THE TORRENT;

OR

AN ACCOUNT OF A DELUGE OCCASIONED BY AN UNPARALLELED RISE OF THE NEW-HAVEN RIVER, IN WHICH NINETEEN PERSONS WERE SWEPT AWAY, FIVE OF WHOM ONLY ESCAPED, JULY 26TH, 1830.

BY LEMUEL B. ELDREDGE.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
"Rough-hew them how we will."—Tragedy of Hamlet.

Middlebury:
PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE FREE PRESS,
BY EDWARD D. BARBER.
1831.
AUTHOR'S APOLOGY.

The reasons which have impelled the author of these sketches to the course he pursues, viz: that of publishing and vending a book, are those which may be inferred from the under written certificate. As the personal injury he sustained in the disastrous occurrence which is the subject of this narrative, has rendered him incapable of discharging the duties of his occupation with vigour and effect, and as he believes this narrative can not but be interesting and useful to the community, he in confidence commits his work to the publick; believing that it will not expect a simple narrative of facts, to appear in the gaudy drapery of composition; since truth, like beauty, shows best in her undress. With these sentiments he subscribes himself, &c.

L. B. ELDRIDGE.

New-Haven, 1831.

CERTIFICATE.

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that Mr. Lemuel B. Eldridge of New-Haven, Vt. at the time of the New-Haven freshet, July 26th, 1830, being solicited to assist those of his neighbors who were more immediately exposed to the ravages of
the Torrent, was swept away in it with his son, who perished in the waters.

As by this disaster his health has been badly impaired; and as he suffered materially in the destruction of property sustained; his estate lying on and near the river; we cheerfully recommend him to the public as one deserving their confidence, and his work as entitled to patronage.

Rev. Joshua Bates, D. D.
Hon. Horatio Seymour,
Jonathan Hagar, Esq.
Elisha Brewster,
Ira Stewart, Esq.
Dr. Zaccheus Bass,
Lavius Fillmore,
Peter Starr, Esq.
Hon. Ezra Hoyt.
Jonathan Hoyt, Jr. Esq.
Elias Bottem, Esq.
Rodman Chapman,
Col. William Nash,
Noble Munson,
Abraham Paige,
Gen. Samuel H. Holley,
Harvey Munsill, Esq.
Dr. Luther Newcomb,
Henry Soper, Esq.
Isaac Houston,
Joseph Blanchard, Esq.
Oliver Burnham, Esq.
Nathan Meder,
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The reading community, though cantoned into nearly as many classes as there are authors wanting patronage or works wanting authors; I have often thought, consisted of but two distinct sects, viz: Those who read a preface, and those who do not. The following narrative is unfortunately calculated to interest neither. The former, are too phlegmatick to relish any thing wonderful; and the latter class, although inordinarily fond of the marvellous, have an extreme distaste for every thing true. Nor are we at a loss for a reason why, at the present day, fiction is preferred to fact. The truth is, the idea of impossibility is become so inseparably connected with the word “novel,” that, while novels are in fashion, truth is a poor recommendation for any story whatever; since it is clear, what has transpired is not impossible.

True, it was once thought, those writers of fiction were most successful who most

"Kept probability in view;"

but so changed are times and tastes, that, were a man to write his own biography, he would do well to place on the title page the enchanting sentences, “founded on fact,” which in modern acceptation implies, freedom from the appearance of fact.
Again, the imitators of Nature, (as the writers of fiction claim to be considered,) have really distanced Nature herself. Along the variegated page of romance, flower-bordered rivulets leap with a murmur so eloquent, that the moss-fringed stream, yelping along the mountain’s side, sinks into comparative insignificance. The notes that tremble on each passing breeze, though the instrument is the work of the same hand which framed the Universe; and the musick itself inspired, has often been turned from with indifference, to listen to the mock birds, created by the vagrant imagination of the Novelist. The clouds, rolling in calm sublimity, along the deep, distant arch of heaven; the conflicts of the elements; the bellowings of the regions of space in echo to the rush of the lightnings; all that is beautiful and awful in the firmament; all that is lonely and enchanting on the barren mountain-top; and all that is lovely and animating in the vale beneath; all are often regarded with terror or listless indifference by the same mind which

Dies of a farce in ecstacy of pain.

Thus, instead of following nature, it is clear our writers of fiction have adopted the maxim, flee Nature, and with a spruce, artificial, soldier-like tread, they trip along at the head of the unnatural, distorted, disproportioned shapes, to which
their own imaginings have given birth; while na-
ture, and those who attempt to paint her in sim-
plicity, seem awkwardly to halt along in their rear.

By this time, the reader will have learned that, in the following narrative, he is not to expect any thing more enchanting than truth, more sublime than reality, more fearful than the wrath of Hea-
ven, or more enrapturing than its smiles.

This work I now leave in the hands of those who, from a knowledge of the events it registers, from their connexion with the deceased, or from curiosity, are induced to take it up, with this single remark:—The stream of time, though more silent in its lapse, is, nevertheless, as sure in its work of desolation as the swollen torrent of the hills—and those only act the part of rational beings, who, in-
stead of drifting idly along the current, guard against being borne by it to that Lake

Of shoreless, waveless, bottomless despair,
Whose mimick calm still woos the putrid air,
Which bends reluctant as the birds of night
In dizzy circles wheel their sluggish flight;
Dark birds of omen, guilt and pale remorse,
That prey on souls as vultures on the corse,
Which floats on some dead waters where no wave
Moans its sad dirge, or finds for it a grave.

THE AUTHOR.
CHAPTER I.

Description of the Stream, with an account of the fall of rain.

I wander still in sober pensive mood,
  While dun clouds thicken round the atmosphere;
And not a sound disturbs the moss-grown wood,
  Save where the small birds chant their vespers near
Some fountain gurgling from the mountain-side,
Or wild winds roar far off in solitary pride.

The most striking feature in that ridge of high-
lands which has given its name to the State of
Vermont, is the uniform abruptness of declivity to
the west; while on the eastern side, the mountains
fall away gradually into broken ridges of smaller
magnitude, interspersed with swamps and small
lakes, and, as we recede from the summit, small
plots of ground admitting cultivation. Consequently, the waters on the east side, for the most
part quietly meandering at the base of the steeps,
are seldom forced into cascades, but through near-
ly their whole course, their surface is so little fret-
ted by the descent, that it seems the mirror by
which the lonely spruce and swamp-shrubs adjust their locks of sober, unfading green. While on the west, the waters are hurried towards their destination in almost a continued cataract.

Such is evidently the fact with the head branches of the New-Haven River. The small streams which rise in the vicinity of Avery's Gore and Lincoln, winding along their serpentine courses through deep ravines, are now totally secreted in the rocky chasms, and again they are precipitated over beetling ledges as if flung from their dark beds by the repulsion of the mountain. At the foot of a waterfall like this, there is usually a reservoir in which the white descending sheet again assumes its glassy green, which colour it borrows from the pendant foliage; the rude amphitheatre of overhanging erags, reverend from their covering of gray moss which is nourished by the eternal vapour; the vine idly gadding along the margin of the rocks; above this the stinted brush-wood evidently struggling to maintain its erect position;—above all a summer sky, the blue field of which, is here and there interrupted by dark scuds of clouds; these, rising gradually above and depending below the surface of the water, even surpass the gorgeous pictures of a dream; they impress the mind of the beholder, with an irresistible conviction, that
the crag which sustains him, is surrounded with a sphere of glass, on which the pencils of angels have traced the miniatures of beauty and grandeur. The perpendicular walls of the ledge have the effects of a whispering gallery in redoubling and repeating sounds, so that the rustling of the waters, and the pensive cry of rock-building birds, softened and sweetened in their reverberations, fall upon the ear in a wild, confused, yet soul-lulling melody, which can be likened to nothing but its own echo.

