

The World's Greatest Disaster

By **GERALD A. RODERICK**

ROME, ITALY.—For 20 years I have been an American correspondent in this city, but until the disaster which befell Calabria and Sicily, when on the morning of December 28, 1908, the worst earthquake or other disaster which the world has ever known killed scores of thousands, it had never been my lot to even shudder



THERE WERE SCENES OF INDESCRIBABLE HORROR

over a calamity. Hardened as I was to catastrophes, the piteous sights which met my gaze at Messina, Reggio and other cities more than once drew tears to my eyes.

It was my good fortune to be one of the members of the party of King Victor Emmanuel and Queen Helena, when the ruler visited the stricken district, and many times both the monarch and his consort broke down completely upon viewing the awful sights which followed the earthquakes, fires and tidal waves.

Survivors were raving maniacs and they roved the black-strewn streets, in many instances nude.

The stories told by unfortunate refugees who retained their senses were almost unbelievable. A soldier named Emilio de Castro was in the military hospital. He was awakened by a tremendous roaring sound. He felt himself falling and thought he was in the grip of a nightmare. It seemed to him that he had awakened in hell, for the air was filled with terrifying shrieks. He soon realized, however, what was happening. His bed struck the floor below, and he was still on it. It passed a moment and was again precipitated. He struck the next floor but this gave way at once, and thus the man and bed came down from the fifth floor of the hospital to the ground. The soldier was not injured.

A druggist named Pulco relates that at 25 minutes past five Monday morning he was on a ferryboat in the port of Messina going to Reggio. Suddenly a gale of wind arose, bringing a heavy sea with it. Then a great chasm seemed to open in the water and the boat went down and struck the bottom. But the waters closed in again and the ferryboat floated safely on top of the succeeding wave. Most of the people on board, however, were swept off and drowned. The boat was badly wrecked but it floated ashore. Pulco was still on board. After the first panic he landed and found Reggio like a city of the dead. No body was moving in the streets, and the silence was broken only by the moans and groans and shrieks of the wounded. Pulco and several companions tried to extricate some wounded from the wreckage, but this was almost impossible because of the crumbling ruins. In one of the squares Pulco found a group of people all completely naked. One old man was carrying a little girl in his arms. The child was covered with blood. "Is that your child?" he was asked. "No," he replied. "Yesterday I found her on the pavement in Messina. I picked her up and cared for her. No one claimed her and I could not abandon her. I have had her in my arms ever since." With this touching explanation the old man became oblivious to his questioner and everything around him.

The Serapian brought into the port of Naples records of numberless tragedies. Families separated; mothers mourning and crying for their dead children; husbands and wives lost to each other, or a sole survivor wishing that he had not been spared. There was one girl on board the steamer, her clothing tattered and torn, who had saved a canary bird. She was a music hall singer, and had clung to her pet throughout the terrible scenes of devastation. The bird was the only happy thing on board the vessel.

One of the Messina doctors was sleeping in a room on the third floor when the first shock came, and saved himself by gripping the roof of a neighboring house.

A ferryboat moored at one of the docks seemed suddenly to be thrown high into the air. It landed on top of the dock safely.

The nerves of the unfortunates were in such a condition that at the least noise they were prone to rush screaming from their rooms, seeking the open streets. Signor Birot, the mayor of Brescia,

in Lombardy, was stopping at the Hotel Trinacria, in Messina, and was buried under the ruins of the building for five hours. Finally several persons approached the place where he lay, but at that moment a fresh shock put them to flight. Eventually a body of sailors extricated him unconscious and took him aboard a ship.

