

SCENES OF HORROR IN MESSINA THAT BROUGHT MADNESS TO SURVIVORS



NAPLES, Italy.—The horrors accompanying the earthquake, fire and tidal wave that devastated Sicily and Calabria almost defy description. Now that it is possible to obtain coherent accounts from the few that escaped from the stricken district with their lives—many were for a time without the light of reason—it is realized that certainly not 20 centuries—perhaps never—have such scenes been enacted on the earth.

One of the first of the survivors that reached the steamship *Therapie* the day following the catastrophe thus described his experiences: "I was asleep when the first shock woke me. I lit my lamp, but all was quiet, and I turned to sleep again. Suddenly fresh shocks occurred, violent and terrifying. I arose quickly but the house was swaying and my door was jammed. I tore the sheets from the bed and made a rope and lowered myself from the window to the street. An Italian family of five persons escaped from the house by the aid of my rope.

Wandered All Day. "No sooner were we in the street than the house collapsed. I tried to assist in the work of rescue, but it was useless. The horror and confusion were indescribable. All day I wandered in the wrecked streets. No food could be secured. I had only a few nuts to eat. The prison was destroyed and the warders killed, but most of the convicts escaped. They prowled about the ruins, robbing and murdering. They cut off the fingers of the dead and wounded to get the rings. Some of them were singing songs of liberty as they pined the knife.

"A Russian vessel lying in the harbor was thrown into the street by the tidal wave. Railway lines were swallowed up. The square known as the Cas Campo Santo collapsed and sank. Only the summits of a few ruined buildings still emerged from the wreck."

Not one of the numerous hotels of the city remained standing. A fissure 60 feet deep opened near the Church of Santa Maria, and houses fell bodily into it.

During the voyage of the *Therapie* to Naples a child was born.

Houses Vanished Instantly. A physician named Condo, a native of Messina, said he escaped by climbing over the fallen roofs. Houses vanished with the suddenness of a dream and daylight showed nearly two miles of ruins. Steamships put out to cross the straits for help after the first shock of the earthquake, but half way over they met vessels from the oppo-

site coast which carried the news that Reggio, too, had perished.

The wounded refugees that reached this city presented a sickening sight, some appeared hardly human; others among the fugitives had no apparent injuries, but were in such a deplorable mental condition that they seemed the worst of all. The horror of that tragic minute appeared to be ineradicably fixed upon their faces. On the relief ships the refugees were heaped everywhere. Some of them appeared to be stricken with a kind of idiosyncrasy, looking aimlessly before them; others completely mad, howled wildly. The commander of the *Therapie* gave a thrilling description of the rescue effected by his men when his ship arrived at Messina. As the vessel drew up before the city it was surrounded by a flotilla of boats and tugs loaded with the gunwales with men and women who piteously cried for food and drink, for they had nothing for 24 hours. On entering the port a tremendous clamor greeted their ears. It was the survivors screaming for help. From the water front Messina appeared to be intact, as the facades of the fine buildings along that line of streets still were standing, but behind was emptiness and ruin. The principal square presented an awe-inspiring aspect. Everywhere were enormous cracks into which the sea poured, whence clouds of steam and sulphurous vapors arose.

Corpses Heaped in Streets. In all the streets—or what had once been streets—corpses were heaped, their desperate attitudes and contorted features showing the horror of the death struggles. The ruins of the buildings formed hillocks 30 feet high, under which thousands of persons were buried. The vessel was soon loaded down to its utmost capacity with survivors and then steamed to this city.

All along the way it was seen that the stalling villages on the Calabrian coast had disappeared. Both Scylla and Charybdis had vanished with them.

In Naples public buildings and private houses were thrown open to the refugees and everything possible was done for their comfort. The duchess of Aosta was indefatigable in her ministrations, going from steamship to steamship and bringing to the sufferers a word of comfort. The wounded were carried to the ambulances between two files of soldiers to protect them from the too expressive manifestations of sympathy from the crowd that had gathered at the piers. The means of transportation was augmented by strong arms of sympathizers, in which some of the more seriously wounded were carried in litter.

The commander of the Russian battleship *Makimoff*, who brought word of American Consul Cheney's death, described the fearful scenes at Messina. He declared that many of the residents of that place had been buried alive, as groans were heard coming from far down in the fissures of the earth, which could only be approached with the greatest precaution. At these points the tottering walls threatened further collapse. The anguished cries of the victims caused a half frenzy among the sailors, who in several cases excavated under dangerous places and rescued wounded people. In other cases they reached bodies that separated in parts when efforts were made to drag them from the wreckage.

For an entire day the Russian sailors, divided into squads, gave assistance wherever needed. Amid the ruins of the Bank of Sicily they found a safe containing many millions and delivered it aboard the warship. From one house alone they rescued ten persons alive.

