

ment; while many of their occupants have been buried beneath the smouldering ruins.

In our own Province the past year has been distinguished by special and fearful casualties. The thrill of horror which pervaded the whole population, when by a fearful railroad catastrophe, within forty miles of this city, sixty human beings were in a moment precipitated into the eternal world, will not soon be forgotten. Nor will the memory speedily be obliterated, of the hundreds, who having escaped the dangers of the broad Atlantic, perished in the waters of our own river St. Lawrence. Amidst a thousand other casualties, which have occurred, these two will long be remembered as investing the closing year with a specially mournful character in the history of this Province.

In connection with the casualties which have occurred during the closing year, in this or in other lands, very solemn lessons are suggested. Are we not reminded, for example, of the perishable character of man, and of the works of man? The monuments of industry and art, the treasures of earth, may perish in a moment. The flames may devour, or the waters engulf them. A thousand unforeseen occurrences, also may sever in an instant the brittle thread of human life. Is there not thus forced on us an additional argument for living as strangers and pilgrims on earth, and for being always prepared for the approach of the relentless messenger?

IV. Besides the desolations of the by-gone year already considered, we may further advert in the fourth place to the *commercial crisis* which has occurred. There is a remarkable saying in the prophecies of Ezekiel (vii. 12.)—"Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof." The meaning is, that all would be involved in the same common calamity. This saying has been fearfully realized during the past year. Over all departments of commerce derangement and ruin have spread. Merchant princes, whose signatures were accepted for millions; banking institutions, whose treasures were deemed exhaustless; mighty co-partnerships, erected as machineries for the collection or distribution of the wealth of nations, have been overwhelmed in the general wreck. Nor has the calamity been confined to one country, it has spread over every city, and kingdom of the civilized world.

The misery and wretchedness which have resulted from this commercial crisis it is difficult to exaggerate. Men only of high moral principle can form any conception of the intense agony which must have been felt by honourable merchants, in prospect of the impending crash, or at the moment when they yielded to the resistless pressure. Villains there doubtless have been who rejoiced in the opportunity of evading legitimate claims. But we now speak of men of sterling principle, of unbending integrity, whom disasters, which no human wisdom could foresee, compelled to succumb.

Nor has the misery connected with this commercial crisis been experienced merely by the more prominent members of the commercial world. How many traders in humble circumstances, in cities, towns, and villages, have been ruined? Nor has the evil terminated even here. Hundreds of thousands of mechanics and labourers, have been suddenly thrown out of employment; and were you this day to visit the once happy homes of many of them, you would find them the abodes of poverty and starvation—of such wretchedness and misery as might well cause you to shudder and stand aghast.

The lessons suggested by these calamities are very obvious. They teach us the uncertainty of wealth, reminding us that in a moment it may take to itself wings, and flee away. They serve to convince us of the necessity of laying up those treasures in heaven which are priceless and imperishable. They moreover present a loud call to the exercise of charity and benevolence. If anything has been spared to us amidst the general wreck, we should consider the case of those less favourably circumstanced than ourselves.

V. I shall only further advert at present to the *desolations of war*, which have been witnessed during the year now closing. Of all other forms of desolation, those of war are in many respects the most appalling. The derangement of commerce, the interruption of trade, the expenditure of millions of treasure, and the consequent withdrawal of capital from mercantile employment, and industrial investments, these, which in themselves are great evils, are among the least of the calamities involved in a state of war; and which have been realized in connection with the wars carried on in various parts of the world, and especially in our own Indian Empire during the by-gone year. Think of the hundreds and thousands of brave soldiers who have fallen on the plains of India, or who now lie maimed and wounded in the hospitals of that distant land. Think of the fearful atrocities of which frail women and innocent children have been the helpless victims. Think of the hundreds and thousands of widowed mothers, and fatherless children, and bereaved brothers and sisters, and anxious friends, who are mourning the loss, or trembling for the fate of slaughtered or surviving relatives.

Nor let us forget the sufferings which have been endured even by our enemies. In this moment of fierce indignation, when their crimes cry aloud for vengeance it is, indeed, difficult to think of them as men, as brothers of the same species, possessed of the same natural sensibilities, or as entitled to any human sympathy. Yet still a tear may drop from the judge's eye even when he pronounces the culprit's doom; and so the heart of a Christian cannot contemplate, without pain and pity, the fearful havoc which has been made in the ranks of the insurgent forces, and the fearful desolation which has overspread their families and their homes.

If the evils resulting from the wars which have been raging in different countries during the year now closing, were confined to the calamities which terminate with time, there is enough in them as we have already seen, that is terrific and appalling. But alas! the worst has not yet been referred to. There is reason to fear that among the hundreds of thousands who have engaged in the different struggles, there have been exceedingly few, who were good soldiers of Christ and thus prepared to die. How dreadful is the thought that so many of them, without a moment's warning, while thinking of nothing else, than to plunge their swords in their brothers' bosoms, have been hurried unprepared before the Judgment seat of the Almighty. It is this thought, which in the mind of a Christian, invests war with its darkest and most appalling aspect.

As suggested by the desolations of war there are some reflections to which we may for a moment advert. Do not these wars, for example, illustrate and confirm the doctrine of human depravity? They are not random results of occasional circumstances; but the natural development of the hearts of men who are justly described in the Scriptures as *hateful and hating one another*. Do not these wars still further remind us of the necessity of the Gospel of Christ being preached through all lands? For, this is the only means by which, through the blessing of God, the happy era will be introduced when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and shall study war no more. And, finally do not these wars remind the Christian of the preciousness of the doctrine that God is governor among the nations, and that he maketh all things work together for good to his people? Mere statesmen and politicians may be puzzled and perplexed at the present aspect of affairs, and tremble for the consequences. Calm and unmoved, however, amidst the shakings of the nations, and the tumults of the people, Christians can rejoice to think that the Lord sitteth King upon the floods, that he can make the wrath of man to praise him and, the remainder of wrath, that He will restrain. While the heathen rage and the kingdoms are moved, they can take comfort from the voice, which thus speaks to them from on high—"Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Although in the preceding discourse we have dwelt on the desolations and disasters of the by-gone year, we must not forget, that as already hinted, we have experienced goodness which demands our gratitude. Dark clouds are often fringed with silvery white, and lowering heavens irradiated by the glorious rainbow. Thus gloomy dispensations have not been unmingled with rays of comfort and bright glimpses of hope. We have good reason for singing of mercy as well as of judgment. We have reason for example for gratitude that although the work of missions has received a