# THE DESOLATE VALLEY.

## A Sorrowful Sabbath in the Churches on Mill River.

## THIRTY BODIES NOT RECOVERED

## Pastoral Ministering of Consolation to the People.

## GOD'S WILL FOREVER GOOD.

## "He Carrieth Them Away as With a Flood."

## LESSONS OF GRIEF AND LOSS

## Judgment Upon Human Responsibility for the Disaster.

WILLIAMSBURG, May 24, 1874.

This has been a sad memorial day in the Mill River Valley. For the first time since the terrible disaster of a week ago Saturday the people have come together to mingle their grief and sympathies. The churches which a week ago were deserted, save by the corpses of the unfortunate victims of the calamity, were to-day occupied by the sad and mourning survivors. In all of the houses of worship fitting allusions were made by the respective pastors to the common bereavement, and the great affliction and its full realization caused the whole community to weep tears of sadness. Not only the citizens of the devasted region, but even the hundreds of visitors who came to look over the scene of death and desolation, shared in the universal grief, and many of them manifested the genuineness of their feelings by liberal contributions to the relief fund.

A SAD SEARCH.

The search for bodies has been practically abandoned. All the heaps of rubbish have been overhauled, and in many localities the huge sandheaps have been penetrated. It seems now almost hopeless to continue the search. Some thirty bodies remain to be recovered, but they will only be found by accident.

THE INQUEST.

The Coroner's inquest will be commenced to-morrow, and it is understood that it will be thorough and impartial, and that the conclusions arrived a will be expressed in a most fearless and emphatic verdict.

## THE SERMONS.

### IN WILLIAMSBURG.

WILLIAMSBURG, Mass., May 24, 1874.

**Sermon by Rev. Mr. Thorndike, of the Methodist Church.**

Rev. Mr. Thorndike, pastor of the village Methodist church, addressed a large and mournful congregation, taking his text from Matthew xxiv., 44:—"Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Many came to our Saviour, he said, actuated by curiosity, asking questions and making inquiries about this and that, which was not of so much importance for them to know and understand personally as that which Christ could teach and do, and often was not for them nor for the angels to know. Our Lord was in the habit of calling the attention of such persons in His wise way to whatever concerned them more, and of strongly urging them to take care of the duties of the present rather than those of the future that cannot be fully provided for now. So when the disciples came asking, "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the sign of the coming and of the end of the world," they, nor the thousands who have sought to know since, obtained any direct answer. He intimated that His coming was not alone connected with the end of the world, but as often, so far as it might be called in judgment, as any calamity might come. One that omened the end of the world, the destruction of Jerusalem, was near, and with it the Son of Man came. Again and again has He repeated that coming in our midst. Last Saturday the Son of Man appeared. Whenever an individual has seen any of his life in such a light as condemns it, he has been judged. So it is with a multitude. Whenever disaster has befallen one or thousands, then they know in part what the coming of the Son of Man means. In a world populated by lawbreakers "offences must needs come." Eternal wisdom has predestinated it should be so. What was designed to do us good, rightly used, be it material or spiritual blessing, can be made to injure us. We would not, and God has not ordained it should be otherwise. Carelessness or breaking or neglecting law, natural or moral, though it be through ignorance or wilfully, must, is, determined to bring calamity in a form more or less serious. The carelessness of those who built the reservoir has resulted in this awful disaster that changes the beauty and prosperity of our valley into chaotic ugliness and the most perfected ruin that ever met human gaze. God has no more done it than He took the life of Abel, and is no more the author of it than of any evil. Unless there had been transgression of law Christ would not have come in the flesh nor in any of the comings in mercy and in judgment so many times witnessed. There would be no need of the final judgment or the making "all things new." Transgressors need different government from the obedient, yet in mercy to the transgressor and in possible good to the obedient they mingle together, and on them sunshine and rain fall alike, and over them and their property the natural waters flow regardless of either; but those born into the kingdom of God spiritually come under power that shields from all waters bitter to the soul. It is because their souls are true to the law that controls spiritual things. We can all now by repentance and faith become members of a kingdom eternal and be eternally safe. Death is coming in an unknown hour, and Christ alludes to it as the hour of supreme emergency and as an event of the highest importance to us all. For that be ready. Do that, the first thing; then take every other relation to life and events, as they come, in their proper order. Knowledge and obedience of physical and moral law, as they increase, will lessen accident and wrong doing, and the great calamities of earth will be repeated less often. But it is not probable the time will come in our day, if ever, among the inhabitants of this earth, when the greatest prudence we can exercise will save us from the possibility of instant death. Be ready, not because the act of dying amounts to so much. Doubtless, there was but little pain with those who were drowned. It is necessary because we shall then change our relations. The good and bad are separate in their mental and social feelings now. After death the good and bad, by an impassable gulf, will be separated and each class, doubtless, be placed under the dominion of different governments. Law of love will reign among the good and perhaps the law of force among the bad. Now we all have equal privileges so far as God has provided in the realm of nature and of grace. Evil men may meddle with divine arrangement or not aid in carrying it out so far as placed within their power, in material and spiritual things, yet all who will "seek first the kingdom of heaven" can be secure for whatever awaits that which man nor all the forces of nature cannot kill. We prepare for almost everything; get education in our youth for manhood and learn a trade or prepare for a profession. Many seek to obtain wealth to secure them against times of need. We are daily making efforts to be ready for various smaller events than death. Yet when we do our best to act wisest, in an instant the labors of a life are are borne hurriedly away from us to be marked with total destruction. (Allusions were here made to those who lost largely in great disaster). If we are not faithful in caring and providing for the soul the hour will come when, stripped of all the outward, it must come before God, dwarfed, undeveloped, unsaved, no mansion, white robe, or even a drop of water for it. O, how much character will be worth at the bar of God! Soon we shall have nothing else. Will we be rich in that? If so, then soon we shall love all things. I said to Mr. Skinner, when he told me of his loss, "You have a good character left. The high name you have ever had and deserved among manufacturers has not been taken from you." It will hold him up in society without money and is pledge for sufficient means to rebuild. But while it is worth so much here it will be worth more when the magnitude of the man God and the angels see, shall govern the kind of mansion and the degree of inheritance we shall have in the great city, where the river of life will never flood nor the green fields of Eden ever lose their beauty and verdure. Those that are not ready, seek at once to be born into a new life—become subjects of a new kingdom. Grow in that new life, strive to be perfectly loyal to the King, and then the soul is safe if all else be lost.

