

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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## SOLOMON'S WISDOM.

*"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" (1 Kings xi., 3).  
"For he was wiser than all men" (chap. iv., 31).*

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on you that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. You will have the documents before you, and you must judge for yourselves. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."—LORD COLERIDGE.

## LETTER TO GAOLER HARCOURT.

To the Right Honorable SIR WILLIAM VERNON HARCOURT,  
Secretary of State for the Home Department.

SIR,—This is the second letter I have addressed to you. The first was on the occasion of your being asked by Mr. Freshfield, two years ago, in the House of Commons, "what steps the Government would take to put down the *Freethinker*." I then objected to the tone of your reply. You evidently knew nothing of this journal, except what you had derived from the impudent and lying circular of Henry Varley; yet you had no scruple in describing it as dangerous to public morality—a most indecent piece of defamation on your part, for Henry Varley himself, who is a past-master in the art of libel, never suggested that the *Freethinker* was an "immoral" publication. He only accused it of being a "shameless blasphemer"; the grosser charge originated in the generous fertility of your own mind.

I have more to complain of now. You have since then still more flagrantly abused your official position, by publicly accusing me of obscenity, in order to justify your neglect of that great principle of religious liberty, without which Liberalism is nothing but "sound and fury, signify-

ing nothing." I am not, however, surprised at this; for I have long been aware of your unscrupulous character. I remember how you played the jackal for continental despotisms in the prosecution of poor Most. I remember how, to shield the reputation of the worthy officials who carry out that Contagious Diseases Act which is a striking commentary on the moral value and purity of your creed, you once aspersed the character of an honest woman. I expected nothing but insult from such a political ruffian. I had no hope that the rigor of Judge North's atrocious sentence would be mitigated by one who has always shown a deep hatred of justice and a cynical contempt of honesty. I resigned myself to my fate when I knew it depended on the meanest Home Secretary we have ever had since the days of Sir James Graham.

Yet, with a foolish inconsistency only excusable in my terrible circumstances, I sent you, soon after my arrival at Holloway Gaol, a formal application for certain privileges. I drew your attention to Judge North's obvious animosity; I pointed out that my sentence was heavier than any passed on a Freethought writer for a hundred and twenty years; I remarked that the term of imprisonment for blasphemy had dwindled to four and three months before the law fell into disuse, and that the prisoners were treated as first-class misdemeanants, instead of like felons. For these reasons I asked you to remit my sentence, or, failing that, to spare me the hardship of lying every night for the first month on a bare plank with a wooden bolster, and to grant me the use of books and writing materials. A month after, the Governor received a printed form, directing him to tell me that "the Home Secretary saw no reason for acceding to my request." From that time you never sent a single

direction as to my treatment. I know you circulated through the newspapers a statement that the prison rules, in my case, were relaxed as far as was consistent with my safe custody; but it was a lie. Except for such relief as could be ordered by the doctor and the Governor, and the use of books subsequently allowed by the Commissioners, I was treated in every respect like a common felon; and even Lord Coleridge's indignant protest against the punishment inflicted on me failed to stir your dull sense of decency. You allowed the false paragraphs to circulate again, but you never moved a finger to make them good.

Memorials for my release were signed by thousands of men and women in every part of Great Britain. Even obscure villages, as my friend the Rev. W. Sharman observes, contributed the signatures of a third of their adult population. Of the four jurymen who could be reached, three readily gave their names; and they remarked that the whole of the jury were astonished at the severity of my sentence. You were duly apprised of these facts, but you treated them with official scorn. What remains is still worse. A special memorial, containing a protest against such an extraordinary application of the blasphemy laws, was signed by a long list of eminent men in science, literature and art. Such a memorial had never been presented to a Home Secretary for the release of a prisoner, and no member of any civilised government in the world, except the recreant one to which you belong, would have dared to disregard it. But you have a peculiar courage in defying the traditional principles of your party. You treated that memorial with the callous cynicism which is only exhibited by "Liberal" ministers. Earl Beaconsfield, with all his faults, was incapable of committing such a criminal blunder; he would have contrived to make his Home Secretary defer gracefully to such men as Herbert Spencer, Professor Huxley, Leslie Stephen and George Du Maurier on a question affecting the freedom of the press; and most assuredly he would have checked the official insolence of a Home Secretary who presumed to disregard the pointed remonstrance of the Lord Chief Justice of England. Lord Coleridge paved the way for your retreat from a false position, but, as usual, you displayed a remarkable degree of that virtue which is called obstinacy or fortitude, according as its exhibitor is a jackass or a king.

In the month of July a great demonstration against the blasphemy laws and my continued imprisonment took place in St. James's Hall. Hundreds of people were unable to gain admittance; and such enthusiasm, nearly five months after my sentence, proved the serious character of the agitation. You were evidently startled by this manifestation of public feeling, and you saw the necessity of furnishing an excuse for your inaction. Accordingly, when Mr. Peter Taylor inquired in Parliament whether you intended to make any response to all these appeals, you had the shameless audacity to state that the publication for which I was imprisoned was "in the most strict sense of the word an obscene libel." When I heard of this in prison I despised you as a liar and a coward; and if you had been courageous enough to vent your slander in a less privileged place than the House of Commons, I would have prosecuted you before a jury of my countrymen. So far were you protected against my resentment at that time, that when I exposed your slander in the letter I was soon after entitled to write, my communication was summarily suppressed by the prison authorities, in defiance of every rule of honesty and fair play, and I have no doubt at your personal instigation.

Now, Sir, you knew well that I was indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced for "blasphemous libel," and that "obscene libel" is a distinct criminal offence with which I was never charged. My indictment accused me of being "wicked, blasphemous and profane," but it contained no suggestion of indecency; and, further, you had before you the emphatic words of Lord Coleridge, which are this week printed at the top of my paper, clearly exonerating me from any suspicion of such a crime. You are a most remarkable logician. You would have been just as consistent if you had declined to release a man sentenced for theft, but afterwards proved innocent, on the ground that, though he was not guilty of stealing, you had reason to believe that he had been impudent to his mother.

Sir, it is not your business to impute fresh crimes to prisoners whom you are asked to release; your business is to deal simply with the allegations in their indictment, the evidence produced against them, and the character of their sentence. You cannot honestly take cognizance of any-

thing else. Even if you thought my paper indecent, you had no right to say so in your official capacity, and play the part at once of prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner, without giving me an opportunity of defence. The proper place to charge a man with an indictable offence is not the House of Commons, but a court of law. My friend and fellow-prisoner, Mr. Ramsey, who did not sufficiently appreciate the futility of soliciting you to do an act of justice, sent you a "petition" from prison, asking you to liberate him at once and prosecute him for publishing an "obscene libel," and promising to sell you or your agent a copy of the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* for that purpose. Of course you returned no answer to his manly challenge.

For the present I have done with you, but you will probably hear of me again. You have basely, deliberately, and maliciously libelled me, and through me the Freethought party, for which I am proud to work, proud to fight, and proud to suffer. You will find that we have long memories; you will learn that we have the power to punish you. We do not intend to forgive your insults; we shall track you in your political path; and, when our opportunity comes, we shall teach you a stern lesson—a lesson that you will never forget, and that will be a perpetual warning to all politicians of your peculiar stamp.—Yours with all the respect that honest men pay you,

G. W. FOOTE.

#### THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY TESTIMONIAL.

THE banquet at the Hall of Science on March 12 was, in the words of the hall-keeper, the biggest thing of the kind ever seen there. All the tickets had been disposed of days before, and to prevent friends who had come from the country being disappointed, tables were set up in the gallery. Punctually at 8 o'clock the chair was taken by Mr. Bradlaugh.

