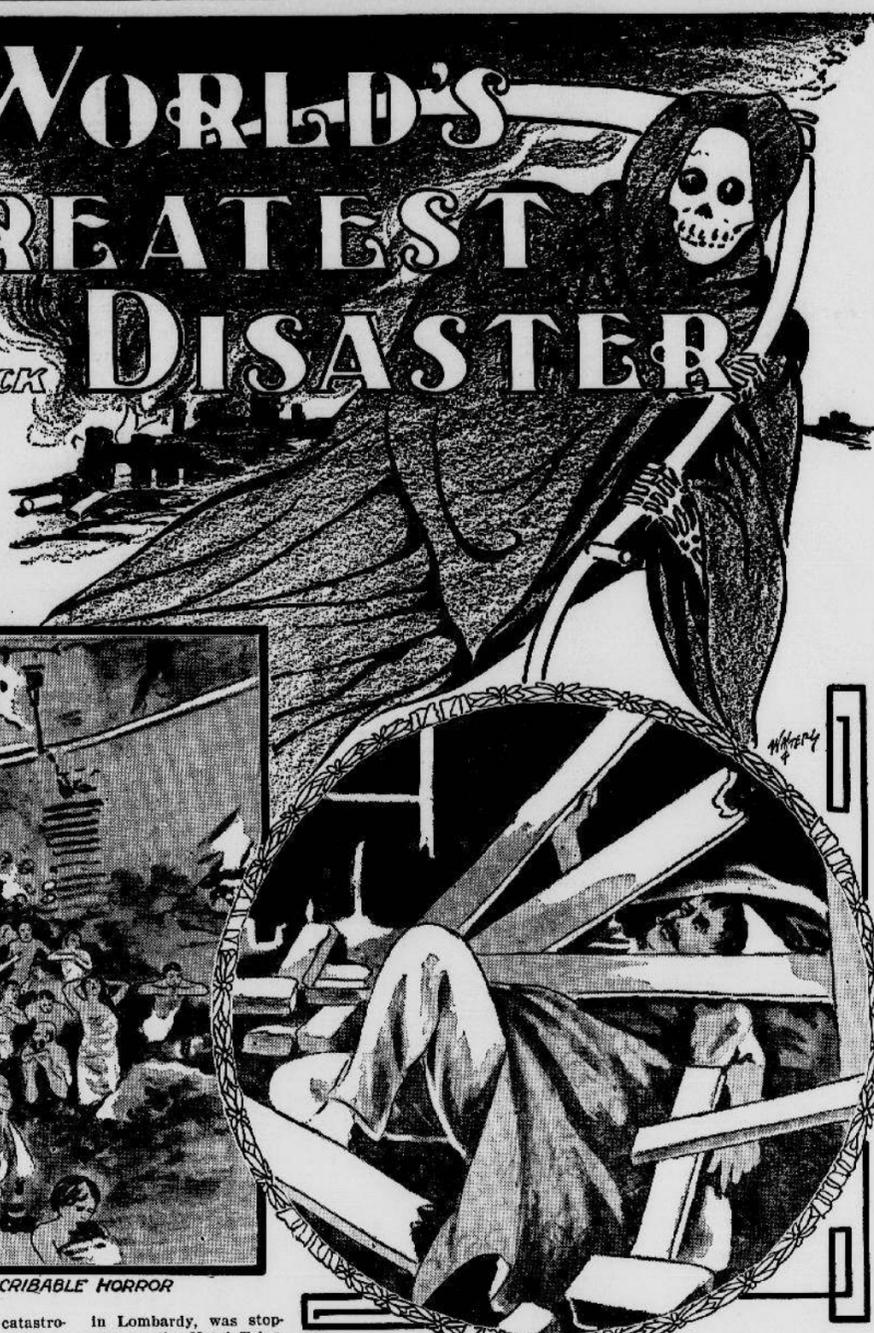


# The World's Greatest Disaster

By **GERALD A. RODERICK**

**R**OME, 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 wave.

Survivors were raving maniacs and they roved the brick-straw 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 paused 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. Nobody 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 Scarpin brought into the port of Naples 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 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 Biro, 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 Rossa 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 planed 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 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 disemboweled 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.

## CURES COLDS QUICKLY

A never failing home remedy for coughs and colds is made from the following formula to be mixed at home. "Two ounces of glycerine, one-half ounce of Concentrated pine compound, one-half pint of good whiskey; mix and shake thoroughly; use in doses of a teaspoonful to a tablespoonful every four hours."

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The Concentrated pine is a pine product refined for medical use and comes only in half ounce bottles, each enclosed in a round case, which is airtight, but be sure that it is labeled "Concentrated."

### Friendly Advice.

"If I ever marry," said the bachelor who was beginning to be old, "I shall be careful to pick out a lady whom I can treat as my equal."

"Oh, say, old chap," answered the married man. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. I can tell you from experience that a woman who would submit to such treatment wouldn't be worth having around the house."

There is more Catarrh in this section of the country than all other diseases put together, and until the last few years was supposed to be incurable. For a great many years doctors pronounced it a local disease and prescribed local remedies, and by constantly failing to cure with local treatment, pronounced it incurable. Science has proven Catarrh to be a constitutional disease, and therefore requires constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, Ohio, is the only Constitutional cure on the market. It is taken internally in doses from 10 drops to a teaspoonful. It acts directly on the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. They offer one hundred dollars for any case it fails to cure. Send for circulars and testimonials. Address: F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, Ohio. Sold by Druggists, 75c. Take Hall's Family Pills for constipation.

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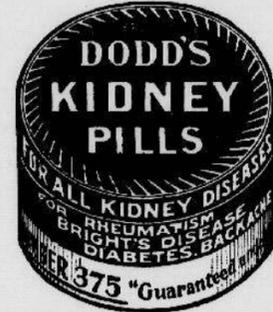
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