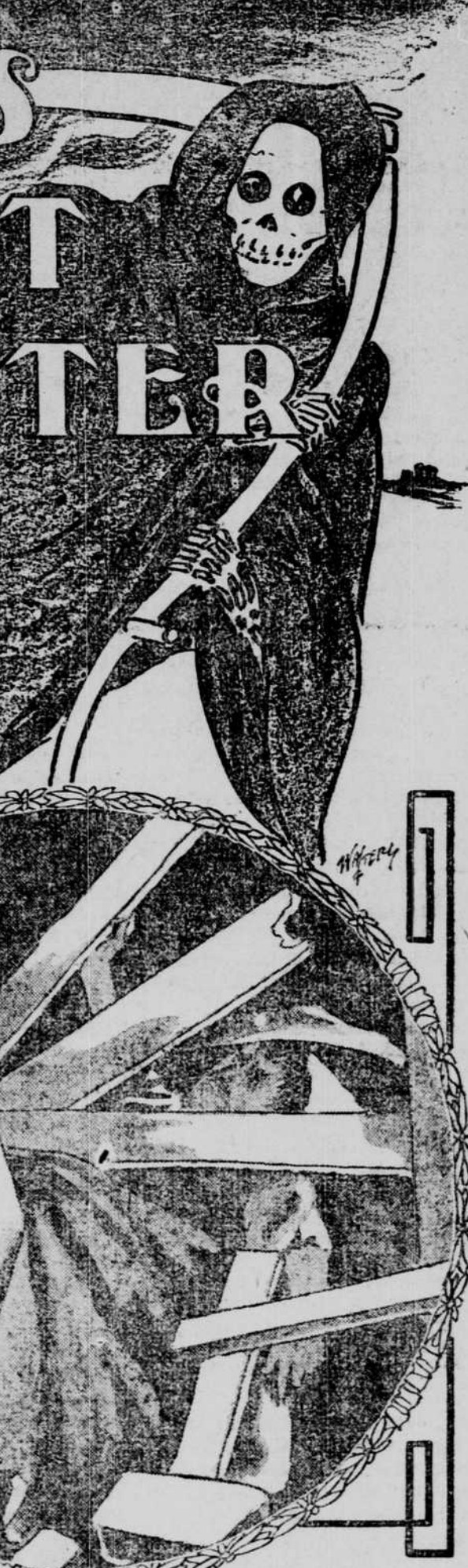
A young doctor named Rosa at Messina, gives a vivid account of his experiences. "Suddenly the profound silence was broken by an extraordinary noise like the bursting of a thousand bombs," he says. "This was followed by a rushing and torrential rain. Then I heard a sinister whistling sound that I can liken to a thousand red hot iron rods hissing in water. Suddenly there came violent rhythmic movements of the earth and the crashing down of nearby walls made me realize the awful fact of the earthquake. Falling glass, bursting roofs and a thick cloud of dust added to the horror of the situation, while the extraordinary double-movement, rising and falling at the same time, crumbled walls and imperiled my life. I rushed into the room where my mother and sister were and with a rope, which fortunately I had with me, I succeeded in rescuing them. I was also successful in getting out of the house a number of other persons who had given themselves up for lost. Then some soldiers came and helped me, and together we dragged forth several women and children from the tottering walls of a half destroyed palace near by. A few seconds later this building was entirely destroyed. There were scenes of indescribable horror in the streets and squares through which my party made its way. We finally gained the open country."

Another survivor of Messina said: "The first thing I knew I was thrown out of bed. Then the floor of my room collapsed and I fell into the apartment under me. Here I found a distracted woman searching for her sister and son, whom she found dead. We remained in the ruins for 24 hours, entirely alone, without food or drink. We made a rough shelter of boards to keep the rain off. Our ears were assailed with the cries and moans of the wounded. These sounds abated somewhat during Monday night. Still no one came to our assistance. We were as in a tomb, with the dead bodies of our children beside us. We could see no one, but every time sounds were heard from the street there would come an outburst of piercing cries for help from the injured hidden and pinned down in the wreckage."

This refugee lost his two children. He arrived in Rome half clad and covered with dust and burns. His wife was clothed in little else than an old counterpane.

the steamboats on the Lake of Geneva.

the traditions of the Ottoman press, which is never allowed by the censor to admit that any chief of any state or any member of any royal family has died a violent death. It stated that Alexander of Servia and Queen Draga "died of indigestion at the dead of night," that President Carnot succumbed to a "chill," and that the Empress Elizabeth of Austria "had a sudden attack of apoplexy on one of



THE MAN LAY IN THIS POSITION FOR FIVE HOURS



"I FELL INTO THE APARTMENT UNDER ME"

The station master at Reggio says that immediately after the first shock a chasm 80 feet wide was opened in the earth. From this there gushed forth a flood of boiling water, some jets rising to the height of an ordinary house. Many injured persons who were in this vicinity were horribly scalded by the flowing stream.

Paolo Rizo, the mayor of Capriolo, was in Messina on a pleasure trip that fateful Monday morning. He was awakened by the fearful roar of the first shock. The floor of his room fell, and, half unconscious, he was precipitated into a mass of rubbish. His body lodged in a niche in a wall, and he was pinned down by a heavy beam, his face being covered by a carpet that threatened to suffocate him. He managed to move the carpet with his teeth until he made an opening in the folds through which he could breathe. The man lay in this position for five hours, expecting death at any moment. Had it been possible, he says, he would have committed suicide.

The Marquis Vincenzo Genesio of Palmi was awakened by a tremendous roar and a severe shock. It seemed as though the house was whirling round, like the wings of a windmill.