Such are some of the appearances which presented themselves to the writer of these sketches, as he has lingered along the head branches of the stream abovementioned; but they are appearances which exist only when no water sweeps along the channels but that which the steady fountains supply. It will be readily seen, that, whenever the streams receive an additional drop, the effect is immediate; and when heightened by a violent shower, tremendous. Not a rain-drop descends, but finds its way to the flinty channels, and tells in its influence on the current. Rocks, cheated of their foundations by the perpetually groaning stream; drift-wood swept off with its shallow foothold of earth, and every substance on which the maddened waters can seize, at the bidding of the
torrent, quit their resting places, and rush with unparalleled impetuosity to the region beneath.

When at length, however, the waves have gained the bottom of the steeps, in ordinary cases, the wide bed of the stream is sufficiently capacious for their reception, and they hold on their way quietly and harmlessly to their home. But when lashed into foaming fury by violent and long continued tempests, those only who have witnessed the convulsions of nature in the devastation of the hurricane or earthquake, or have looked on scenes like that which these sketches attempt to describe, can form any adequate idea of the fearful desolation where

*Nature flings o'er chaos' neck the rein,*  
*And the fierce whirlwinds from his shaggy mane,*  
*Burst bellowing forth.*

And such, it would seem, was the fact in the storm we describe, which occurred on the night of the 26th of July, 1830.

There had been an unusual fall of rain throughout the whole season; and there seemed to be a strange impetuosity and unnatural anger in the motion of the elements. At one time, a faintness appeared to have unnerved every breeze; and the animal and vegetable creation alike drooped under the sickening of oppressive heat. Again;—though the cradle of the storm might be but the murky rag of a cloud which could scarcely be
perceived, as it neared the earth with the diminishing density of the atmosphere, widening in its extent, and deepening in its dye, it suddenly expands into a wide field of black, bearing in its bosom at once the seed of the flood and the flame, shrouding the heavens and shading the earth!

These sudden transitions from dazzling sunlight and intolerable heat, to the dimness of evening and the cool storm breeze, became more marked and interesting until the third day preceding the freshet. On this day (Saturday) about three o'clock P. M., rain fell with unusual vehemence until Sabbath morning, so that during the day, the streams were forced from their beds upon soil which had slept by their side for ages unmolested. When, at the close of the Sabbath, they again began to retreat slowly and sullenly to their wonted channels, it seemed that a short respite was to be allowed the already saturated earth. Indeed, one would have thought the very heavens had been exhausted of their watery supplies. But early in the forenoon of Monday, the brisk and frequent gleamings of the lightnings; the deep mutterings of thunder, which boomed at intervals along the welkin; the murmurings of the atmosphere, as it groaned in echo under the weight of huge piles of rain clouds, resembling in their aspect sable mountains suspended by the discordant attraction
of the earth and sun; and, in fine every feature of
the heavens above, and of the earth beneath, seem-
ed to indicate that the storms before witnessed,
were but a prelude to the tragedy about to open,
in which the elements were actors, earth the
scene, and fate itself master of the drama. The
instinct of the brute creation took fright at the un-
natural language of nature. Fowls betook them-
selves to their coverts ere night had woven the
pall of the feeble day, and in low whisperings talk-
ed of their mutual fears. The beasts looked upon
man and then upon each other, and as they snuff-
ed the sulphurous gale, in a dismal hum, vented
their melancholy forebodings. Such was the uni-
versal aspect when

Storm clouds arose—winds murmured—and the Sun
Sunk as if glad his daily task was done.

The air itself appeared to be converted into one
vast liquid sheet, and urged to the earth with an
impetuosity which beggars description. The ser-
pent of the lightning withdrew his fierce darting
tongue; and the rattling of the thunders were
hushed. To the one succeeded the gloom of im-
penetrable dark; and to the other, the hoarse
rush of descending waters. The breezes which
were out upon the landscape, with impeded pace,
crept to their caves and wrung their locks in si-
lence, while the din of the tempest, came on the
ear without intermission with the same hurtled rush, rush, like the throttled gasps of expiring Nature.

CHAPTER II.

LINCOLN.

The effect upon the streams can neither be described by those who witnessed it, nor imagined by those who did not. It was as if “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and earth was again to be cleansed from its pollution by an overwhelming deluge. In places which had been before moistened only by the dews and rain-drops of heaven, now swept torrents, bearing on their bosoms the cob-web labors of man, as the whirlwind of the desert in the madness of its fury rends the tiny architecture of the ant.

The height to which New-Haven River rose, was beyond all comparison with other streams, owing to circumstances peculiar to itself. This river scarce can be said to have left the mountain before it arrived at extensive iron-works. The dams connected with these not able to withstand the force of the current, broke away and added the contents of their broad deep beds to the already overswollen stream, so that the waters came down on the plains below in almost a perpendicular wall,
which, in a narrow place in the channel, through which nineteen persons were driven, was compelled above the common level of the stream to the height of twenty-five feet!

The destruction of property commenced in Lincoln, where a bridge, called Jones’ Bridge was swept away; above which, rocks and trees only were exposed to the ravages of the stream. Below this, Aaron Gove, whose house stood near the bank, was compelled to his chamber with his wife and six small children, by the rapid rise of the water. He had scarcely left the lower part of the house, when it was beat in, one post only sustaining the upper side, remained to prevent the fall of the house, and the consequent death of its inhabitants.

Below Gove’s about one half mile, Daniel Butterfield suffered the loss of land and crops; and below this, one mile, a dwelling house belonging to Thomas Tabor was instantly carried away with all its contents. The family, five small children with their parents, hearing the crash of a bridge falling immediately below the house, escaped from the building with their lives, heard the plunge of the falling house, and in the morning saw the main channel of the stream where it had stood.

Below Tabor’s, one mile, where John Gove resided, a saw-mill and other machinery were de-
stroyed; and one half mile below this, a bridge, together with nearly all the crops of Valentine Meader suffered the same overwhelming ruin.

Still farther down a small creek brought two bridges into the main stream and passing one half mile from their meeting, at a small village called Acworth Village; the waters bore away in their irresistible progress, a new saw mill a large iron forge, together with coal, coal-houses and iron in large quantities; and immediately below, a bridge contributed its mite to swell the vast accumulation of drift-wood already afloat.

Below this cluster of buildings about 100 rods; the iron establishment owned by Pier & Burnham, with a large quantity of stock went to sate the same hungry element.

Below Pier & Burnham’s forge about 50 rods, stood an unfinished house occupied by Prosper Durfee, who on the night of the freshet was from home. His family, a wife and four small children were asleep in a high and low bed in the lower part of the house. The current and the driftwood awoke the mother, who, upon examining, found the water had already gained the floor beneath her, which, fortunately, as also the chamber floor consisted of loose boards placed for temporary use. Having secured the two children in the under bed in the same with herself, when the water bore the
beds with the floor beneath within reach, the boards of the upper floor were removed and the children were drawn through by their mother, with whom they were rescued next morning by the neighbors, after having passed a gloomy night of horror, in momentary expectancy of inevitable death. The water reached within a few inches of the upper story, but was prevented by drift-wood from sweeping away the dwelling and its occupants.

The last of the effects suffered in Lincoln was the destruction of a large factory, the property of Gen. Barnum of Vergennes, newly erected together with the dam connected with it.

This stood about 150 rods below the house of Durfee, and was swept clean from the surface a part of the dam only remaining.

