

Hale, Rev. Dr. Hammond, and the Rev. Dr. Annesley. Baxter informs us that he long adhered to this, until, for himself, he found it too little, and observed, "I think, however, that it is as likely a proportion as can be prescribed; and that devoting a *tenth part* ordinarily to God is a matter that we have more than *human* direction for." Doddridge was another instance of this kind: "I make a solemn dedication of *one-tenth* of my estate, salary, and income, to charitable uses; and I also devote to such uses *an eighth* of everything I receive by way of gift or present." A *fifth part* was the fixed proportion of Archbishop Tillotson and Dr. Watts. Such, too, was the constant practice of the Hon. Robert Boyle, of the Rev. Mr. Brand, and of the Rev. Thomas Gouge. Of the latter, Archbishop Tillotson says in his funeral sermon, "All things considered, there have not been, since the primitive times of Christianity, many among the sons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, that '*He went about doing good.*'" The list might be extended to those who have lived since, to many of our own age, and in our own country; but these examples are sufficient. If Christians generally were to act thus,—to fix some due proportion, and keep a separate fund for charitable purposes,—with how much more wisdom, prudence, and cheerfulness would they perform this Christian duty! How often would they lift up their hearts to God in devout thanksgiving for affording them opportunities of enjoying this privilege, and of showing to themselves and others, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."—*Rev. D. T. K. Drummond.*

THE HOLMFIRTH FLOOD.

ON the morning of February 5th, vague and undefined rumours were in circulation, through the West Riding of Yorkshire, of an overwhelming calamity which had befallen the inhabitants of the valley of the Holme. As the intelligence became confirmed, and the gloomy fact was extricated from the mass of conjectural horrors which had invested it, all other matters gave place; and the sole business of the day seemed to be to discuss and brood over this dire visitation. Business in the immediate neighbourhood was almost entirely suspended. That strange mixture of excitement, awe, and fear, which pervades the mind on the first shock of a great and near catastrophe, gave its peculiar tone to all countenances and to every conversation. Seldom has such a spell been thrown upon an entire neighbourhood. There are many who will never forget the altogether new emotion which filled their minds, when the fears of the day deepened into the certainty of the evening, and it was past all doubt that a desolating flood had swept the valley of the Holme, destroyed many of its famous dyeworks, shops, and cottages, and decimated its inhabitants. The scene itself, when visited, gave sad confirmation to all the worst reports. The calamity was too great for exaggeration. It has touched the heart of the whole community, and excited a universal response of sympathy and help. There are few who have not some acquaintance with the tragedy; but it may not be inappropriate to give a permanent place in the pages of this Magazine to the record of an event so profoundly impressive. It is written with a pen that still trembles with the solemn excitement of the shock.

It is impossible to regard this event, at once and directly, as a dispensation of Divine Providence. It cannot be classed among those desolating floods

which in almost every land sometimes occur, to which all watersheds and great rivers are liable, and in which the hand of God alone is seen. Nor is it an occurrence that involves simply the agency and causation of man. The Divine and the human appear both very prominent. Perhaps the first intelligent glance at the scene itself would perceive a mischief of man's own working; but the second must needs revert to the visitation of God, the ultimate Ruler of the elements. Let us adopt this order in our thoughts, and view, first, the human part in the catastrophe.

The valley of the Holme is one of those romantic and characteristic ravines which are so numerous amid the mountain-ranges of this part of the kingdom. In its natural self, and stripped of every violation or appendage of industry, it is one of the most enchanting retreats of nature. To any one standing upon the high hill which overlooks the fatal reservoir,—who can by an effort of imagination eject the factories, and dispel the murky drapery which they hang around the hills,—who can imagine and watch the rills as they track their silvery way down the neighbouring cloughs, and, meeting in this valley, go rejoicing in the beauty and strength derived from union in quest of some greater liege,—and who then glances at the hills which, in every variety of bold and far-reaching outline, intersect the landscape,—nothing can be imagined more commanding and more beautiful.

But for many years this valley has known no seclusion. The stream, which has given it life from time immemorial, was at length made subservient to manufacturing industry. Some twenty factories, within a range of three or four miles, urging a thriving trade in fancy woollens, have effectually marred its poetry. This trade has given importance to the small town of Holmfirth, which lies at the foot of the ravine, some three or four miles lower than the point at which we have stood; and which, with a numerous scattered population in several villages around, might furnish a total of seventeen thousand persons, holding of the valley, and deriving their main subsistence from its trade.