At Messina a frightful scene occurred amid the ruins of the customs house. The first of the searchers who were successful were attacked by others with revolvers and knives, and were obliged to defend their finds literally with their lives. The struggle was fierce. The famished men threw themselves upon each other like wolves and several fell dismembered in defending a handful of dry beans or a few ounces of flour. One of the unfortunates was pinned to a plank by a knife, while clinging to his hand was his little child, for whom he had sought food.

REAL 'LIVE' GHOST SEEN IN ENGLAND

VISION OF VICAR IS PROJECTED ALL THE WAY FROM ALGERIA TO NORFOLKSHIRE.

ALLEGED PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Disembodied Spirit in Bodily Shape Seen by Preacher, Aged Woman and Maid—Man Unconscious at the Time.

London.—One of the chief topics in London recently has been the Astley ghost story, which from the statements made by persons concerned, the circumstances of the alleged apparition, and the effort made at prompt investigation, deserves a special place in the chronicles of alleged psychic phenomena.

As a rule, spook stories rest upon second-hand evidence. In this instance three persons have made affidavits of what they saw. One is Rev. Robert Brock, who is acting as locum tenens for Rev. Dr. Hugh Astley, vicar of East Rudham, who is wintering in Algeria and whose disembodied spirit is stated to have made its appearance in bodily shape at his Norfolkshire vicarage.

The first news of the alleged apparition was published in the London Times in a letter from Rev. Robert Brock. The Times assigned a well-qualified correspondent to investigate and while this correspondent has been unable to see the apparition himself his circumstantial reports have been a plausible contribution to the case.

Rev. Mr. Brock's story follows: "Owing to the fact that his wife was not in good health, Dr. Astley, vicar of East Rudham, decided to winter in a warmer climate, obtaining a chaplaincy at Biskera, Algeria, and left England with Mrs. Astley on December 10. It was arranged that I should act as locum tenens.

"I met Dr. Astley for the first time in London on December 9 and spent not more than half an hour with him

prior to coming on here; and I heard nothing more of him until December 26, when I received a letter from Rev. Herbert Muriel, the English chaplain at Algiers, announcing that Dr. and Mrs. Astley had sustained injuries in a railway accident on December 16. On the same evening I got the letter when I was seated in the dining-room with Mrs. Hartley, the housekeeper, came to me and said: 'Come and see Dr. Astley,' and led me into the study.

"Looking through the glass window on the lawn, I myself distinctly saw the figure of Dr. Astley in clerical attire standing against the wall which adjoins the dining-room. It certainly was not a reflection of my own face, for I am clean shaven, and the face of the figure I saw wore a beard and mustache. It was distinctly Dr. Astley as I saw him in London. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. I was not dreaming. The figure was not looking at me.

"Mrs. Hartley had a candle in her hand, and I told her to take it away. I still saw the figure most clearly. A housemaid who had joined us also could see the figure.

"I will go and have a look in the garden," I said, and I did go. There was nothing to be seen there; and when I returned the vision had gone."

On the following Tuesday, December 29, Mrs. Hartley again saw the apparition.

"As on the previous occasion," continued Mr. Brock, "Mrs. Hartley went to close the shutters of the study, and came running in to me, saying: 'Come quickly! Here it is again!' I went rapidly to the study. Looking through the window I again saw distinctly the vision on the lawn, albeit it was not so distinctly visualized as before, probably because of the strong moon shining."

After the first apparition telegrams were sent to Algiers inquiring about the Astleys. The response came that both Dr. and Mrs. Astley were progressing comfortably, but, curiously enough, a letter written December 26, which arrived in England later, revealed the interesting fact that Dr. Astley was suffering from concussion of the brain, and presumably was unconscious at the time of the apparition.

Have Little Patronage. The highest public house in England is said to be the Tan Hill, in Yorkshire (1,747 feet). The second highest is the Cat and Fiddle, in Cheshire (1,690 feet), and there is also the Traveler's Rest, in Westmoreland (1,476 feet). The Tan Hill house is so lonely that an 18-gallon cask of beer has been known to last three months. One winter no stranger crossed the threshold for 17 weeks.

War of Extinction on Rats. A Paris Journal suggests that in order to rid the world of rats the various governments should offer a reward of one penny for each rat killed. Denmark, it appears, has already set the example. There, since a law was passed giving a halfpenny a head for dead rats, the schoolboys of Copenhagen devote their playtime to hunting the rodent. The bodies are taken to the fire brigade station, where the tails are cut off in order that the reward may not be claimed a second time. The bodies are burned the same night in a furnace at the gas works.

GIRL IS SALOME MAD; CAN'T RESIST DANCING

CIRCLES AROUND BEFORE DOCTOR UNTIL HE HAS HER SENT TO HOSPITAL.