Such is a mere sketch of the devastation in the town of Lincoln. The distress which was occasioned cannot be imagined, nor the loss estimated. Most of the buildings demolished were lately erected, and after having vested their capital, the owners were just beginning to realize the profits of their toil and expense. The suffering was felt sensibly by Joseph Blanchard, Isaac Houstin, Wm. Mitchell, and Andrew Mitchell; a company from Ackworth, N. H. who had built and given name to Acworth Village where they had commenced the manufacture of iron.
As the hills approach near the stream on each side, the land suitable for cultivation mostly bordered immediately on the river. One hundred acres of this were either totally destroyed or rendered useless for years; and as the crops on which the inhabitants depended for the coming winter were entirely ruined, the affliction became by far the less tolerable. Add to these the consternation and misery endured for the time by those expecting death in every surge—every crash of wrecked buildings, and every struggle of the tempest, while a darkness like the plague of Egypt prevented their situation from being known, which was rendered more fearful by the harsh colorings of a startled imagination; we are warranted in asserting that those who would realize, must first experience such a calamity.

CHAPTER III.

BRISTOL.

Soon after crossing the line of Lincoln into Bristol, the New-Haven River receives the waters of a tributary called Baldwin's Creek, which unites with it at a place known by the name of "The Notch," from the sudden yet regular declivity of the mountain on each side of the stream. On the
north side particularly, ascends a tall rock-ribbed eminence, consisting of little else than continued strata of ledge disposed in regular arches, which, with the wind-blasted shrubs along the ridge, somewhat resembling bristles, very justly have gained it the name of "Hog's Back." This, with the sudden descent of the mountain on the south side of the stream, presents an interesting view to those who travel along the west side of the Green Mountains, giving an impression to the beholder of a stupendous channel, forced through by dint of human labor, or shaken into its present form by some mighty convulsion of nature.

The road below the mouth of this creek, which, during thirty years, had suffered no material damage, was now totally removed, and with it trees, with the ground which had sustained them, and rocks were hurled from their beds and removed to some distance, though retained in their quiescent position by a weight of from twenty-five to thirty tons.

As the ravages of the stream in Bristol were principally confined to the destruction of property, without endangering the lives of the inhabitants, I subjoin a list of the most prominent sufferers from the minutes of the Committee appointed to furnish an estimate of the damages.
ON THE NEW-HAVEN RIVER.

Nathan Drake, Thurstin Chase, Sisson Chase, { Suffered the loss of Land and Crops.
Moses Smith, House, Land and Crops.
Solomon Drake, Land, Crops and Mill-dam.
Abraham Gage, Land.
Nathan Rider, Land and Bridge.
Fred’k Peet’s Estate, Land and part of Mill-dam.
John D. Holly, Crops.
Munson, Dayfoot, { Saw-Mill.
Atwood, Vadakin, and Wilds. Atwood & Munsill, Carding Machine.
Harrington & Atwood, Clothiers Works.
Dayfoot & Sheldon, Triphammer, Shop, Coal-house and Coals.
Dr. L. Newcomb, Gristmill.
Luther Newcomb, Forge, Coal-houses and Stock.
Philip Vadakin, Clothiers Works.
Moses Standish, Dwelling House.
Arnold & Dunshee, Sawmill, Triphammer Shop, Coal House, Coal and Dam.
John Scott, Barn and Land.
Edward Dunshee, Land and Crops.
William Gaige, Do. do. Do.
Widow Drake, Two Barns and Land.
John Dunshee, Land and Crops.
Michael Dayfoot, Do. do. Do.
John Brooks, Crops.
Sylvester Scott, Land and Crops.
Amos Eddy, Corn-house, Land, Crops and Fences.
L. Hazeltine, House.
John Howden, Land and Crops.
Luther Newcomb, Do. do. Do.
Eliphalet Mason, Two Dwelling Houses and one Barn.
Orrin Obrien, Crops.
Rufus H. Barnard, Saw-Mill.
D. P. Nash, Land, Crops and Fences.

In the town of Bristol only, ten bridges were destroyed. Six of which, crossed the New-Haven River, and four, streams tributary to it. Destroyed of public property in Bristol, viz—Roads and Bridges, as computed by the Committee $24,000.

Although no lives were lost, or seriously injured; yet traces of this flood will remain distinct in the town of Bristol while the earth shall endure. In many places, slides have been occasioned on the river-banks to an enormous height. Through the whole town, the channel of the river was worn to an unnatural width; the soil driven off, left the huge rocks beneath naked; so that now, when, in mid-summer the river is at its lowest ebb, instead of a beautiful stream stealing along without a murmur, the surface of which flings back the depending pictures of spires of corn growing on the extreme verge of the shore; you view a
wide, sterile bed of rocks in the centre of which, the diminutive stream skulks along, muttering and repining at the monstrous channel, like the stripling David, mailed in the harness of the giant Saul.

CHAPTER IV.

*Destruction of Property, &c. from Bristol line to the mouth of New-Haven River.*

In order that the reader may obtain some idea of the extent of the destruction of property, public and private, I have thought best here also to annex the result of the Committee's computation for the whole town of New-Haven, and then to notice any particular incidents which may be too interesting to be neglected, excepting only an account of the individuals overtaken by the stream, the circumstances of which are given in the next chapter.

The following is the Report of the Committee appointed to make an estimate of damages, and, as is usual in such cases, probably falls far short of the true amount.

H. S. Walker, - - - - - $1200,00
O. Jewett & Son, - - - - - 1800,00
J. C. Dickinson, - - - - - 700,00
J. C. Bradly, - - - - - 500,00
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H. Fitch, - - - - - - - - - - - 150,00
Wm. Willson, - - - - - - - - - - - 1600,00
J. Willson, - - - - - - - - - - - 3300,00
M. Farr, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 100,00
A. Barnes, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 300,00
N. Stewart, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 225,00
T. A. Carpenter, - - - - - - - - - - - 250,00
A. Farr, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 250,00
I. Farr, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 200,00
J. Cook, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 100,00

$23958,00

Damage done Roads and Bridges, - 3200,00
Damage in N. West part of the town, - 3160,00
Lumber, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 600,00

$30918,00

At the East-mills in New-Haven, the destruction of property was the more severely felt, as it fell upon those buildings upon which the inhabitants were dependent, in some degree, for the necessaries of life. Two tanneries, a saw-mill, carding-machine, with a large quantity of wool and rolls, a large, new, and elegant stone grist-mill, a woollen-factory, and extensive clothing works, a large brick trip-hammer shop, and the village bridge, were all rent from their foundations and utterly demolished. Below the mills about
forty rods, the dwelling-house of Wightman Huntington, and also one owned by Nathaniel Turner, which stood near, both were crushed and swept away. Below these last 50 or 60 rods, was situate a burying ground, so high above the level of the stream as to be considered out of reach of the river at its highest point. The water, however, not only overflowed the ground, but came with so great vehemence as to sweep away the fence by which it was enclosed; the posts of which were of cedar, and firmly fixed in the earth; and, after the water had subsided, there was not a tomb-stone left, but had been prostrated or broken off, having been either laid naked by the washing of the water, or overthrown by floating lumber.

A large extent of the plain below the burying-ground presented a dismal picture. Barns, some of them filled with hay, were taken from their foundation, and borne off, in an erect position, a distance of one or two miles; and some light buildings were found standing upright on dry land, after having performed their voyage without pilot or rudder.