The thread of stream, however, which naturally runs down this glen, was too capricious for the supply of mills demanding uniform motive power throughout the year. A company was therefore formed, in 1837, according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament, composed of mill-owners and other persons deeply interested in the water-supply of the valley, who were empowered to construct eight reservoirs, under stringent safeguards as to management, and pecuniary liability. Three only were formed, of which the Bilberry reservoir—the bursting of which has laid prostrate for a time the trade of the neighbourhood—was the most important, though not the largest. It is situated at the highest point of the valley, where there is a bifurcation formed by a high bluff of land, on either side of which the watershed drains some thousands of acres of moorland.

The two streams flowing through these cloughs, after running parallel for a short distance, unite at the foot of this promontory, and form naturally a basin of some two or three hundred yards' diameter. The reservoir was formed by simply blocking up the valley just below. The embankment, sixty-seven feet in height and three hundred feet in width, was apparently constructed with great regard to strength, but was radically infirm. To construct a dam which should confine such an enormous body of water as in all times of heavy rain would test its strength, obviously required the most consummate skill; while the regulation by machinery of the

height of the water allowed to remain in it would obviously require the most vigilant care. But neither skill in the beginning, nor vigilance since, has been expended upon this miserable reservoir.

Its base, as seen in the fearful section of it now visible, was very extensive, formed out of the loose material of the valley, with a central "puddle-bank" of several yards in width, which should render it impervious to water. Its exterior side was very massy, but very slight: its interior, shelving very gradually, was faced with stones. The supply of water, needed for the purposes of the mills below, left the tank just at the bottom of the embankment by supply-pipes; the quantity being regulated by sliding valves or shuttles working at the extremity of these pipes, unprotected by gratings. To carry off the superfluous water, and to regulate the depth allowed to remain in the reservoir, a funnel or waste-pit was constructed in the body of the embankment, with a horizontal culvert, which, when duly working unimpeded, would carry off all the waste or flood water which might fall into the waste-pit. This culvert seems to have had a capacity of discharging fifteen hundred feet per second; and as the quantity entering the reservoir, according to a careful approximate estimate of Captain Moody, the Government Engineer, was about five hundred feet per second, every allowance on the original design was made for the effectual restriction of the mass of water impounded.

Now, it appears that at the very outset the most culpable errors were committed in the construction of this embankment, on the soundness of which the lives of hundreds, and the property of thousands, depended from the moment it began to restrain the waters. The materials on both sides of the internal bank were of insufficient strength. A most fatal and ruinous spring was left undiverted at the very base of the central puddle-bank, which for years must have been treacherously undermining the whole mass. Hence the *discoloured rill* of water, which was insanely unheeded; and the consequent settlement of the middle of the embankment, which rendered the waste-pit utterly useless. Thus the only protection in time of great rains was removed; and though a very slight effort and very little expense would have lowered the funnel to the serviceable height, and thus averted the catastrophe, nothing was done by those interested and responsible. The infatuation of this neglect was in proportion to the plainness of the danger and its remedy, which stared them in the face.

Uneasy suspicions have been floating in the neighbourhood for years. An ominous terror has brooded over the valley from the time of erection. Presentiment of calamity has been like an instinct in many minds. But the Commissioners have been, from the beginning, dispirited by the bankrupt state of the whole enterprise; and in apathy and despair they seem to have left the supervision of the whole affair to chance. The latter part of January, and the beginning of February, of this year, gave manifest warning by uninterrupted steady rains. The gorges and ravines were surcharged immoderately everywhere. The flood in the reservoir swelled visibly before men's eyes; and so rapidly approached the very edge of the shrunken embankment, that the warning must have been observed. Had the bystanders held their peace, the very rocks that overlooked it would have cried, "Danger!" Up to the very day of the catastrophe, an energetic effort of a few hours would have averted, or at least have greatly moderated, the destruction; but not a step was taken, even to send warning down the valley, till the very flood was pursuing the messenger.