After ample justice had been done to the viands a musical selection was given by Mrs. Wheeler during the clearing of the tables. Mr. Bell and friends then opened the proceedings with a quartette, which was excellently rendered and loudly applauded. Miss Trevillion next gave a song with much taste and feeling, which was warmly greeted.

The CHAIRMAN: I will now call upon Dr. Aveling to read a letter from Dr. Schlaeger, of Berlin, expressing his regret at being unable to be present, and saying how much pleased he would have been to have been able to be present to congratulate personally Mr. Foote upon his release, and he desires me as chairman to express to him his regret at his unavoidable absence. (Cheers.)

Dr. AVELING then read the letter, which was as follows:—

"Berlin, W., Bellevue Strasse, 16, March 9, 1884.

"I should be greatly benefited by being one of the celebrators of an important event such as the public appreciation of your latest martyrs of Freethought, which will certainly figure in history; but I have to put up with a mental attendance, and suffer myself to be represented by a few suggestions that perhaps may recommend themselves to your attention also. The great lesson of history has been confirmed again in the case and cause now before you in the first of its victory stages—i.e., that it is only by bringing about conflicts with the representatives of tyrannical prejudice in state and society that the laws enacted by it as its fortress will be shattered and brought to the ground. Martyrdom is still the ransom of every new liberty and radical reform. It is only the form of persecution that has undergone changes—its essence is still the same as in former ages. The holy inquisition killed the heretic outright by the flames of the stake; the modern hypocritical remnant of it has substituted imprisonment, or killing of only a part of the lives of its opponents. Life consists in free action only. Life spent in prison is just so much life lost—is capital punishment dealt out piecemeal. There is really no essential difference between the old and the new inquisition. Both agree in the end and aim of putting down heretics; of discouraging by means of intimidation the full exercise of free utterance, the most sacred right of our individuality, without which life is not only a burden, but a stagnant pool for all its surroundings. Persecution has, in these recent times, taken to itself the cloak of law; but its claws are clearly protruding from under it, nevertheless, and this pretence of acting on the spur of outraged law and decency does no longer deceive any unbiassed mind.

"*Religio instrumentum imperii*—i.e., privilege, entrenching itself behind superstition, furnishes the real motive of the action of Judge North and his jurors, and the non-action of the Home Secretary. Power will only defer to power. If you want to prevent any more convictions of your leaders and followers for blasphemy you will have to show yourself a political power that can no longer be insulted with impunity. In order to become such a power you have only to change still more the manner of your propaganda and agitation from the mere defensive to the boldly aggressive. It is only by sturdy battling

with our enemies that our best qualities will come out and prove the excellency of their mettle. It is only by attack and defence that the strong and the weak points of both sides are made clearer, and that a new ground is being gained and finally fixed upon to serve as a new basis for the progress of our posterity.

"When St. Boniface, in the sacred grove near Fulda, not only mocked at the old gods of the Saxon heathens, but dared gods and men by bringing down with his axe the holy oak of Wotan, the then Christian world did applaud the bold monk and missionary. How long will it be yet till a similar applause shall greet the modern iconoclast, who will bring down the worn-out religious superstructure of to-day by means of the axe of victorious criticism and analytical weapons forged by the great thinkers of England, France, and Germany? It is only by organisation that glorious results will be attained. You have already set the example of its power by your National Secular Society. You have already made the defence of your principles relatively easier by guaranteeing the families of your martyrs against want, by keeping the mind-flag of your Footes and Ramseys flying defiantly in the face of their gaolers. By showing finally the depth of your sympathy and appreciation in the tangible form of a memorial fund you have meritoriously carried out that part of our common platform of the International Federation of Freethought, pledging material aid to its martyrs. It is by such examples that progress in the same direction will report itself also in other nations.

"May you continue to make living and life-giving truth the words of Emerson delineating the man of reform as follows:— 'And, further, I will not dissemble my hope, that each person whom I address has felt his own call to cast aside all evil customs, timidities, and limitations, and to be in his place a free and helpful man, a reformer, a benefactor, not content to slip along through the world like a footman or a spy, escaping by his nimbleness and apologies as many knocks as he can, but a brave and upright man, who must find or cut a straight road to everything excellent in the earth, and not only go honorably himself, but make it easier for all who follow him to go in honor and with benefit.'

"Leaving this life-programme of the great American to your care and emulation, I am, with great hopes and aspirations of your future artillery-work against the above-mentioned entrenchments of hypocrisy and superstition,—Yours as long as you are true to yourself.

E. SCHLAEGER, Dr. Phil.

Charles Bradlaugh, Esq.

"Dear sir,—I should be obliged to you if you will read the above at your meeting in your old battle hall on Wednesday.—E. S."

During the reading of the letter various portions were heartily cheered by the large assembly.

Mr. BRADLAUGH then said: We have met to-night to record our formal protest against the statute law of blasphemy, which Lord Coleridge agrees is "ferocious"; and still more to protest against the common law of blasphemy, which—differently interpreted by different judges—Mr. Justice Stephen says no one can dislike it more than he does—of which law he writes that he "is profoundly convinced of its utter unfitness for these times," and which he declares that he "so thoroughly dislikes," that he prefers to see it exposed "in its natural naked deformity." We have met to repeat in your presence our protest against the revival by Mr. Justice North, of practices against accused persons on trials for blasphemy, in which the judge renewed the worst conduct of Best and Ellenborough against Davison and Hone. Justice in old times had terrible traditions of harshness and cruelty; in modern times it has, until verdict, treated the accused as possibly innocent. More than once in peril of my own liberty, I have ever found courtesy from the Bench. Mr. Justice North against you, Mr. Foote, forgot the dignity of his high position, and conducted himself as an adversary rather than as a judge. To-night, therefore, we renew the censure which scores of journalists unconnected with our movement, have passed on Mr. Justice North for his exceeding unfairness on the first trial; for his excessive harshness in remanding you in custody, and in refusing bail in the interval prior to your second trial; and for the sentence so cruelly severe with which he punished you—rather, we fear, for your defence than for the offence for which you were indicted. (Loud cheers.) The money testimonial which will be presented to you to-night is made up of several thousands of small subscriptions, and its value is not so much in the amount as it is in the warm expression of sympathy which goes with it from every donor. (Hear, hear.) Directly you were sentenced the Executive of the National Secular Society took steps to raise a fund which might secure a constant and reasonable provision for your wives and families during your imprisonment. In this the Freethought party aided so readily and so generously, that the committee appointed were able to refuse further money help for this object, having a considerable balance in hand; and it was then the fund was commenced for the testimonial, which will be presented to you this evening. Simultaneously with this action of the Executive, a private committee, consisting of Mrs. Besant, Messrs. Herbert, Hilditch, Grout, Standing and R. O. Smith, was formed by Mrs. Besant, and to which Mr. C. Herbert acted as treasurer, in order to keep open 28 Stonecutter Street, and to keep alive the weekly and monthly issues which, by the sudden

