

of enjoying the benefit of regular intercourse. They were sensible of the vast advantages resulting from association, and often wished that their number might some day be such as to make it possible for them to hold regular meetings for purposes of mutual instruction and edification. In addition to those to whom I now more especially refer, there were others of similar views, but less favorably situated, as being more isolated, and scarcely in communication with any one to whom they could look for sympathy or even unreservedly express their opinions. I need hardly say, that there is no one who needs sympathy more than the Freethinker. Broadly speaking, he has the world against him, he has the whole force of tradition against him; he has against him to some extent his own organization, moulded as it has been by the institutions and creeds of the past. On the other hand, of course, he can take himself to witness, in the fine language of Matthew Arnold, that he has

“ * * * Loved no darkness
Sophisticated no truth,
Nursed no delusion
Allowed no fear.”*

Still he cannot thoroughly enjoy his liberty alone; and when he sees a hostile world, he wants to know and to feel that some one stands abreast of him,—that he is not all alone. Cut a man off from all congenial companionship, make no demands upon his social faculties, and there is much danger that his moral nature will either wither or harden, that everything will fall away from him, but the impenetrable little nucleus of self. We all need the discipline of common work carried on, not in the spirit of competition, but in the simple spirit

* “Empedocles on Etna.”