

# THE RECENT FLOODS AT NAPIER

Of the four elements—fire, air, earth, and water—into which the simple ancient cosmology divided the universe, the second and last are undoubtedly the two that have wrought most destruction to mankind. If we could have the numbers of those who have come to a sudden end through hurricanes or in floods since Noah emerged in safety from the flood *par excellence*, there would be a very long list of figures indeed; probably longer than corresponding lists of those who have perished through plague, or famine or by the sword. It is estimated that some 13,000,000 of people have lost their lives by earthquakes since the beginning of history, and the number seems striking enough, but compare it with that of those who have been drowned by inroads of the sea or overflowing of rivers and it sinks into insignificance. Take the record of the last 16 or 17 years alone and pick out the great floods of that period. First comes the great tidal wave that passed over a portion of China in 1876 and swept over 200,000 souls into eternity. Then in 1887 the Celestial Empire was again visited by a flood, but this time it carried unheard of disaster with it. After a period of heavy rain that great river the Hoang ho, burst its southern bank and inundated a great portion of the province Honan, destroying human lives to the number of millions. The next great disaster that occurs to us is that terrible one at Johnstonville, Pennsylvania, U.S., where 10,000 lives were lost through the bursting of a reservoir. Besides these three, there have been many smaller floods which, if they have not been attended with heavy loss of life, have caused extensive damage to property. The floods in Queensland might be cited as an instance of these.

The size of New Zealand and the peculiar conformation of the country are an assurance to us that we may never greatly fear visitations such as those which cause havoc in the plains of China. At the same time we have some rivers that can pour down no contemptible volume of water, and when in flood, might prove very dangerous in their passage through some of the low lying valleys. These valleys are, of course, the places most liable to inundation. As they contain the best land they are sure in the future to be the most populous agricultural parts of New Zealand. It is in these places, therefore, that we may look for our most memorable floods in the future. Let us hope they may be few and very far between.

The recent inundations in Hawke's Bay may appear and are very insignificant indeed compared with some of the catastrophes alluded to above. When people, however, are sufferers to any considerable extent themselves they are not given to look at their sufferings comparatively, and it would be little consolation to the people of the Bay to be told that the natives of the Hoang ho sustained infinitely greater loss, even when the terrible mortality in the latter case is left out of consideration. Their loss has been serious enough. Fortunately, the loss of human life was small, the Rev. Mr Douglas and Mr Duncan McFarlane being the only victims; but, from all accounts, there were many who had very narrow and marvellous escapes from death. In some cases the crews of the rescuing boats at Clive had to

wrench the weather boards from the gable ends of the houses in order that the inmates might escape. It is not easy to estimate the loss of stock and the damage to crops and property for which the floods are answerable.



Mr. Cobb, photo. REV. S. DOUGLAS.

In a comparatively short time, thousands of sheep and hundreds of cattle and horses must have perished, and acres on acres of ground under cultivation have been inundated, and the hopes of whole farming districts shattered. The flood waters covered the whole of the low-lying country between Napier and Ormondville, which lies about sixty miles from the coast. On this plain are farms of all kinds in a most prosperous condition. It is splendidly watered by several rivers, which take their rise in the Ruahine and Kaimanawa Ranges, and empty themselves into the bay. The country, as we said, is flat and low-lying, so that the result of a sudden increase in the volume of these streams may be easily understood. It is one of the finest districts in the colony. Clive, which suffered particularly through the floods, is a township situated in a rich agricultural district, seven miles from Napier, on the southern bank of the Ngaruroro. Its proximity to Napier, with the enterprise of its residents, has made it a prosperous manufacturing centre. It possesses three large boiling down establishments, furnishing employment to a large number of hands, two cooperages, a steam flour mill, and a trading steamer, which conveys wool and tallow down the river to the large English ships in

the roadstead. The public park at Farndon, 20 acres in extent, is the finest recreation ground in Hawke's Bay. Hastings, where the devastation by the floods has been very serious, is a borough town on the Heretaunga plains, twelve miles from Napier by rail, the centre of a rich agricultural and pastoral country containing about 40 square miles. The Ngaruroro River is about 4½ miles distant, and the principal streams are the Makirikiri and Te-Awa-o-te-Atua. Waipawa, which was also visited by the floods, is a township on the main line of road and rail between Wellington and Napier, distant about 41 miles from Napier. It is situated on the north bank of the Waipawa River, and is in the middle of a fertile and advancing district. Ormondville is a township on the verge of the bush, and is distant about 20 miles from the Rushmore Mountain. It is, however, in the more northerly portion of the district, close to Napier, that the water was highest. The low-lying nature of the country offers no protection against floods of such a wide-spread nature. It is a matter for deep regret that the settlers in this district, which is now going ahead rapidly, should have been subjected to such severe injury and loss of property as was the case.

The Rev. S. Douglas, one of the unfortunate gentlemen who perished, was a native of Dalbeattie, in Scotland, and subsequently took his degree of M.A. at Glasgow University. He attended the Divinity Hall of the Free Church for two sessions and, coming out to New Zealand, completed his studies here. He was ordained to the Presbyterian Church at Kaikoura in 1886, and inducted at Meanee, Port Napier, in 1889. Mr Douglas was greatly esteemed by all who knew him, as a Christian and a gentleman.

Mr Duncan McFarlane, who shared the same fate, was a young man of great promise and worth. He belonged to Tyree, where his father was a minister of the Baptist Church. He is most highly spoken of by all who knew him



Mrs. Cobb, photo. MR DUNCAN M'FARLANE.

as 'a loving brother, a dutiful son, a true friend, a genial companion, a trusted servant, and a man who was generous and considerate to all.'

### CURIOUS EPITAPHS.

IN Newland Church, Gloucestershire:—  
On a marble tablet under the tower of the Church.

Under this Stone Interr'd doth lie  
The Mirror of true Charity  
To God, his Friends & Country dear,  
The poorest Supporter fair & near,  
His days hee Spent in peace and Quiet  
He never gaue himselfe to riot;  
A Vertue Strange in those his days  
When it was scorn'd & Vice had praise,  
He lived long and did Survive  
Fully the Years of Seventy Five,  
And at ye last expir'd. his date  
April the 8th. in 1668.  
*Christopher Bond, Gent.*

IN Stanton Churchyard, Gloucestershire:—  
In memory of Wm. Jenkins, who died October 10th,  
1889, aged 91 years:

Here lies a man whose badge of fame  
Was freely won in freedom's name:  
Whose generous heart and mind serene  
Were tempered by his judgment clear;  
For whom fair virtue sketched a plan,  
And modelled him an honest man.

IN Helsington Churchyard, Westmoreland:—  
To the memory of Mary Garnett, who died 19th January,  
1831, aged 88 years.

This lonely spot of ground contains  
The dust of Mary's last remains.  
Her deeds of charity and worth  
Will be recorded long on earth.

IN Heverham Churchyard, Westmoreland:—  
To the memory of William Whalley, who died 11  
February, 1786, aged 65 years.

What kind of a man he was  
The LAST DAY will discover.



MAIN STREET, CLIVE.