illness of your appointed agent, were left in a precarious state. This committee has worked constantly and ungrudgingly in order that on your release you might find your means of publicity at least as efficient as you left them. And it is gratifying to them that with the devoted co-operation of Mr. Robert Forder, who took charge of the publishing duties, and the able literary assistance freely given by Dr. Aveling, they have been able to hand over to you a substantial profit and a flourishing business. (Loud cheers.) I am here to-night the mouthpiece of large numbers of earnest Freethinkers, scattered in city, town and village, and of some beyond the seas, who permit me to speak for them. Indignant at the severity of your imprisonment, they send their heartfelt sympathy. Delighted by the character of your defence, they send their warmest congratulations, and for your future they send most earnest hopes and hearty wishes. And to you, George William Foote, they entrust me with special message. Your three brilliant and masterly pleadings for Freethought, in winning you high honor, bring to you serious responsibility, and our people look to you to guard the post you have won. They pray you serve our cause free, with the dignity with which you have suffered for it in gaol. They remind you of your brave and worthy presentment of Freethought in the shadow of Newgate and before England's Chief Justice; and they trust you that your tongue and pen will keep alive and undimmed the high repute you have won under such trying ordeal. (Loud cheers.) And in giving you this message I add my own. Those who have suffered for Freethought identify themselves with the Freethought cause in history; they bear higher responsibilities, they have higher duties, higher service to render. All looks are turned on them; all eyes watch them. The honor of the Freethought cause is placed in their hands. And I pray you, for the honor of that Freethought cause, which I love, for that Freethought cause which, with whatever errors, I have striven all my life through to serve; I say to you, and especially to you [turning to Mr. Foote] who have shown ability and power to go before me in our work, for the sake of that cause for which men have been burned, for which men have suffered in gaol, for which men have starved; that, cause that has been mocked and jeered at, but which is triumphing and shall triumph yet more in the coming days; if words of mine may add aught of pleading, may have aught of power, I pray you forget not that you have bought the right to be true. (Loud and continued cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I will now ask Dr. Aveling, who has been editor of the *Freethinker* during the period of Mr. Foote's imprisonment, to say some words which we all expect to hear from him on surrendering his trust. (Cheers.)

Dr. AVELING, who met with a very cordial reception, said: Mr. Chairman and friends,—One is in the difficulty to-night of having practically to speak to three gentlemen at once. (Laughter.) We meet together in honor of the release of our friends, Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp, and in order to render to them our tributes of gratitude and admiration—to all three of them collectively—(cheers)—as three men that have suffered for the cause that is as dear to every one of them as I hope and believe it is to us to-night. (Cheers.) It is always a difficult thing trying to analyse the feelings of such a multitude as we have here before us to-night, in trying to put into words the emotions moving myself and him who has just spoken; and not only you here, but thousands throughout the length and breadth of this country and the civilised world, when we greet these three men. If we had to analyse the emotions, the permanent feelings in our mind, we should, I think, find that they are the emotion of joy, the emotion of hope, and the emotion of anger. (Cheers.) We have an intense feeling of joy that these our three friends are with us once again—(hear, hear)—and we have an intense feeling of hope, that I cannot put into better words than Mr. Bradlaugh has put, as to the future, not only of every one of them, but every Freethinker—that he will feel his arm nerved and his brain made more keen by the presence of these our latest martyrs amongst us again. (Cheers.) I feel myself the strongest emotion is one of anger, and that is still the paramount feeling in my mind. (Hear, hear.) I am angry with the iniquitous sentence—(hear, hear)—passed by an iniquitous judge—(hear, hear)—at the instance of an iniquitous prosecution, prompted by an iniquitous creed. (Cheers.) I and you are angry with the whole of these four. With the judge you can do little—he is protected by the office he dishonors—(cheers); with the sentence we can do nothing now, except grieve for it; but with the prosecutors we can do something. (Hear, hear.) They are not protected by the office they manage with wonderful ingenuity to dishonour. (Laughter and cheers.) One amongst them we have not heard so much of lately. I notice that Sir Henry Tyler has not taken so prominent a part lately in public affairs as in the past. (Laughter.) He asked a question in Parliament within the last few hours, which shows the bent of his mind. It is thoroughly in keeping with the character of Sir Henry Tyler that he should ask questions about cattle—(laughter and cheers)—and about the diseases of cattle—(renewed laughter); but with the creed, friends, we can have less truce and parley than we had before. (Cheers.) No amount of begging the question, no amount of kindly words—aye, even from the ministers of the creed—can make us forget that it is due to the creed we are combatting these men have been put in prison for twelve months, for nine months, and for

three months. (Cheers.) I don't want to throw an apple of discord into this Assembly of Olympus, but I want to remind you we have to set our faces against a creed whose fangs and claws are not yet drawn. (Cheers.) What crimes have been done in thy name, oh, Liberty! and what crimes have been done against thy name, oh, Liberty! and the latest, and not the least, of those crimes is the imprisonment of our friends and brethren. (Cheers.) They have suffered; I believe that they will understand that we have suffered in some measure—not as they have done; they are triumphing now, and we are triumphing too, and they will be the first and most generous to grant us the greater triumph while they bear the greater suffering. (Hear, hear.) I think, rather than that I should receive thanks from the Freethought party, I ought to tender my thanks for having filled the office of Mr. Foote during the past twelve months. I don't understand why anybody should be thanked for doing a work which is just the most natural work for him to do. Everybody—every Freethinker—it seems to me, would be glad to render any service he could to the cause. (Hear, hear.) Everybody has been willing to do work—the President of the National Secular Society has done his work; Mrs. Besant and the Committee have done theirs; I have done my simple work cheerfully, and it has not been little. Not one of us has done more than any one of you who has supported the cause. But thanks are not required. It is the consciousness that the party as a whole has done its duty; that while these men have been suffering and have suffered nobly, the party has never flinched and never failed for a single moment. That is all the reward that the party wants. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: As we have present to-night the Rev. W. Sharman—(cheers)—who so warmly and thoroughly took up the agitation against the blasphemy laws, and who, I believe, intends some special movement in London within a short time on the subject, I am sure I shall be interpreting your wish if I ask him in your name to say something. (Cheers.)

The Rev. J. W. SHARMAN, who was cheered on rising, said: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,—I don't know what to say to-night in the presence of Mr. Foote and his fellow-sufferers because I really don't understand the interior of Holloway Gaol—(laughter)—the more I learn about that place the more mysterious it becomes. (Laughter.) I spoke to Mr. Foote a very short time after he came out of the gaol, and I thought I should be favoring him if I gave him some news, for I thought news could not enter the gaol, and to my astonishment I found, metaphorically speaking, I was teaching my grandmother to suck eggs, or carrying coals to Newcastle. (Laughter.) Mr. Foote appeared to know all I was telling him before I did myself. (Laughter.) But I do wish, even if Mr. Foote has heard it before, to say this to him, that the moment the truth was known concerning the almost incredible sentence pronounced upon him, an agitation was set on foot for his release. (Cheers.) That agitation failed—(Shame)—yes, it was a shame, but it has this advantage, that to-night Mr. Foote stands before you, having paid the full penalty and indebted nothing to Sir William Harcourt. (Loud cheers.) I myself was astonished at the response that I received to the request published for signatures to a petition for release. Small towns in Cornwall recorded in many cases thirty per cent. of their adult population in signatures for release—(hear, hear)—and a very large number of the persons signing were Wesleyan Methodists. (Cheers.) Let it be understood clearly that in the agitation against the blasphemy laws we protest against laws that affect all forms of opinion except that by law established, laws that attack the mental liberty of the hyper-orthodox as well as of those who have not the required amount of orthodox faith. (Hear, hear.) My attention was called the other day to the fact that a year after the passage of the Reform Bill a man named Zion Ward was, at Nottingham, sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment—not for heterodoxy, but simply for being a little too orthodox—(laughter)—and it must be understood that these laws menace Spiritualists and Unitarians and persons holding extreme orthodox opinions, as well as Secularists. (Hear, hear.) We have come, happily, to a close of the personal dangers of the controversy; three persons are at liberty, and personal considerations disappear—(hear, hear)—but the laws, statute and common, remain—(hear, hear)—and it becomes our duty to see that Mr. Foote shall not only be the latest, but also the last, martyr to this law. (Cheers.) I am happy to tell you that the Committee of the Association for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, at its meeting last night, resolved that its organisation should be perfected and its agitation made continuous. (Cheers.) Early in May a demonstration will be held in St. James's Hall, and I trust that you will do all in your power to make the demonstration, numerically and morally, a great success. (Cheers.) You will have an opportunity then of hearing many of your old friends and some new ones. Mr. Foote, of course, will be present; Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant will be present, and their names ought to suffice to make the meeting a success. (Hear, hear.) But apart from that, the cause itself ought to do it, and for the sake of the cause I trust that you will not forget to make the meeting a very great success. Mr. Foote, you know, comes from Plymouth, a town in which I have been residing for the last nine years. I am glad to see that he is going there shortly, and I can assure him his fellow-townsmen will give him a very warm reception indeed—a welcome such as he will meet with in few towns or few parts of England;