**Sermon by the Rev. J. P. Gleason, of the Williamsburg Congregational Church.**

The memorial services in the Congregational church, commemorative of the great affliction, were largely attended by a sorrowful concourse of people. The church was appropriately draped in mourning, the pews vacated by families being entirely covered with black. The services were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Gleason, the pastor, assisted by the Rev. F. T. Perkins, of Naugatuck, Conn., a former pastor. Reckoning by events, said Mr. Gleason, instead of by the dial, the time is long since we last met. After spending one day among the ruins of our valley a Boston clergyman said it formed a quarter of his lifetime. If simply by reviewing the results of the disaster and receiving no personal injury so much seems added to his life's span, then there must be the full experience of a life bound up in the volume of the past week for you who witnessed all this and have been either stripped of your possessions or bereft of your friends. A majority of the hecatomb of the dead of Williamsburg were members of this congregation. The waters leaped unheralded into the midst of our village and swept away many of our best citizens and dearly loved friends. As the suddenly added waters forced the stream to forsake its time-worn bed and plough a new channel for its flow, so the rushing experiences of the past week crowd our thoughts of pulpit ruts and homiletic methods to range over unfrequented ground. This service is like the first roll call after a terrible conflict. Until to-day it required much searching to find many of the living, as it did the dead. We were all struck dumb by the terrible blow, and I should hardly dare to call the roll of the living, lest there be some whose lips are still unsealed. For days we spoke one to another only with our hands and eyes. Men from abroad could talk, but we were well nigh speechless. Now that we have tenderly laid our dead to rest we may pronounce their names round this family altar. We bless God that the lives of many of them enable us to point to heaven as their names are called, and answer, "Gone above!" Dr. E. M. Johnson, a deacon of this church and a beloved physician—he will be missed by many homes and hearts. His mother, Widow L. B. Johnson; his wife; his children, Eddie, Mamie and Lottie—three generations in one grave! Superintendent Henry Birmingham, Mrs. Birmingham, Mary Birmingham, Lily Birmingham, Carrie Birmingham—a whole family together crossed the threshold of heaven. Mrs. Elbridge G. Kingsley, Mrs. E. D. Kingsley and her little ones, Nettie and Lyman, leaving the bereaved husbands and fathers with the family Bible as the only souvenir of two happy homes. William H. Adams, who had just risen from his knees at the family altar, when he was called to stand before the throne. T. J. Hitchcock, Mrs. Electra Knight, Mrs. George E. Lamb, Jeremiah Ward, Mrs. Caroline Chandler and May, wife and daughter of Conductor E. M. Chandler, whose train was chased down the valley by the leaping flood; Engineer Alexander Roberts, Mrs. Roberts, our chief singer when with us, but now in the choir of heaven, with their little ones, Nettie and baby Allie; Widow Sarah H. Snow and her grandson, Willie Tilton, inseparable in life, undivided in death; Mr. E. C. Hubbard, his daughter, Mrs. Merrick Wood, and little Harry Wood; thus, with one fell swoop, did death cut down more than thirty of this congregation. Within sight of my house twenty children went down by a path through the waters up to the shining shore. Oh, how much we do miss them! We need all we have left to enliven our desolated homes. When the angel of death passed over Egypt "there was not a house where there was not one dead." "There was a great cry throughout all the land, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." So it seems to be with us. But the story of these empty pews is not all sad, for there is something beautiful in the thought of whole families going to heaven together. The removal of shattered families will soon leave other pews vacant. To those among whom these bereaved ones find an asylum and a home I would say, "Comfort ye, my people." Thirteen of these lost to us were members of this church, while several others were members of sister churches, but worshipped regularly with us. They were kin to many and friends to all. We mourn around a common sepulchre. To you who have been bereaved in your family we give our hearts full of sympathy. For seven days and nights we have sat with you in sympathetic silence, as did the friends of Job when he had lost children, flocks, crops, riches, everything; "for we have seen that your grief was very great." But now I open my mouth to thank the Lord that He took them home by such a short and easy path. It seems more like translation than death. I thank Him that, when I stood on the edge of the roaring torrent and with transfixed eyes saw it bow and pick up house after house, I was able in so many instances to say, "There goes a household, every member having on the life preserver of a Christian hope." I thank Him for the light which streamed from heaven when its gate swung wide to admit so many side by side. I thank Him that some rose from prayer at the family altar to stand before the throne. I thank Him that He has sustained me by His own right hand in scenes through which I pray no other pastor may ever be called. I thank Him for the signal examples of Christian fortitude which He has shown, the sustaining power of the Christian hope in the deepest floods and the strength of our anchor in the strongest current. I thank Him that, although our church is weakened in numbers, yet in faith we are greatly strengthened. I thank Him that the faith of the patriarchs has been repeated in our day, and that those who have been stripped of property, families and homes can still look up and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Every affliction has its compensation if our hearts will open to receive it. In what form it will come we know not. But every vessel of mercy is first scoured to brightness. There must be a bright bow for so dark a cloud. The sunbeams already struggle through the clouds and we can smile through our tears. Let us all look up, for our pathway is ascending. We shall soon have a broader landscape and a clearer view. If the little girl's eyes danced with delight when her doll was rescued from the flood, and the father could rejoice because he still had his family Bible as a precious relic of the loved and lost, then we, with homes intact and friends in health, will daily run up the scale of God's mercies from doll to Bible, touching every note. Having looked at the situation, the desolation and some of the consolations of the hour, let us notice one of the questions which it forces upon us. How are we to regard this calamity? The fatal reservoir was not dug with the shovel of Divine decrees. We cannot charge God with man's ignorance or neglect. We know that water seeks the lowest level, and may know