The night of February 4th set in with heavy rains. The full moon

struggled through driving clouds to look down upon the devoted valley, as she had looked down, at the same hour, at the same place, on the doomed "Amazon" in the English Channel. The west wind howled over the upper moorlands, came whistling down the cloughs, and pressed the swollen waters of the reservoir steadily toward the labouring embankment. Some few hours before the crisis, the uneasy forecasting of peril seized upon several parties who ascended the hill which overlooked the reservoir. Some gave vague warning to the habitations in the immediate neighbourhood. One or two from Holmfirth returned impressed with a sense of danger; but we shall find that they gave no effectual warning there. When the crisis was so evidently near that all doubt was removed, some ran, with the frantic vehemence which would outrun death, down the sides of the hill to arouse the sleeping valley; but it was too late. It is doubtful whether, a mile below the reservoir, a single family was even thinking of immediate danger. About half-past twelve o'clock, the overstrained embankment, which had been for some time wearing down, gave way; and a body of water, three hundred thousand tons in weight, rushed in thunder and in mist down the valley. It spread over the plain, poured in condensed fury through the narrow gorges, followed the windings of the glen, destroyed and carried with it everything that lay in its direct path, and more or less ruined everything that its outer swell touched: it threw down and pounded to fragments immense stone-built mills, laid waste whole batches of houses, quenched on its way some forty lives, and hurried along the scarcely cold bodies. Within a quarter of an hour it had reached, laden with every imaginable engine of destruction, the town of Holmfirth, where it renewed its work of desolation and death; and, after another short quarter of an hour, it forced its way through the ruins of everything that obstructed it, to the more open country beyond, where it subsided into swollen rivers, or slowly sank exhausted into the earth. In that short hour more than eighty lives were lost, and more than a quarter of a million of property destroyed; six or seven thousand persons were deprived of their accustomed employment, and a shock communicated to the interests of this valley which will vibrate through a generation.

Let us now return, and follow in the track of this desolation at about its own pace. The first prey of the raging waters was a mill bearing the same name as the reservoir, which, not lying in the direction of its central force, was simply cloven in twain. Immediately below, an expanding meadow-ground gave space for the waters to dilate, but only for a moment. The narrow gorge lies immediately below, in the neighbourhood of which, and at a very short distance from each other, stood three mills. The first and last of these were dismantled, their machinery ruined, and much of farming implements and live stock hurried away. The middle factory lay in the very throat of the gorge. It was a very massy structure of sixty yards square, four stories high. This mill, with all its subordinate sheds, cottages, stables, and outhouses, forming altogether a little village, the flood swept utterly away, carrying the huge fabric visibly entire for some distance. Besides everything else that it contained of a lighter sort, gigantic boilers, one of which weighed some ten or twelve tons, were whirled away with the greatest ease by the irresistible torrent. A house built on the higher side, and near it a solitary mill-chimney rearing its dusky head, are the only exceptions to the clear sweep of desolation in that narrow gorge. The owner of this mill had gone up just before midnight to ascertain the state of the embankment. Struck with the imminence of the danger, and

while the mass was tottering to its fall, he rushed wildly along the side of the hill, in the hope of saving his family. But the flood overtook him, threw down by its extreme fringe the wall along which he was running, and drove him, for his own preservation, up the hill-side. He saw the terrible rush of the waters, carrying with them his all; but, before he could realise the loss of his family, he found them all upon the hill in safety, having been warned in the meanwhile by another relative.*

The body of water, charged with every sort of heavy addition to its force, being indeed by this time a congeries of stone, timber, and iron, urged by an irresistible torrent, soon reached the village of Holme-bridge; but without, as yet, a human victim. The valley here widens, and the current, somewhat distracted, committed havoc rather than destruction. The picturesque church was assaulted, but withstood successfully and divided the torrent,—which, urged into a whirlpool, tore away the enclosure of the church-yard, uprooted and sported with the trees, rushed into the sacred edifice, raised the floor several feet, upheaved and distorted the pews, and deposited upon the floor the coffin and corpse of a man lately interred, which, with other contents of the grave-yard, had been wrenched from its quiet resting-place by the tumultuous whirls of the current. Still without a living victim, it pursued its way to the village of Hincliffe,—its first, and perhaps saddest, region of death. The village is, or rather was, dependent upon a large mill of the same name,—a building five stories high, and of solid construction. This was penetrated by the stream, which deposited all kinds of rubbish in the first and second story—timber, broken machinery, and wreck of every description. But a little row of houses, with the ominous name of Water-street, was swept away *en masse*; a survivor describing them as tottering for a few moments, then renting away. But, as they fell asunder, they gave up to the waters forty-two human inhabitants, of whom seven only were saved. In other dwellings five more perished, thus making forty souls hurried in a moment, from the deep sleep of weariness, into eternity. In one house, three individuals were drowned in an instant, and before they could become sufficiently conscious of danger to attempt escape. In another were sixteen persons, who only saved their lives by climbing to an adjoining roof, whence they could watch, in hope and fear, their chance of deliverance. In a third, an unhappy mother appeared at the window holding out her infant with frantic gestures; but in vain, for both were hurried away