although wherever he goes I am sure he will meet with cordial greetings from great multitudes. (Cheers.) I shall not stand between you and the other speakers. What I may have to say on the general question, I shall have an opportunity of saying at the meeting to be held in St. James's Hall. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I now call upon Mrs. Besant to make the presentation. (Loud cheers.)

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## ACID DROPS.

Mrs. WELDON has elicited some very blasphemous notions from Dr. Edmunds. That gentleman confessed in the witness-box that in his opinion Balaam, St. Paul, and other hearers of heavenly voices, were "crazy." Judge North pointedly referred to the blasphemy of ridiculing Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; yet in the open Court of Queen's Bench Dr. Edmunds publishes similar blasphemy, and everybody laughs at it as a good joke.

JUDGE NORTH, in the case of Coudon v. Vollum, has ordered a Protestant mother, who had the custody of her child, to bring it up in the religion of the father, a Roman Catholic. Comment is needless.

An advertisement has recently appeared in the daily papers addressed "To all Christians," desiring them to pray for their queen and country, for Ireland, for Egypt, for all in affliction and sore distress, and for "all Atheists and murderers." This is the habitual politeness of pious people who think Freethinkers ought to be sent to gaol for "hurting other people's feelings."

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT, out of regard for "other people's feelings," is opposed to cremation, which he says is "repugnant to the general feelings of the community." But why, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* asks, should one man not be burned because ninety-nine prefer to be buried? He doesn't want to burn them, and why should they want to bury him? This theory will be carried to a pretty length by and by. Some day we shall read a newspaper paragraph to this effect: "Yesterday Sir William Harcourt, late Home Secretary, was tried at the Old Bailey for outraging the feelings of the community, and sentenced to twelve calendar months' imprisonment by Mr. Justice South. The taste for slimmness is now become so general that stout men are a great eyesore. They have frequently been warned against parading their corpulence in public, but many of them have treated the warning with levity; in particular the right honorable gentleman just mentioned, who has displayed his obesity in the most crowded places of public resort. His indecent disregard of the general sentiment of the community has at length met with condign punishment. A year of third class diet will probably reduce him to more orthodox dimensions, and we trust that he will come out of prison a thinner and a wiser man."

*A propos* of our pious Home Secretary, it is reported that several M.P.'s agreed to invite, each of them, to a dinner party the most disagreeable man he knew. There was only one visitor. They had all invited Sir William Harcourt.

SIR WILLIAM is going to address his constituents at Derby. We hope some of our friends there will *heckle* him, especially as to the blasphemy laws, and his unredeemed pledges to Mr. Plimsoll.

PHYLLIS BUTLER, a girl under 16, charged at Worship Street with stealing a purse and £21, declared she did it at the instigation of a captain of the Salvation Army, with whom she had travelled to Liverpool, and who had seduced her.

THE meeting called by that clean-handed body the Corporation of London through the Commissioners of Sewers, to protest against the expenditure of the School Board, proved a stormy one. Mr. Richards, the rejected of Northampton was to the fore, and bellowed out "Mr. Ramsey of the *Freethinker*" when that gentleman rose to move his amendment, declaring the greater necessity of an inquiry into the educational endowments of the City. Several fat aldermen laid their flabby hands on Mr. Ramsey, and the resolution was declared passed while our friend was still speaking.

THE *Church Reformer*, edited by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, says: "Mr. Foote is at last out of prison. The lecture tour on which he is starting will, we hope, not only help to bring about the abolition of the blasphemy laws, but also to call serious attention to the evils of our present prison system, especially in the case of unconvicted prisoners."

**SPECIAL NOTICES.**

**MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

Sunday, March 23rd, St. James's Hall, Plymouth:—Morning at 11 (Mr. R. S. Smith in the chair), "My Three Trials for Blasphemy"; afternoon at 3 (Dr. C. Marchmont Jones in the chair), "Prison Thoughts on the Bible"; evening at 6.30 (Rev. W. Sharman in the chair), "Twelve Months in a Christian Gaol."

March 30, Liverpool. April 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 24, Hall of Science. May 4 and 11, Hall of Science; 18, Claremont Hall—As Mr. Foote is overwhelmed with applications for lectures, and finds the greatest difficulty in arranging his tours so as to economise his time and visit as many places as possible, it is practically useless for any more Societies to write until the fresh dates are settled and published.

**CORRESPONDENTS.**

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.O. Literary communications to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, 28 Stonecutter Street, London.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post-free to any part of Europe, America, Canada, and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7d.

DR. EDWARD AVELING'S ENGAGEMENTS.—March 23, 30, Milton Hall, London. April 6, Manchester; 20, Birmingham; 27, Liverpool. May 4, 11, 18, Milton Hall; 25, Hall of Science. June 8, 15, 22, 29, Milton Hall.

RECEIVED—A. F. Mooney.

W. SEARMOUTH.—Until we increase the size of this journal, which we hope to do shortly, we must devote the whole of our space to Freethought.

VIOLET.—Safely to hand. Thanks.

J. LAYCOCK has a complete set of the *Freethinker*, minus the first volume, for sale, and will devote the price to the Benevolent Fund.

OLD JOE.—Apply to the club manager—Mr. Anderson, Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Thanks for the jokes. Judging from the report you send us we apparently made a mistake. The man who was wounded with a sugar basin was not a professed Freethinker; but that only makes the case worse.

A. LEWIS.—Cuttings are always useful.

C. HARDING.—We are overwhelmed with copy at present.

P. H. ECHLIN.—The extract is interesting. We regret being unable to serve you in return.

CARRINGTON J. FORSTER.—Many thanks. Always glad to hear from you.

ANXIOUS.—All who judge of religion by reason alone may properly term themselves Freethinkers whether their conclusions are Theistic or Atheistic.

THOS. COLES (St. Helens, Lancashire), will be glad to hear of others in the same district willing to start a branch of the N. S. S.

PERSONNE.—Your short pars are always useful.

HOLY PIGEON.—We are not aware of any such copy having been returned.

JUDGE SOUTH.—See Matthew xix., 12., and James v., 14.