Mr. J. Hendee’s buildings were situated on the edge of the lowlands, where the hills terminate as they approach the river. The water, having undermined and carried off his out buildings which
were on the opposite side of the road from his house, and between the road and the river, began now to endanger the house itself. Shade trees which stood in front of it were rent from their places, although they had remained in quiet possession of them until their trunks measured one and a half feet in diameter. Mr. Hendee being absent, the family, eight in number, succeeded in gaining a brick walled cellar in rear of the house which afforded them protection from the merciless current, though the earth in front of this, was swept away to the depth of six feet below the butments. From this situation they were rescued by their neighbors at eight o'clock the next day, by the aid of a small boat; after lingering through the night in momentary expectancy of following their buildings, their furniture, and their provisions, all of which went to the hungry torrent.

Some distance below Hendee's situation, the stream divides, forming a large island, called after the owners, "Nash's Island." Upon the highest part of this island, a dwelling was occupied by Mr. McLauglin, who became alarmed for the safety of his family about 10 o'clock in the evening, at which time the island became completely immersed. The water still continuing to rise, Mr. McLauglin took a bedstead and braced against a
willow* shade tree, near the corner of the house, not finding this sufficient, he added another, placing the posts of the one in the ropes of the lower, and thus perfected a ladder reaching to the limbs of the tree. He then removed six children from his house to the branches of the tree, confined them to the limbs by means of pieces of rope, leaving his wife, with an infant four weeks old, his oldest son, a lad of fourteen years, still in the house. He then placed a rail horizontally among the branches of the tree, and having assisted his wife to her truly exalted seat, he sustained his wife on one side and his son sat on the other, and thus they all remained until morning, alternately the subjects of trembling hope and the agony of suspense. When at length their friends came to their relief, they found the stream still so high as to prevent all access to them. A large tree was fallen into the current, with hope that it would lodge, and enable them to pass the deepest part of the channel, but the attempt proved abortive: the tree was borne away. At length a man from the shore swam the stream, carrying with him a rope which he fas-

* Twenty-three years before the above events, Col. Wm. Nash of New-Haven brought a riding stick from Simmsbury, Connecticut, which formed the tree on which Mr. Clanghlin's family were preserved. It is now twenty-two inches in diameter.
tended to a float upon which the family were placed and drawn ashore. This was accomplished at 8 o'clock in the morning. The feelings of individuals thus circumstanced, I leave the reader to imagine. Enveloped in the gloomy mantle of darkness, rendered more terrific by its contrast with the sheet of foam which spread around them as far as the eye could penetrate; stunned by the roar of waters and the plunging of driftwood, which interrupted their voices when they spake to those within their reach; perched as they were between the heavens and earth, while every moment, larger trees drifted by them than the one which stood between them and death. The feelings of people in this situation, the reader can better imagine, I repeat, than I can describe.

From Nash's Island, a plain of one mile and a half in extent was made little else than one continued scene of ruins. In the road, were formed numerous cavities from ten to fifteen feet deep, and the whole surface in many places lowered several feet beneath the ground on either side. The cellar-wall beneath the house of Mr. Gifford was burst in, and the cellar itself nearly levelled with the surrounding surface. At this house, while the water around stood at the depth of three or four feet,
a youth of fourteen or fifteen years, in his fright, determined to go to the barn, which stood on lower ground than the house. In pursuance of his purpose he rushed into the water, and as he was unable to distinguish one object from another, must inevitably have perished if he had not been rescued by Mr. Gifford who caught him and drew him again to the house.

At the lower extremity of this plain, where the river receives a dirty tributary, called Muddy Branch, are situated the buildings at the residence of Col. William Nash. Here, by 10 o'clock in the evening, the water had arisen higher than it had ever been known before, and he being apprehensive of danger, removed in all imaginable haste his wife's father, an old gentleman who slept in the back part of the house, to the chamber, just as the water came upon the floor where the bed stood. The situation of Mrs. Nash was trying in the extreme. As her babe was but five days old, to have attempted to move her from the house in the storm and flood would have been presumption. She was therefore carefully borne to the chamber and kept in ignorance of the extent of the disaster which hung over them. After securing his most
valuable papers, Col. Nash watched the progress of the torrent with feelings which a parent and husband only can experience. As the water gained in the lower story of his house, he marked its rise on the railing of the stair-case, and with feverish anxiety, repeated his visits from above until at the height of about five feet, a faint gleam of hope crossed him when he perceived it was at a stand. By slow degrees it at length sullenly retired, and in the morning, no danger remained but that the house might be overthrown by being undermined.

When the water became at first frightful, a stock of cattle was confined in his yard. These were set at liberty by the sweeping away of the fence which enclosed them, and by swimming the current, all, except five, with one horse, escaped to the hills. Another horse, confined in a stable was found in the morning alive, having his head resting on the scaffolding, by which means he avoided suffocation.

A family living near Nash, by the name of Matthews, prudently leaving home in the afternoon previous to the freshet, escaped both the danger and anxiety of those who remained in dwellings
situated near the stream. In this place, the bridge at the mouth of the Muddy Branch was swept away long before the stream had attained its greatest height.

Below this bridge about one hundred rods, two families escaped from their dwellings after the water had surrounded them, and succeeded in gaining the land unhurt. Allen Farr lived between the road and the stream, and his brother, Ira Farr, on the opposite side of the way but few rods distant. When the water began to rush freely into the house of Mr. Allen Farr, he constructed a raft, took his family aboard, and committed it to the stream; hoping by passing twelve rods in this manner to gain the high land. Instead of this, such was the impetuosity of the current, he was driven a distance of seventy or eighty rods, where he with difficulty succeeded in gaining an eminence, which if he had not gained, a few rods would have brought him to the middle of the current, where his own death and that of his family must have been utterly inevitable.* He then

*In mercy to his swine, Mr. Farr had opened a sty which was filling with water, and admitted them into his house. In forming his raft, he took the chamber door from its hinges, and when he again came to his house, he found them quietly slumbering in his chamber upon a bed of rolls; having either walked up stairs, or rode up, keeping above water.
came to the relief of his brother, who with his family still remained in the upper part of his dwelling, the water having filled near to the floor the lower story. This family were taken away by means of a raft which those on the land constructed, and pushed to the house, where they were. An addition standing against the house, the family passed from the chamber by a window, to the roof of this addition, from which they embarked on board their float and were drawn ashore by the rope which still remained fastened to it.

From this, to the village at the West Mills in New-Haven, a distance of about one mile, nothing occurred except the same universal desolation which marked every inch of the progress of this stream, from its egress from the forests and precipices of the mountain, till it loses itself in the more quiet rolling waters of Otter Creek.

We have now followed its course to the last tragic scene at its mouth, a river, which, in one night, was the secondary cause of a desolation so vast, that were the remaining waters of the universe to bear a like proportion of a general ruin, not one moment would elapse, before every immortal soul on this poor earth would be unhoused; and chaos would again brood over the dismembered im-
mense! Our wonder, then, at the mighty energy of seemingly unbridled elements, ought to be transformed into admiration of that Power which has spoken into being elements of such ineffable force, that one, if uncontrolled, would unhinge a Universe; and yet so restrains and impels them, that in the great majority of cases, the sorriest fly need not suffer by collision in their operations!

CHAPTER V.

A particular account of the distress occasioned at New-Haven Hollow, or West Mills.

In presenting before the mind a calamity, like the one with which our village was visited, in order to notice all the incidents which transpired in the lapse of a few moments of time, we are under the necessity of stating a series of facts in some measure detached and without arrangement.

The inhabitants of the village living nearest the stream, became alarmed between ten and eleven o'clock in the evening of the 26th, and commenced exertions for securing property from the mills and other buildings threatened with immediate destruction; and, as many of them had lived during thirty years in that vicinity, they apprehended
no danger to those buildings, the foundations of which were higher than the river had ever before been known to rise. Thus the time which might have been improved for securing their own lives was devoted to the rescuing of property.

