

# MOST DISASTROUS YEAR IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

**NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHT**—the most terrible year of disaster in the history of the modern world. That is the black record which Time has entered in his books for the year which has just closed. A quarter of a million people destroyed in awful cataclysms, billions of dollars' worth of property wiped out of existence, a sum of pain and human anguish which can never be expressed in words or figures—such is the balance which must be carried to the debit side of the world's account books.

The mention of the word catastrophe will of course bring the thoughts of every one back to the great Italian earthquake, the greatest single disaster in the world's history, a tragedy which cost 125,000 lives and wiped out of existence great and historic cities. In the shadow of that terrible holocaust the world has failed to realize that it was merely the climax of a long series of horrors which followed one on the heels of the other from the first day of January, 1908, to the first day of January, 1909.

The chiming of the rejoicing bells that rang in the new year of 1908 had not died away when the grim fiend of destruction commenced its work in a mine at Carthage, N. M. Twelve miners were blown out of human recognition and the black year had opened.

The first big blow fell 11 days later when 300 people were incinerated in a restaurant fire at Canton, China. It was followed the next day by a tragedy in America which shook the country to the core and sent thousands into mourning. The opera house at Boyertown, Pa., was burned down during an amateur performance, and 172 charred and mangled bodies were subsequently taken from the ruins.

The first month of the ominous year wanted to a close amid a series of minor disasters at home and abroad which were overshadowed by the horrors which preceded them and the yet greater horrors which were to come. The first of February ushered in the first cyclone, which devastated Mississippi, leaving 20 dead bodies and hundreds of ruined homesteads in its wake. Two days later news was flashed across the wires that a mine explosion in Japan had destroyed 91 miners and that 21 lives had been lost in a snowstorm in Algeria.

## Devastated by Cyclone.

Scarcely a week had elapsed before the cyclone fiend made its second appearance, sweeping through Minnesota and Texas, claiming 13 lives. On the same day a mine explosion in Natal put an abrupt end to the hazard-

ous calling of 32 miners. Within two weeks similar accidents in England and Spain had killed 92 more men to their account, while a dynamite accident in California was paid for with 30 lives.



As if each month was endeavoring to outdo in horror its predecessors, March opened with a record of terrible disasters, among which is numbered the most heartrending American tragedy since the Iroquois fire. The carnival of destruction opened on the

121 passengers were drowned. A week later another terrific cyclone burst over the doomed southern states and took toll of 42 lives in Louisiana, 17 in east Nebraska, and 14 in Oklahoma.

The sequel to this prelude came on the 13th, when 10,000 lives went out in another Chinese flood at Hankow. Beside this appalling tragedy a railroad accident in Belgium with 60 fatalities seemed trivial. As a grand finale the ill-fated Hankow was struck

by a typhoon and the total of her dead was increased 1,000. The following day another thousand lives were sacrificed in a mine fire at Kewang, China.

June apparently despaired of ever competing successfully with her sister month. However, she continued to pile tragedy on tragedy. On the first of the month an accident on the Amur river in China resulted in 89 deaths, and 18 was added to the day's roll by a flood in Mexico. On the fourth a typhoon on the west coast of Australia wiped out 270 lives, and two days afterward another cyclone burst in Nebraska at a cost of 28 lives, to be followed the next day with another cyclone in Iowa which increased the list by five. On the same day 20 persons were lost in a flood in Mexico and 18 in an explosion in Vienna. The month of roses concluded its list with a tornado, which struck the Portuguese coast and slew 400, while Oklahoma contributed 100 more of her citizens to another storm.

As far as America was concerned July was the most merciful month of the year. Fifty-two lives were the entire tribute collected in the United States through the agencies of flood, fire and storm. This leniency was more than compensated, however, by the list of fatalities abroad. On the second of the month Batavia, Java, was ravaged by a storm which destroyed 600 lives. On the same day a mine explosion in Russia was respon-



sible for 225 fatalities. On the 13th 57 lives were lost in a storm off the coast of Spain, and on the 15th a flood in Asia Minor swept away 2,000 people.

## Few Fatalities in August.

August was the most merciful month in the year. In the United States the death toll was 170, principally caused by floods in North and South Carolina and Georgia. The biggest disaster abroad was a cyclone in Hungary which killed 74 people. It was closely followed by a mine explosion in England with 70 fatalities. The total deathroll for the remaining disasters was 81, the largest single item being 39 lives lost in forest fires in British Columbia.