the exact pressure upon every square inch of surface. Prudence and forethought have been given us, and when we fail to use them God will call us to a strict account if man does not. The nearest that any sham work of man can be pushed towards the throne of God is to get it just within the rim of His permissive providence. But in fixing responsibility we are called to the exercise of great charity of judgment, especially when we reflect that the State itself may not be wholly guiltless. Whoever is a sharer of the guilt is bound to repair his quota of the terrible waste. To accept these chartered seas, held over the heads of our manufacturing villages, on the recommendation of a Board of County Commissioners, possessing every qualification, it may be, except the needed one of practical civil engineering, is a custom against which we raise our earnest protest in the name of the cherished dead. Let us, with the shears of prudence, cut the locks of strength from these imprisoned giants around us, and at every reservoir let a signal gun be placed, which shall send its note of warning down the valley with swifter wings than those with which Collins Graves flew along the road. God gives His benediction to those who do their duty, and gives the benefit of doubt to the side of human safety, and we shall not withhold ours. But the heroes and heroines of the hour are almost as numerous as the dead. To indicate their names would be to displease them, but I must tell, as one of the stars which shine through our cloud, how our noble young ladies, who, under ordinary circumstances would shrink from the sight of the dead, as the sensitive plant does from our touch, took the mangled dead, shrouded them with their own garments, placed the May flowers in the clasped hands, kissed the marble brows for their absent friends and tenderly laid them in their coffins. And when I heard one of the army of visitors who daily march through this valley say, as he viewed the track of desolation, "I would not live here now if I could have the whole valley," my heart replied, "I had rather live with these, with my hut pitched on a scraped rock, than in a palace park with kings." First among the duties of the hour is not to desert the valley, but to bend our energies to repair its waste. I know the prospects of the future look dark to many, especially to those beyond middle life, who stand stripped of the honest accumulations of many years. You see your roads and bridges gone, your pleasant fields filled with boulders and débris, or the soil removed; you miss the houses of your neighbors, while they refuse to respond to your call. You wonder how the taxes are to be paid, how the strap is to be stretched to the buckle at the end of the year and how the schools and churches are to be maintained. Many of our friends share in the same wonder, and to one, who mentioned an inquiry as to how you would be able to continue the salary, I replied that during this disaster you had paid it for several years in advance, in a coin purer than gold and stamped with the image of heroism in danger and of faith in God in trial. It is true you will be called to diligence, but we are used to that, to rigid economy, to the sacrifice of many former comforts for a time, and possibly, it may be, to hardships. But many shoulders can bear a heavy burden, as we have together borne this tremendous shock, and the God of all consolation, who has supported us in our sixth trial, will not desert us in our seventh. Nature will exert all her energies to reclothe our fields, the dear old Commonwealth will reach down a hand to her prostrate children, while the whole brotherhood of humanity holds us by the hand. The assurances of sympathy from every quarter are indeed very touching. This strengthens us. As an illustration of hundreds received by you and me I mention one. Almost as soon as the blow was struck a former companion in arms sent these words of the Psalmist to us on the wings of lightning:—"Thy billows have come over me." Such is the feeling of all. They make our sorrow their own, and they desire to help us bear our burden. For no sooner had the Cyclopean destroyer, who hurled his granite boulders as a shepherd boy his pebbles, and snatching the tall trees from the hillsides, sent them with the swiftness and accuracy of Parthian arrows through our streets—I say no sooner had he disappeared from our sight than a tide of benevolence, impelled by the great undertow of human sympathy, began to set up the valley. Let it come. We shall need it all. Let the tide rise until it shall rebuild every dam and every factory and every cottage and every church—volume enough to bring together these scattered families—and then we shall be poor enough, making no mention of the dead. There are so many treasures lost which the mines of Nevada cannot replace. What was the value of your mother's Bible? What price did you set upon the lost portrait of your lost loved one? What answer would you have given, had any one asked the value of the little socks which you took from the baby's feet when the angels called him to heaven? The homes which this catastrophe swept away were not those which are furnished by three wooden chairs, a table and a lamp. They were homes of culture, where the Bible stood at the head of the library; where the fire of devotion burned brightly on the family altar; where the alphabet of praise was learned, that they might know the language of heaven; where fragrant flowers as well as Christian graces were grown; where the youth were prepared for the college that prepared them for their fields of mission. Let no vain attempt be made to count the value of such homes in dollars and cents. Then let the generous tide roll on, that these persons who have once fought the battle to competence and wealth may not have to struggle again through every phase of the conflict with the added burdens of this disaster. From these Christian homes the streams of benevolence constantly flowed into the treasures of our great charitable institutions. And it will be the gladdest day in the lives of this people when they shall be able to return with tenfold volume the sweet benevolence of our friends. Then let the tide roll up. Let it come through Leeds and through Haydensville, setting the lathes and spindles in motion. Let it rise to Skinnersville, and there, though it lifts its head like a mountain, it will find something still higher. As the tall corn ships entering the harbor of ancient Rhodes sailed beneath the colossal statue that bestrode the harbor, so must this benevolence flow through the desolated field covered by the large heart of William Skinner. If but a moiety of the wealth which has for many years flowed through the channels of piety to our churches, colleges and schools, should return, like "bread cast upon the waters," to the generous givers, the valley would again be made glad, and the prayer go up from every home, "God bless the donors!"

Here Mr. Gleason set forth the lessons of this great event in a practical and forcible manner.

