

die away gradually; and when afterwards their four corpses were disinterred, they were found clasped in each other's arms. Affecting narratives are preserved of mothers saved after the fifth, sixth, and even seventh day of their interment, when their infants or children had perished with hunger.

It might have been imagined that the sight of sufferings such as these would have been sufficient to awaken sentiments of humanity and pity in the most savage breasts; but while some acts of heroism are related, nothing could exceed the general atrocity of conduct displayed by the Calabrian peasants: they abandoned the farms, and flocked in great numbers into the towns—not to rescue their countrymen from a lingering death, but to plunder. They dashed through the streets, fearless of danger, amid tottering walls and clouds of dust, trampling beneath their feet the bodies of the wounded and half-buried, and often stripping them, while yet living, of their clothes.*

Concluding remarks. — But to enter more fully into these details would be foreign to the purpose of the present work, and several volumes would be required to give the reader a just idea of the sufferings which the inhabitants of many populous districts have undergone during the earthquakes of the last 150 years. A bare mention of the loss of life—as that fifty or a hundred thousand souls perished in one catastrophe—conveys to the reader no idea of the extent of misery inflicted: we must learn, from the narratives of eye-witnesses, the various forms in which death was encountered, the numbers who escaped with loss of limbs or serious bodily injuries, and the multitude who were suddenly reduced to penury and want. It has been often remarked, that the dread of earthquakes is strongest in the minds of those who have experienced them most frequently; whereas, in the case of almost every other danger, familiarity with peril renders men intrepid. The reason is obvious—scarcely any part of the mischief apprehended in this instance is imaginary; the first shock is often the most destructive; and, as it may occur in the dead of the night, or if by day, without giving the least warning of its approach, no forethought can guard against it; and when the convulsion has begun, no skill, or courage, or presence of mind, can point out the path of safety. During the intervals, of uncertain duration, between the more fatal shocks, slight tremors of the soil are not unfrequent; and as these sometimes precede more violent convulsions, they become a source of anxiety and alarm. The terror arising from this cause alone is of itself no inconsiderable evil.

Although sentiments of pure religion are frequently awakened by these awful visitations, yet we more commonly find that an habitual state of fear, a sense of helplessness, and a belief in the futility of all human exertions, prepare the minds of the vulgar for the influence of a demoralizing superstition.

Where earthquakes are frequent, there can never be perfect

* Dolomieu, *ibid.*