Mother Killed, Child Saved. A dispatch from Palermo described the experience of A. J. Ogston, British vice-consul at Messina, who arrived with his daughter at Palermo, he himself being injured. "At the first shock," said the vice-consul, "my wife rushed to a cot and snatched up the child. We ran down stairs, and found the door blocked with wreckage. We clambered through a window, but as we were passing a building a balcony fell and killed my wife instantly. By a miracle the child escaped unhurt. I rushed to the municipal square, where 50 people had gathered, and we ran madly for the open country, balconies, columns and chimneys falling around us in a terrifying manner. The members of our party were struck down, sometimes singly and sometimes a half dozen at a time, and when we reached a place of safety only four of the party remained. The others undoubtedly were killed!"

One tragic phase of the disaster was the fight for life made by the prisoners in the jail above Messina. There were nearly 1,000 of these, including 200 women. The building collapsed at the first shock and the inmates were caught like rats. Several rows of cells remained intact and those who were locked within them could be heard pounding the walls and crying aloud for help. Then came another shock which completed the destruction. All were killed with the exception of the few who had escaped after the first shock.

An artilleryman, Gaspare Valenti, says he was engaged in rescue work at Messina with his comrades when an enormous wave struck him and swept him off his feet. Like a piece of straw, he declares, he was whirled out to sea. Being a good swimmer, he kept up for a long time, becoming tired, however, and just as he was about to sink he was picked up by a fisherman, who landed him on the beach. Then, seized with terror, he ran blindly for 11 hours and dropped exhausted near Aethene, a distance of about 50 miles from Messina.

Searchers Killed at Reggio. A refugee from Calabria stated that an express train on the road from Reggio to Naples was brought to a stop by the shock when about 18 miles along the road in its journey. The passengers demanded that they be taken back to Reggio, where they found a scene of desolation. While searching for friends fresh shocks occurred and practically all the passengers were killed.

At Messina, after rapid work of organization, progress was made in the work of succoring the wounded survivors, but no attempt was at first made to remove the wreckage. The troops and sailors were obliged to shoot down robbers who persisted in looting. The entire local treasury of the Messina branch of the Bank of Italy, some \$2,000,000, was saved and placed on board an Italian warship.

Many of the people of Messina refused to leave the ruins of their houses. They clung to the sites of their homes, crying out that their only safety was in fidelity to the wrecks of their houses. Force often was necessary to get them to the ships in the harbor. There were large numbers in the suburbs of Messina who would not come back into the city for fear of a recurrence of the shocks.

Hopeless Search for Relatives. The German steamer *Seraphin* brought stories of heartrending separation of families, and the hopeless and frantic seeking of relatives one for the other. Shortly after the *Seraphin* docked a gangplank was lowered and a few persons were allowed on board. The refugees were found sitting in isolated groups.

They gave evidence of great mental depression, and were utterly exhausted. They seemed scarcely conscious of their surroundings. Most of them were held in the thrall of their terrible experiences.

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. "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 *Seraphin* brought into this port records of numberless tragedies. Families separated, mothers moaning 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 the vessel.

Fell Five Floors; Uninjured. The stories told by these unfortunate refugees are almost unbelievable. A soldier named Emilio de Castro, relates that on Sunday, the day before the disaster, he was taken sick and was sent to the military hospital.

Early Monday morning he was awakened by a tremendous roaring sound. His bed struck the floor below, and he was still on it. It paused a moment, and was again precipitated. He struck the next floor, but this gave way at once, and thus man and bed came down from the fifth floor of the hospital to the ground. The soldier was not injured.

Imprisoned with the Dead. Prof. Palermo of the University of Messina lost two sons. "I was sleeping in my bed," he said, "when I was thrown out of bed, which fell on top of me. The ceiling collapsed, the floor opened and I was thrown into the first floor apartment of Mme. Pernici. She was reaching for her sister and son, whom we found dead. We remained all day and night alone without help, keeping the rain off with planks."

"Thus we were without food or drink among the screams of the buried. The latter ceased somewhat at night. No one came with assistance and we were as if in a tomb alongside the bodies. Children, wounded, were around us, but invisible under the ruins and weeping in despair or bursting into piercing cries at every sound heard without. When we finally escaped from the ruins we were taken by sailors to the *Cristoforo Colombo*, which brought us to Naples."

"We passed through streets that felt as if they were the bottoms of valleys or climbed heights which were as that remained of the finest palaces of Messina. I will never forget it as long as I live."

Royal Couple Assist Rescuers. The king and queen of Italy went to Messina in the battleship *Vittorio Emanuele*, and his majesty grasped the situation and set to work all the powers he controlled to alleviate the horrors of the situation. He participated actively in the work of actual rescue.

Immediately on his arrival at Messina the king joined a rescue party and labored as unremittingly as the others. He personally extricated several injured persons pinned under the ruins.

