

I sometimes heard old Dr. Colquhoun of Leith preach. There were fewer authors among the clergy in those days than now; and I felt a special interest in a living divine who had written so good a book, that my Uncle Sandy—no mean judge in such matters—had assigned to it a place in his little theological library, among the writings of the great divines of other ages. The old man's preaching days, ere the winter of 1824, were well nigh done: he could scarce make himself heard over half the area of his large, hulking chapel, which was, however, always less than half filled; but, though the feeble tones teasingly strained the ear, I liked to listen to his quaintly-attired but usually very solid theology; and found, as I thought, more matter in his discourses than in those of men who spoke louder and in a flashier style. The worthy man, however, did me a mischief at this time. There had been a great Musical Festival held in Edinburgh about three weeks previous to the conflagration, at which oratorios were performed in the ordinary pagan style, in which amateurs play at devotion, without even professing to feel it; and the Doctor, in his first sermon after the great fires, gave serious expression to the conviction, that they were judgments sent upon Edinburgh, to avenge the profanity of its Musical Festival. Edinburgh had sinned, he said, and Edinburgh was now punished; and it was according to the Divine economy, he added, that judgments administered exactly after the manner of the infliction which we had just witnessed should fall upon cities and kingdoms. I liked the reasoning very ill. I knew only two ways in which God's judgments could be determined to be really such,—either through direct revelation from God himself, or in those cases in which they take place so much in accordance with His fixed laws, and in such relation to the offence or crime visited

---

resembled nothing but hell; for there were vaults of wine and spirits which sent up huge jets of flames whenever they were called into activity by the fall of these massive fragments. Between the corner of the Parliament Square and the Tron Church, all is destroyed excepting some new buildings at the lower extremity."