REMINISCENCES OF CHARLES BRADLAUGH

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Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh by G. W. Foote

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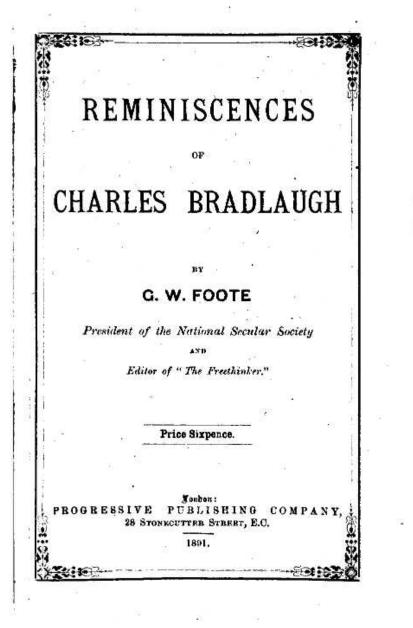
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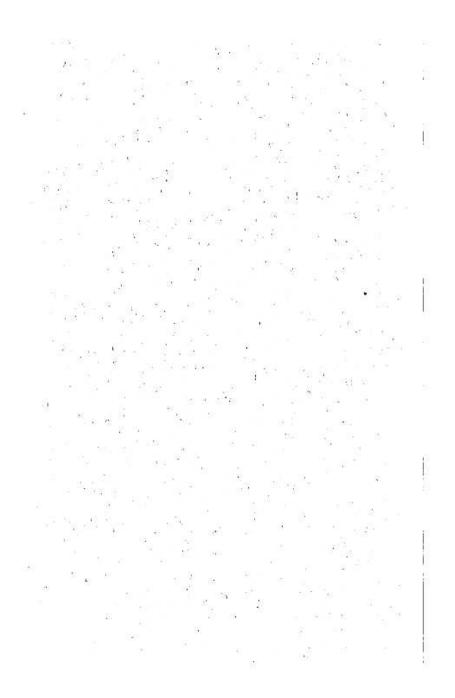
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G. W. FOOTE

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· President of the National Secular Society

AND

Editor of "The Freethinker."

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INTRODUCTION.

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.

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March 30, 1891.

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Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh.

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 Lohdon 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