



The Devil is Dead.

Sigh, priests, cry aloud, hang your pulpits with black:
 Let sorrow bow down every head:
 The good friend who bore all your sins on his back—
 Your best friend, the Devil, is dead.

Your church is a corpse; you are guarding its tomb;
 The soul of your system has fled.
 That death-knell is tolling your terrible doom;
 It tells us the Devil is dead.

'Twas knowledge gave Satan a terrible blow;
 Poor fellow! he took to his bed,
 Alas! idle priests, that such things should be so—
 Your master, the Devil, is dead.

You're bid to the funeral, ministers all:
 We've dug the old gentleman's bed:
 Your black coats will make a most excellent pall
 To cover your friend who is dead.

Ay! lower him mournfully into the grave,
 Let showers of tear-drops be shed;
 Your business is gone; there are no souls to save—
 Their tempter, the devil, is dead.

Woe comes upon woe; you can ne'er get your dues—
 Hell's open—the damned souls have fled;
 They took to their heels when they heard the good news:
 Their jailor, the Devil, is dead.

Your preachings henceforth will be needed no more;
 Revivals are knocked on the head;
 The orthodox vessel lies stranded on shore;
 Her captain, the Devil, is dead.

—Wm. Denton.

Theology is Ignorance.

BY JEAN MESLIER.

When we wish to examine in a cool, calm way the opinions of men, we are very much surprised to find that in those which we consider the most essential, nothing is more rare than to find them using common sense; that is to say, the portion of judgment sufficient to know the most simple truths, to reject the most striking absurdities, and to be shocked by palpable contradictions. We have an example of this in theology, a science revered in all times, in all countries and by the greatest number of mortals; an object considered the most important, the most useful and the most indispensable to the happiness of society. If they would but take the trouble to sound the principles upon which this pretended science rests itself, they would be compelled to admit that the principles which were considered incontestable are but hazardous suppositions, conceived in ignorance, propagated by enthusiasm or bad intention, adopted by timid credulity, preserved by habit, which never reasons, and revered solely because not comprehended. Some, says Montaigne, make the world believe that which they do not themselves be-

lieve; a greater number of others make themselves believe, not comprehending what it is to believe. In a word, whoever will consult common sense upon religious opinions, and will carry into this examination the attention given to objects of ordinary interest, will easily perceive that these opinions have no solid foundation; that all religion is but a castle in the air; that all theology is but ignorance of natural causes reduced to a system; that it is but a long tissue of chimeras and contradictions; that it presents to all the different nations of the earth only romances devoid of probability, of which the hero himself is made up of qualities impossible to reconcile, his name having the power to excite in all hearts respect and fear, is found to be a vague word, which men continually utter, being able to attach to it only such ideas or qualities as are belied by the facts, or which evidently contradict each other. The notion of this imaginary being, or rather the word by which we designate him, would be of no consequence did it not cause ravages without number upon the earth. Born into the opinion that this phantom is for them a very interesting reality, men, instead of wisely concluding from its incomprehensibility that they are exempt from thinking of it, on the contrary, conclude that they cannot occupy themselves enough about it, that they must meditate upon it without ceasing, reason without end, and never lose sight of it. The invincible ignorance in which they are kept in this respect, far from discouraging them, does but excite their curiosity; instead of putting them on guard against their imagination, this ignorance makes them positive, dogmatic, imperious, and causes them to quarrel with all those who oppose doubts to the reveries which their brains have brought forth. What perplexity when we undertake to solve an unsolvable problem! Anxious meditations upon an object impossible to grasp, and which, however, is supposed to be very important to him, can but put a man in a bad humor and produce in his brain dangerous transports. When interest, vanity and ambition are joined to such a morose disposition, society necessarily becomes troubled. This is why so many nations have often become the theatres of extravagances caused by nonsensical visionists, who, publishing their shallow speculations for the eternal truth, have kindled the enthusiasm of princes and of peo-

ple, and have prepared them for opinions which they represented as essential to the glory of divinity and to the happiness of empires. We have seen, a thousand times, in all parts of our globe, infuriated fanatics slaughtering each other, lighting the funeral piles, committing without scruple, as a matter of duty, the greatest crimes. Why? To maintain or to propagate the impertinent conjectures of enthusiasts, or to sanction the knaveries of impostors on account of a being who exists only in their imagination and who is known only by the ravages, the disputes and the follies which he has caused upon earth.—
 [Preface to Common Sense.

Struggle for Existence.

BY L. BUCHNER.

All arrangements in the state, in society, in the church, in education, in work, etc., in consequence of a most prominent law of inertia, has remained far behind what is required by the general human consciousness, elevated as it is by scientific knowledge, reflection and material progress. If the forces opposed to progress had not so great and powerful a reserve in the indolence and immobility of the great and ignorant masses, a very different state of things would long since have taken the place of that which has hitherto prevailed.

In such a position of affairs as this there can be no greater or more elevating task for the philanthropist than the investigation of those points in which this disproportion makes itself most strongly felt and in which the struggle for existence may be rendered easier and more advantageous both to the individual man and for mankind in general. These are at the same time the very points at which man is best able to show his dominion over the rude natural conditions, and thus to raise himself furthest above his lowly past. The farther he departs from the point of his animal origin and relationship and replaces the forces of nature, which formerly exerted an unlimited influence over him, by his own free and rational spontaneity, the more does he become man in the true sense of the word, and the more does he approach that goal which we must regard as the future of man and of the human race. But for this purpose it is above all things necessary for him to recognize that his natural destiny can never be attained by him so long as he, like the animals,

feels only as an individual being and carries on his struggle for existence upon his own account alone and guided by mere personal or egotistic motives. Man is a sociable or social being and can evidently attain his destiny, and consequently also happiness, only in conjunction with his like, or in other words, in the midst of human society. The individual is all that he can be only in and with humanity at large, or by its means, and his endeavors after personal happiness are therefore most intimately connected with the striving of mankind in general after prosperity and progress.

In such a state of things the collective body cannot well feel as such; it must perceive that it is better that all should strive with united forces and mutual support towards the same goal, towards liberation from the trammels of the forces of nature, than that the best powers should destroy each other by mutual contests. Competition, which in itself is so beneficial, may and will continue, but it must be transformed from the old and rude form of contest and destruction in the struggle for existence into the nobler and essentially human form of competition for the highest general well-being. In other words, the struggle for the means of existence will be replaced by the struggle for existence, man by humanity at large, mutual conflict by universal harmony, personal misfortune by general happiness, and general hatred by universal love! With every step in this path man will depart more and more widely from his past animal condition, from his subjugation to the forces of nature and their inexorable laws and approach more and more to the ideal of human development. On this course he will find again that Paradise, the ideal of which floated before the fancy of the most ancient nations, and which, according to tradition, was lost by the sin of the first man. The only difference will be that this Paradise of the future will be not imaginary, but real, that it will come not at the beginning, but at the close of our development, and that it will not be the gift of a deity, but the result of the labors and merits of man and of the human intellect.—[Man, Past, Present and Future.

Considering how much trouble the state has to enforce its own laws, would it be wise for it to undertake to enforce the laws of God?—[Sel.