The United States was still fortunate through September with a total of fatalities merely amounting to 33, but abroad the ominous figures commenced to mount with a rush again. Five thousand lives were lost in a flood in India and 140 through a ferry disaster at Smyrna.

October was the month of the great forest fires which devastated Michigan, destroying 50 lives and \$20,000,000 worth of property. A typhoon in the Philippines added its quota of 800 souls, and a second typhoon off China claimed 5,000 victims.

Both at home and abroad November proved a comparatively innocuous month, although it was marked by two comparatively large disasters. Three hundred and thirty-nine lives were lost in a mine explosion in Germany, and 125 deaths resulted from the burning of the steamer Sardinia at Malta.

December and Yuletide came and exhausted humanity saw the black year drawing to a close in apparent calm. They were looking forward to the new year in eager hope that the evil days were over, when the greatest blow of all fell.

On December 28, 1908, occurred the great Italian earthquake, the most stupendous disaster of the world's history.

Even yet it is impossible to make an accurate estimate of what its cost was either in loss of human life or property. It is known that 125,000 people perished, but in actual fact it is probable that figure is far below the real number of victims. In material loss it is impossible to name any figure.

## Far Surpassed Lisbon Disaster.

Up to the time of the Italian earthquake the record disaster had been

the earthquake at Lisbon in 1755, when 60,000 lives had been lost. This terrible tragedy had been for over a century and a half the object of the awful dismay of the world. It becomes almost insignificant in view of the calamity which befell in the closing days of 1908. For every soul that went out at Lisbon two were quenched in Sicily and Italy and 5,000 more were added for good measure.

Another point of interest, especially for those who cherish the venerable superstition ament the unluckiness of the number 13, is the discovery that there was a disaster on every thirteenth day of the month for the first seven months of the year. The record was started on January 13, the date of the Boyertown theater fire. A month later there was a boiler explosion in Pennsylvania, followed in March by an avalanche which took 18 lives in Siberia. April 13 saw a flood in China which cost 2,000 lives, and the same day in May a similar disaster was responsible for the loss of 10,000 people, while 42 people died in a cyclone in Louisiana. June 13 a dynamite explosion took nine lives in Winnipeg, and on July 13 47 lives were lost in a storm off the coast of Spain.

Another curiosity is discovered in connection with the highly-useful elevator which has made possible skyscrapers. While it is fairly common to hear of accidents in elevators, few

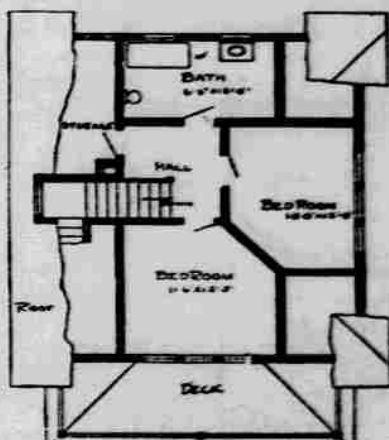
## THE AMERICAN HOME

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Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice FREE OF COST on all subjects pertaining to the subject of building for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as Editor, Author and Manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on all these subjects. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 194 Fifth Ave., Chicago, Ill., and only enclose two-cent stamp for reply.

forget things when they are out of sight and out of hearing, so next fall the old curtains pass for new draperies.

The front hall connects with the kitchen by way of a sort of cellar vestibule. This arrangement is all right. A great many houses are so built that you can't get from the kitchen to the front door without passing through the dining-room and



Second Floor Plan.

It would be difficult to design a practical house any cheaper than this. It is a small affair intended for a newly-married couple who don't require very much room. It is a very neat, pretty little story-and-a-half house 25 feet 6 inches wide by 27 feet 6 inches long, exclusive of porches. Love in a cottage used to mean more or less discomfort in the winter time as soon as the weather got cold, but modern inventions have been lately introduced into the smaller houses and we are applying them in a sensible way.

