

The succession of earthquakes of a destructive character in Java, New Zealand, Greece, and now in Charleston, South Carolina, serve to recall to mind the many alarming catastrophes arising from like cause. From 500 years before the Christian era but a brief space of years has at any time elapsed without a destructive earthquake. But of these earlier shocks only brief mention is authentically recorded. In the year 79 A. D., Pompeii and Herculaneum were in lava and ashes, accompanied by an earthquake. In 742 an awful earthquake in Syria destroyed 500 towns with loss of life beyond computation. In 1137 occurred the memorable earthquake at Catania, when 15,000 persons were buried in the ruins. In Syria and adjoining countries in 1158 there perished 20,000 persons. The great earthquake in Calabria, in which cities were overwhelmed, occurred in 1186. In 1268 Cilicia was shaken, and 60,000 persons swallowed up. In 1318 occurred the greatest earthquake known in England. At Naples, in 1456 40,900 were killed. In 1531 Lisbon suffered and 30,000 persons were buried in the ruins. In Naples, in 1626, an earthquake destroyed 70,000 lives. This was followed twelve years later by the awful earthquake in Calabria. Sicily suffered in 1603 when more than 100,000 lives were lost. In the early part of the eighteenth century Aquila, in Italy, was destroyed in 1702 with a loss of 5,000 lives; in the same year Yeddo, Japan, was shaken into ruins with a loss of 200,000. In 1706, 15,000 perished in an earthquake at Abruzzi, and in 1716 at Algiers, 20,000 were killed. In 1731 at Pekin, China, 100,000 persons were swallowed up. The latter part of the century was equally noted for destructive earthquakes. In 1754, at Grand Cairo 40,000 were killed, in the following year Quito was destroyed; Kaschan, Persia, had 40,000 swallowed up, and in Lisbon, in the brief space of eight minutes, about 50,000 persons were destroyed. Thousands perished from the same shock in other parts of Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Madeira, Soria suffered in 1759 losing 20,000 people. Santiago was engulfed in 1773. Fifteen thousand houses were thrown down at Tauris and multitudes buried in 1780. In 1797 the whole country between Santa Fe and Panama was destroyed, including Cuzco and Quito, 40,000 persons being buried in a second.

The present century has had its full quota of earthquakes. In 1812 an awful succession of shocks occurred at Caracas in which 12,000 persons met their death, Aleppo was destroyed by an earthquake in 1822 with 20,000 people. In 1851, in South Italy, 14,000 persons were engulfed. Calabria, with only a population of six millions, had lost 10,000 in seventy-five years by earthquakes, and was depleted of 10,000 lives in 1757. Corinth was nearly destroyed the following year, and Quito lost 5,000 people in 1859. In 1868 a number of towns in Peru and Ecuador were destroyed, with 25,000 lives, and 30,000 more were rendered homeless. San Jose, Columbia, was destroyed in 1875, with 14,000 lives. There has been many shocks since, but none so destructive as those in Java and New Zealand. In fact, since 1850, not a single year has passed without some loss of life being recorded from earthquakes. Apparently the subterranean forces lose none of the strength or activity as the world grows older, and among the dangers of the future must be reckoned the chances of being badly shaken and perhaps swallowed up. But experience has shown that destructive earthquakes have been mainly confined hitherto within the belt extending forty degrees north and south of the equator.

THE DEACON'S REWARD.

Dea. Holcomb stamped the snow off his boots and sat down by the kitchen fire looking around at the family with unusual seriousness.

His wife and his pretty daughter, Kate, were chopping meat and paring apples for mince pies; and his tall son Gene, was mending a washtub.

Mrs. Holcomb looked at the deacon sharply, and suspended her chopping knife.

'Anything the matter?' she said anxiously.

'Nothing very bad,' the deacon responded, looking across the stove at her affectionately.

'You won't think so, anyhow.' I says to Seth and William, 'I know just what she'll say'—meaning you.

'What deacon drew a letter from his pocket.

From the colonel's lawyer,' he read.

Colonel was the deacon's half brother, an elderly, eccentric person, who had been in the village a month ago in the village.