W. WISE.—Up to the time of going to press Dr. Aveling has not been converted by the American sky-pilots, Moody and Sankey, so your information is at any rate premature.

S. N.—The *Freethinker* is well supported by the party, and has, we believe, a larger circulation than any Freethought paper ever had. If friends would see that newsagents obtain and exhibit it, its influence would be much extended.

W. BUNTON.—We are glad to hear you say "This week I take four times my late number of the *Freethinker*." Coming from a news-agent these words are doubly welcome.

M. T. COCKSWAIN.—The sketch is witty, but rather too broad.

G. HENDERSON.—Yes, the numbers are in print. Order what you require direct from Mr. Ramsey.

B. DAWSON.—Your hearty good wishes are very welcome: It is beyond dispute that the great bulk of the Freethought party is with us. The "dignified" Freethinkers, as they like to regard themselves, are free to do their work in their own way, and there is room enough for all; but our task is to fight Christianity with every honest weapon at our command.

R. W. HEARNDEN.—The congratulations of the Maidstone Secular Society, though late as you say, are none the less welcome. Mr. Foote will be happy to pay your town a visit.

JAMES WENSON (West Hartlepool).—We hope scientific and Freethought lectures will be found to supply the place of the declining churches in your town.

W. H. HARRIS.—Thanks for your support. It is not our custom to reprint verses which have already been published.

J. CORBETT.—Your long letter only exhibits the terror of your faith. Upon what prophecies do you rely in proof that Jesus was the Messiah?

L. SMITH.—Mr. Foote visits Liverpool on March 30, and will lecture three times in the Concert Hall.

NEXT week will appear an article by Mr. Symes.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, to whom all Post-office Orders should be made payable. Considerable

delay and annoyance are caused by the disregard of this rule. In remitting stamps halfpenny ones are preferred. AGENTS wanted in town and country to sell this paper and other Freethought literature.

**SUGAR PLUMS.**

THE April number of *Progress* will be ready on the 25th inst. It will contain "A Look Round," by Mr. Foote, descriptive of his impressions on revisiting the political and social scene; the conclusion of Dr. Aveling's "The Rottenness of the Press"; a paper by Mr. Wheeler on "Christianity and Buddhism"; a review of George Eliot's Essays, by Norman Britton; "Thoughts on Working Men," by J. H.; a poem, "In Chambers," by Ernest Radford; "Tried by Death," by Captain Bingham; and an interesting notice of Mr. Dobell's Biography of James Thomson (B.V.), by one who knew him intimately, and is able to clear up many perplexities and remove many misapprehensions. The friends of *Progress* should give it an extra push this month.

MR. FOOTE delivered the first Freethought lecture ever delivered in Hastings on Thursday, March 11th. Mr. W. J. Ramsey took the chair, and there was a good attendance. After the public meeting was over, a private meeting was held in the ante-room and a branch of the National Secular Society formed, with Mr. J. Britcher as secretary. Forty members were enrolled on the spot. The lecture was reported in the local press.

THE South Lancashire friends turned out in strong force last Sunday to welcome Mr. Foote and Mr. Ramsey at Manchester. It was a grand sight in the evening, when the huge St. James's Hall showed a crowd of upturned enthusiastic faces. Mr. Foote's physical powers were, fortunately, quite equal to his heavy task, and his voice held out clear and firm to the end of the day. Mr. Ramsey took the chair morning and evening; in the afternoon Mr. Councillor Slater, of Bury, presided. There was an immense sale of the *Freethinker* at the bookstall.

THE following subscriptions were collected by Mr. Hilditch, independent of the Prisoners' Aid Fund, and employed in defraying some urgent expenses:—A. Hilditch, £2 12s.; Mr. Hurren, £2 12s.; Mr. Bruce, £1 10s.; Mr. Williamson, £1 10s.; Mr. Ryce, 13s.; Mr. Burnes, 13s.; Mr. Smith, 10s.; Mr. Craffey, 3s. 6d.

AT the 329th regular meeting of the Manhattan Liberal Club of New York, held February 29, 1884, a large audience being present, the following resolution was read. It was received with applause and adopted unanimously: "Whereas George William Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker*, has just completed the term of incarceration in Holloway Prison inflicted upon him by the Christian Government of England, therefore, be it resolved, that the Manhattan Liberal Club of New York send greeting to him and his compatriots, W. J. Ramsey and H. A. Kemp, and would join with English Secularists in doing honor to them for their noble martyrdom in the cause of Universal Liberty.—Asenath C. Macdonald, Secretary."

THE New York *Truthseeker* has an article on the liberation, "The English Inquisition Yields up the Last Victim." It concludes with the following words: "We send hearty greeting to Mr. Foote and his fellow-martyrs. He and they may with reason congratulate themselves that although Christianity can imprison, it cannot kill. Few men ever came from the torture chamber in possession of full bodily strength and vigor, and our English heroes are lucky also in that respect. That they will make their experience dear to every Christian heart is not to be doubted. And should they ever visit America, the Freethinkers in this country will show them that their deed of heroism is not unknown, and that Americans know how to appreciate pluck."

DR. EDWARD AVELING lectures on Sunday next at Milton Hall. 11.30, "Gradations between Monkeys, Apes, and Men"; 7.30, "God Dies; Nature Remains."

A NEW Freethought paper is being started in Calcutta. It will be entitled the *Bengal Investigator*, and be in the Bengali language. The editor is Kedarnath Basu.

FREETHOUGHT is spreading in New Zealand, as elsewhere. A Rationalistic Association has been started this year at Auckland by Mr. W. H. Webb, of the N. S. S. Similar associations have been established at Christchurch, Wellington, Napier, Canterbury and Wanganui. At the latter place is published a "Freethought Review."

MISS THORNTON SMITH lectures on Sunday next at the Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S., Castle Street, Camberwell, on "The Doctrine of Eternal Torture." We wish her a large audience.

## THE N. S. S. TESTIMONIAL.

(Concluded from page 94.)