* Mrs. Hurt, the owner of Digley-hill, had returned to her house, being assured there was no danger. She thus speaks:—

“I went into the house and opened my Bible, and thought I would read a little about the troubles of Job. After this, I went to bed. By and by I was again alarmed by my neighbours, who urged me to fly for my life. The members of my family said they would go in different directions to my relations and friends, and they did so. I put, as I thought, many things out of harm’s way, by taking them from the lower room into the chambers. The heavy pieces of furniture, such as the pianos, sofas, tables, and chairs, were left below. I got into the cellar, and there thought of staying for safety. By and by, two of my neighbours came and urged me to run; but I refused, and clung to the cellar-stone; but they forced me away. I then seized my youngest child, who was in bed, wrapped it in a table-cloth, and we fled for our lives, the men carrying us along; and as soon as I had got over the wooden bridge, I looked and saw the water coming mountains high, and dashing in the windows of the house. I just saw the white window-blinds floating on the water; and then I remembered nothing more. Another minute, and I had been lost. The reservoir burst before I left the house. All I had was swept away.”

with the wreck of their house. One young man, the hero of a hair-breadth escape almost unparalleled, was, with nine others of the same family, borne down the current. In some marvellous way disentangled from the ruins of the house, and hurried, from plank to plank, refuge to refuge, a considerable way down the stream, he escaped,—the only one of the household left.*

After this scene of horrors, the valley, again widening, permitted the volume of water to disperse itself. It passed almost harmlessly through another large mill; but, gathering together again, ravaged a woollen factory somewhat below, and carried away several cottages and outhouses, with much valuable property. In one of those cottages which were broken up and scattered, twenty poor creatures were gathered together who had dug their way to this uppermost cottage through the partitions. They were kept prisoners in anxiety till the subsiding of the waters allowed them to escape. Immediately afterwards, the cottage fell. Within a few stones' throw was another mill, occupied by Mr. Jonathan Sandford, who with his two children and servant was carried away with the ruins of his house, not a vestige of which is left.

The next point of desolation was Scarfold, where dwelt alone a man, his wife, and two children. The man was lifted by the rising water, carried through the staircase-door, and up the stairs to the chamber, where he was raised to the height of the beam of his loom. The interval to the ceiling was just enough for the saving of his life.

At length, and within fifteen minutes of its overleaping the embankment, the overpowering flood, in all the integrity of its strength, and carrying with it an awful freightage of remains, reached the town of Holmfirth, where all had been, but just previously, quietness, sleep, and, with some few exceptions, unconcern. As we have accompanied it in its furious course down the valley, and have beheld it spreading on all sides devastation and ruin,—gliding into farm-yards, stables, and cottages; quenching all the life it meets of old and young indiscriminately, and of infants in their cradles; and hurrying all things before it in promiscuous confusion,—we cannot but have sent our thoughts onward to the far more

* The following is his account :—

“ There were ten of us in our house,—my father, step-mother, and eight children. Somebody came and roused us just after one o'clock. I put on my trousers; my step-mother and I stood on the stairs. We looked out of the windows, and saw a large quantity of water and sticks coming down. From their appearance, we knew the reservoir had burst. I and my step-mother came down stairs, then stood on the stairs, and my father handed us the children, who were asleep in the house-part, for us to lift into the chamber. The water burst in at the window and through the door, filled the lower room, and half-filled the chamber. I ran with the rest into the garret, except my father and one child, who, we expected, were drowned in the house. About half a minute after we got into the garret, the whole house gave way, and we were all swept down the stream, and I saw no more of any of them. No part of the house touched me that I know of. When I got into Harpin's dam, I caught hold of a piece of wood, and sprang up. I got a good sob of breath, and then went under the water, and lost my hold of the plank; on coming up again, I got hold of another, and again rolled over; at last I got hold of a large piece of timber, and kept my hold. I got hold of a small piece of wood, and paddled it towards the side. A gust of wind then came, and blew me towards the land on the Austonley side. I leaped off the timber, and fell up to my neck in water; but I managed to scramble out of the water, and, after falling several times, I got into Hannah Berry's, stripped, and went to bed. I was nearly exhausted.”

