

# GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN CALAMITY.

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**LUKE XIII. 1-5:**—"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

You have all doubtless heard of the fearful calamity that took place a short time ago in the city of Santiago, by which about two thousand persons perished. A few minutes before seven in the evening of Tuesday, the 8th December last, more than three thousand women, and a few men, knelt together in a very grand Roman Catholic church, with the view of paying their devotions to the Virgin. It seems that the church, the grandest in that part of the world, was lighted up to an extraordinary extent, with wax candles and camphene lamps, and decorated in the highest style with images and festoons. Some of these were formed of pasteboard and other inflammatory materials. One very large image of the Virgin was placed upon the altar or stage, forming a conspicuous object, and lighted up in a splendid manner by the strong lights that were thrown upon it. More than twenty thousand lights in all were distributed over the building, many of them pendent from the roof, furnished with coloured globes, and rendering the position of the worshippers below very perilous in the case of fire. There was one main entrance to the church, and two side doors, very strait, and used chiefly for admission to the sacristy. Here there was a brilliant assembly, composed of the youth and beauty of the place, dressed out in their gayest and grandest attire. The church for several successive nights before had blazed with a sea of flame and fluttered with clouds of muslin and draperies, for it

was a festive season, in which orchestral music and singing, and an immense profusion of lights, glittered and flared in every part of the building. But on this night an enthusiastic audience, greater and grander than any before, filled every nook, composed, as I have said, of about three thousand, mostly women, and many of them there contrary to the desire of their husbands. But the performance had scarcely begun when the gigantic figure referred to on the altar caught fire, and in a moment the flame shot across the roof, snapping the long, coloured globes, and dropping the camphene lamps among the gay assemblage below. In the panic all rushed to the main door, which soon became choked up, and not more than a thousand of that brilliant assembly, made up of the flower and fashion of the place, escaped. It was a fearful sight to see women fainting, screaming, entangled in their long swelling dresses, seeking to escape, and holding out their jewelled hands for help, as the remorseless flames came on—to see mothers and sisters—tender and timid women—seized in the embrace of the flames, undergoing the awful transformation—first a dazzling blaze, then a writhing spectacle of agony; then a black calcined mass of dust and ashes—all the beauty gone save the jewels and gems which they loved to wear upon such occasions. In fifteen minutes all was over and the church was burned to the ground. The shrieks and groans of those two thousand sacrifices gave place to the stillness of the grave. "O! what a