit of the other birds. He has wings that work in a kind of socket, and now and then his cake walk changes to a caesthenic skirt dance, to the great delight of his feathered friends on the bleachers who are taking it all in. At certain times of the year he is bald-headed and has a blue scalp.

"Then," continued Mr. Davenport, "there is the peacock pheasant, of which I have a pair, the only ones in the United States. The hen lays two eggs, and her chicks follow her in single file, sheltering themselves under her parasol tail, specially designed by nature to protect them from the sun. When she strikes a worm for them to eat she puts it on the ground and makes four steps forward. Being a good judge of distance she calculates it so that when she stops the worm is exactly under her parasol tail, and she stands still until her babes have eaten it.

"That crate there contains a pair of vulturine fowls from Matabeleland that have faces like Mark Hanna, and I'll bet they know a lot about the Boer situation if they could only tell it. There are also a couple of spicifers or wild peacocks, a pair of malnoti from Japan and many others.

"Those peacock pheasants live in the low canyons of Asia, in a sort of steam heat. I have just ordered twenty tons of coal to keep my birds warm this winter, for they are nearly all tropical."—[New York Journal.

[Mr. Davenport is the pheasant king of America as well as the world's greatest cartoonist. While he takes great pride in his foreign birds, none are more interesting to him than those from his old home, Silverton, Oregon. He has recently ordered a pair of Oregon native pheasants to more nearly complete his collection.]

The philosophers who have figured on the condition of things at the earth's center give opinions which vary widely. Some think that the earth's interior is composed of white-hot molten matter. Others are of the opinion that the pressure is so great that all substances have been condensed beyond our powers of conception. Dr. Young goes so far as to say that a block of steel 10 feet square would be pressed into a block only 2 feet square if taken 4,000 miles below the earth's surface.