terrible consummation of all this havoc, in the unconscious little town below, which presents its most crowded and important mass of life to the very line of the torrent's career. Scarcely had a single note of warning been given of the direct coming of the flood. One or two townsmen who had purposely gone up to the reservoir, as if sent by Providence for the town's sake, and had retired uneasily, though without any general utterance of their fears, to their rest, had just time to gasp, with spent breath, "The flood! The flood!"—before it confirmed their words, and, in a wide, deep, surging wave, came, with the voice of thunder, around the last bend of the valley that hid from it its prey. A band of young men, who were returning half-intoxicated from the public-house, sobered by this dire intelligence, commenced knocking up the people everywhere. But, generally speaking, no man, no household, was prepared for this visitation of the night; though, as soon as the first shock of its contact with the town was felt, all men instinctively understood what was the enemy that had come upon them. A toll-keeper was seen to open his door, with light in hand, to ascertain the cause of the tumult. Scarcely had he closed the door when the whole of his dwelling, himself, his wife, and child, were hurried away to destruction. Just at this point, where the body of the water first struck the town, the damage done was very great. A row of houses, forming one side of a street, was completely carried away, and the stream still flows over its site. The foundations of many other dwellings were swept bare. The bridges were much injured. Hundreds of houses not destroyed were in an instant inundated, and goods to a vast amount ravaged and injured. The ponderous engines of destruction which the flood brought with it, burst in doors and windows, and demolished everything that opposed. The alarm was soon everywhere spread, and everywhere acted on with frantic vehemence. The first fearful howl of the torrent seems to have waked every soul in the neighbourhood in a moment. People hurried in every direction, intent on saving themselves, or delivering others. As the waters entered the houses, and rose, yard after yard, the terrified inmates rushed to the highest parts of the dwelling, through the windows, and upon the roofs. All was one wild scene of bewildered confusion, save where calm energy of mind and fervent self-sacrifice were toiling for the safety of others. The destruction of human life, great as it was, was slight in comparison of the immense mass that was endangered. For, all within the range of the water were in mortal fear that their houses, thus sapped and undermined, would fall. And it was for many minutes of tedious anguish an awful problem, whether the resources of the torrent would not be still further reinforced from above. The general tendency was to rush, by any method of passage whatsoever, to the hill-side. Many were thus saved, and many fell victims in the attempt. Several cottages were overthrown; and, in one of them, a man, his wife, and child perished. In another lived a man, with his son-in-law, daughter, and child. All perished but the old man, who was seen labouring on the surface of the flood, and saved by a pole being thrust to his rescue. An old man and his grandson were occupied in making mourning clothes at the moment the flood burst their door. It was too mighty for the decrepit old man; but his grandson contrived to swim about the house, till some persons above stairs, hearing his cries, came to his help, and, being unable to open the passage-door, pulled him through a narrow aperture in the panel, which they burst open. One poor man was seen with five children on the roof of the house; he saw them drop off one by one,

and at last, when left alone, gave himself up to the waters in despair of life. A new street in the neighbourhood of Victoria-bridge suffered severely. The lowermost house was occupied by a Local Preacher of the name of Woodcock. His family were aroused by the awful roar of the waters, and, seeing the flood rush past with such awful impetuosity, were in the utmost consternation. Mrs. Woodcock immediately threw open the window, and stepped upon the narrow wooden cornice of the shop-fronts, to run along the side of the house: finding that none of her family followed, she resolved to return and die with them, but fell into one of the windows as she returned. It is gratifying to find that the lives of all were saved. The families of the Wesleyan Ministers, Messrs. Firth and Garbutt, were mercifully delivered. The flood entered the chapel, and filled the pews to within a foot of their tops. It filled the cellars of their houses; and their families rushed from their beds to the hill-side in great alarm. But their terror soon subsided, and they have been able to lend their vigorous aid to others who have suffered more.

