

### ***An Awful Visitation which happened in a Coat Pit near the City of Durham.***

They went down alive into the pit. Num. xvi. 33.  
I became like them that go down into the pit. Psal. xxviii. 1.  
Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit. Psal. lxxxviii. 6.  
He brought me up also out of an horrible pit. Psal. 1x. 2.

EARLY in the morning of Monday, November 3, 1823, being at Middle Rainton, about five miles from the City, of Durham, and one of the Colliery Towns belonging to the Marquis of Londonderry, I was informed, by sister Henderson, of a sudden and awful calamity which had taken place in one of the coal pits, called the "Plane Pit," near to Colliery Row, very early on the above-mentioned morning. The calamity was occasioned by fire, foul-air, and the after-damp. Not long after our sister had related her awful tidings, her husband came in, and, with sighs and tears, confirmed the same.

As soon as I conveniently could, I, with brother Henderson and his wife, hastened to the place where was the scene of misery. On our way to the pit, we met a horse and cart bearing the lifeless corpse of one of the sufferers. When we arrived at the place, one of the most affecting scenes presented itself that I ever witnessed. The distracted inhabitants were assembled in multitudes. Women, who had lost their husbands and sons, were to all appearance, frantic; tearing their hair and making a most fearful mourning noise. Children who were left fatherless, were in no less trouble, but with excessive grief, filled the air with their cries. In a word, all faces gathered blackness, and every countenance seemed painted with mourning, lamentation, and woe! Every exertion was made to extricate the dead bodies from the destructive pit. I beheld several of the unfortunate sufferers brought on the bank. Some of them were so severely burned that they appeared as though they had been flayed alive. Others had no marks of the devouring flame, but were suffocated by the sulphur and after-damp. Some were so dreadfully mutilated, that their mangled bodies could not appear on the bank without coffins.. The bottom of the pit presented a truly awful spectacle; heads, arms, hands, legs, feet, and pieces of flesh, were found scattered about; and some of the bodies were burnt as black as a cinder. In fine, the appearance of some was such, that it was next to impossible for the beholders to challenge their mutilated relatives. The whole scene portrayed such havoc and misery, as to me is indescribable.

But the scene at the pit did not show all: when the mourning friends came to receive their dead, a still more heart-breaking sight (if more could be) presented itself. The besom of destruction made a desolate sweep in some of the houses. One woman lost her husband and all her sons, which were two; another lost her three sons; and one poor widow lost the only son she had to keep the house over her head. Among the rest, our societies in these parts have sustained the loss of a pious and excellent class leader, and two members. The whole number which were so awfully and suddenly launched into eternity, amounted to about sixty souls.

It would swell the account too much to describe the funeral processions, the almost innumerable crowds that attended, and the manner of interment. Many of them were buried together in large graves, which necessity caused to be made for these unfortunate fellow-creatures.

Neither will I enlarge upon my labours or fatigue, which I underwent by night and by day among the disconsolate relations of the unfortunate sufferers, during the greater part of this awful. and melancholy week, but leave it to that God who is not unrighteous to forget our works and labour of love.

But this calamity has not been the only one of the kind in this neighbourhood. Several have taken place within the memory of this generation; I will notice a few in addition to the above, hoping it may prove a, warning to all colliers, and all others in dangerous occupations in life, to *speedily prepare to meet their God.*

In this neighbourhood the following awful misfortunes have taken place:—In December, 1777, at Chater's-haugh there were twenty-four lost. In June, 1794, at Harreton, twenty-eight. In October, 1799, at Lumly, thirty-nine. In October, 1805, at Hebron, thirty-two. In November the same year at Oxclose, thirty-eight. In May, 1812, at Felling, ninety-two. In October the same year at Harrington, near Shiney-row, twenty-three. In September, 1813, at Fat Field, thirty-two. In May, 1815, at

Heaton, by an inundation of water, seventy-five. In June the same year at Neasham's Success-pit, fifty-five. June 30, at Narraton, Nova Scotia, thirty-eight. In December, 1817, in the Plane Pit, twenty-seven. And in October, 1821, at Wallsend Colliery, fifty-two! And these are only some of the principal places where havoc has been made. How ever, one would think the bare reading of these things would impress on the mind of the most hardened collier, the indispensable necessity of immediately getting ready to die. May God grant that such an effect may be produced on all who read it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

*An Address to the Hard-hearted Colliers.*

TO you I write; have you made, or do mean to make a right and proper use of the late awful misfortune? What effect has the mangled, burned, and suffocated bodies of so many of your unfortunate fellow-creatures, produced in you. Have you taken warning by this awful judgment? Has it brought you to a consideration of yourselves? Has it caused you to leave off your sins, to make a full surrender, and fully to turn to God? or has it only made an alarming impression which has since worn off? And are you still determined to pursue your old course of sinning, and to "care for none of these things?" Well, if you are still resolved to go on in your old course of drunkenness, swearing, lying, gaming, sabbath-breaking, and your other debauched practices, remember that God will yet find you out; yea, and your sins will find you out too. Remember, that, if the preaching of the gospel, together with the many and loving admonitions you receive from time to time, do not produce a reformation in you, God will most assuredly have recourse to his judgments. And oh! - what strange work doth the Almighty make when he lets loose his judgments. "If mercy, (abused mercy) be his darling attribute, surely judgment is his strange work."

Oh ye ungodly ones, the omnipotent. God has more ways by which he can destroy you than one. If no warning will avail in time, remember there is an awful hereafter! I say, remember there is a burning hell, and a sin-avenging God, who will by no means clear the guilty. Oh wicked man look before you, and both see and hear what the Lord God doth say;---"The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." Psal, vii. 17. And when God gets the wicked into hell, "He will rain upon them snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, and this shall be the portion of their cup." Psal. xi. 6, yea, the Eternal God will hold this "cup" in his own hand, for it is the "cup" of his fury, and he will make the wicked to wring out the very dregs, and drink them. Psal. lxxv. 8, and Jer. xxv. 15.

Oh! ye drunken colliers remember this; fond as you are, in this world, of your glasses and cups of drink, remember, that (unless timely repentance prevents it,) you will also have a cup to drink out of in hell-fire! A cup, this will be, without the least mixture, (no mercy to sweeten it) a cup of wrath and indignation from the hand of the Lord; together with being tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels; and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of your torments will ascend up for ever and every ! Rev. xiv. 14, 11.

Oh! consider this ye that forget God, consider of it and speak your minds, before it be too late, stop, poor sinner, stop! I charge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to stop and think before you go one inch further! Took at your soul, what state it is in, Oh! fly to Jesus, fly to God's people, get among them, and earnestly endeavour to save your immortal soul !

You see, within these last forty-six years God has permitted no-less than six hundred and fifteen souls or more, round about your neighbourhood to be hurried from the coal-pit into eternity! And you cannot tell, reader, (if you are a pit-man,) but you may be the very next that must obey the awful summons. Oh! get ready to die! May the Lord grant you grace to begin, continue, and end well, so that I may at last meet with all who read this, in the kingdom of glory; which is the sincere prayer of your soul's well-wisher in Christ. N. WEST.

---

Reference

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1824/40ff