

lady fell a victim to the flames, still clasping to her bosom the object of her tenderness and the cause of her sorrowful fate.

The lower orders of Calabria manifested, amidst all the horrors of this awful catastrophe, the very excess of depravity. On the tottering walls, and among the smoking ruins, men might be seen who braved an ever-present danger, and trod under their feet the half-buried victims, vainly imploring their assistance, in search of gold or jewellery or plate—breaking open and plundering the houses that still stood erect. They stripped, while yet warm with life, the bodies of their unfortunate fellow-creatures, who would have rewarded them lavishly for timely help. At Polistena, a gentleman of rank had been buried under the ruins of his house, with his head downwards; only his legs could be seen, which protruded into the air. His servant ran up to him—but it was only to tear away the silver buckles of his shoes, and then to take flight immediately, in spite of the entreaties of his master, who contrived, however, to effect his deliverance by his own exertions. The greater number of the Calabrian peasants who chanced to be in the open fields on the fatal 5th of February, poured headlong into the towns, still enveloped in clouds of dust; hastening thither, says Dolomieu,* not to carry help and encouragement—no feeling of humanity awoke in their bosoms in these terrible circumstances—but to rob and plunder.

Frequently, as we have said, the survivors were so few that they could render no effectual assistance to the buried persons. A mother, with dishevelled hair, and covered with blood,—a father half-mad with grief,—heard from beneath the earth the moans and cries of their dearest and best-beloved; they recognized their voices, and knew the exact place where they were slowly dying, yet were utterly unable to give them any help. The want of strong arms and stout hearts, the enormous mass of débris which required to be removed, paralyzed all the efforts of those who sought to deliver them, and who found themselves compelled to listen in despairing inaction to the complaints of the victims, and to the groans extorted from them by their supreme agony. These appalling sounds were sometimes heard for several days consecutively.

In the town of Terranova, four Augustinian monks having taken refuge in the sacristy of their convent, were saved from immediate death by the solidity of its vaulted roof, which sustained unshaken the pressure of the superjacent ruins. But how could any succour reach them? Out of more than a hundred brethren whom the monastery had contained, only one had effected his escape, his extraordinary bodily strength enabling him to struggle through the earth, timber, and masonry under which his comrades lay crushed. Wandering to and fro, solitary and despairing, he heard, for four days, the cries of the poor wretches shut up in the vaulted sacristy; their voices gradually grew fainter, and when, at last, the ruins were cleared away, they were found with their arms interlaced in death.

* Dédot de Dolomieu, "Mémoire sur les tremblements de terre de la Calabre, pendant l'année 1783" (in 4to), p. 12.