

part of the devoted city, nothing could exceed the general consternation. Flight was considered the only remedy, and it was adopted by at least one half of the population. The wealthy citizens collected as much of their effects and provisions as possible, and instantly quitted the city; the poor fled in great numbers, and took up their abode amongst rocks and caves, and in whatever huts or tents they could hastily construct. Those who were connected with the sea took refuge with all their families in boats and vessels in the harbour. But in many cases, all those precautions were useless. The unhappy fugitives had borne away with them the seeds of this frightful disease, and not only miserably perished; but in several instances were deprived of the solace of human sympathy, and the powerful succours of religion. To add to the horrors of the scene, those whose particular duty it was to provide for the health and security of the inhabitants had abandoned Marseilles. The officers of justice, the directors of hospitals, the conservators of public health, the town-councillors, and all the municipal officers, with the exception of the sheriffs, also fled from their posts. In this terrible calamity, the heroic charity of the bishop presented a remarkable contrast to the weakness and timidity of others. M. de Belzunce had for twelve years governed the see of Marseilles, when the plague made its appearance. He was of illustrious birth, and distinguished both for eloquence and learning; but all are forgotten in the recollection of his Godlike charity. He resisted every entreaty to quit the city, placed himself at the head of his clergy, and at all hours of the night and day was to be found in the midst of the sick and the dying. He procured every relief that medicine could afford, and took care that all spiritual assistance should be given. He was ever foremost in braving danger, visited all the hospitals, and administered the sacraments with his own hands, unless when he was more urgently employed in the duties of his office, or in collecting alms and provisions for the poor and the sick. The clergy were animated by his example, and displayed the most noble instances of self-devotion and courage. Between two and three hundred priests and religious were carried off by the contagion, the greater part of whom were martyrs of charity. It is calculated that about fifty thousand persons perished altogether from this devastating scourge. In the month of September, when it raged with the greatest violence, the deaths were one thousand a-day. On the festival of All Saints, the bishop, on his bare feet, with a halter round his neck, and a torch in his hand, walked in procession to an altar that had been erected under the open air, on which he offered the holy sacrifice to appease the anger of heaven. He then made a most pathetic appeal to his suffering flock, and conjured them to avert the divine scourges by prayer, alms-deeds, and penance; after which he solemnly consecrated the city to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The plague now began to diminish; at the following Easter the churches were re-opened for divine service, and on the 20th June, the festival in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was celebrated throughout the city with the greatest solemnity and devotion, and in about two months after, the holy prelate congratulated his people in a pastoral letter, on the cessation of the scourge. From this time the devotion rapidly spread throughout