New York.—Dr. A. W. Newfield sat reading in his study in his apartment on West One Hundred and Forty-first street. His wife, his daughter and the latter's husband had gone to a theater. Soon the doctor dozed, he doesn't know how long, but suddenly he was awakened by a low, wailing cry right in the room. The doctor looked up with a jerk, adjusted his glasses on his nose and then fell back limp in his chair.

In front of him, swaying and prouetting, with her hands chasing each other in snakelike fashion, stood his housemaid, Margaret Kelly, with her



"I'm Salome," Chanted Margaret, Twirling on One Toe.

hair in a braid and doing a Salome dance, appropriately clad.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor when he got his breath. "What does this extraordinary conduct mean, young woman?"

But Margaret answered not. She just kept on dancing, sliding her arms sinuously about, singing the queer, wailing tune, with her eyes fixed on the doctor's as if to her he represented John the Baptist. Around his chair she circled slowly and the doctor's uneasiness grew every second.

"Go away!" he cried. "Are you crazy? Suppose some one should come. Go away!"

"I'm Salome," chanted Margaret, twirling on one toe. "I saw Eva Tanguay do it at the — I don't care! I don't care!"

Then the doctor telephoned police headquarters, and when two policemen came they had their hands full with Margaret Kelly. She refused to put on any more clothes, and when Dr. Tompkins came he found the two policemen holding a blanket about her.

"Too much Eighth avenue whisky," the doctor said, and he bundled Margaret, still protesting that she was Salome, off to a hospital.

Mrs. Newfield engaged Margaret a few days ago from an employment agency. The girl is young and pretty and had excellent references. When she sent her trunk to the Newfield apartment it was so big that it had to be put in the attic.

"But it didn't hold much," Mrs. Newfield said. "One of the other servants saw her unpack it and told me that all it contained was a lot of fancy gauze stuff that must have been the Salome costume she was practicing in."

TERRIFIED BY WILD MAN. Taunton Citizens, Fearing Mysterious Person, Appeal to Police.

Taunton, N. J.—A wild man is haunting the vicinity of Prospect Hill in the north end of the city, and scores of residents, frightened at his peculiar actions, have appealed to the police to investigate his case. Reaming about on the outskirts of the woods and often appearing near the edge of the roads, he has spread such a reign of terror in the locality that mothers will not let their children run about as before.

He was sighted on the summit of the hill, wildly waving his hands toward the sky and singing as if in prayer, but before any capture he disappeared. Other reports say that he has been seen running like a hunted deer through the underbrush and tearing down bushes and small shrubbery in what appears to be a maniacal desire to destroy.

He is described as very poorly dressed and his unshaven face and unkempt hair give him every appearance of a wild man. Residents of the neighborhood are planning a concerted action to effect his capture the next time he makes his appearance upon the summit of the hill. Some believe that he may have escaped from the insane hospital which is located nearby.

Premonition Saves Woman's Life. Altoona, Pa.—Premonition of danger saved Miss Lillian Jeffries, assistant postmistress of Bellwood, from serious injury while returning from Pittsburgh over the Pennsylvania. "Change your seat," something seemed to tell her. She did, and a short time later a stone was hurled through the window, striking and perhaps fatally injuring a child that had taken her place.

NEBRASKA IN BRIEF

NEWS NOTES OF INTEREST FROM VARIOUS SECTIONS.

ALL SUBJECTS TOUCHED UPON

Religious, Social, Agricultural, Political and Other Matters Given Due Consideration.

Grand Island postoffice receipts for 1908 show a substantial increase over the previous year.

Judson Brown, a deaf mute of Tecumseh, was run down and seriously injured by a Burlington train one mile from the city.

If you are in need of old line life insurance, or wish an agency to write life insurance, correspond with The Midwest Life of Lincoln.

Governor Shallenberger has accepted the invitation of the senior class to deliver the commencement address at the Normal in Peru, June 2.

The city council of Fairbury has decided to purchase a combination chemical fire engine and hose wagon as a preliminary step towards organizing a paid fire department.

Farmers should all have telephones. Write to us and learn how to get the best service for the least money. Nebraska Telephone Company, 18th and Douglas streets, Omaha. "Use the Bell."

Crawford is anxious to secure the next encampment of the National guard of the state and a committee of its citizens called upon Governor Shallenberger to extend the invitation of the city.

Dr. Wells of West Point announces that he will accept the appointment of assistant physician at the Norfolk Insane hospital. He was appointed by Shallenberger and wanted the superintendency of the institution.