### IN HAYDENSVILLE.

HAYDENSVILLE, Mass., May 24, 1874.

**Sermon by the Rev. James P. Kimball, of the Haydensville Congregational Church.**

At the village church in Haydensville the Rev. Mr. Kimball, the pastor, preached from the text, "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." Our subject, he said, occupies all our waking thoughts. Only a week ago yesterday morning, as the gentle rain was falling and our hearts were made glad as we looked upon hillside and valley taking on their robe of green, suddenly a terrible sound was in our ears. Two or three strokes of the bell warned us of some great danger. A fearful groaning, roaring and crashing filled the air. After the first alarm there was a breathing space of only five or six short minutes, and then the destroyer was upon us, and all those who had not heard the warning and fled for their lives from his fatal track were remorselessly swept away. Those of us who were above the reach of harm looked down upon a scene such as words or pencil can never depict—a scene which no stretch of years can ever efface. The swollen tide surged along the river bed and through the streets, carrying all before it. Where its full force was felt frame buildings were raised from their foundations, tossed about like egg shells and then crushed to fragments. The most substantial masonry was utterly unable to stand such a strain. Our strongest mills, our stores and shops and our dear homes fell one by one and disappeared. The waters enclosed and seemed about to carry away our sanctuary, but just then—Oh how like hours the minutes seemed!—came the glad cry, "The flood is abating!" and in a few minutes more the fearful work was done. While it was passing we could not venture in to help our dearest friends. We could only stand in silent horror and pray that the end might soon come. Surely, we know by sad experience how expressive is the figure of the text—"Thou carriest them away as with a flood." The calamity which has come upon us is terrible. It appals us if we consider its extent. A man is carried over the falls of Niagara, a family are all buried by a land slide and the whole country shudders; but here is a calamity which plunges a whole valley in mourning, in which village after village shares alike. A flood, as resistless for the time as Niagara, has passed through the streets of these villages; has come down upon half a score of mills filled with workmen, has poured itself over hundreds of homes and has carried away nearly everything that was found within its track. It has been almost impossible to exaggerate the mischief that has been wrought. This calamity is the most appalling in the suddenness with which it has burst upon us. When the Mississippi swept over levees and overwhelmed plantations and whole parishes with its turbid wave there was a chance for escape. People could take warning and flee for their lives. Here there was no commotion among the elements, no excitement, no rising of the waters. As I came through Leeds at sunset I remember distinctly how gentle seemed the murmur of the stream. There was in the morning not the least sign of danger, and yet even then the monster was let loose which was to swallow up such a vast amount of property and so many precious lives. On that still morning air the cry rang out "The reservoir has given way." Those who failed to catch the warning, or who lingered a moment in securing valuables or in helping their friends, were instantly borne down to death. It was all over almost before we knew that it was upon us. But for the tidings brought in such swift haste by those brave men—Collins Graves, Jerome Hillman and Myron Day—at the risk of their own lives, hundreds more would almost surely have been whelmed in ruin. The calamity was terrible indeed in the desolation and ruin that have followed in its track. No fire could possibly expose the people of this valley to the same amount of loss. Had all these buildings which we have lost been consumed in one short hour the damage would not have been as great as now. The ground would have been unchanged, the foundations would have remained and there would have been large insurance, but now more than a hundred families have lost everything. They have no house, no household furniture, no provisions, not even so much as a change of clothing but for sympathizing friends. Stores and shops have been swept utterly away, mills, with all their machinery, all their valuable raw material and all that was on hand of finished work, went crashing down to ruin. Many hundred thousand dollars' worth of property—the fortunes of the rich, the homes and competence of those well-to-do in life and the last earnings of the poor—in one half hour were utterly lost. This valley, but now so charming, full of enterprise and things of beauty, with bridges all swept away, with roads almost obliterated, robbed of many of its trees and in many places even of its very soil, loaded down with unsightly wrecks and so marred and battered that as we look upon it we scarcely know where we are, seems to us, indeed, the valley of desolation; and the worst feature of this sudden, dark calamity is the great destruction of precious human lives. In a time of health and peace nearly 150 of our friends and neighbors have in a single hour gone down to death. Many whom this town could not afford to lose will be with us no more. This congregation and this village have, indeed, suffered less than those above and those below us; but Mrs. Hill, the devoted wife and mother, and her aged father, Mr. Kaplinger, will be seen among us no more. Little Aggie and Georgie Miller will be missed from the Sunday school. Little did we think when last we saw them there that soon their still cold forms would be brought into that very room to be robed for the grave. We have all lost those who were dear to us. The whole valley is plunged into mourning. In this terrible calamity we must recognize God's hand. He uses the forces of nature to do His bidding. He does not lose control of the current of affairs because of the mistakes or crimes of wicked men. If there are those who are responsible for this frightful evil let them be held responsible, but let us not forget that it is "God that turneth man to destruction." "He carrieth them away as with a flood." In the wide sweep of His providence our interest, our lives may be engulfed. We can only submit while he says, "be still, and know that I am God." God is teaching us that in His hands our breath is. He is teaching us to set our hearts on Him and not upon any form of earthly good. He is teaching us to do what we do, whether it be for God or man, in the best possible manner. We feel Him drawing us to Himself as He always does in time of misfortune. Let us give ourselves up wholly to Him and then in the greatest dangers we shall be safe.