About twelve o'clock a young man came to my house and awoke me, requesting the aid of myself and son for the sufferers in the hollow. My buildings, several rods from the scene of ruin on an eminence, were not endangered. On receiving the information of the trouble of my neighbors, while my son brought a horse from the barn, I awoke an Englishman, occupying a small dwelling of mine across the door-yard, and we three repaired immediately to the hollow.

While we were engaged devising means to preserve what was valuable in the buildings about to be plunged in the stream, we were alarmed by the cries of Mrs. Willson, who called to her husband informing him that their house was about to be overturned and themselves lost. We then for the first time discovered the hopelessness of our situation. A new channel had been formed in our rear, encircling the whole village, and, when discovered, was rolling along ten or twelve feet of water, every minute adding to its depth nearly one foot.
One way of escape presented itself; the mare which had brought me thither, possessed nerve and sinew sufficient to have borne me with my son across the moat; my son even mounted the beast and urged her into the stream, but the thought of leaving his father in a situation almost utterly hopeless, forbade him to proceed. For myself, the hope of lending assistance to those who were hopeless retained me until all opportunity of escape was cut off.

Twenty-one persons were now on this island upon which the water gained with fearfully rapid advances. Each swell, as it swept by, bore something from the small area which remained to us; the surface of the surges broke whiter and whiter in the feeble light of our lamps; the hoarse clamor of loosened rocks and floating drift-wood became more and more deafening; and each sound added something to the despair and consternation depicted on every countenance.

The individuals thus surrounded were the family of John Willson, viz: himself, his wife, one son and four daughters, also his wife’s sister, who was unable to move from her bed.

The family of Mr. Stewart, a blind man, viz: himself, wife, two sons, four daughters, and Phineas...
ney, a youth of nineteen years, who lived in the family. The rest, among whom were myself and son, were those who had come to their assistance.

When Mrs. Willson discovered the channel which had encircled the village, and called to her husband, he with his son immediately went to their assistance. Having removed them to the chamber, he stood in the front door of his house and watched the progress of the stream. When it became too apparent that the house must go, he ordered his son, after they had divested themselves of their clothes, to follow him if he attempted to make the shore. The house trembled—and rested—trembled again, and left its foundation! The chimneys rocked from their bases—a dead plunge,—and the house is afloat! Willson and his son now committed themselves to the waves. Seventy-five or eighty feet would have placed them beyond danger in a straight line from his door, instead of this distance, they were borne by the impetuosity of the current a distance of ten rods, having gained no more than fifteen feet in advance. Here they caught by the roof of a wood-house from which they were drawn by ropes flung from the shore, and left the building just as it arose from its place and went to add one more wreck to the general ruin.
One small spot now only remained above water. Upon this, stood a barn, in which we had secured the Stewart family, among whom was a sick daughter, aged 21 years. She had been for more than a year unable to walk. This daughter, (Minerva) we laid upon her couch on the floor of the barn, and when the water came freely across this, she was removed to a manger. But her cup of grief had been drained to its dregs, and heaven in mercy spared her the anguish of tasting the remainder. Her brother went to the manger,—moved her,—but she might not awake.—He put his hand upon her brow,—the chill of death was there —She had gone.

Enviable indeed was her fate. Our lights were now extinguished; and the barn trembled as a reed. Just at that moment the house of Mr. Willson drifted by, and with it a jam of lumber from the sawmill and wrecks of buildings and bridges which resembled a moving mountain. Above the din of the astounding torrent, came the shrill repeated cries of the women and children, as they moved by in the floating tomb; during which, thrice came distinctly on my ear the cry, "Lord Jesus, save or we perish!" Faint and more faintly the accents fell,—and now were lost amid the roar of the waters. Alas! that words are so feeble representa-
tives of things! Fourteen souls yet remained in the barn. Nay! one had fled. The heavens brooded in blackness above us; and every instant the surges became more angry, and more loud. A light raft constructed of the doors and loose parts of the barn was flung together; and five of us, Mr. Farr, Summers the Englishman, Phinney, my son and myself, with this thin partition between us and a gaping death, pushed out from the barn. And all attempts to urge our float to land proving abortive, in the short space of fifteen minutes, we followed the same path after those whose shrieks had frozen our blood.

Leaving ourselves in this situation, we will look again at the barn, where we had left Mr. Stewart, the blind man, his wife, two sons, one twenty, and the other sixteen years of age, four daughters, one of whom was already dead, and a son of Mr. Farr. Fifteen or twenty minutes after we had left upon our raft, (as these young men who were preserved judge) the barn was undermined and plunged into the main stream. Yet it fell reluctantly, and tho' one end was shattered, the other still clung to its foundation as if willing to protect from the yawning billows a little longer, those who had fled to it for refuge. This moment was an age! Young the wart and Farr drew themselves upon the scaf-
fold, and the rest clung to different parts of the already half-wrecked building. Mrs. Stewart being caught in the fall of the building by her foot, feeling at the same time the limb above shattered to atoms, cried to her son on the scaffold, to release her by severing the mangled limb so that she might climb to the scaffold with them! But alas! this cruel kindness might not be performed. The frame groaned as it yielded to the unnatural violence of the waves, left its hold on the earth, and moved at first slowly and sorrowfully on toward the rapids, where, it will be borne in mind, the swells rolled twenty-seven feet above the ordinary level of the stream.

The reader has now seen us in three parties successively afloat on the relentless surges. After the escape of Mr. Willson and son, nineteen individuals were left to the enraged elements; and all now had left the spot where they were at first surrounded, which was now completely overflowed.

I can speak of none now, but those who were on the same float with myself. After leaving the barn and urging our way into the middle of the stream, as abovementioned, but few minutes elapsed before we arrived at the narrows. The first swell we rode in safety. But our little float was rifted in our attempt to rise the second, and in a
breath of time, none were above the surface of the water. This was a solemn parting. With my son, it was my last. As we neared the monstrous swells, my son in a tone of suppressed emotion observed to me—"in a few minutes we must all be in eternity," a broken reply in confirmation of the assertion was all I could, we spoke no more!

On our being plunged in the stream, I strove to keep at a distance from the surface, and to this expedient I probably owe my life; and, as my son was an expert swimmer, he most likely strove to keep on the surface, and by consequence, perished among the floating timbers.

Having used all my energy to keep below the surface, and being borne swiftly by the current, I passed through the rapids, a distance of 50 or 60 rods without sustaining any injury or receiving any water in my lungs. Heavy lumber, however, as I had passed under the last swell, plunging in almost a perpendicular direction, I received several severe blows upon my head and different parts of my body, by the force of which I was driven to an enormous depth in an eddy where the water stood at thirty or forty feet. At this moment I was driven in contact with one of those who com-
menced their journey with me on the raft. As my arm passed about the body I discovered no motion of life; I perceived by evident marks upon his clothing that it was no other than the corpse of my son! Cold indeed was the embrace! But no more cold than short. He was immediately swept from me, and I labored for the surface.

I gained it at length, and after receiving air sufficient to prolong life, was again dashed beneath, and again arose. I then secured a plank floating near, and by this means kept myself most of the time above. After floating thus about three quarters of a mile from the place where I embarked, I caught a hill of corn on the river bank, and remained till day break in three or four feet of water defended by unremitting exertion from the drift-wood which I distinguished only by the dark spot it occasioned on the white field of foam. By the grey of the morning I discovered but few rods above me, upon a ledge on which I had designed to land, two of the young men who had been wafted thither upon a large timber, which the water, although it over flowed it, had not sufficient force to drive past the ledge. About the same distance below me Mr. Farr, (who could not swim) having been wafted to the place by means of two planks which he seized on falling from the raft, had lodged upon a rolling
stump and forced its prongs in the earth. He had but just gained the position, when the older of the two young Stewarts floated by within speaking distance, not daring to trust an attempt to land, he passed the ridge on which we were secured and immediately again came in deep water. Floating a distance of about sixty rods, immediately above the cluster of rocky islands and a rapid in Otter Creek, to have passed which would have been death inevitable, he caught the top of a young tree, and climbing above the reach of the waves, remained until helped ashore next morning by his friends.