Mrs. BESANT, who was received with loud and prolonged cheers, said: Mr. President, the work that we have to do to-night is, I suppose, work as pleasant that can well fall into any Freethinker's hands. (Cheers.) The suffering that we have met to commemorate is past; we have now the joy and the triumph—the thanks that we give to those who have suffered for our sakes. (Cheers.) And, indeed, I know not how any of us who stand on the Freethought platform would dare to mention the names of our martyrs who are in their graves unless we gave willing and hearty service to those who to-day are carrying on the same work and sharing the same suffering. Of these there remain, immortal in our history, the names of Carlile, of Hetherington, of Cleave, of Watson, and of one still living amongst us—Edward Truelove. (Loud cheers.) Empty indeed would be our service of praise to our dead if we could not bring some service of thanks to our living, while they are still here, to take our thanks for what they have done for us. (Cheers.) Three have suffered in gaol for the right of free speech. Outside, those they loved better than themselves suffered more for them than they bore in their own persons. (Hear, hear.) They left outside mother, wives, and families, everyone of whom bore part of the pain, for which we thank them all to-day. And I can speak about all that, friends, for I have come very closely in contact with those who were left outside. Why, in our own place in Fleet Street, Mr. Ramsey's mother, his sister, his brother-in-law, have all worked that we might not miss Mr. Ramsey's help, and gave their work willingly and joyfully—gave it heartily and thoroughly; partly, I like to think, for love to ourselves—but more, I know, for love to the cause that their brother and friend was suffering for in prison. (Loud cheers.) If you speak of the creed that sent them there, I can only say for myself that when each week I met Mr. Ramsey's old mother there, trying to do something for her imprisoned son, I felt the bitterer towards the creed that took a son from a widowed mother—(cries of Shame)—and made the home more desolate that had been happy and peaceful before. In regard to the work that had been done outside, what would our party be worth if we could not work for those who were silent for our sake? (Hear, hear.) The duty that I have now to perform is to present a gift to you—Mr. Foote—in their name—an answer to you; for perhaps you will be glad to know that the testimonial we present to-night is raised by the free gifts of the poor. There were those who sent sixpence a week, sometimes ninepence, and every week, Mr. Foote, you were in gaol, there were men who sent a few pence week by week, that out of their poverty they might show you gratitude for the work you have done. (Cheers.) And out of those pence, and the shillings and the pounds of wealthier ones, who to-day are coming forward to show their sympathy with the cause of Freethought, we have the right to announce that we have received £379 odd. (Bravo and cheers.) That we give, not as money, but as expressing our thanks to those who have suffered, and who have made the freedom of speech more possible than it was before. (Cheers.) To three we give our thanks to-night. One—Mr. Kemp—has had an amount of suffering that some may not remember who only knew that his was the shortest of the terms of imprisonment; but he suffered in gaol from a disease from which he long had suffered, and since he came out this terrible rheumatism has been made worse by the effects of the cold stones of the Holloway Gaol that made him captive. We are now able to congratulate him on coming back to his work, and to what we trust will be a long and honored life. (Cheers.) In giving him this message from the Freethought party, I would say [addressing Mr. Kemp] that as you have suffered for us in the gaol we believe you will suffer for us in the future, and we welcome every worker who will give his life to Freethought, and honor by his devotion to the cause that liberty we thank him for defending, and we trust we may know him as one of her soldiers in the days to come. (Loud cheers.) To Mr. Ramsey, one of the members of the Executive of the National Secular Society, and whom we rejoiced to elect last year while he was in prison—(cheers)—as we have elected him over and over again in freedom—(renewed cheers)—we offer an address that we trust will make his home brighter in the days that are to come:—

“To WILLIAM JAMES RAMSEY, Member of the National Secular Society, who suffered nine months in Holloway Gaol for the so-called offence of blasphemy.

“In offering you on your release this illuminated address, and the accompanying purse of gold, we do not seek to give you recompense for the sufferings and the insults which have been heaped upon you. We bring them only as a symbol of our thanks to you, in that you spoke bravely, suffered unflinchingly, endured steadfastly and have come out from gaol as resolute to struggle for the freedom of man from an evil creed as you were when that creed severed you for nine months from wife and child.

“Signed on behalf of the National ) C. BRADLAUGH, *President*.  
Secular Society. } R. FORDER, *Secretary*.

In presenting the address and the purse that comes with it, I can only say to Mr. Ramsey, that we trust him that his work of the future shall only make the work of the present more glorious,

and that he will make his name known in Freethought history as one of those who can suffer in prison for Freethought, and that he will also work for her now he is free outside it. (Cheers.) Coming to the last of these gifts is the gift that we bring to George William Foote. (Loud cheers.) We cannot but feel that in thanking him for the work he did so bravely in the cause, he has given us the pledge that that work he will do none less bravely and none less brilliantly in the future. (Cheers.) What a year in prison means, none, I suppose, can tell except those who have felt it. The prison is intended as a punishment for crime, but the prison that cuts out a year from a man's life, from a man's energy, from a man's speech and from a man's family—that prison must be a penalty so terrible that I do not know how to express my own sense of the gratitude with which I thank Mr. Foote for facing it bravely, for bearing it unflinchingly, and for coming out of it, if that were possible, more resolute and brave even than when the doors of the gaol closed on him. (Cheers.) Our words are but poor:—

“To GEORGE WILLIAM FOOTE, Vice-President of the National Secular Society, who suffered for twelve months in Holloway Gaol for the so-called offence of blasphemy.

“In offering you on your release this illuminated address, and the accompanying purse of gold, we do not seek to give you recompense for the sufferings and the insults which have been heaped upon you. We bring them only as a symbol of our thanks to you—thanks, because, on your trial, you spoke nobly for the right of free speech on religious questions; thanks, because you bore, without a sign of flinching, a sentence at once cruel and unjust; thanks because you have carried on in our days the traditions of a Freethought faithful in the prison as on the platform.

“Signed on behalf of the National ) C. BRADLAUGH, *President*.  
Secular Society. } R. FORDER, *Secretary*.”

In giving this to him whom we thank, we give it with the love of men and women in all parts of our own country and from the other side of the world as well—thanks which are not to be measured by the poverty of our gift, but by the warmth of the feeling we have put into it. They have told in former days the story that when a prophet came to have his consecration to go out into the world, an angel caught from the altar a burning coal which should touch the prophet's lips with fire. I know not whether I may term that allegory unpoetical or unfitted for our creed to-day, but, indeed, if you take the noblest meaning of the word “prophet,” what is it but the man of insight, proclaiming to the world hidden treasures that the blind in the world may not see? And such a thing does the “Freethought” advocate—to tell to the friends of freedom what they know not of; to impart to the ignorant a knowledge they dare not dream of; to open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf in a sense far deeper than they ever dreamt of in their Christian creeds. (Cheers.) And, in speaking of this old allegory, can we think of any altar of the godhead stronger than the altar of human hearts which give out love and gratitude to those, who serve in our cause to-day? I know not what passion of devotion; I know not what force of inspiration; I know not what divine spirit or what god you will that has in it aught so sacred, aught so mighty, aught so touching in its inspiration as that burning feeling of love, of gratitude and of sympathy now offered which will touch your heart and lips with fire when you speak again to your countrymen. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I will now call upon Mr. Foote. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE, on rising, received a tremendous ovation, the audience rising, waving handkerchiefs, and cheering loudly. After the prolonged applause had subsided, he said: Mr. Chairman and my very good friends—I know there are those, and their number is many—(a Voice: “Yes, legion”)—who think Freethinkers are callous because they are obstinate. (Laughter.) There never was a greater mistake. (Hear, hear.) My task in confronting a malignant judge—(cheers)—and a prejudiced jury—(renewed cheers)—was far easier than my task to-night. I felt very little emotion when Judge North sentenced me to twelve months' imprisonment as a common felon, except one of scorn. I felt scarcely any indignation, scarcely any anger, but I was filled with scorn, and that wonderfully sustains a man in the most trying circumstances. (Cheers.) To-night, I confess, you fill me with unusual feelings. It is a most difficult thing to give expression to one's emotions in standing face to face with so many, some of whom are speaking words of praise and others applauding them; yet it would be on my part the most prurient modesty if I did not accept those words in just the very spirit in which they are offered. (Cheers.) Mr. Bradlaugh has said that the Freethought party—which no one will dispute his right to speak for—looks to me, amongst others, after my imprisonment, to maintain with dignity whatever position I have won. I hope I shall not disappoint the expectation—(hear, hear)—but I should like it to be clearly understood that I consider the most dignified attitude for a man who has only just left gaol, after twelve months of a cruel and unjust sentence, for no crime except that of thinking freely and speaking freely—(hear, hear)—is to stand again upon the same right he exercised before, to pursue the very policy for which he was attacked, precisely because he was attacked, and to flinch no hair's breadth from the conduct he pursued before, until at least the opposition resorts to suasion instead of force, and tries to win by criticism what it

