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Bradlaugh's First Book.
A Bibliographical Note.

Nothing concerning Charles Bradlaugh, the noblest hero of the nineteenth century, is without interest; this is my excuse for a note that, to many readers, will appear trivial.

Mr. J.M. Robertson, usually so accurate, and following him, Mr. H. Cutner, in the *Freethinker* for June 23, are rather badly "out" in their reference to the Master's first book, and, for the sake of the future historian, I shall put them wise. They will forgive me.

The Bible: What it Is was originally issued, following a common custom of the period, in penny numbers, whereof the first was dated March 8, 1857; it was advertised in the *London Investigator*; and reviewed in the issue of that journal for April, 1857. So interesting is the notice that it is here quoted in full:—

The Bible—What it is—being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelations. Published fortnightly by Holyoake & Co. Price One Penny. The first number of this new work we have read with pleasure. It seems a revival of the days of Socialism. J.N. Bailey editing Haslam would give the best idea of "Iconoclast's" fortnightly work. It promises to be an able and outspoken refutation of Biblical errors, and we heartily recommend it to our readers. "Iconoclast" is a young lecturer and an author, rapidly rising into popularity. We hope that he will not, like so many of our once best and most promising advocates, allow himself to be tampered with by withdrawing from the stand point he now occupies so ably.

The work was curiously prophetic of "Iconoclast's" career; it was hung-up for several years owing to the lack of funds; twice at least it changed printers; it incurred the obloquy of "respectable" Freethinkers.

The author came to loggerheads with his first two publishers over his comments upon the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. It

is worth while to quote his own words, from page 36 (Number 5), of the book itself:—

My original publishers and my present printer, more moral than the Queen's printers, decline to print or publish any comment upon, or any quotations from, the obscene part of this chapter. In defence of the publishers, I may observe that, if this chapter was in any book but the Bible, and was published by any one not well protected by the aristocracy, he would be most assuredly prosecuted by the Society for Suppression of Vice; Regent Street, a few Lords, a Duke or Marquis, a Bishop, or the Bible, will, however, cover with mystery, and varnish over with fashion, that, which if stripped of its tawdry gewgaws or solemn black coat, is nothing but disgusting and degrading immorality.

The original printers were Holyoake & Co., who "struck" after the issue of Number 3; the next seventeen numbers were printed by J. Watts; then came E. Truelove; and the concluding numbers reverted to Holyoake & Co., whose name appears on the title-page.

From *The Investigator* of February 15, 1859, we learn that "The work is only standing still for want of funds." From the same source we know that it was intended to complete the Old Testament commentary in forty-eight numbers; but, as a matter of fact, the first edition is complete in thirty-three penny numbers; the last not published until 1861.

As I write, a copy of the excessively rare "First" is before me; there is no doubt as to its being a first issue, for the dedication, "To the Rev. John Graham Packer, M.A., Incumbent of St. Peter's, Hackney Road," begins: "Sir,—To you, twelve years since," ; and Bradlaugh's first pamphlet appeared in 1849.

Strangely, Bradlaugh himself, writing, doubtlessly, from memory, makes a slight error in his Preface (1882) to the third and final edition of his book. He writes: "Originally commenced in 1856, . . . a second edition was published in 1865." As we have seen, the work was begun in 1857.

Mr. Robertson's statement is undoubtedly taken from this source; and, not having seen the book, he errs by five years; for, although *begun* in 1857, *The Bible: What it Is* was not *published* until 1861.

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