

long as the laws of nature are unknown there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural; or, in other words, there is nothing incredible. Boundless credulity and perfect ignorance go together. Nothing but a knowledge of the phenomena of nature can lead the mind up to the conception of the reign of law, and nothing but familiarity with this idea of law can lead to any general hypothesis like that of evolution. The naturalist continually studying the phenomena of nature and discovering her laws, continually weakens the foundations of supernaturalism. But supernaturalism precedes naturalism, because ignorance precedes knowledge. Let us not be deceived. The superstitions held by individuals or bodies are entirely characteristic of their states and are to be removed, not by attacking the effect, but by removing the cause. He who loves the truth seeks it, finds it, discovers it, and comes in time to refuse the supernatural. Now of this we are to be examples. If we are not deceived, the spirit of our belief requires us to lay aside all bitterness, dogmatism and evil-speaking, and show ourselves just, kind, truthful, and in all things rational and patient. P. G. D.

Dayton, Ohio.

BASKET OF GEMS.

Right thinking involves free thinking. If to know truth makes us free, freedom, again, is the condition of knowing the truth.—*Dr. J. F. Clarke.*

A theology which defends itself by forbidding or limiting inquiry, and by tabooing reason, must necessarily be an unreasonable theology. It declares itself to be devoid of reason in its very condemnation of reason. If it were itself rational, it would have no objection to being submitted to the test of reason and inquiry. Things born of the light do not fear the light.—*Sunderland's Orthodoxy.*

If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.—*J. S. Mill.*

In this austere solicitude (the hermitage to which Peter retired) his body was emaciated and his fancy was inflamed; whatever he wished he believed; whatever he believed, he saw in dreams and revelations.—*Gibbon.*

Truth is a good dog; but beware of harking too close to the heels of an error, lest you get your brains knocked out.—*Coleridge's Table Talk.*

[This maxim of the great English seer seems to be modeled on the famous saying of the Galilean, "cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rend you." As a matter of worldly prudence, both precepts deserve careful consideration; but, if truth is not worth fighting for, and dying for, then the scheme of the universe is a manifest bungle which we will not readily believe.]

Orthodoxy, as a theology, is mixed up, through and through, with ideas that are immoral in their tendency, and nearly, or quite, every essential doctrine of it is either founded upon, or else necessarily involves, principles which, when legitimately carried out, and just in so far as they are legitimately carried out, lead to the degradation of God and the moral injury of man.—*Orthodoxy the Enemy of Christianity, by Rev. J. T. Sunderland.*

A great deal of discomfort arises from oversensitiveness about what people may say of you or of your actions; whereas it may be doubted whether they will say anything about you.—*Arthur Helps.*

I will take no man's liberty of judging from him, neither shall any man take mine from me. I will love no man the less for differing in opinion from me.—*Chillingworth* (1635)

No atom of matter was ever created, and none can be annihilated. Not an atom is lost or used up in all the changes of nature's great laboratory. Not one ever had a beginning, nor will one have an

end; neither can a single atom always remain in any single form. Even the hardest adamant slowly and steadily disintegrates, changes and enters into new combinations and new identities, just as you and I, reader, must inevitably do when our little life here is lived and done.—*Mrs. E. D. Slenker*

The humblest human creature is not incapable of taking some part in the battle which is continually going on between the powers of good and those of evil, a battle in which every, even the smallest, help to the right side has its value in promoting the very slow and almost insensible progress by which good is gradually gaining ground from evil, yet gaining it so visibly at considerable intervals as to promise the not uncertain final victory for good.—*J. S. Mill.*

Whoever does a noble deed, or gives utterance to a noble thought, raises, elevates, and refines humanity.

By associating with the good and pure we invariably grow better and purer ourselves. By cultivating the beautiful and the artistic we create a tidal-wave of the aesthetic which flows from our own little world into the worlds of those around and absent.

By giving of the lovely and the true from the storehouse of our selfhood, we add to the treasures of our neighbour and yet lessen not our own.—*Mrs. E. D. Slenker.*

AN OPEN LETTER TO W. G. H. SMART.

SNOWVILLE, PULASKI Co, June 12, 1878.

FRIEND SMART,—

As I am not smart enough to understand the smartness contained in thy attempted criticism upon the "Gem" bearing my signature, in the February number of the FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL, I here appeal to thee for a little more smartness upon the subject.

'Tis said that all rules have their exceptions, and it is equally true that the generality of expressed sentiments have also their exceptions. But I would like to hear a few of thy objections to the observation that "the more a man knows the more he is valued by others, and the more competent he is to provide for himself, and for those dependent upon him." Simply saying a thing is not true is no proof of its falsity. My observations thus far have convinced me that it is true, and the proof that it is so is found in the fact that our great scientists, wise rulers, skilled architects, our best poets, painters and sculptors, our men and women who can "turn their hands to most anything" are always "valued" members of society, and are rarely unable to provide for themselves and those dependent upon them. Again, "our knowledge is our own individual property." I do not see that because "we have received it from others," makes it any the less *our own*, or that it will cease in any manner to be our own, when we have shared it with everyone who desires or will accept of any part of it. Nor is it selfish or miserly to "hoard up knowledge," for it is not like money; and in "laying it up in the storehouse of the mind," we do not keep it out of circulation, but with every item of real information we gain, we increase our power of adding to the stock of general knowledge. Does he who hoards up health, lays in a great store of strength, of muscular development, of good, pure blood, and sound, uncorrupt flesh, rob others of the same blessed possession? No! it is the ignorant and the diseased that scatter the seeds of ill by not hoarding up the good.

Neither does the "knowledge gatherers" ("miser" is here a misnomer) wealth perish with him. There was a time when much of it did so, but as the world grows in knowledge and wisdom, so does the generous spirit of emulative love and charity increase in like proportion, and he who possesses a secret fountain of knowledge, a new discovery that he has carefully mined out by unwearying labor, or mayhap accidentally blundered upon, is now found providing a safe means of having it transmitted to the world after his death, even if he jealously guards it for the sake of gain or glory during his life time.

Will friend Smart please show me wherein I am wrong in these conclusions?

Respectfully,

ELMINA DRAKE SLENKER.