Mr. Farr and myself, after having been assisted to the ledge by the younger Stewart brother and young Farr, by means of a series of poles, confined by strings rent from their garments, and thrust to us, were, with the young men, brought ashore upon a raft constructed for the purpose by those assembled on the bank of the stream which still continued swollen and violent.

Five of the nineteen we have seen safe; the remaining fourteen are now quietly slumbering, alike regardless of the calls of friends, and the tumult of the waters. I have laid before the reader the simple facts in the case, leaving him to make his own reflections. I cannot forbear adding, how-
ever, that, with regard to my son, I sorrow not as those without hope. Yet the singularly awful impressions I received on grasping his corpse will leave me only with my existence. It seemed he had come to take his last farewell in the dark silent chambers of the deep, so that our greeting might be uninterrupted. The following lines tho’ simple are somewhat appropriate.

Whence com’st thou! my Boy! that thy nerves are all chill, And thy young limbs, which once might well buffet the wave? From the drift-wood, the surf, and the wind sonnding shrill, I have come to the deep where the storm may not rave.

Why com’st thou! my Boy! Could thy strength and thy skill, Not deliver thy life from thy play-mate, the wave? My Father! above us the tempest broods still, And I seek from its wrath a kind refuge—the grave!

Alas then! my son! May I meet thee no more, When the storm breeze is hushed and the billows all sleep! Thou may’st! But our meeting must be on that shore Of immortal delight where no tempests e’er sweep!

The following is a catalogue of those who were that night wafted into eternity, with their respective ages and the day on which they were found after the night of the freshet, with the distance below the village.

THE STEWART FAMILY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Stewart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva Stewart</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Stewart</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Julia Ann Stewart, 11  4  4  do.
Martha Stewart,  18  1  1 1-2 do.
Erastus Phinney,  16  4  4  do.
Mr. Stewart,  48  6  4  do.

THE WILLSON FAMILY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Willson</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 1-2 do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Willson</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6  do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Wheelock</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6  do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Willson</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 1-2 do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Willson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9  do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal W. Eldridge</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 1-3 do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Summers</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td>never found *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Months after the freshest, a young man named Benjamin Royce of Essex, N. Y. while fishing in the lake, opposite the mouth of Otter Creek, with one other individual, discovered some strange looking object floating near them, which they found on examining to be the remnant of a corpse, which some thought to be the body of Summers. One arm grasped a piece of drift-wood, the other was gone, as was also the head and most of the flesh. All they could determine, was, the skeleton was too large for a female. Having constructed a convenient coffin they committed the remains of the unknown to earth, on the margin of the lake from which they were rescued. Such, were I to choose, should be my burial. True, it is soothing to hope, when I am dead, some will remember me when they read my epitaph; But alas! it is infinitely more painful to feel some will weep when they gaze on my grave! It is true, the stranger lies in solitude; but it is equally true, his rest is unbroken by the mattock or the spade. And on the supposition that our spirits are careful of their dust, until “the sea shall give up the dead that are in it,” who would not prefer this stranger’s obsequies to the broken slumber of a loathly charnel. The wild fowl of the lake shall early tell him of the return of spring, when they smooth their down o’er his dreamy bed. He was deprived, it is true, of a pall, but the summer flowers annually supply the deficiency. No bell told his
Such is a feeble picture of the devastation occasioned at New-Haven hollow. Its local advantages, with the industry of the inhabitants, had rendered it what it was; a place where the hum of machinery, the gambols of joyous groups of school-children, with the bustle and activity always witnessed in a country village; had "taught e'en toil to please." But alas! what is it now! Twenty-four of its buildings have left their foundations and gone to sate the hunger of the waters. Most of the buildings which remain, rendered useless by the wrath of the night, seem only as melancholy remembrancers of their perished occupants—

As stranded vessels tell of those who lie
Beneath in cavern-chambers of the sea.

In reverting to the scene of ruin, the mind cannot departuro to an unfeeling multitude, but the autumn winds with the answering waves murmur of his death to the surrounding rocks, which, at least, (far more than the heartless multitude can) ring back an echo to his requiem. And when the piping blasts of winter shriek along the shore, the unfading cedars obtrude their overhanging boughs to shield his nameless, stoneless grave. Thus glides the years which rapidly hasten the time, when, though his form was shattered by the violence of his death,

"——— Scatter'd dimbs and all
The various bones obsequious to the call,
Self-moved advance; the neck again to meet
The distant head, the distant legs the feet."

And had I no hope of bliss beyond the grave; if a kind remembrance when dead, were my only solace here; I would cheerfully barter the chilling gaze of those multitudes who insult the dead by looking thoughtlessly on their tombs, for the honest sympathy and unfeigned awe which hove the bosom of the fishing boy, as he cautiously avoided a little hillock of earth, and informed me "The stranger was buried there."
dwell long on the ravages of that dismal night, without imaging to itself the gloom and terror, nay! utter agony of soul those endured, who were overtaken by the rapid rise of the stream. Slowly and gloomily the day had worn away, rendered almost a perpetual twilight by the sable aspect of the heavens, hung with low-drifting rain-clouds. At length it is night:—the plaintive cry of the whippoorwill is hushed; the last peal of thunder left an ominous tranquillity on the air: even the night-owl has betaken himself to his cavity; and as the stars one by one drew over their sickly countenances an impenetrable veil, darkness seemed, in the language of Milton, about to "regain her old possession."

"Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," as she followed her wonted round in the rear of the sun, looked drowsily from her dusky chariot of shade, and the village slumbered. Would it had been the slumbering of the tomb! But no! They awoke but to prove in their own melancholy instance the truth of the assertion; "In the midst of life we are in death!"

As is ever the case, when so alarming providences occur, many vague and uncertain rumors were afloat soon after this dreadful disaster was experi-
enced; it was however, well attested that a young Miss. Willson floated some distance on a fragment of the buildings, holding her infant sister in her arms, discerned, if at all, only by the glare of the lightnings, and some confidently aver that they heard her shrieks for aid above the din of the waters. This circumstance seems to have been the subject of the following lines which appeared in the Bellows Falls Intelligencer soon after the melancholy event.

THE STORM.

Low moaned the winds:—for the night clouds descending;
Heavily hung on the wiogs of the gale;
The ether rang loud, and the atmosphere bending,
Groaned to the lightnings and shrouded each vale.

Hush’d rose the vessels of storm from the ocean,
Gloomy and grand through the welkin they ride;
Bore by the selfacting spirit of motion,
Upward and onward all silent they glide.

Now on the frightened earth trembling and riven,
Swiftly their deluging contents they pour;
Veil’d is each light save the flashings of heaven;
Still’d every sound save the torrent’s wild roar.

Hark! On the mountain stream tumult and foaming,
Sweeping the wave-welt’ring ruins away;
Faint shrieks arise as if night-elves were roaming,
Uttering terror and looking dismay,

Alas! For the maid! the dark waters are bearing,
Sullen with merciless fury along;
Nerv’d by the hope that attends the despairing;
Strengthens the weak and inspires the strong.

