

Edward Bond Foote, Jr., M.D.

Dr. E. B. Foote, Jr., has endeared himself to the Liberals of America in a way that few men have ever been able to do. Yet his great work has been done so unpretentiously that many are not aware to what extent he and his influences have sustained the great cause so dear to them. We give, therefore, his portrait and the best sketch of his life we can gather.

Dr. Foote, Jr., had the good fortune to be well born, that is, in a goodly place and of excellent parentage. He first saw the light on the Connecticut settlement of the "Western Reserve," near Cleveland, Ohio, August 15, 1854. His father, Dr. Edward Bliss Foote, the distinguished physician, Liberal and reformer, is so widely and favorably known that his two sons might have been overshadowed, as is often the case, if they had not genuine ability of their own. Part of this ability they doubtless owe to their mother, who was also of New England stock, and a thorough and efficient teacher, and graced with remarkable strength and beauty of person. Both parents still survive. Our young Dr. Foote had his share of early country life; and as a good and well-beloved boy was given the benefit of such public and private schools as could be found, until he found himself well in his "teens," growing up with his family, which was then getting a good professional foothold in the great city, New York. There also, for two years, he attended the Columbia College School of Mines; and then four years were spent in the well-known College of Physicians and Surgeons in that city, from which he graduated well equipped in 1876, at 22 years of age.

He soon found work enough for him to do—medical, literary, Liberal and reformatory; and congenial work of this kind has occupied his life, most usefully and productively, without any attempt at assertion or notoriety.

As a physician he had the advantage of an early introduction to his father's extensive and original medical practice, and soon became his mainstay and chief reliance. His father has of late years largely withdrawn from active practice, except for purposes of consultation; and our Dr. Edward, together with his brother, Dr. Hubert Foote, have fully sustained the fame and efficiency. The business is at No. 120 Lexington Avenue, New York. We mention this business position and its thoroughness because it has been the foundation of Dr. Foote's life and character. He has tried above all things to be a good, well-posted and faithful physician, and the great success of his life has been his success in doing that. The literary part of his life and character grew out of his medical. From

1876 to 1896 he, together with his father, edited the "Health Monthly," which was only relinquished on account of the partial retirement of the father, and the impossibility of the two brothers running a large medical magazine and practice at the same time. This periodical did a most efficient work in popularizing medical remedies and hygiene, and was in many ways a public benefaction—the Doctors Foote having the rather peculiar medical belief that medical light is the most useful when not hidden under a bushel, and that doctors do good as they let the light out. Dr. Edward, Jr., has done his part in this light-spreading business by pen and tongue. He uses stenography and dictates and writes with great facility. His books, pamphlets, articles, letters and lectures have been constantly going out for years on medical, Liberal and all kinds of reform topics. His rule is, "Never too much," "Stand on the middle, useful ground," "Buy and sell the goods that will wear;" and this is all applied and said in a plain, simple style that a person has to be very stupid not to understand.

These are the qualities which Dr. Foote has also brought to bear in his work for Liberalism. He has believed that in religion, as well as in medicine, and, indeed, in everything, the remedy for human ills was to be found in knowledge and general enlightenment and consequent skill of use, instead of ignorance, repression, and dependence upon authority and the "consensus of the competent." He has believed in the extending of the competent as fast and far as possible. He has sought "to open up things," and give light and air and free circulation in body and mind, and even society, a chance—even if Nature got the credit of the cure instead of the doctor, the priest, or the lawyer. In short, he has never believed that the bottom of the universe would fall out, or that men and women would not soon learn to do what was best for themselves if they only know what, and how, and had a chance. He is thus a Freethinker, and yet a Constructive Liberal. In this way, for the last thirty years, he has quietly given to Liberal and reform affairs and movements the time and means that most successful professional men give to "churches," or "orders," "societies," etc.

He does not claim any credit for this—says it all came about naturally and healthfully. His parents naturally changed from the old

Congregational orthodoxy to Unitarianism, in which stage he was well stuffed with Christian Sunday school, Bible and other literature and doctrines. Then, after coming to New York, this Unitarianism became very liberal under Rev. O. D. Frothingham and his Sunday school. Then he struck the Liberal Club and its influences with the Positivism of Comte rarified and sublimated by Stephen Pearl Andrews, "the Pantarch," and then toned down into a practical American and working shape of "Constructive Liberalism," by T. B. Wakeman. On that basis he has ever since, he says, been working out into greater breadth and clearness, and gaining brighter hopes of the good that can be done on earth.