The queen also took active part in the work. She rescued with her own hand a boy of three years, who was bleeding from many cuts, and herself carried him to the dock where she handed him over to members of the hospital corps. She devoted her attention principally to the little children and labored long amid the scenes of horror.

Those who brought news here from Catania of the visit of the king and queen said that the horrors of the ruined city were added to by the countless number of bodies lying all about. Such a force of laborers as it would be impossible to gather, equip and sent to Messina would have been needed to bury the dead. The task was regarded as beyond human power of accomplishment within the period which would make such disposal of the bodies effective.

Lime Spread Over the City. So it was arranged to have tens of thousands of tons of lime taken to Messina in ships and carried over the city and spread everywhere.

The messengers from Messina could not find words of sufficiently high praise for the conduct of the king and queen. They said that their majesties left the battle ship and hurried into the ruins of the city as if their own near and dear ones lay amid the wreckage.

Owing to the overwhelming character of the disaster, the hastily established hospital and relief corps were woefully inadequate to the work. So it was that before their majesties had gone more than a few rods from the dock they found themselves among the ruins with the dead all about them. Even the dying pined beneath walls and masonry heard the wild cries of welcome mingled with the chorus of wailing as a great mob of half-distracted men and women crowded about the royal couple and followed them as their guards made a way into the ruins.

The king made himself dear to all his subjects, especially to those in the earthquake zone, by his prompt and personal aid in times of disaster. This makes plausible a story told by his companions, who said that as the royal pair and the crowd surrounding them made their way through the ruins a man pinned under a great block of stone and supposed to be dead raised his head, repeated the cries of acclaim and dropped back dead.

There was a deep coating of mud all over and their majesties walked through it in their work. The queen was frequently affected to tears by the sight of the homeless, helpless women who followed her crying for pity, half-crazed by their misfortunes. If she looked upon them they threw themselves upon their knees in the mire and with clasped hands prayed for her help.

BY RIGHT OF LOVE

A Short Story of Rural Life

By MARY C. RINGWALT

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The doctor, John Norton, held the lines listlessly as he drove down the country road. The Smith baby was toothy—he might have to lance her gums. Tommy Peterson, who had personally investigated the mystery of the forbidden fruit in the form of green apples, was on the road to recovery and new mischief. Even the judge no longer needed the ministrations of a doctor so much as those of a nurse. There were no critical cases to scatter his thoughts that swarmed about the anxiety of his own home.

His little mother was breaking down. It was all his fault, accused his morbid thoughts.

Norton's forehead puckered in a calculating twist. Although the drought had made money "tight" among his farming clientele he could manage to borrow a hundred or two to send her to the "shore" for the complete rest and change that would alone be her salvation—but there was his mother's indomitable will to be reckoned with! Her alert knowledge of his affairs prevented kindly deception and he knew that no power on earth could persuade her to spend a borrowed penny on herself.

The pucker deepened—he was searching for hidden possibilities among his uncollected, uncollectible



With a New Spurt of Fury the Fight Continued.

ills. Then, even in that worried moment the doctor smiled. He had remembered Joe Riley's \$300.

As the months had piled themselves up into years after Joe's operation, this promised bonanza had been the pet dream-castle built by the doctor and his mother in their twilight talks; the family joke of the saner breakfast hour. And yet only last week when the doctor had broached the subject to Joe anew there had seemed a definite purpose in the latter's eye as he begged Norton to wait until the first of September—why, that was today! Of course nothing would come of it, but his despair clutched at even a straw of hope, and flicking Molly B. with his whip he hastened toward the toll-gate, passing under its lifted white arm into Centerville, one of the little squat, one-story towns dotting Cloverdale county, over which the doctor's practice sprawled.

Old farmer White, his legs in faded blue overalls twisted about a keg of nails, was ornamenting the platform in front of Watson's as the doctor's buggy drew up.

"Hello, Pete!"

"Hello yourself, Doc!"

The doctor leaned out of the buggy, peeping in through the open door to a laughing group of men lolling over a counter.

"Say, Pete," he called, "ask Joe Riley to come out here a moment, will you? I want to speak to him."

"Sure!" was the ready answer, but instead of entering the store he shambled down the steps and approached the buggy, giving a low chuckle with the same shuffling quality as his walk.

"Heard the news about him, Doc?" Pete puffed the question out slowly with rising rings of smoke from the pipe.

Norton shook his head. "Had a windfall. Brother dead in California. Left Joe \$2,000. Ain't that what you call luck?"

The chuckle shuffled through his speech, punctuating it with dashes. "It weren't paid in till to-day, but Joe knew it was a-coming a week or more ago. He's celebrating now by treating the boys to drinks. I— He stopped, suddenly conscious of the doctor's absent-minded gaze.