The citizens of Cambridge held an enthusiastic meeting to effect immediate arrangements in support of a bill pending in the legislature, providing for an appropriation of \$75,000 for a state agricultural school at Cambridge.

One of the biggest land deals made in Gage county for some time was closed, when C. H. Calkins of Westfield sold his 480-acre farm northwest of Filley to Henry Kelle of Logan township for \$40,500.

A meeting of the resident members was held in Fairbury and an organization formed which is known as the Fairbury Knights Templar association. R. D. Russell was named as president.

The jury in the case of Henry Brown, accused of robbing the bank at De Weseo, Clay county, brought in a verdict of guilty. Hall and Brown were caught in St. Joseph, Mo., they demanded separate trials and Hall was tried first and found guilty.

When Frank Johnson started out to burglarize the town of Clarks his plans for securing his booty and making his escape were poorly laid, for within three or four hours he was in the Merrick county jail and the loot he secured was locked in Sheriff Her's strong box. Johnson acknowledges his transgression.

The Farmers' bank of Hadar, a village in Pierce county, five miles north of Norfolk, was robbed of \$1,929 in cash. The robbers dug a hole through a two-foot vault wall with pick-axes, dynamited the safe at both ends, got \$1,965, dropped \$16 on their way out and escaped without creating the slightest disturbance in the town.

According to his system of computation the food commissioner of Nebraska finds that the people of Nebraska pay \$54,000 a year for water which they buy at oyster prices, the same, which he declares to be an adulteration and liable for prosecution. He has sent out a statement to oyster dealers in the state, giving his objections to the water cure for cysters and forbidding them to continue this "cunning trickery."

A Valentine dispatch says: Leo Phillips of Rosebud, S. D., was found in a snow drift frozen to death. He started from Crookston Wednesday with a load of coal and feed. His horses showed up at Rosebud, with check reins up. A searching party started out at once, and found his wagon broken down and the suggestion is that he started to lead his team to Rosebud and was lost.

At a recent meeting of the state board of agriculture in Lincoln, Secretary W. R. Mellor submitted a long report dealing with everything of interest to the board, receiving the progress made in agriculture in the state, agricultural education, progress of the board in its work, and showing receipts and expenditures from warrants drawn by the secretary. The total receipts were \$81,616.77; expenditures, \$16,500.78. The report of the board of managers showed that there had been available last year a surplus of \$20,000 for construction purposes. To this was added \$3,000 from the resources of the society. Buildings under way were completed in time for the use of the fair.

Howard Archer, the 4-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Archer, former Beatrice residents was killed at Kansas City by falling from the seventh floor of the Lorraine building. Mr. Archer served in the Philippines with the First Nebraska.

Wesley Travis, a theatrical man from Chicago, has just organized a local company of artists at Tekamah, and gone on the road in a musical comedy called "The Poor Mr. Rich." He prompted a home talent play recently given in that place and found what he considered good material for a company.

A man giving his name as James H. Davis walked into the office of Sheriff Her at Central City, and said he desired to give himself up as he was a deserter from the United States army. The sheriff communicated with the officers and is holding the soldier mentioned.

It was announced to members of the legislature at the state farm during their trip to that institution, that the North Platte experiment station had taken the prize at the Denver stock show on a carload of hogs, fed from the products raised on the farm and reared there.

NEWS IN TURKEY

The Turkish papers have published their version of the tragic death of Dom Carlos of Portugal. In the Levant Herald we read that the king and the crown prince "died on their way back to the palace after an excursion." The Stamboul says: "Dom Carlos is dead. His son, Manuel, has succeeded in the throne. There is therefore no change in the destinies of the country." And this, of course, is in accordance with

the traditions of the Ottoman press, which is never allowed by the censor to admit that any chief of any state or any member of any royal family has died a violent death. It stated that Alexander of Servia and Queen Draga "died of indigestion at the dead of night," that President Carnot succumbed to a "chill," and that the Empress Elizabeth of Austria "had a sudden attack of apoplexy on one of

the steamboats on the Lake of Geneva."

First Post Office.

The first letter post, in the modern acceptance of the word, seems to have been established in the Hanse towns in the early part of the thirteenth century. A line of letter-posts, connecting Austria with certain towns in Lombardy, followed in the reign of Emperor Maximilian. In 1481, when Edward IV. was at war with Scotland, a system of relays of horses was estab-

lished in the north in order to provide the king with the latest news from the seat of war. The first regular post-route between England and Scotland was established by Charles I. in 1635. —New York American.

Lands of Almost Fabulous Value. Do you know the average value of a square mile of land on Manhattan Island? According to the consensus of opinion of nine of the best informed real estate agents doing business on the island, it is \$200,000.