

our duty lies in doing all in our power to mitigate the evil under which others are suffering, without attempting to penetrate into the counsels of the Almighty, or to pronounce judgment, individually, on our fellow-creatures. At the same time, it is no part of Christian charity to deny the existence of crimes in a community, which may bring upon us divine chastisement; and our utter powerlessness in the presence of any great visitation, whenever God permits a particular concurrence of circumstances to arise, shows us our feeble, helpless condition in the hands of God. Men have boasted that they were entire masters of the element of fire, — so perfect their mechanical skill, so thorough their organization, that they could always stay its progress; but now, in broad daylight, they are made to feel how little their boasted skill avails them against the natural forces opposed to them, and that they lie helpless under the mighty hand of God. Our first lesson, then, is that of the deepest humility. "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Even if we admit that we cannot carry our possessions with us, we feel confident of being able to bequeath them. But God steps in, and shows us, that not even this is always permitted. When the sense of possession is strongest; when the produce of our labour in our silver and our gold is multiplied; when our houses are enriched with costly ornaments; when banks are laden with our accumulations; when private citizens and corporations spend as if there were no end to riches, and the world lay at their feet; when men cry "Peace and safety," then "sudden destruction cometh upon them," and there is no escape. All is levelled with the ground. Then the truth of the inspired maxim is pressed home upon us, "It is certain we can carry nothing out." The solid walls, the costly furniture, the tasteful paintings, the admired plate, the jewels and gay clothing, the abundance of provision for the future, all is dust within one hour. It is as if we had never possessed it; and the very use of it seems to embitter our loss, for if it had never been ours, we should have less to regret. What a call is here to remember that our true life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions! What a terrible reflection comes home to us, that we shall have to give a strict account of all those riches which are gone, and which we are not now permitted to enjoy! A humble submission to the will of God will do much to mitigate the loss, and