He was worth a pile of money, and he had a fine house, has he?

From the kitchen there came the odors of roasting pork, of simmering apple-sauce, of boiling turnips, and of mince pies.

From the sofa came the sound of conversation, proceeding from the deacon, Mrs. Holcomb, and Mark Hill.

They were sitting close together—

'It's from his lawyer, as I says,' the deacon rejoined, unfolding the letter. 'And Seth's and William's got copies of it. We was all at the postoffice when the mail come and took 'em together.'

'It says—he went on slowly—and Seth's and William's says the very same thing—that it was the colonel's last wish that his daughter Melvina should have a home out here, with Seth or William or me. He said that whoever took her would be doing an act of charity, and would be sartin to get rewarded in heaven.'

'Well,' said Gene, going on with the wash tub calmly, 'of course Uncle Seth is going to take her? He's the best able to.'

'I rather expected myself,' said the deacon hesitatingly, 'that Seth would step forward in this here crisis; but he hain't. He said he didn't hardly see how he could do it. He said Malvina must be somewhere nigh 50 by this time; and being an old maid she might be cantankerous, and Julia Ann mightn't be able to get along with her. He said William and me would have to settle it between us.'

'Well, I never!' said Mrs. Holcomb indignantly—'him with all his money and that big house!'

'What did Uncle William say?' said Kate. 'Now see here, Pa Holcomb!—as the deacon's kind eyes fell before her gaze—you don't mean to say that he's going to leave it to you to do—you, the poorest of them all?'

The deacon moved uneasily.

'I don't want to blame William,' he said mildly. 'I can see it's just as he says.'

'What did he say?' said Kate, her black eyes flashing.

He said he didn't know how he could take her, nohow,' the deacon replied. 'He's building his new barn, and he don't feel like having any more expense just now. And he said he couldn't think of boarding people without nothing more substantial than a reward in heaven to look forward to.'

'He's a brute,' said Gene warmly—'he and Uncle Seth both! But you're not going to let them impose upon you, father? Why, neither of them would feel it? but you—good graciousness?'

Gene looked around the bare little kitchen meaningly.

'I always thought a sight of the colonel,' said the deacon, looking up at the cracked ceiling, 'though he wasn't nothing but a half brother; and I can't just bring myself to refuse the shelter of my house, if it ain't much, to any of his kin. There's where it is.'

'You dear old silly Pa!' cried Kate. And she slammed her apple pan on the table, rushed around to the deacon's chair and kissed him violently.

'Your pa is right, children,' said Mrs. Holcomb, resuming her chopping knife quietly. 'It's our duty plain as day, to take the poor creature.'

'There' said the deacon triumphantly 'I knew where you'd stand! I told Seth and William so.'

'Well,' said Gene, rising from the wash tub with a good natured despairing gesture, 'we are to have our cousin Melvina, Kate; but we are to give up all hopes of a college course and we are to be married to Mark Hill in the dress we have on—we shall not be able to scrape up money for a new one by next spring, with cousin Malvina on our hands.'

He put an arm about his sister's waist in mock sympathy, and whirled laughingly away.

The deacon looked across at his wife rather soberly.

'I'm afraid it's true enough,' he said. 'No such thing!' said Mrs. Holcomb briskly, 'And s'posing it was? Mark Hill would marry her quick enough in her old duds, I reckon!'

'But Gene,' said the deacon anxiously. 'Mebbe Malvina will make a difference about that. And he's set his heart on getting an education.'

'You didn't have any to speak of!' said Mrs. Holcomb stoutly, looking a little troubled nevertheless.

'They're good children,' said the deacon. 'They won't make no trouble about it—I know that. But I should hate to have 'em disappointed.'

'We'll trust in Providence,' said Mrs. Holcomb simply. 'We know we're doing what's right, taking Malvina; and I don't believe but what it'll be for the best.'

'You're always just the same—always real good,' said the deacon with feeling, as he picked up his hat and started for the barn.

And Mrs. Holcomb reflected that she could hardly be better than the deacon.

* * * * *

'She couldn't have had a better day for it, nohow,' said the deacon delightedly.