**Remarks of Rev. Father Barry, at the St. Mary's (Catholic) Church.**

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" was the text selected by Rev. Father Barry for his discourse at the Haydensville Catholic church. It is appropriate, he said, that I, your pastor, should speak words of comfort to you amid the universal desolation that has rudely visited your late happy valley, brought death into almost every family, snatched with lightning speed the husband from the wife, the children from the mother and left widows and orphans to the guardianship of the Church. There is a perceptible gap in our congregation. As my eye wanders down the nave of the church I miss many a familiar countenance, many a stalwart form, many a faithful friend. The wise man has said "Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity," and afterwards comes the words of solace, "And they that fear the Lord shall find him." This is our consolation—this the balm of solace for every wounded heart—our friends shall be remembered. Oh! it is hard to die in the bright Maytime of youth, when the trees are putting on their brilliant garniture and all Nature showers her benisons upon all sides with generous hand. It is sad that the raven wings of death should brood over our little mission during our month of Mary. 'Tis an event of sorrowing significance that the stroke of affliction should fall so suddenly upon our hearthstones, turning to blight the blossoming hopes of many of our people; but, Catholics, take this comfort to your hearts, your friends and relatives were not tossed about without a chart to guide them on life's vast ocean; they had the truths of religion to guide them; they now have the suffrages of the faithful to succor them. What need they fear the result of the change from a transitory existence to an inheritance of immortality, since they lived so purely and honestly and fulfilled their obligations so faithfully? It is a Catholic's sacred duty to pray for the dead. It is a Catholic's precious obligation to honor their memory. It is a Catholic's crowning glory to have the Church's aid. The recent calamity was a scene which I pray God may never be repeated in the valley. It was too terrible for pen to adequately describe, to view the cold and rigid bodies, that but two Sundays ago were animated with life and listened to my words of instruction with the true Catholic respect that is characteristic of the faithful. And how can you aid the souls of your departed friends? By protecting those whom they have left behind; by assisting the widow and the orphan; by offering in return for their friendship while in life the fragrant incense of your prayers. Let your prayers, then, be wafted daily to the throne of the Almighty in their behalf. Our affliction is great, but let our trust be in Him who doeth all things well. May we be ever ready to yield our souls to God's sacred keeping by a faithful observance of His most holy law, by trusting ourselves to the guidance of the Church's hand along the narrow paths, strewn with mercies, that lead to bliss eternal. Whether gentle be the call or quick and sudden be the warning, let our lamps be trimmed ready for the bridegroom's coming. We might wish to tarry here till our faith grow stronger, but our lives are in His hands, and we know not the minute Death may claim us. Pale with fear we hold our breath in dread anticipation of the fatal messenger, who comes at times unheralded, takes one from our midst and passes on his way. A vacant seat in the church or at the fireside, a familiar countenance and loved voice missed for a time, and then in the hurry and bustle of the world, we press along and are apt to forget the loved and lost, but oh! let not such be your case, my friends; the memory of the good remains in benediction. Preserve the memory of your friends by your prayers; preserve it by the brilliancy of your example and the purity of your lives; preserve it by keeping from the desolation of the world's trials the Catholic women and children so suddenly bereft of support; comfort them in this their hour of sorrow; cheer and encourage the faint hearted: stand by the little church which must now guard with sacred trust the orphans, and must be to them another mother; be united from henceforth in a bond of sympathy, one for another, that will end only in death. Remember that you are all brethren in faith, and are rendered more closely allied to one another by a common suffering which renders all akin. Murmur not, then, however terrible the blow, for you know not the good that may be evolved from the present affliction. There is light beyond the black clouds, and the angel of peace shall again spread her white wings over the valley, heralding God's golden benediction and a future of unparalleled triumph for the faith in the Mill River Valley.

### IN SOUTH HADLEY.

SOUTH HADLEY, Mass., May 24, 1874.

**Rev. Dr. Herrick on the Lessons of the Disaster.**

Rev. Dr. Herrick, of the South Hadley Congregational church, in his discourse this morning referred feelingly to the great calamity which has visited the neighboring valley. It was not necessary to portray the heartrending scenes of a week ago yesterday on Mill River. For a whole week the papers have been giving us the particulars. The facts are well known, and now, if it were possible, it is neither necessary nor desirable to attempt a picture of what is and still more has been at Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydensville and Leeds; but it is appropriate, while the event is fresh, and while from lapse of some days we can think more deliberately than could be possible at first, to gather up and impress some of the lessons of this terrible disaster which ought to be received and become practical. I desire to present the following:—The destruction of human life in this disaster renders the demand imperative and morally binding that there shall be security against such calamities. It is implied, I know, that this is a destruction not to be at once referred to a mysterious Providence, but to man's reckless improvidence. Who can recall the testimony given in the case and believe otherwise? A wall and embankment could have been built at the lower end of that reservoir which in depth and thickness might reasonably have allayed fear, instead of causing all below it to live in fear of their lives—this to be realized in the most fearful death of 150 to 200 human beings, who were hurled to destruction by the first stroke of the torrent. And such calamities include what are called accidents by land and by sea. How many railroad accidents, steamboat accidents on the broad Atlantic, on our inland waters! What fearful loss of life has resulted during the past two years from these accidents! And yet the result of the investigations in most cases has been carelessness, recklessness! Is it not possible to provide some security against such fearful destruction of life? When one on the Continent of Europe comes in contact with public works he has a feeling of safety, and because he sees that great care is taken of human life. Cannot our general legislation and State Legislature and local authorities have an eye and a hand upon railroading and steam navigation and public works, and bring about such a change that in respect to security of life we shall at least approximate to the countries of the Old World? They can, and are morally bound to do it. The pecuniary loss shows that true economy does not lie in want of true security. Men may in business be as Bunyan says "Penny wise and pound foolish." Such a work as that of securing the reservoir must be let out to the lowest bidder and be pressed upon the acceptance of the county commissioners, when inadequate and unsafe. And in addition to the loss of 150 lives, $1,000,000 was swept away in a moment. A limited part of this amount wisely added to the expense of building the dam would doubtless have made all secure. This is now evident. Pity men must learn through great pecuniary loss not only what is wise economy but what morality requires. We ought to learn, from the fact that riches so quickly perish, not to prize them too highly or seek them too ardently. We do estimate wealth too highly—estimate worth, or try to do so, by a money standard—sometimes sell our manhood for gold or greenbacks, and yet a million dollars may be swept away in a half hour's time; and if a man's worth lies in that he possesses, this comes so near being worthless that it is hardly worth the while to enter on the hot pursuit of riches. Certainly it is wise to look towards and seek the "durable riches," and to begin to estimate a man's worth by something else than by "the abundance of the things which he possesses." We have here a forcible lesson on the uncertainty of life. Of this you do not wish to hear much said, but this awful destruction of human beings so near us compels us to look upon death—life quenched instantly, death coming suddenly, unexpectedly, the vigor of health and activity, no security against sudden death. How important to be prepared for death at all times, to be always ready, to make provision for a life beyond death and a blessed immortality.

