

Well, sure enough, he did recover, and the priests—with their usual front of brass—took credit to themselves for having prevailed *with*, or, to listen to the more fanatical of them, *over* God, and *with*, in fact, having worked a kind of miracle. His recovery was, any way, a lucky hit for the saints, and they were not slow to make capital out of it. But what we want to press on them now, is the question, Why did you not repeat the experiment? There was plenty of time to get up the steam, and surely the object was a good and worthy one. Nothing, however, was done. Not a single public prayer was offered up on her behalf. The clergy of England—so far as we know—rested on their oars; the clergy of Canada followed suit, and even our Y.M.C.A. looked on “with mute, insensate gaze”; and now, all men may see the end. Is there not “something rotten in the state of Denmark?”

The subject is not an agreeable one, and we shall not pain our readers by lingering on it. We only say, and we say it in all honour and honesty, that we cannot believe that the saints believe so absolutely in the efficacy of prayer, as they profess to do, or they would not have failed to use it, in a case so interesting and so distressing. If they really and truly believed that *their* prayers could avail aught, and yet declined to offer them, we do not well see how they can be acquitted, or how they can acquit themselves of “constructive——.” Let them think of these things. Let them learn to amend their ways, and to make their practice square with their profession. *Fas est ab hoste doceri*; the “Christians” may take a friendly hint from us, and try and be a little more consistent.

We wish our readers the compliments of the season and many returns. We would like to hear from them, everyone, with the amount of their subscriptions for the second year of the JOURNAL and arrears, where such exist.

Not only do Christians seem to think that sceptics have no rights which a Christian is bound to respect, but, some of them, at least, think that even courtesy is not due them. The Rev. Mr. Sandford, in his “Review of Coleman,” is careful to give himself the title of “Rev.,” but has not the common decency to give Mr. Coleman even a modest “Mr.”

The meeting in Albert Hall every Sunday evening, under the auspices of the Toronto Freethought Association, continue to be well attended, and are of an interesting character. The semi-annual election of officers takes place on Sunday morning, the 8th January, 1879.

We are in receipt of a communication from the Rev. J. H. Dodd, regarding an editorial of ours in last issue of JOURNAL, criticising his attempt to prove the existence of a “God,” in the Boston *Investigator*. Our space will not permit us to engage in a long controversy with Mr. Dodd, and if we published his letter, and replied, it would inevitably lead to such a controversy. Besides, we are of the opinion that our friend, Mrs. Elmina D. Slenker, who is his opponent in the *Investigator*, will be quite able to deal with him without aid from anyone.

THE REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.

Common experience has shown that wealth unjustly acquired is not permanent. Such riches are said to take wings and fly away. The fact has been observed, and yet the reason assigned has been of such a nature as to involve the whole subject in obscurity, and even to produce doubt and distrust as to the reality of the phenomenon. The nemeses of unearned money has been, in all ages, attributed to the anger of the gods. A man has been unjust to his neighbour, has incurred their anger, and the gods avenge themselves by bringing some sudden calamity, by sending the plague among his cattle, burning his house, or sinking his ship. This explanation has two great disadvantages; the one, that such calamities are common to the just and the unjust; the other, that it involves the supernatural—the work of agents with whose nature and motives man is unacquainted. Such is the explanation so long as men are in the theological state; that is, while phenomena are referred to supernatural and arbitrary causes. So long as the fact is thus accounted for, there can be no true knowledge of right and wrong. Men are exhorted to refrain from injuring their fellows, lest they suffer the vengeance of an offended Deity, not because the act is by constitution of society injurious to the doer and to the injured party. At the same time, it is taught that there are means by which offended Deity can be reconciled. But this theological sanction has another great drawback. Moralists, legislators, and religionists have alike erred in supposing that in the realm where all is darkness and uncertainty, they may find a sure foundation for their teachings. The supernatural sanction is one of the weakest and most uncertain, instead of being one of the most certain and invariable. He can never tell just how great and how real is a man's belief in his gods. Men who take the oath by that form which, according to their supposed faith, should effectually bind the conscience, are observed to be very careless of the truth, whether they call themselves Christians, Jews, Brahmins, or Mussulmans. The supernatural sanction fails. On the contrary, the natural explanation calling in nothing but what is clearly understood, and fortifying each step by daily experience, casts a flood of light upon the whole subject, removes it from the unknown, and brings it within the known and reasonable. It is not enough to know that injustice is punished, we must see that it is punished by the law of nature. A thief steals fifty dollars. It is folly to say that that fifty dollars will do him no good; it will buy fifty dollars worth of any good thing, and will most likely be used to buy food and clothing, or some other good thing, but it is rational to say that there is no general prosperity to the thief. The fifty dollars stolen is not the first of his crimes, but is one of a series. He has committed a hundred thefts, some greater and some less. Suspicion is already directed to him, honest men shun him; one day, perhaps, his long career in crime will close by proof of crime being found which will condemn him to prison. But without this, the man is an outcast from the society of honest men; they fear him, but he fears them ten times more, the fifty dollars gained by theft he must divide with a pack of hungry parasites who, if refused, can bring him to justice. Besides, stealing is very uncertain and precarious as a means of livelihood, a business that no one can ever become rich or prosperous by following, for the only certainty of prosperity lies in industry and economy, and no thief is either industrious or economical. We look then for the thief to be punished, not by bad luck, but by the consequences of his own acts. There is nothing supernatural in this, no mysterious avenging powers, nothing but men acting on ordinary motives. Men object to being robbed of the fruits of their labour, and combine in every way against those who rob them; he who enters upon a career of theft will continue that career, and will finally come to grief, either at the hands of honest men, or of thieves. In the nature of things there is some uncertainty as to how long such a career may be continued, and whether it end by this or that catastrophe, or without one, but that the thief will not prosper with his ill-gotten gains, is certain. So far we have been talking of theft, but in whatever manner money is unjustly obtained, we shall find that