But it is vain to attempt a further topographical narrative of the progress of this most disastrous flood. Suffice it to say, that its violence continued for about twenty minutes of suspense and dismay; during which the hoarse murmuring of the torrent, and the crash of falling buildings, mingled with the shrieks of terrified women and children, and the groans of those whose voices the flood had not yet quite stilled, combined to add horrors to the confusion which no words can represent. After that, it began sensibly to decline, while it emerged in full force from the obstructions of the town. Rushing then forth into the more open country, it left traces of its violence for several miles, depositing the bodies of its victims, and destroying a large amount of property, even in its spent and final violence.

The aspect of the whole valley on the following day was such as only such a night could produce. It was a spectacle for a generation. When the sun rose upon the scene from which the moon had retired, how awful the change which that one sad and solemn midnight-hour had effected! There lay the empty chasm of the reservoir, as if in vacant mockery. There was the yawning pass which the violent waters had made for themselves, when, avenging their unnatural restraint, they rushed down to seek their rest. There was the reduced and lowly lake, somewhat such as it once was before the hand of man had artificially raised it. From the heights above, the great outlines are the same; but how mutilated and spoiled all traces of man's industry and skill! Strewing the valley for a long distance are visible the stones, and rubbish, and boulders of enormous dimensions, the disintegration of the embankment; giving, to one who could find time or disposition for such a thought, some faint illustration of the violent action of running waters upon the general surface of the globe.

Along the sides of the valley might be seen the long, undulating, and slimy water-mark which indicated the track and the depth of the torrent. A wild, rugged, and ruined air pervaded everything. On reaching the lower part of the valley the scene grows still more frightful; for we pass from the track of mere spoliation to that of death. The marks of violence upon the face of nature are still more deeply graven upon the faces of the stricken inhabitants, whose haggard looks speak silently, but sadly, of the last night's keen anguish. Miserable countenances look upon wreck and ruin which there is no energy left even to think of repairing. The woe of those who have lost their all in life, but are as yet stunned into half

unconsciousness of their fearful disaster, and whirled by wild excitement into a region of passion too high for mild sorrow and tears, who, that witnessed it, shall attempt to dilate upon? and who, without witnessing it, can imagine? In the track of the deluge, at every step some new wonder arises to absorb the attention, only to be displaced by something still more wild and striking. At one moment incredulous surprise is excited, as when one sees a gigantic boiler lying at a distance of miles from its shed, driven down by the tide as if it were a mere trifle; at another, amazement, as when a horse is seen suspended in the branches of a tree, or a dead cow upon the roof of a house; at another, awe and horror, as when the gaping fragments of houses are seen overhanging the stream into which the sleeping inmates were perhaps precipitated, or when the graveyard is seen with the resting-place of the dead violated, the ground scooped out around the coffins, leaving their contents open to the light; and, again, deep, deep sorrow and commiseration, when the bearers of the dead are seen carrying here and there bruised and macerated bodies of all ages,—from the most aged, down to the infant of an hour, *and perhaps less*. The whole formed a scene of desolation, into which were crowded more of the tragic elements of human life than often meet in any passage of human history.

As days passed on, the smitten faculties of the people begin to rise to the emergency. Everywhere the breaches are being repaired. The dead are laid out, as they are found, in the inns,—father, mother, and children, side by side, with every appearance of life save its bloom. Every hour there is some fresh and striking discovery; and all things, from parchments and cashboxes, down to bonnets and shoes, are being brought to the Town-Hall, which is the general receptacle of property. Charity is already awake, and pouring into the valley, by a thousand channels, sympathy, money, and clothing in abundance. Curiosity is, if possible, still more energetic. During many days, the labouring trains bring thousands every hour to swell the crowds who come to see these strange sights,—occasioning tumult and excitement in strange keeping with the scene which attracts them. Groups of amazed beholders are seen at every critical point of horror or deliverance, listening to the astounding tale of the sufferers or survivors,—easily to be distinguished by the stamp of care which that night impressed upon their features. Daily for several weeks was the path to the reservoir thronged with pilgrims ascending with eager curiosity to see the heart of the mystery, or descending, spent with fatigue of frame and feeling. The several halts of this constant stream of pilgrims soon became fixed. Here, they are thoughtfully and solemnly beholding the dead, and thinking of their souls, hurried before God; there, they are marvelling at the utter blank where busy cottages were, lately, crowded with life; here, again, they are looking at the place where two little boys, running back to save their chickens, were overtaken and drowned; and some think of the Lord's awful text, and some think of their own unbroken family-circle and weep. Yonder are others, finding the best stand-point for an artistic realisation of the appearance, and course, and sublime features of the molten avalanche as it sped on, more like a demon of destruction than waters seeking their level; while below are others entering into some poor, shaken huts, and looking at the sampler by which the old man hung when, exhausted with swimming round the dark room, he seized it and was saved,—the old man himself telling the story with the neighbours' help. Others, again, are handling the damp and begrimed old books which are on