will certainly never win by the gaol. (Loud cheers.) It is my intention to-morrow morning to drive to the west of London, to leave the first copy of this week's *Freethinker* pulled from the press, with my card, at the house of Judge North. (Prolonged cheering.) What I may have to say to Sir William Harcourt will have to be deferred until I can speak about him and to him before those who have more than a theoretical right of deciding what claim he has to the confidence and votes of his countrymen. (Loud cheers.) I don't pledge myself, as I have said before, to contest any seat for which Sir William Harcourt may stand, but I do pledge myself, if other things are equal, to give him the preference. (Laughter and cheers.) Sir William Harcourt has not only libelled me and my co-defendants and prisoners, but he has, through us, libelled the Freethought party; and it is our duty, in the spirit of the very admirable letter which Dr. Aveling read to us from one of our German friends—it is our duty, when we are opposed by politicians with religious weapons, to oppose them in the name of our own Freethought, until they recognise the absolute right of all—without distinction of creed—before the law and in the Constitution. (Loud cheers.) Mrs. Besant has truthfully said—and on this, of course, I am an authority—(laughter)—that people who have never undergone twelve months' imprisonment don't know what it is like. It is a very easy matter to do by proxy. (Laughter.) Valiant journalists from the purlieus of Fleet Street—(laughter)—will write of twelve months' imprisonment in a felon's cell, in the constant society of thieves and forgers and fraudulent bankrupts and burglars and other products of Christian civilisation—(laughter and cheers)—as though it were a light and trivial matter—(cheers)—journalists, probably, many of them, who would show a clean pair of heels if any danger pursued them in their calling—(laughter)—and who, still more, if they had to sign their names to their articles, would scarcely have a dozen of readers. (Laughter and cheers.) But the person who has undergone it knows it is no light matter. The ordinary criminal feels it horribly oppressive, but to those who are not criminals by nature, those who are sentenced to suffer for a purely fictitious offence, those who would never be engaged in such work as they are engaged in, if it were not for the intensity of their sympathies—to them imprisonment is doubly and trebly hard. (Cheers.) We had, I dare say, more power of looking in imagination beyond the gaol walls than the ordinary criminal; we could feel by sympathy the sufferings of hearts outside that were aching for ours, and whose every pang we would gladly have borne if we could; and all that makes the suffering ten times greater. Think what it is to be under lock and key for twenty-two or twenty-three hours of every day; to be taken out for exercise, as it is called, and as much fresh air as can be obtained in the yard of a gaol, in the midst of company the very presence of which is an unspeakable pollution; to see nothing of the sky except a mere patch over the prison walls; to feel excluded during three long months from all communication with friends; to have only the felon's number of letters and only the felon's number of visitors; and when friends are seen to be visible only across a barrier, and so far distant that a shake of the hand is utterly impossible. (Shame.) All this is very light to people who do not know what it means, but it is hell to those who know by experience what it means. And yet, just as during the prosecution I thought it my duty to persist in the policy for which I was attacked, and even to be more extreme in it if that was possible—so now, fresh from the horror of a Christian gaol, I repeat the challenge I flung down in my imprisonment. I would rather to-morrow return to Holloway Gaol than flinch a single hair's breadth from the line of duty I followed before and mean to follow in the future. (Cheers.) And permit me to say, apart from my personal feelings and interests, that I believe it is only by such a policy that tyranny can be overcome. (Hear, hear.) Just as Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant defended a publication which was attacked, which they did not publish, but which they thought it necessary to defend because the right of its publication was challenged; so when an attack is made on the liberty of the press it is not a question of absolute unanimity of taste—that may be discussed in calmer time when there is no threat of violence. The question to be discussed is not whether a man's taste is a justifiable one, but whether he has the same right as others to the exercise of it. (Cheers.) I am glad that the Freethought party—whose interest, since I took any part in the public life, I have always had at heart—has felt throughout the whole of this crisis that that was the plain duty before it. (Cheers.) The National Secular Society has nobly defended its name and history, which, however short, is valuable and inspiring. (Hear, hear.) I thank the President of the National Secular Society for having by his great energy sustained others when their energies might have flagged. (Hear, hear.) I thank him for the unobtrusive efforts he made to procure our release without publicity, because publicity at that particular time would have rendered those efforts more difficult. And I thank him as much for the prudence he then displayed as I thank him as much for the courage and loyalty to the cause which he equally displayed. (Cheers.) I thank the whole of the committee for keeping the flag, which I was defending when I was struck down, with my two friends, flying. I remember in Holloway Gaol, three weeks after my reception there—(laughter)—when I knew absolutely nothing of what was going on in the outer world, and when I was yearning to hear something, however slight it might be, of the flag (it would have been indeed a pain to me to hear

—I will not say that it was soiled, because that was an impossibility; but lowered). (Hear, hear.) It was against the regulations, and I am not going to betray an officer—when an officer walking behind me as I was going out to exercise said, "Don't look round. Do you know Mr. So-and-So?" I did. "He says that the committee is looking after your families." That was good news—(cheers)—and he said further, "I have read your speeches in defence." "Where?" I said. "In the last three numbers of the *Freethinker*," was his answer. From that moment, when I felt that the flag was flying as well as I knew that those I and my co-prisoners cared for were not neglected, my heart was, I can truthfully say, light. (Cheers.) I knew that I had a favorable constitution; that Judge North's sentence would not kill me; that, although I might be slightly reduced, I should still not sink beyond the power of recovery—(hear, hear)—and I felt that the scorn which had sustained me before Mr. Justice North would enable me very easily to tide over the difficult circumstances immediately after my release and the excitement of the work, and to appear before my friends certainly not less resolute, and, I hope, not less effective than in the days that preceded my trial. (Cheers.) When I thank the committee for doing this, I must make especial mention of the lady on my right—Mrs. Besant—(cheers)—if it were for no other reason than that she is a lady. (Cheers.) No one who is not aware of all that happened during that twelve months can know how quietly and unassumingly, and yet with what tact and delicacy, Mrs. Besant performed her labors—(loud cheers)—and I feel all the more deeply towards Mrs. Besant because she is at present almost the only woman on our platform, and has had to meet in her own time much odium and obloquy because of her attachment to principles which she has valued more than comfort or even reputation—(cheers)—and because, too, I am firmly persuaded that we must look to women for the real elevation and emancipation of mankind in the future. (Loud cheers.) I must also thank my friend, Dr. Aveling—(cheers)—for his conduct of the *Freethinker* and of *Progress* during my absence, and I must congratulate myself, and I think you too, on the fact that although he ceases to be the editor of the *Freethinker* he does not cease to be a writer in it—(cheers)—and that he doesn't even cease to be the editor of *Progress*, for his name will appear with mine as joint editor. (Cheers.) And I am happy to say that the bigots have not succeeded in diminishing the circulation of the *Freethinker*—(cheers)—just as I am quite sure they have not succeeded in diminishing the circulation of the *National Reformer*. (Cheers.) The more they prosecute us the better we are known, and our principles are such that the better they are known the better they are liked. It is publicity we want, and if martyrs are necessary for that end martyrs will be forthcoming. (Hear, hear.) I confess, for my own part, if martyrdom is to happen in the immediate future, I should prefer that someone else took a turn—(much laughter and cheers)—that I might have the opportunity to bring myself in such good form as I was when I went to Holloway. (Renewed laughter and cheers.) But I am quite sure that whatever may happen the Freethought party will be ready with its martyrs, and if one is struck down there will be another ready to take his place, and if he be struck down, another ready to take his place, until our perseverance tries out the malice of our adversaries, and they see the futility of attempting to suppress a cause, whose advocates know no fear and therefore are not to be intimidated. (Loud cheers.) And now, in conclusion, let me say—and it would be absurd on my part not to say it—that I am indeed grateful to the National Secular Society, and to Freethinkers within and outside its list of membership, who have contributed to the very handsome testimonials presented to us to-night. (Cheers.) If I am to do more work in the future than in the past, it can only be by means of funds; and I hope that the testimonial I have received, so far as it is pecuniary, will be devoted absolutely and entirely to fighting the battle of Freethought. (Cheers.) I hope to reserve some of it as the nucleus of an election fund. (Loud cheers.) At any rate I feel it should not be touched, and I mean that it shall not be touched, for any personal need of mine, but shall be devoted to that end. (Cheers.) But this is what I value most—the illuminated address. This expresses in clear, forcible language the sympathy and gratitude of those who think that when I stood in a perilous position I did not disgrace the cause I had the honor to defend. (Cheers.) I shall keep this in my home as long as I have a home. It will always be an inspiration. I shall think of my imprisonment when I see it. I shall think of the creed, the evil and malignant creed, whose passage through history has been marked by centuries of sacrifice of men and women, and the blood of innumerable—and in many cases unknown—martyrs. I shall think of the active opposition which we still must show to the creed—(hear, hear)—I shall think of the words which our President has addressed to me to-night; I shall think of all the kind words coming from Mrs. Besant, Dr. Aveling, Mr. Sharman, and the other speakers; I shall think of your rapt countenances while they were speaking; I shall think of my own emotions, which I had great difficulty in controlling; and, if for a moment I should forget my duty in the struggle and turmoil of life, this will remind me of it, and this will prevent me from utterly forgetting or neglecting it. (Loud cheers.) Friends, I thank you all for your hearty greeting to-night, and I give you, so far as a man can, my solemn promise—which I hope I shall have health and strength to fulfil