The doctor sat silent, a shining light in his eyes. He was not a praying man, but there had been crises in his professional life when his heart uplifted to the Supreme Mystery in words of praise unspoken by his shy lips. And now he felt that a power outside himself, above, beyond himself, had laid a divine gift in the outstretched hand of his necessity.

Riley had known of his legacy at their last meeting—that had been the meaning then of the definite purpose in his eye when he had asked the doctor to wait.

The laughter trailed from the shop to the sidewalk, and Joe Riley stalked pompously toward the buggy, the "boys" in his triumphant wake.

"Well, Doc," said Riley with boisterous joviality, "what is it to-day—tea, oats, or a clothes-wringer?"

The doctor laughed. "I guess it's congratulations first, isn't it, Joe?"

"Pete's been leaching!" Riley playfully slapped the man's shoulder.

There followed a general exchange of bantering pleasantries, then in a little drift of silence the doctor said penitently: "So this legacy was in your mind a week ago, Joe, when you asked me to wait to settle that little business affair of ours?"

Riley lifted one foot to the buggy step and bent over to tie a dragging shoe-string. "Yes, Doc, I had the legacy in mind all right."

Norton's smile held the radiance of sunshine after a storm. "The money couldn't have come in more handy, Joe. That little mother of mine is all worn out. Now I shall take your \$300 and send her to the shore for as long a time as I can coax her to stay."

"You ain't trying your chicken before you've caught it, he you, Doc?"

"I—don't quite—understand?" The doctor's mind fumbled for the point of humor in Joe's joke.

"This here sleek, hobbled fortune ain't no back horse to haul a load of debts. She's to be ridden for sport—see?"

"Come, Joe," said the doctor quietly, "quit your fooling. I'm in dead earnest."

"So am I!"

Norton's eyes blazed. "Joe Riley, I give you fair warning—I'll put up with no nonsense! You'll pay me that \$300 or I'll have the law on you!"

"And I'll laugh on you, Doc Norton!" cried Joe, mimicking the doctor's tone. "Your bill was outlawed yesterday—I had that in mind, too, when I asked you to give me another week!"

For an instant the doctor sat motionless, then he threw the lines out of his hands and jumped from the buggy. Dashing off his coat and tossing it on the sidewalk, he cried: "The bill's outlawed, is it? By heaven, we'll settle it without the law then!"

The astonished Riley slunk back from Norton's threatening fist. "You're making a pretty good bluff, Doc," he laughed derisively, "but it don't cut any ice with me! You bookish men ain't got the ginger to fight, and—"

A blow from Norton's fist stung a crimson trail down Riley's left cheek. With a cry of rage Joe sprang upon his antagonist.

Out of hurrying clouds of dust up and down the pike men came running. "Something was doing" in front of Watson's—in the field the plow was left in the furrow; in the butcher shop the cleaver flung down upon the chopping-block!

There was no time for explanations, and the crowd was not one of fine discrimination, but for the past ten years Doc Norton had come into intimate touch with their lives and hearts, and they championed him to a man.

"Go it, Doc! Steady there! That's the boy, Doc!" were cries given in an ascending scale of enthusiasm.

Riley's great bulk was now a wall of self-defense, now a battering ram of danger against his foe. But Norton's staying power, his habit of ignoring fatigue, aches and pain in the performance of a physician's duties, had stored the strength of resistance in every fiber of his being, while his alertness, both of mind and body, gained in telling force when brought into prolonged play with Riley's lumbering chumminess.

The blow upon Joe's left cheek no longer showed—his whole face was a purplish crimson, drops of sweat trickling from his forehead, his breath coming and going pantingly.

"Come, Joe—give in," cried Norton. "Let's call it a finish."

"Never!" yelled back Riley. With a new spurt of fury the fight continued.

Suddenly Joe staggered, threw up his arms, reeling to one side. On the instant Norton dropped the attack, standing off guard. In a flash Joe swung down his arms, gave a lunge forward, a devilish gleam in his cunning eyes.

A moment more and Norton, tripped a second time, would have been tripped up and thrown to the ground, but in that moment an intuitive sense of danger made him spring aside before Riley's outstretched fingers could snatch at his ankles.

Riley, clutching at the air, lost his balance and pitched forward—as he struggled to regain his footing a hand of steel gripped the back of his shirt collar, a weight bore down upon his shoulders, forcing him firmly to the sidewalk, where he sprawled in the dust, Doc Norton's hold still on his collar.

A shout arose from lusty throats, and even Riley's cronies, who had so recently drunk his whisky, now joined the crowd waving their hats when Joe Riley whimpered: "I'll settle."

But the doctor was oblivious to the ovation. One shining thought flooded his mind—that of his little mother, her hand no longer hot and fluttering; her face no longer haggard, nerve-strained, but her cheeks flushed with health; the sunlit sparkle of the sea in her tired, lustreless eyes.