

into a narrow tomb-like vault, denied the privilege of communication with his sick wife, and supplied with innutritious food, Cooper's health failed; but his dogged English pertinacity enabled him to get a petition sent to the House of Commons which procured him better food, the use of his books and papers, the right of correspondence with his wife, and the privilege of receiving three visitors in two years. He had already composed and committed to memory above thirty Spencerean stanzas of his remarkable prison rhyme, "The Purgatory of Suicides," and now he applied himself to its completion; and also finished a romance, previously begun. He read thoroughly Gibbon, Prideaux, Milner, and in three months went through about two-thirds of his Hebrew Bible.

During his gaol-life his mind grew morbid, and his skeptical sentiments rapidly developed and were confirmed by Strauss's pernicious "Life of Christ." On his release from prison, impoverished and infirm, his poem and romance were all his stock in trade. Disraeli, Jerrold, and Dickens kindly aided in procuring him a publisher; but hope deferred often made his heart sick. His books at last saw the light, and procured him, if little money, at least high recognition and the friendship of Carlyle, Wordsworth, Howitt, Kingsley, De Quincy, Massey, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and other distinguished writers.

Besides doing chance literary work, Cooper became a Socialist lecturer in London and throughout the kingdom. His range of subjects was very remarkable, comprising history, philosophy, poetry, painting, politics, science, religion, and criticism; but all were tinctured with his now prevailing skepticism. He also wrote during this period several successful novels.

Another turning point in this remarkable career was at hand. On one Sunday in January, 1856, he was to lecture in London on Sweden and the Swedes. But he could not utter a word. He looked pale as a ghost. When he recovered speech, he acknowledged to his audience his cardinal error in lecturing on morals while ignoring their true foundation, the existence of a Divine Moral Governor and our accountability to Him. A storm of infidel opposition was instantly raised. Cooper forthwith became the champion of that Christianity from which he had