### IN NORTHAMPTON.

NORTHAMPTON, Mass., May 24, 1874.

**Sermon by Rev. Dr. Hall, of the Second Congregational Church.**

In the Second church (Congregational) Rev. Dr. Gordon Hall, the pastor, preached an appropriate discourse to a large and affected audience. His text was from Luke, thirteenth chapter and fourth verse:—"Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" The preacher said that when an extraordinary calamity occurs the people want to know what they have done to deserve such an affliction. There is nothing in the text, he added, to show that such visitations are inflicted by God. When John the Baptist was beheaded it did not indicate the moral estimate in which God held him, and those Galileans whose blood mingled with their sacrifices were not proved by this to be extraordinary sinners. Still, our Lord does not deny that they were sinners, and it is only sin, after all, that accounts for suffering under God's government. God deals with the world by comprehensive laws, which we call laws of nature, and men of every character must conform to those laws or take the consequences. The prophet asks, "Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned?" If a good man should be so foolish as to do that God would not interfere to prevent the result of His wholesome laws. It is good that there be such a law as gravitation, and that same form of gravitation which makes the water carry our machinery makes it rush down the valley and cause devastation. These laws, used prudently, are a blessing unspeakable; abused, they work mischief; but they were not appointed for this. Without these laws we should not know what to depend upon, could make no calculations, have no foresight, carry out no plans. These rigid laws teach us prudence, reward carefulness, are a wholesome discipline and remind us of higher laws which it may be quite as well to obey. It is suggested by this text that this is not a world of retribution. These physical laws are unrelenting and they exact retribution; but they are intended only as chastisement, while the great day of exact reckoning of moral recompense lies in the hereafter. Catastrophes and suffering are often suggestive of the danger of neglect and delay. No harm is intended, but proper precautions are not taken to provide against harm. The New York builder does not mean to kill anybody, but he slights his work and puts up unsubstantial walls. They fall and men are crushed. The steamboat proprietor does not really mean to destroy lives, but he sends out an old, inferior vessel, hopes it will make another venture successfully, and the explosion or the fire or the wreck follows with death and lamentations. God does not interfere to prevent the legitimate consequences of human cupidity and folly and unfaithfulness. If attention is called to the mischief of abusing trusts, slighting contracts with sham work and pretended inspections, then a startling calamity will not be without its benefits. Nature treats careless neglect and delay of duty as a crime and comes down upon it with vengeance. The man says I meant no harm. Nature says you should have guarded against it, heedlessness is sin; take the consequences—and remember God establishes nature's laws. Another observation to be made is that physical suffering is for moral usage. It is not sent as measuring the degree of guilt, but to work repentance. These losses and trials show that in a sinful world everything is fluctuating except these laws and character and God. They bid us lay up our treasure in heaven. The ploughshare is driven through the soul to break up the hard clods and make the soil mellow for the good seed and for the dews of heaven. Disasters beget a fellowship of sympathy. We are drawn out from our selfish isolation and learn to bear one another's burdens, and we catch something of the spirit of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Physical sufferings and desolations answer a worthy end if they put the grand immortal soul upon a heavenly pathway. What, after all, is the loss of property compared with the uplifting and glory of a deathless spirit. I think Christ's miracle among the Gadarenes was for just this lesson. What was it that a herd of swine perished in the waters, so much live stock lost, provided the devil went out of the man and the man was in his right mind, a saved man. One more moral use of affliction is to bring about a readiness for departure out of this disappointing world. In view of all the distresses which afflict the good man here it is comforting to reflect that heaven will be ample compensation. What difference does it make now or will it in the ages to come that John the Baptist and Paul went to heaven by the hand of the executioner, or that one went in a chariot of fire and the other in a chariot of water? The great fact, they will say, is that we are here—sinners saved unto glory, honor and immortality. Well, have we cleared up the mysteries of Providence? I have not attempted this—only to say what may relieve certain perplexities and afford some comfort. Still the great comforter is faith to trust where we cannot see. From the piazza of my boarding house among the White Mountains of New Hampshire I could see there in the clear atmosphere the monarch Washington Mountain towering up in solid majesty, but there would be days when I looked and not a trace of it could be seen. The eye could not tell me it was there, but I never doubted it. The righteousness of God is like the great mountain. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. Calamities are calls to conversion. When Christ speaks of Siloam He adds "Think ye they were sinners above all others? I tell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