the wall drying (one of them purchases Wesley's Hymns in that predicament, which he keeps as a memorial). Multitudes, in the channel of the torrent, are leaping from stone to stone, and rock to rock, where, a few days since, they might have walked along green pastures. And thus, from stage to stage, the crowds, with one idea pervading them all, pass on, through a succession of marvels, to the source of all the desolation.

Meanwhile, the public commiseration shows itself most vigorous. These troops of curious pilgrims go home to organize public meetings, and to contribute according to their ability. Before the expiration of the month, a sum of £30,000 was raised: a very large amount when viewed as spontaneous charity, though small enough when proportioned to the occasion for it. Six thousand hands are thrown out of regular employment, at least for a considerable time; which, of course, involves, more or less, the sustenance of a far larger number than that.

The final inquest and official inquiry, which was adjourned from body to body till January 25th, fully established the general suspicion of lamentable indifference and folly on the part of the Commissioners. The report of Captain Moody, the Government Engineer, is of great value, not simply as a luminous narrative of the immediate causes of the catastrophe, but also as directing attention, with all the weight of his high official character, to the condition of other reservoirs in the neighbourhood, and as arousing the popular sense to a feeling of their insecurity. The finding of the jury was very explicit. It condemned in unmeasured terms the conduct of the Commissioners as a body; who, however, through the technicality of the law in their case, are not liable to any criminal indictment. The country has universally responded to this feeling: a general indignation has been aroused, which will not be appeased until a rigid inquisition be directed into the responsibilities and obligations of all such corporate bodies as that which has, in this instance, so culpably trifled with human life.*

But we may not conclude without connecting this dire event with the supreme Ruler of the affairs of human life. Hitherto it has been viewed simply in its lower and more limited aspects, as a sad disaster among human interests, springing from human causes. But, to the Christian, no event seems rightly viewed unless its place and relations are sought in the government of God. He shrinks not from the attempt to trace the hand of Jehovah in such a night of sorrow as this; being saved from all misgiving by a principle which is before all reason, but which sound reason approves. He studies the awful past, and turns over the brighter and the darker pages of Divine Providence in the spirit of faith, and with a stern pre-judgment, which, howsoever mocked by proud folly, is most honourable to the dependent spirit of man. No special pleading from the facts of life, against the government of God, has any effect upon this sure conviction of the necessary right of all His actions. It produces the effect of pitying horror to hear the ways of the Infinite discussed, as if they were the workings of a machine whose every secret is before our eyes. When the Eternal hears Himself called upon to give account of His matters, by men who, after having passed sentence upon the human originators of this

* There is another reservoir, in the hands of these same Commissioners, which is notoriously as insecure as that which is destroyed. It is situated at the head of another ravine,—so situated, with regard to the Holme-valley, that, if it had burst its embankment at the same time, the two torrents would have met at right angles, and pressed on with fourfold fury towards Holmfirth. A public meeting, however, has resolved on a petition to Parliament to take these matters into rigid control.

catastrophe, proceed to arraign Him, and summon their own reasonings upon His character as witnesses against Him,—He answers not. He leaves them to explore His principles of action in His revealed word, and to commune with their own heart, which, by its instinctive recognition of the Supreme, gives the lie to all their arguments. “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the LORD is at hand. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

The Lord was looking down from heaven day after day, and saw the operation of His own laws, maturing a catastrophe that would issue in the destruction of the lives of many of His own creatures. Multitudes of other calamities did the Eye of pity witness that night in detail throughout the earth, which in their aggregate make the desolation of this valley a feeble argument against Him. Every moment does the Lord witness, permit, and blend with His own administration, events which we term accidents, and shudder at, but which He uses as co-operating instrumentalities of a plan which will work out the restoration of all things. Doubtless He saw the threatening danger. He saw the peaceful valley where resting industry slept under His own protection, unconscious of the imminent destruction which was fretting its banks to reach them. But all the physical causes of this tragedy were working according to laws older than Adam. He saw not fit to suspend their operation. On some mighty emergencies, when intercession has prevailed, or when some great lesson is to be impressed upon all time, He has reversed the order of things, and laid the hand of violence upon His own creation; but on this occasion nature had no command to suspend her dynamical laws.