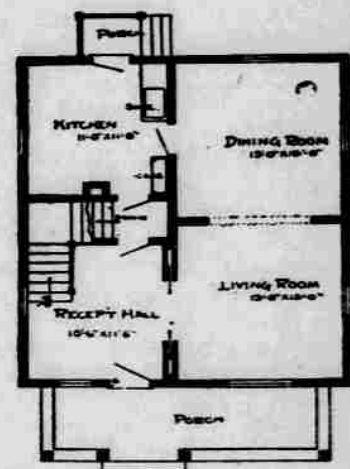
Besides a hall we have three good large rooms on the first floor and we have two very good bedrooms and a bathroom tucked away in the roof gables. In fact, it might properly be called a gable end house. All the windows you get upstairs are in the gables, and, by the way, these windows just add the necessary finishing touches to the large gables. A house gable was never finished satisfactorily until the three-window frame was invented, and that didn't happen until recently. There was some objection at first to triple windows like this, casement windows they are sometimes called, until the women found out how to dress them up satisfactorily, but we don't hear any complaints now. The fashion seems to have come to stay because the women have given it their

parlor. The idea seems to be that a door opening from the kitchen in the direction of the front hall is likely to disseminate the savory odors of cooking when certain vegetables are undergoing the boiling process, and the perfume is not considered sufficiently bon-ton to associate on equal terms with the guests in the parlor.

This plan, however, provides for double doors, a precaution that is like-



sanction. When the women nail a fashion it stays nailed until they change their minds, and they haven't published any change of sentiment in regard to a triple window, especially when it decorates the gable end of a house roof. The reason probably is that they have found a satisfactory way to arrange the shades and curtains and they have also found out



First Floor Plan.

A significant feature of the list is the exceptionally high number of fatalities which resulted from the accidental discharge of high explosives. In spite of the elaborate precautions which are generally observed in the handling of such material as dynamite death marshaled a large army of victims from premature explosions. Altogether 496 lives were lost through this class of disaster.

## Dangers Surround Earth's Deivers.

An examination of the figures brings home forcibly the terribly dangerous conditions under which work the men who go down into the earth to delve for wealth. From every country in the world which owns mines was contributed the tale of a gruesome underground tragedy. In all 2,270 miners were sacrificed, and the universal distribution of the disasters would seem to indicate that no precautions can be taken which will guarantee safety with any certainty to the subterranean workers.

In considering the statistics given here it must not be forgotten that they do not include many thousands of violent deaths which would run the total far above its present tremendous total of over a quarter of a million. No account is taken in these figures of single fatalities, such as persons killed by street cars and in other thoroughfare accidents and the long list of individual deaths for which the railroads are annually responsible. Also the criminal statistics are not included, and it is only too true that the number of persons who meet their death from assassination every year is a large one. Suicides also are not included, nor the big number who lose their lives through individual drowning accidents, careless handling of firearms, and the numberless other stray hazards which surround life.

If all these figures could be collected and added it is not an exaggeration to say that it would be found that at least 300,000 persons came to a violent end during the fatal months of 1908. That is to say that the year saw the violent destruction of a population of a city almost as large as Pittsburg. As a matter of fact the true figures would probably be much in excess of that number.

ly to meet with approval from the most fastidious housekeepers. The cellarway leads down from this little vestibule and there is also a set of shelves reaching from the floor to the ceiling. This set of cellarway shelves is about as useful as any other feature of the house. For some reason it is almost impossible to keep jellies in the cellar without having them mold in the glasses. If kept in the kitchen the jellies shrink until the glasses are not more than half full, but shelves in a cellarway built like this seem to hit the happy medium and the fruit comes out just as nice in the winter time as when put up in summer. Dry air in the house and damp cellar air meet here and the results are very satisfactory.

The value of a house is made up of little things. It is the many little things added together that make the round, satisfactory whole. The man or woman who wants a house to suit them must study the details before starting to build, otherwise the house will be unsatisfactory when finished. The fact is, few families can find a satisfactory house readily made. It is difficult for anyone to feel really, thoroughly at home in a rented house. There are fifty little things you would like to have different but you positively refuse to put time and expense on a house that belongs to some one else. This is one reason why I so often recommend young people to start out in a home of their own. It may not be elaborate but if it fits the pocket book it is very likely to prove the nucleus of a happy and prosperous life.

## Advice for Life's Course.

Be and continue poor, young man, while others around you grow rich by fraud and disloyalty; be without place or power, while others beg their way upward; bear the pain of disappointed hopes, while others gain the accomplishment of theirs by fattery; forego the gracious pressure of the hand for which others cringe and crawl. Wrap yourself in your own virtue, and seek a friend and your daily bread. If you have in such a course grown gray, with unblessed honor, bless God, and die.—Heinzelman.

## Same Old Exception.

Singleton—Does your wife ever acknowledge your superiority?  
Wedderly—Only when she has a lead pencil that requires sharpening.  
—Chicago News.