As a summary of his views we may take the following sketch, which he wrote six years ago, when requested to send his "confession" to Mr. S. P. Putnam's "Four Hundred Years of

Freethought," and which only needs to be 'moved on' to apply to today:

"It makes me feel rather lonesome to build my platform, and I even wonder whether I may not have to occupy it all alone. If there be others cast to fit this mold, just like me, I should

be glad to know where to find them, though I am far from wishing that every one should agree with me all around. In medicine I am eclectic, with preference for hygienic practice, but a believer in utility of medicine; an advocate of medical freedom, or abrogation of all restrictive laws that rule out undiplomated 'healers,' an antivaccinationist, but a believer in utility of vivisection, limited. As a hygienist I favor (and almost practice) vegetarianism, avoid tobacco, and apply prohibition of alcoholics to myself. I am one of the neo-malthusian cranks who would limit population, and my pet hobby is 'engenics,' or the right of every child to be born well, or not at all. So I also advocate woman suffrage, and the sexual emancipation of woman, less bondage in marriage, far greater freedom in divorce, and believe that every child should be as legitimate in law as in nature. Politically I favor Nationalism, of the People's party, a moderate protective tariff, bimetalism on the old basis (for the present), and greenbackism as soon as we can be freed from barbarous devotion to metals. As to religion, I am an Agnostic, subscribe to the articles of Secularists, and find myself pretty closely in accord with the Positivism (Constructive Libe-

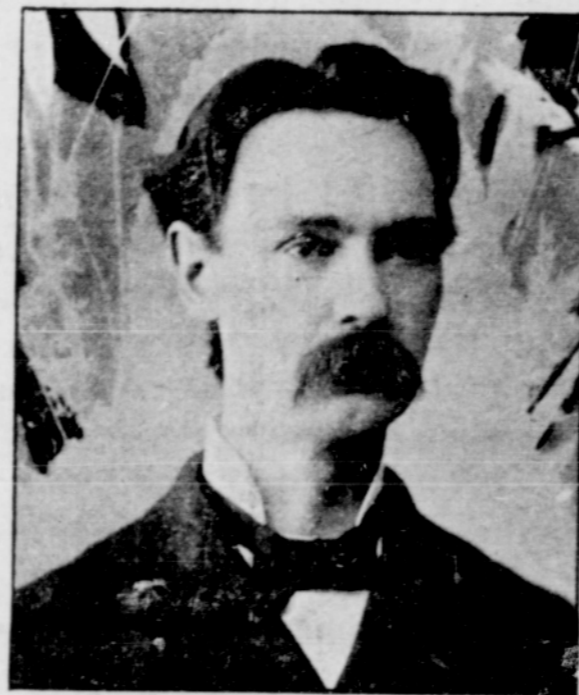
ralism) of Mr. T. B. Wakeman, to whom I am glad of an opportunity to offer publicly many thanks for much useful, rational, liberal instruction. Lastly, I look forward to cremation, and anticipate nothing further."

That is, he is not wasting any anxiety about any "next world," but making what he fairly can of himself in and for this. Entertaining these views, he is very sure to be present at every Liberal meeting, club, and convention within reach, and to give it the support of his heart and hand, voice and means. And the advice of no one has proved sounder or better in the long run. He had long been a member of the N. Y. Liberal Club and then of the Manhattan Liberal Club in New York, and in April, 1888, was elected, and has since continued to be, its President. As such he has well kept his promise—to give her a common sense and plain management, and "keep her nose to the windward." He has thus avoided wrecks, and perhaps startling achievements. He has also done much active and useful work as secretary of the "National Defense Association," from 1877 to 1887, and also by individual efforts as occasion required, in opposing "Comstockism" in State and Nation. This "ism" always seemed to him one of the most immoral, cruel and disgusting forms of ignorant and bigoted repression since the inquisition and that it has been kept within some bounds is largely due to his efforts in the press and before Congress and State Legislatures.

As events have moved on in politics, they have seemed to deepen his sympathy for the "under dog"—socially, politically and in every other way. He gave the Populist and Bryan movement his hearty support, but is no party partisan in politics, but a Republican of the Paine, Jefferson, Washington and Lincoln school and instincts, with no confidence in trying to reform or civilize people at home or abroad by imperialism or compulsion.

In one thing our friend has proved deficient; while giving his life largely for the relief, liberation and advancement of womanhood, he has never been able, as yet, to descend from the general to the particular in his admiration. But even in this he may reform, and at least he has the plea of great examples.

To sum up, if "The Christ" should "come to" New York instead of to Chicago, he might shy the great money-changers, priests and Pharisees, scribes and lawyers—their palaces and temples, but if he should run up against the president of the Liberal Club would it not be just like him to say: "My friend, my 'good physician,' shake! We have been trying to do very much the same things. You have the best of it so far—and may you ever!"—[Freethought Magazine.]



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