Still on the fragment all fearful she drifted,
Her sister, the infant, her bosom still bore;
Vain! By the current relentless now rifted,
Rent is her bark and the maid is no more.
Sleep thee, then, Maiden! thy sorrows are ended!
Calm be thy rest 'neath the eddying wave;
Long shall the tear with thy story be blended,
When gloom shades the darkness and storm-spirits rave.

Thine was the bier the tall surges constructed;
Thine was the dirge which the wolfish winds moan,
Wild gleaming death-lights thy funeral conducted;—
Rest thee, then, Maiden! thou sleeps't not alone.

CHAPTER VI.

General notices of the freshet.

The extent of country which sustained any considerable damage in the storm we have noticed, embraced all the north part of Vermont, together with some towns on the western side of Lake Champlain, in length from 60 to 90 miles east and west, and from 50 to 60 north and south. Over this whole tract, wherever there were streams which might not be forded, travelling was almost utterly suspended. Though New-Haven, from its local situation, and the concurrence of unfortunate circumstances which brought down upon the little village we have described, the contents of almost every dam erected throughout the whole course of the stream, suffered a dreadful proportion of the loss of human life; yet it was far from being the only place, where the streams assumed a fearfully interesting aspect.

The Connecticut River, though it ordinarily re-
ceives but a small portion of its supplies from the tract of country above named, was forced, as some confidently affirm, several feet above the highest point it had ever before reached. And Onion River is alleged, on good authority, to have arisen, in a place in the stream where the channel is narrow and the banks abrupt, to the, enormous height of 60 feet above its ordinary level.

Mails were carried, if at all, by circuitous routes, and in one instance, a stageman undertaking, at the request of his passengers, to pass a stream in a boat, lost all but himself who were in the boat (3 or 4 gentlemen) with two of the United States' mails.

Such were the quantities of drift-wood borne to the lake by Otter Creek, Onion, Lamoille, and other smaller rivers, that Steamboats were compelled to lie by at night, or to proceed with danger and difficulty, aided by watch-lights and unremitting toil.

The damage occasioned by the fall of rain was seriously felt, even in mountain towns, where of necessity the streams were of inconsiderable size.—But those interests which were in the slightest degree exposed in ordinary cases, invariably sustained incalculable injury. In Middlebury, at a small
collection of buildings on a stream coming down from the mountains, near the Bottle Factory, a house occupied by Messrs. Smith and Champlin, was swept so suddenly from its foundation, as to afford them time to rescue none of its contents except the wife and nine children of Mr Smith.— The house stood a short distance below a saw-mill, each side of the dam of which was defended by a wing or dike raised above the remaining parts of the dam, to protect the banks in case of high water. But of so little service was the mound in the present storm, that the house beforementioned left its situation in fifteen minutes after the swells first broke over the wing of the dam, and the occupants of the dwelling were not clear from the dwelling so long as ten minutes before it was a complete wreck. In the morning, not one single trace distinguished the spot from the surrounding bed of the stream; and when the stream had subsided, so that it might be approached, the rocks which rested on the plot before occupied by the building, were as smoothly worn, and as large as those by which they were surrounded. Such was the violence of the current, that a stove was borne to an incredible distance down the stream from the site on which the house stood, and the lower part of the saw-mill, referred to above, was
filled, and the gearing imbedded to a depth of several feet with rocks of such weight as it would seem perfectly incredible could be moved one foot from their resting places by the agency of the most maddened waters.

Nor was the destruction of human life, in this short period of disaster, confined to the small portion of country more particularly noticed in these sketches. Instances of death by drowning were met with in the weekly journals, as incidents of ordinary occurrence; until the sympathies of our natures were congealed by the chilling frequency with which they were called in requisition.

With the reader's patience, one more "tale of woe" and I shall have done.

A young man in the town of Royalton, was desirous of urging a boat across a new current which White River had formed for its surplus waters, to an island between the old and new-formed channels, in order to bring away some individuals who stood on the island out of danger. It was on the day succeeding the night of storm, and the channels yet groaned under the burden of their contents, raging and chafing at the highest. Still, though unable to swim, he might not be persuaded to desist from his hazardous undertaking. He pushed from the shore, and labored for the insulated spot.
for which he had started. The boat moved slowly out in obedience to the oar, now lifting its prow to look above the swells towards the destined landing, and again, plunging in the troughs as if eager to avoid the crippling surges which every instant became more vehement, as it neared the middle of the stream. The middle of the stream he at length gained, and, with it, total incapability of controlling the boat. With the desperation of a life-effort, he pldyed his inexperienced shaft to force the boat along the water, but the despairing oar only produced a mocking bubble, and perchance, a murmur on the surface! Finding every effort ineffectual, and seeing himself already swept with resistless impetuosity to the middle of the main stream; in the blindness of affright and dizziness of despair, he sprang from the boat which still remained upright, and in an instant, disappeared. But it seems he was again doomed to feel the transports of hope, only the more effectually to wither under the blight of returning despair. After struggling to the surface, he was hurried along with an impetuosity [which almost prevented his sinking, until, by an extraordinary effort, he caught by a tree, which stood about ten rods from the margin of the swollen stream. Unfortunately, however, such was the violence of the current, he
could not bring his feet to the trunk, nor ascend by any other expedient from the reach of the water. Thus he remained suspended near an hour, during which he often spoke with the crowd gathering on the shore, who were making all possible efforts for his rescue. They attempted to urge out a boat, which they each time drew back having been filled with water and upset. Some young men attempted to arrive at him by swimming with ropes attached to them, but they were borne immediately down the stream and were drawn ashore. A dog was repeatedly sent toward him with a rope in his teeth, but the faithful animal each time returned, after an ineffectual struggle, almost suffocated. Meantime his strength became exhausted—the tones of his voice came more faintly on the ear—"I am gone!" and the words fell like accents from the land of spirits! They were his last! A slight rattle was heard, as the throat of the hungry element hid him from their sight.—A ripple for a moment curled on its fretted bosom; and again the turgid swells leaped wildly as before, to the din of their own discordant music.
CHAPTER VII.

Reflections. Reasons why men are reluctant to meditate on death.

Having completed this melancholy narrative, my imagination naturally accompanies it, in anticipation, during the little moment it may be destined to float above the waves of that oblivion which is constantly performing the kindly office of disburdening the book-case of nations; and, in accordance with a maxim by which the actions of all ought to be regulated, I cannot forbear proposing to myself the question, "what will this contribute to the happiness or misery of mankind?" Nor shall I plead guilty to the charge of vanity in assigning to these sketches an agency in promoting or diminishing the amount of happiness in the universe. If, in the natural world, the weight of an insignificant fly may occasion the revolution of a well balanced globe with a diameter of miles, surely it is not preposterous to affirm, that, in the moral world, the most inconsiderable cause which ever influenced the mind of a single individual, can by no means be neglected as ineffectual or despised as impotent.

Imaging to myself the feelings which the perusal of these pages will awaken in the minds of
those who may take them up, I need no art of
divination to foretell the character of the thoughts
which will arise in the minds of different classes
of individuals.

While the superficial mind experiences an in-
distinct sensation, in the production of which,
each part of the narrative may have exerted an
equal share of influence, the student will be af-
fected chiefly by the excellencies and deformities
of the style: the avaricious, will lament the useless
waste of goods in the operations of nature: the
sensitive, will shudder in sympathy with the wretch-
ed unfortunates whose lives were made the sport of
the elements: and a few, alas how few! struck
with the frailty of the ice-partition between life
and death, may learn to keep more constantly in
view the whole of their existence, grow more fa-
miliar with death, and, by regulating their lives as
though they expect to die, enable their souls, by
nearer and more unruffled approaches, to loose
their dread at the “king of terrors,” in the con-
templation of the enrapuring prospect which lies
beyond.