Passing from the reckless irreverence of all argument derived from this event against the providence of God, we may more safely contemplate its dread mystery. These things teach us the utter insignificance of our powers, and the close restraint of our present existence. If they work healthily—that is, holily—upon our minds, they make us yearn for the revelations of another state, to look down from the point whence they radiate upon all the lines of the providence of God. Meanwhile all who *glory in the Cross*—that deep, fundamental mystery of the Divine relations to man and the world—will patiently and meekly submit to all lesser mystery. The plans of the Lord are adapted to a disordered world, and are not to be estimated by any measures of an economy of peace. In the process of the reconstruction of all things, floods, and fires, and all other convulsions of time, are executing their office under the high hand of God, with as much order, though not so much amenity, as the singing rain, the joyous sun, the glad opening of day, the soft close of eve. “Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

We must, however, remember the more strictly utilitarian view of such a dispensation as a *permitted event*: for as such, of course, it must simply be regarded. It was not a direct catastrophe of Providence, in which He sometimes acts independently of all human connexion, and takes His creatures' fates and interests directly into His own hands. It has not been as when the Danube, or the Loire, or the Severn, within man's recollection, laid waste large sections of the earth's surface, and carried away hundreds of thousands

of their inhabitants. In the present instance, the victims *fell not into the hands of God* simply, but too painfully *into the hands of men*; and it may be easily inferred that the Lord of nature has permitted the elements to vindicate their own importance, and teach men the powers of agents which are too much trifled with. In this way has the providence of God been the most effectual instigator of such wholesome reforms, and of such salutary cautions, as, it might seem, infatuated mankind will not be driven to but by costly sacrifices of property and human life. By sea and by land, along the rails and in the bowels of the earth, how energetic has this great source of reformation been! and how much need, alas! yet for its energy!

But eighty souls—summarily hurried into eternity—demand a higher application than this of so awful a pouring out of human life. Surely the Lord here teaches the most solemn lessons of time and eternity. “The day of the LORD is here: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice; He hath bid His guests.” He teaches the generations whose ears tingle at this calamity, with what irresistible powers He can punish those who neglect His laws. “As with an overwhelming flood will He drive away His enemies.” So is it written, and multitudes have an illustration which such texts of holy Scripture receive only once in an age. The Redeemer’s home-comment upon such calamities is full of admonition. Let those who, because there have been *no changes*, have not *feared God*, bethink themselves how soon and how unexpectedly He may ruffle the current of life around them, and hurry them away in the vortex of a swift destruction. Let those who are trusting implicitly in the goods of this life, learn to cease from their idolatry, by the stern lesson of many who retired to rest affluent and prosperous, but who rose, according to this world’s language, ruined. Let them think of the elaborate and costly apparatus for producing wealth effectually destroying in an hour more than it would produce in a generation, and count it a symbol. Let those who shudder at the cold thought of the stealthy, insidious entrance of the midnight flood, suppressing the very cry for mercy which it created, learn to live in such daily preparation for death as none but those who are *in Christ* can attain to; remembering that they may themselves be under the frowning brow of as imminent a calamity as fell upon the sleepers of that valley.

And let all, in addition to these lessons, learn to bless the goodness of God, who left not His essential compassion without a witness during that night of sorrow,—who saved multitudes more than He permitted to die,—who gave long, ample, and repeated warning to all,—and who doubtless heard many voices in their prayer for spiritual grace, who cried in vain for temporal deliverance. Bread was cast upon those waters. May it be found after many days!

By this time, the first excitement is over. The desolated valley is fast undergoing renovation. The British energy, which cannot be thoroughly broken, will soon restore the prosperity of the Holme valley—if God give His blessing. May He prosper the effort! The broken hearts we leave with the only Healer. May He succour the parents beginning to find the lack of their little ones, and the little ones who, though they know it not, have lost their best friends! Especially may the Lord sanctify this visitation to the good of those sufferers—not many—in whom the readers of this Magazine have a more special interest!

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