It was a week later. He stood at the sitting room window, looking out at the snowy, sunny world, and rubbing his work-roughened hands with quiet satisfaction.

From the kitchen there came the odors of roasting pork, of simmering apple-sauce, of boiling turnips, and of mince pies.

From the sofa came the sound of conversation, proceeding from the deacon, Mrs. Holcomb, and Mark Hill.

They were sitting close together—

Mark being a prospective member of the family, dropped in to dinner occasionally.

Up the road there came the jingle of sleigh bells. The deacon watched the little old-fashioned cutter eagerly as it came nearer. For the deacon's resolution had been faithfully carried out. He had written a cordial invitation to poor Malvina, amid the mild sneers of his brothers, Seth and William, to be sure, and the astonished disapproval of such of his neighbors as were in possession of the facts; but with the laughing consent of his children, and with the warm abetting of his wife.

There had come a prompt response to his letter—a brief note stating Miss Malvina Holcomb's acceptance of her uncle's hospitality; and stating further, that she would start directly, and would arrive a few days later.

The day had come. The driver of the little cutter, turning up at the hitching post with a flourish was 'Gene'; and the small bundle of green veil and water-proof cloak which he lifted down in the snow was his cousin Malvina.

The deacon hurried to the door; Mrs. Holcomb stopped in the act of mashing the turnips and rushed out to the porch; and Kate followed hastily, with Mark close behind her.

The bundle had made its way up the snowy path. The green veil had become disarranged, and there looked out from under it a sharp little face, with bright dark eyes, and two rows of faded cork-screw curls.

'We're glad to see you, Malvina,' said the deacon; while Mrs. Holcomb pulled her indoors kindly, and helped to undo the voluminous waterproof cloak.

It was a queer little woman that stood warming her small hands at the kitchen stove and looking sharply from one to another when the last wrap had been removed.

She was certainly past 50—so Kate mentally decided. She also decided that long ear-rings and a juvenile necklace, and tight curls, besprinkled with gray, were hardly becoming to her faded little face; and that her checked silk dress was not in the best of taste.

But she felt a warm impulse towards her cousin Malvina. There was a kindly sparkle in her eyes as she looked around the modest table—Mrs. Holcomb had taken up the dinner with hospitable haste—at the deacon, carving with a beaming face; at Kate and Mark, side by side of course, and engaged at the moment in an affectionate altercation; at Mrs. Holcomb, dishing the apple-sauce and at Gene, who had come in, cold and snowy, from the barn.

She did not appear to be much of a talker. She answered their inquiries in chirpy monosyllables, turning her gaze meditatively around the small bare room and through the door to the calico covered sofa and the well worn rag carpet of the sitting room.

But she wore a look of quiet satisfaction and enjoyment, and by the time the mince pies had disappeared, and the dishes been washed briskly by Kate's nimble hands, and they were gathered around the sitting room fire, it had deepened into a positive warmth, which softened her sharp eyes and gave a pink tinge to her faded cheeks.

'I should judge, Uncle Holcomb' said Malvina, turning upon the deacon—I should judge, now, that you ain't so well off as you might be?'

It was an embarrassing inquiry. Mark Hill looked at his boots and pretended not to have heard it; and Kate and Gene exchanged indignant glances.

Surely any other remark would have come better from their cousin Malvina, under the circumstances.

'Well, no; said the deacon meekly.

'And I suppose,' Malvina continued calmly—I suppose Uncle Seth and Uncle William are better off now, ain't they?'

'Well, yes,' said the deacon; 'they be.'

'So the colonel said. I always call him the colonel,' said Malvina.

And there was silence, broken sharply by the violent jingling of Malvina's long earrings, as she sat straight up in her chair suddenly.

'I sha'n't wait another minute,' she said decidedly, 'the colonel advised me not to be hasty, look into things a little first. But I couldn't know you any better if I waited a year, you dear good man!'

Her listeners stared at each other in silent alarm, and Kate edged a little nearer Mark.

'Was Malvina going out of her senses? I've been imposing on you shamefully,' Malvina went on energetically; 'shamefully.'