—(hear, hear)—that I will never betray whatever trust my fellow Freethinkers may place in me—(hear, hear)—that I will fight throughout the battle I have had the honour to take part in with better men—(no, no)—than myself, but I say with none who are more interested in the success of our movement. (Cheers.) I promise that I will go from one end of the country to the other more rapidly than I have ever gone before; and I think I can also say that judging from such audiences as have assembled to greet me since my release from Holloway, I shall be the means of carrying Freethought to a larger circle of listeners and readers than ever before. And if I only eventually succeed with others who have fought the very same battle in which I have been engaged, in speaking in the name of the grand principles of Freethought, of universal justice and human solidarity, in another assembly that may make laws for the future more wise and just than those which have governed the past, I shall not consider my suffering useless. (Cheers.) I shall not consider any pain I have undergone thrown away. I shall think that my sacrifice has helped on the cause I love. I shall be more ready if another day of danger should come, to stand side by side with those equally ready to confront peril, and to give battle to the eternal enemies of progress. (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

Mrs. BESANT: This book has been placed in my hands for presentation to Mr. Foote. It does not come from our President, as you may think, but it comes from a very good Freethinker, and you will understand that though it looks like a Bible—(laughter)—it is a copy of the greatest enemy of the Bible—the “Power of the Pen,” which we hope Mr. Foote will use to destroy the tyranny of the Bible. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ramsey, I will now ask you to say a few words. (Cheers and “Bravo Ramsey.”)

Mr. RAMSEY, who was enthusiastically greeted, said: Mr. Chairman and friends,—I feel myself in a position of great difficulty. I have but few words to say to you to-night in thanking you for this magnificent testimonial, and still more for the greeting you give me. And even if I had words to say to you more than I have, it would only be to repeat what Mr. Foote has said. His sentiments with regard to the prosecution, with regard to our prosecutors, with regard to the position we took and the position we are going to take, are so exactly my own that I can only ask you to believe all that he has said. (Cheers.) Yet I must say one or two special words to those of the Executive of the National Secular Society who have stood by us so well. None but myself know the work your President had upon his hands. With a score of other cases around him he had our own also to battle for. None but myself can know what Mrs. Besant has done for me and mine. If I have no more to say than that, she will accept it. (Cheers.) To all those who helped to keep our business flourishing and our flag flying I can only give such thanks as my poor words will convey. I am sure they will be ready to do it again if need be—(cheers)—quite as ready as I shall be to meet the foe if he comes again—(hear, hear)—and I should be the veriest cur if I were not courageous when I have met such friends as I have met throughout the country, with such hand-grasplings, such greetings as I have had—east, west, north and south—wherever I have been, (Cheers.) In my best hopes I could not have anticipated anything so great as the reception I have met with everywhere I have been. (Hear, hear.) I can only hope that in the future I may deserve it. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) As I told you when I stood on this platform after my return, when my friend and co-worker was at liberty, we should begin where we left off, and in the same style; and we have begun again, and in the same style. (Cheers.) And we intend to go on with it. (Renewed cheers.) How terrible our imprisonment was no one can know who has not suffered. I used to think of you every Sunday—(laughter)—and I felt sure you would miss me from my old seat there (on the platform.) I sent you a letter the first Sunday I was in Newgate, and I thought about you. I used to know exactly when the doors would be opened and when the chairman would rise, and I knew when my bell rung that the lecture was concluded, and the separation from you all was very bitter. (Hear, hear.) I hope you believe I did not entirely disgrace you. (Cheers.) If the danger comes again, I trust we may meet it as bravely as before; and if the party as a whole has gained—and I think it has as the party of progress—if it has made one step forward owing to my imprisonment, then I shall be amply repaid for all the suffering I have undergone. (Loud cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I call on Mr. Kemp. (Cheers.)

Mr. KEMP, who met with a very flattering reception, said: Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentleman I have to thank those who have throughout this great country so readily responded to the numerous calls upon their pockets and time, and have been so ready to assist us and the party, and who have been so kind to us in their greetings. (Cheers.) With regard to my imprisonment, painful though it was—my illness was caused by it—I can promise you, if health and strength last, I will remain at my post until imprisonments for blasphemy are impossible. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I will now, in obedience to your wish expressed earlier, ask Miss Trevillion to sing for us and then ask the quartette to sing for us also. (Cheers.)

Miss Trevillion for her song was loudly cheered.

The CHAIRMAN: There are several friends from the country who would have liked to have said a few words to you, but I am quite sure you will agree with me that we have made the even-

ing as long as possible, and it will be as well to close with a quartette. (Cheers.)

A quartette having been rendered,

The CHAIRMAN said: I can only thank you—the whole of you who have helped to make this testimonial so successful, and to make the evening so pleasant. (Cheers.)

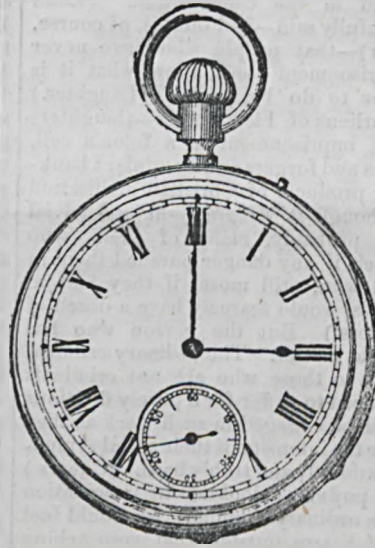
The proceedings then terminated.

A ball was subsequently held, and dancing was kept up with great vigor into the “wee short hours ayont the twal.”

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