These thoughts, occasioned by following, as be-
fore hinted, this little work in its visit to the minds
of its readers, have suggested a train of reflections
on the cause of that universal, determined forgetful-
ness of death, which induces men to act and think, in almost all cases, as they would act and think if they were assured, beyond the possibility of mistake, that this life was unchangeable and interminable.

That men do thus act and think, until their conduct is controlled by the intervention of some other cause than their natural inclinations, needs no argument to substantiate. The object, then, in the following remarks will be to discover the cause of this reluctance to contemplate the subject of death, since, it is evident from the nature and extent of its effects, on the conduct of men, that this principle in our natures is universal in its existence, and destructively mischievous in its tendency.

1. But it may seem like trifling to some, to inquire for a reason why men avoid meditation on that which is an evil, and the thought of which must of necessity give them pain. That death is an evil, is evident, since it was at first denounced as a punishment; yet that is not, cannot be the cause why mankind are prone to thrust it from their minds. Suppose a rumor should be disseminated, that, before the expiration of the next half century, by some derangement in our system, the earth was to be unbalanced, and mankind destroyed in one general catastrophe: suppose such
a rumor to obtain universal credence, and be believed as implicitly as is the fact, that a few years, at most, will hide in earth every member of the human family: who is so much a fool, as to suppose such a calamity would be a topic on which few would speak, and fewer, far, would feel? Yet such a disaster would be an evil, to contemplate, which, would be as painful, if not infinitely more so, than to meditate on the silent process by which death has swept off former generations, and will soon remove us. Thus we see, most clearly, that we are naturally inclined to forget the subject of death, not because it is an evil. As far as we are concerned as individuals, the evil to us is the same as in the case which was supposed, viz. the ruin of our earth; which, all must at once see, from having witnessed the conduct of people when only the shadowy calamities of superstition were impending, would become the theme of constant conversation. All we are to prove, is, in this case, that evils may be connected with such circumstances that, with all our dread of them, we shall still meditate on them. This, I apprehend, is proved.

2. Nor, in the second place, is the aversion men naturally feel to sober, frequent reflection on this subject, owing to the consequences which they
fear attend on a change of worlds. To assert this, would be to affirm, that, though the cause why men choose to forget death, is not that death is an evil; it is because they dread the evils consequent upon this evil. This being alleged, the arguments used in the first case, would apply with equal force in this. But, again; it is evident men do not live in forgetfulness of death only, or chiefly because they dread the evils consequent upon it—from the fact, that there is no class of people under the circle of the heavens, who do not suppose that these evils may be avoided; or, at least, none who ever apprehended such evils. And all know, that, when men fear their interest or happiness on earth, is in danger of suffering by reason of any event, a dread of such a calamity does not prevent them from thinking much and deeply on the subject, if there is the remotest hope that the evil may be averted by taking certain precautions.

If this reasoning be correct, it is proved that the reason why mankind live in perpetual forgetfulness of death, cannot be because they dread it as in itself an evil; or because they dread its consequences, and;

3. There is but one more reason possible. This must be, an aversion to those precautions, and
that preparation for the event of death, which the
instinct itself of all nations and all individuals
seems to have persuaded them is necessary in or-
der to avert evils consequent upon it; which evils,
all nations have believed to exist. This, I be-
lieve is the cause. It amounts to this. Death is
inevitable; and from various sources of evidence
men are led to believe in, and consequently, to
dread misery of some kind which they fear it may
bring with it; and although all have believed this
misery might be avoided—although the bright
hunting grounds of the Indian, the dreamy Para-
dise of the Turk, the imaginary styfe of sensuality
of the Pagan, and the heaven of spiritual essence
and undying happiness of the Christian; all have
assured the votaries of the several creeds, that the
woe they dreaded might be shunned; still a dis-
inclination to comply with their own requisitions,
however low their standard of duty may have been,
has universally prevailed and has uniformly produ-
ced the same effects, viz. to cause men to live with-
out any reference to death. This is true of those only
whose bias and inclination has never been modifi-
ed or retrenched, and whose whole characters have
not undergone a radical alteration.

And it will be further evident that this dread of
death consists in a disinclination to prepare for it, if we imagine to ourselves a world, the circumstances of whose inhabitants, are in all respects like ours except their possession of perfect integrity of heart, and unspotted purity of life. Suppose the occupants of such a world, endowed with the same rational faculties with us, to possess a knowledge of the fact, that after a short period of time they must exchange theirs for another state of existence, what subject can we imagine would engross so great a share of their thought, feeling, and conversation as this? I need not complete the contrast by again referring to that principle of our natures which causes us, by averting the eyes of our mind from our real situation, to imitate the frantic child who, aiming to seize the gilt clouds in the stream, grasps nought but jagged rocks in his embrace, and is drowned.

With this view of the subject of these remarks, we cannot but observe, 1st, That men, by their dread of death, which has been seen to be but an unwillingness to prepare to meet it, most clearly prove themselves guilty, and acknowledge their guilt is their own choice.

In these remarks, more especially, many who may slightly look through the preceding pages, will find the reason why the fearful dispensation
of Providence in the death of the inhabitants of that village, scarce awakes in their bosom a single throb of sympathy. And, from this subject too, we learn why those who, by complying with the requisitions of God, are prepared to meet life or death with calm acquiescence, while with equal serenity they behold the smiles of nature and the tumults of the elements, can

"Look up to heaven with unpretentious eye,  
And say my father made them all."

I only add, to those who arrive at this frame of soul, and to those only can the words of Dr. Paley be applied, "The world from thenceforth becomes a temple, and life itself one continued act of adoration." While those who live for the single purpose of avoiding death; who gaze with eagerness on the dazzling of fiction, only to render themselves incapable of seeing in the more sober and permanent light of reality; who chase the phantoms of hope only when they run directly away from "that undiscovered country" to which all are hastening, and believe her promises only when she speaks of lasting joys on this side of the grave, which we know from our natures, she can never give;—those, I fear, whenever they look on these hastily sketched pages, or view, in any af,
flictive providence, the sad proof of the frail and unsatisfying character of those day-dreams which mock us with painted effigies of pleasure, will be driven by the goadings of returning reason to the despairing misanthropy of those who gaze unmoven on the convulsions of the elements, and only utter "SUCH IS LIFE."

STREAM OF LIFE.

I saw a stream.—Its waters wildly roll'd
In restless eddies; and the fretted foam
Vanished and came as to their far off home
Th' unwilling waves glide slowly, and oft turn
In backward flow; these, waves succeeding spurn,
Then onward murm'ring low their course, reluctant hold.

It was the stream of life.—Its surface bore
Unnumbered mortals, and the turgid wave,
Swift in succession swept them to the grave;
And as it neared th' illimitable sea;
Wide wondrous ocean! dread Eternity!
One shriek of woe ascended, and I saw no more.

Dimm'd was my sight, and sickened was my soul.
Is this, I sighed, our being?—this our end?
To toil one hour,—then to the tomb descend?
Let me not live, nor idly waste my breath
In empty wishes to escape the death
That in oblivion shrouds thy unbounded whole.

Hush! cried the voice Eternal wisdom gave;
Look where you silent-stealing river flows;
This, this, it said, this is the boon of those
Whose names are register'd beyond the sky;
Tranquil their life, and when their spirits fly,
They reap immortal blessedness beyond the grave.

I turned;—soft beaming on my raptur'd sight
A still clear stream, 'twixt leaf-clad borders flowed,
On its pure bosom sportive sunbeams glow'd;
While those it wafted, calm, with cheerful mien,
Eye the gilt clouds or view the landscape green,
Till the scene fades in rays of everlasting light.

BLANCHARD.