The deacon looked at her apprehensively and Mrs. Holcomb turned a shade paler, something was wrong with Malvina clearly.

'It was the colonel's plan,' that small person continued apologetically: 'you know he was always peculiar, and he took this way of showing it.'

'Of doing what?' said the deacon, finding his voice with an effort.

'Disposing of his property,' said Malvina composedly. 'I suppose from

that letter, now, you didn't think he had any to dispose of? Well, if you recollect, it didn't say he hadn't. The colonel dictated every word of that letter just the day before he died!'

Malvina's voice trembled a little. 'What he wanted to find out was which of his brothers was the best and kindest and thought enough of him to be willing to put up with the poor lonesome old woman he left alone; and that would be the one for his money, he said. And he said all along—he seemed to feel certain of it—that it would be you, Uncle Holcomb, though you're the poorest of them!'

The deacon looked at her blankly. 'You see the colonel was pretty successful of late years,' said Malvina, 'and there's enough for us both. My income would take care of a dozen forlorn old women like me, and your share—well you'll find its enough to build you the best house in town, and live better than my uncles Seth and William ever dreamed of doing—not that's that a Christian spirit.'

'Mrs. Holcomb folded her apron in her fingers tremblingly, and the deacon struggled vainly to speak.

'It's a sort of surprise, ain't it?' said Malvina, smoothing down the checked silk smilingly. 'And now that I've let it out, I suppose you will be glad to let me go home, I'm nothing but a bothersome old woman.'

Perhaps it is needless to say that the bothersome old woman did not go home, neither then or at any time; that Kate's wedding dress was the prettiest the town had ever seen, and that Gene's college course was promptly begun; nor that the deacon's surprise has not ceased to be a subject of wondering discussion among his neighbors, not excluding his brothers Seth and William.

SUBJECTS FOR THOUGHT.

The mind is largely dependent for its strength and clearness of vision upon the purity of the life. It is true that a man should know what is right in order to do right; but it is also true that he must be in the habit of doing right in order to make such knowledge of any practical value. For example, one who is accustomed to live wisely and to avoid whatever he believes injurious learns one day through a reliable source that a certain article of diet of which he is fond, or a certain habit that he has acquired, is deleterious, and he at once discontinues it. Another, accustomed to self-indulgence, receives the same instruction, and makes no change in his conduct. The intellect of each has been appealed to alike, and their knowledge of the point in question is equal; but in the one case the habit of right-doing makes it operative, in the other the habit of wrong-doing makes it inoperative.

To live on your own convictions against the world is to overcome the world. To believe that what is truest in you is true for all; to abide by that, and not be over anxious to be heard, or understood or sympathized with, certain that at last all must acknowledge the same, and that while you stand firm, the world will come round to you—that is independence. To enter into the world, and there live firmly and fearlessly according to your own conscience—that is Christian greatness.

When injury is inflicted on an individual, the offence is obvious, and cannot be ignored; but, when it is spread over a large number, it is comparatively obscure, and does not carry with it so strong a feeling of regret, or self-reproach, or indignation. The imagination fails to depict what is so far removed; consequently sympathy is dull and the conscience inactive. Yet the nature of the act is the same thing in both cases, and the result is the same in the aggregate.

As it is through the steps which lead us away from and above the landscape that we attain the truest idea of the beauty of the whole and the proportion of its parts, so it is by steps which ascend to the region of true principles and noble purposes, widening the mental horizon and expanding the sympathies, that the seeming trifles of life will assume their true proportions as part of a great and beautiful whole.

Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species, with design to be each other's mutual comfort and entertainment, have in that action bound themselves to be good-humored, affable, discrete, forgiving, patient and joyful with respect to each other's frailties and imperfections to the end of their lives.

While the male thinks labors and battles without, the domestic woes and wrongs are the lot of women, and the littlenesses are so bad, so infinitely fiercer and bitterer than the great that I would not change my condition, no not to be Helen, Queen Elizabeth, or the happiest she in history.

Those who have been once intoxicated with power, and have derived any kind of emolument from it, even though if but for one year, never can willingly abandon it. They may be distressed in the midst of all their power, but they will never look to anything but power for relief.

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