**Rev. Dr. Leavitt, of the First Northampton Congregational Church.**

In the First church, Northampton, the pastor, Rev. Mr. Leavitt, preached from Job, xxxiii., 14—"For God speaketh once, yea, twice; yet man perceiveth it not." He mentioned the work and word and spirit of God as voices by which He is constantly speaking to man; and then said, There is still another voice, which is never silent, but which sometimes speaks in language so distinct that no one can mistake it. That voice is the providence of God. It is thus we all feel that He has been speaking to us in the terrible event which for a week past has occupied all our thoughts—that mountain of water, rushing with lightning speed through the narrow valley and sweeping before it fields, gardens, factories, happy homes and precious lives. We have seen the desolation it left in its track, and no words can deepen the impression of it in our minds. I have said that this is the providence of God speaking to us; and this is true, however we may account for the event, and however justly or unjustly we may blame any human negligence or parsimony as being its immediate cause. It is plain enough that the wall which held the waters back was insufficient. Destruction and death are the proofs of it. Investigation may show whether this insufficiency was the result of an innocent mistake in judgment or of a criminal negligence. We may, perhaps, learn the exact nature of the defect, and the precise way in which the water, acting according to the regular and changeless laws of nature, gradually undermined the wall and at length burst it asunder. Still we are not satisfied; still we cannot rest till we have referred the whole event and its dreadful consequences to the providence of God. And we have a right to do this. We have a right to think that nothing escapes the watchful eye and government of God; that He, His love and wisdom are present everywhere; that life and death, prosperity and ruin, are in His hand. We have a right to think that He is working behind the blackest cloud, and that the most impenetrable veil of mystery and woe is only hiding His purposes of infinite beneficence. Nothing will satisfy us but this. We are not willing to have our calamities come from chance, or from the caprice and negligence of man, or even from the mechanical and unintelligent operations of law; and under the heaviest burdens it is a relief to think that they are laid upon us by the wisest mind and the kindest heart in the universe; it is a comfort to know that human prosperity and life do not fall to the ground, any more than a sparrow does, "without our Father." What lessons, then, is the providence of God teaching us by this great disaster? I think we ought to have no sympathy with the disposition that sees in every calamity a judgment of God upon the sufferers. That disposition is a growth of ignorance and bigotry. It shows itself most where there is the most of ignorance. All barbarous tribes are full of it, and even in cultivated and Christian communities it lingers in ignorant and superstitious minds. But Christ has expressly taught us otherwise. "Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, suppose ye that they were sinners above all the men who dwelt in Jerusalem?" Let all reason and observation, let our human instincts answer. Those innocent children swept by the waters into death, those mothers who perished with them; those honest laborers in the shops; those brave men who lost their lives with their families or perished in the effort to save them, were they sinners above all who dwelt in that desolated valley—were they sinners above us whom the flood has not harmed? We dare not say or think it. Neither Christianity nor common humanity will suffer us to insult their memories with the thought. There is one lesson which comes to us legitimately and directly from this calamity—a lesson so often uttered and so much neglected that we may well say of it, in the language of the text, "God speaketh once, yea, twice; yet man perceiveth it not." That lesson is the importance of honest and substantial work. Negligence of this has been called, with much truth, an American characteristic; and yet there have been scenes of late on the ocean which proved that it was not limited to these Western shores. We build ships and cover them with magnificent decorations and fill them with splendid furniture, and trust that the storm will never find out the weak spot which the magnificence hides. We erect buildings, not strong enough to bear their own weight, which fall and crush those who are in them and those who are passing by. We build bridges that are good only while they are new; and we let them stand till some catastrophe forces us to build stronger. We build reservoirs, and if they stand we increase recklessly the pressure of water on them till the frail structure yields and the pathway of the flood is strewn with misery and death. And to-day how many a city and town is trembling beneath its reservoirs, lest the same ruin work should be done by them! Now, it is not enough to say that all this happened by the providence of God. What is the providence of God saying to us? Is it not this? Do your work honestly: make it strong. Do it as well where it cannot be seen and examined as where it can. It is just as much a Christian duty as to go to the prayer meeting or send Bibles to the heathen. We are often greatly troubled about the theological opinions of our neighbors; but there is no heretical opinion so bad as sham work. Better in the sight of God and man is the heretic, the Mohammedan, the heathen, who makes his work honest and secure, than the Christian who does it deceitfully and brings harm upon his neighbor who trusted it. My friends, the voice of God is to all of us—the community, the nation—for it has been a habit with us to do or to acquiesce in the doing of work that was imperfect, unfaithful and not strong enough for what it was meant to bear. May we all give heed to the voice, and let it not be any longer said of us that "God speaketh once, yea, twice; yet man perceiveth it not." There is another lesson, which I can only mention in a word, and that is the wide extent of human charity and sympathy. How prompt and generous have been the impulses of compassion! How free and ready the gifts of labor, food, clothing, money to relieve the destitute, to find and bury the remains of those who died! It teaches us that there is something *good* in human nature; it gives us better and nobler thoughts of man; it shows us how the lessons of Christianity and its spirit of charity—that charity which Paul says *is* greater than faith and hope—have leavened the whole nation, spreading through all creeds and churches and beyond them all. And there is one more lesson. Whence came those widely flowing sympathies, those charities that from all parts of the land have come on the wings of the lightning to meet and aid the sudden woe? There is but one answer. God is the author of them. He has inspired them. They are only drops from the ocean of God's love. And must not the ocean be greater than the spray that comes from it? If human charity is so large and free, must not God's charity be freer, larger, broader, deeper? If human hearts have been so willing, and human hands so kind, to search day after day through storm and darkness for the precious bodies that were lost, and when they were found to bear them tenderly, first to the recognition of mourning friends and then to the grave, may we not hope that God, the Father of spirits, was there through all the ruin as tenderly gathering the spirits to himself? And so our lesson and our comfort is that over all that is most mysterious and sad, over property wrecked and homes destroyed, over families swept away, over widows and orphans, over sorrows that we can but partially relieve, over griefs that we cannot comfort, over all that valley of death, spanning it as a rainbow, rests the immeasurable love of God.

# CONEY ISLAND.

## Opening of the Season at the Poor Man's Watering Place—The Rural Beauties of Kings County—A Wonderful Cow That Keeps the Sabbath—Venus and the Coney Island Innkeepers.

No matter how many "fresh fields and pastures new" in the way of summer resorts may be discovered or created, there is no doubt that old Coney Island still retains its great attractions for a large class of our city population. The "best families" may go to Newport and Saratoga, and the favorites of shoddy fortune may go to Long Branch or some warmer place to display their vulgar wealth; but the honest workingman, the decent clerk and mechanic and the prudent tradesman will continue to patronize Coney Island, at least for the one day of his busy week which he can devote to country air breathing, clam eating, sea bathing and all manner of harmless and wholesome

SALT WATER DISSIPATION.

This fact made itself patent yesterday to every person who visited the popular bathing place. The early hours gave such promise of a bright and pleasant day that thousands of our good citizens regarded the evil predictions of "Old Probabilities" with the contempt they now and then deserve, and prepared themselves to take risks on the unclouded skies and genial sunshine of the morning. During the whole forenoon a lively passenger traffic was carried on over all the available approaches to "the Island." Many took the steam cars from the gate of Greenwood Cemetery, but by far the larger number preferred the open horse cars, which enabled them to enjoy a comparatively leisurely drive and "take in" the delightful glimpses of country scenery that one runs past on the horse railroad line from Prospect Park to the beach. That this drive is a very enjoyable one all who frequent that road are prepared to admit; but that it could be made much more attractive and pleasant and be rendered entirely free from many petty but annoying inconveniences, by something of a more liberal and enterprising spirit on the part of the Brooklyn and Coney Island Railroad Company, there can be no doubt whatever.

A LITTLE RIVALRY,

in the way of another railroad line or two, will be apt to mend matters in this particular; and the regular frequenters of Coney Island, as well as the dwellers in the pleasant places along the road, are already congratulating themselves on the announcement that the Gravesend Avenue Company are about to supply the rivalry that, in all probability, will result in giving them all the travelling accommodations they require. Meantime, the company that at present enjoys the almost exclusive right to Coney Island transportation would do well to take time by the forelock and give their patrons the improvements they look for in the way of regular time, more frequent trips and an accommodation car or two in the early morning and late at night. But, be all this as it may, the old road looked lively yesterday. Down

THE MAGNIFICENT BOULEVARD

that sweeps majestically from the southwestern gate of the Park to Gravesend, there dashed along every species of vehicle known to civilization, carrying representatives of every well-to-do class, from neat-handed professional gentility down to the diamond-fronted representative of "the liquor interest" and its well-conditioned wife. His friends travel on the horse cars. He takes a glass of good "home brewed" with them at "Ward's" and starts with them for the Island. Down the level, lively road, the fresh verdure and bright apple blossoms gladdened the eye all the way; past peaceful-looking farmsteads; past swift-going light wagons and sober old rockaways, with equally merry occupants; past hotels of good repute, with crowded bars and staring piazzas, and past one of decidedly not good repute, which has lately been established on that road, and which the property owners should get rid of at once for shame's sake; past the tollgate without paying toll and past Peter Ravenhall's wonderful cow, as she grazes on the roadside, near Peter's hotel, in the mossy-avenued village of Parkville.

THE BATHING HOUSES,

as might be expected, were not extensively patronized yesterday; but the hotels, which for the most part were opened for the first time this season, suffered nothing from the coldness of the breezes. Indeed those same breezes were so fresh that they kept on doing nothing if not suggesting frequent visits to refreshment rooms all day. The landlords, however, have to depend altogether on the patronage of casual visitors just now, and must for some time to come—that is, until the dead summer heat drives regular boarders to "sojourn" by the sad sea waves. The reporter horrified one Boniface yesterday by suggesting that, as far as the old-fashioned summer is concerned, the nose of this planet has been put of joint completely; that

VENUS IS TO HAVE RAPID TRANSIT

this year; that she has come between us and the sun, to the almost entire exclusion from his favors of our hapless world; and that, in short, we are to have no summer at all this time. "Mine host" proposes to form a Coney Island association to raise funds and send a delegation to have this outrageous injustice represented in the proper quarter, wherever that is.

The visitors to the Island yesterday were all of the respectable middle class, and conducted themselves accordingly. Indeed, the persons visiting that part of the island which is reached by the cars are always decent and well behaved, the property owners and hotel keepers having made arrangements to make the place decidedly unpleasant for roughs. The hotels on the western portion of the island—the part affected by the disorderly "bhoys" of the city, who always patronize the Coney Island boats—are not yet opened; so that the entire beach from end to end was as free from the rowdy element yesterday as Fifth avenue.

# SEASIDE AND COUNTRY.

Keyport is unlocked.

Tarrytown will do to stop at.

Great Neck is good to embrace.

Old Orchard Beach begins to blossom.

Islip should be approached with caution.

Croton Lake is where the "big bugs" thrive.

New Brighton has probably been re-galvanized.

The Highwood Hotel, Tenafly, N. J., is now open.

The Forest House, Budd's Lake, N. J., will open June 15.

Mount Mansfield, if you would aspire to high climbing.

Many Philadelphia belles would like to be Queen of Cape May.

Lord Willoughby has taken up his residence at his Saratoga villa.

William C. Barrett, Sr., will build a cottage at Saratoga on a part of the Walworth estate.

The *News* says rents have not gone up in Newport, nor have they materially declined since last season.

John B. Cozzens has leased the Grand Central Hotel at Saratoga, and can accommodate 1,000 guests.

Whitestone is not a grave resort, nevertheless it undertakes much for the earthly welfare of its visitors.

Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Travers and family, of No. 19 Madison avenue, will leave for Newport the first week in June.

George P. Wetmore has arrived at Newport to superintend the completion of his residence on Bellevue avenue.

North Conway's "White Horse" looks like Death's pale charger. The landlords there are pretty good chargers, too.

Ballston, N. Y., already has had one marriage—the Comte Charles Philippe Otto von Schwerin to Miss Fannie E., daughter of Ellis Boker, of Albany.

The Fenimore House, Cooperstown, will have as guests John C. Hamilton and family, Mr. Green and family, of Thirty-first street; General Post and family, of Madison avenue, and Mrs. Denis Harris, of Forty-sixth street. It is managed by D. P. Peters.