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## EARTHQUAKE IS DISASTEROUS TO SOUTHERN ITALY

### DETAILS ONLY ADD TO HORROR OF AWFUL DISASTER

**Tidal Wave that Followed Tremors Swept Along the Straits of Messina Drowning People in Helplessness and Panic--Flames Broke out Immediately Afterward and Countless Maimed and Wounded Victims Meet Awful Death by Fire**

Rome, Dec. 29.—One hundred thousand dead; Messina, in Sicily, and Reggio and a score of other towns in Southern Italy overwhelmed; the entire Calabria region laid waste—this is the earthquake's record so far as is at present known from the reports that are coming slowly into Rome on account of the almost complete destruction of lines of communication to the stricken places.

The death list in Messina ranges from 12,000 to 50,000; that of Reggio, with which its adjacent villages numbered 45,000 people, including almost the entire population. At Palmi, 1,000 are

is believed that navigation has become exceedingly dangerous, in which case the fortifications on which the government in recent years spent large sums will be useless. The famous whirlpool of Charybdis, it is said, has shifted its position.

Desperate calls have been made from Rome to Messina, but these remain unanswered and fears are entertained that Fort Spuria, near Messina, has been destroyed as the wireless station installed there is one of the most powerful in Italy and is evidently not working. The catastrophe has excited the superstitions of the entire populace who are running about the country calling upon all the saints and invoking aid

ter of yesterday's terrestrial maelstrom, was shaken to ruins. Flames burst forth to complete the city's destruction and to burn alive numbers of hopelessly pinned beneath fallen walls and broken timbers.

The Strait of Messina was shaken and twisted by the earth's trembling, for mariners report the channel altered beyond recognition. The ports and villages on both the continental and Sicilian sides were wrecked or inundated, and all lighthouses along the coasts were swallowed up. Navigation now is dangerous and in some places impossible.

In the Calabrian district, which was only beginning to recover from the effect of the earthquake of 1905, Reggio was the center of the earth's upheaval. The seaport of Reggio is reported as no longer existing and the city proper is in ruins.

The loss of life on both sides of the strait and in Eastern Sicily was enormous. One of the refugees from Reggio, who was the first to bring the news of the city's destruction, tried to make his way to Sicily in a sail boat, but was compelled to return and finally found safety at a peninsula port.

In describing his experience he said:

"The sea was strangely, mysteriously agitated and the heavens were ablaze. Nearing Sicily the clearing smoke revealed the mystery; Messina was in flames. In the frenzy of despair, I turned

their warships quick as the flash of the telegraph could carry the orders to lend assistance to the stricken cities. Relief funds have already been started, and a hundred ships and trains are on their way carrying supplies and reinforcement to the south. Rome, Milan, Florence, Naples and other cities are sending physicians, police and firemen. Today all the ambassadors and ministers expressed sympathy with M. Tittoni, minister of foreign affairs, whose emotion was profound.

The bourses and theaters have been closed throughout Italy, and dispatches of sympathy continue to pour in from all quarters of the globe.

At the time of the earthquake the torpedo boat Sappho was lying in the harbor at Messina and one of the officers told of the occurrences as follows:

"At half past five in the morning, the sea suddenly became terribly agitated, seeming literally to pick up our boat and shake it. Other crafts near-by were similarly treated and the ships looked like bits of cork bobbing about in a tempest. Almost immediately a tidal wave of huge proportions swept across the strait, mounting the coasts and carrying everything before it. Scores of ships were damaged and the Hungarian mail boat Andrassy parted her anchors and went crashing into other vessels. Messina Bay was wiped out and the sea was soon covered with masses of wreckage, which was

pour into the town. It seemed that this must mean the end of everything. The oncoming waters rolled in a huge wave, accompanied by a terrifying roar.

"The sky was aglow with the reflection of burning palaces and other buildings, and as if this was not enough, there suddenly shot up into the sky a huge burst of flame, followed by a crash that seemed to shake the whole town. This probably was the gas works blowing up.

"Eventually we reached the principal square of Messina. Here we found two or three thousand utterly terrified people assembled. None of us knew what to do. We waited in an agony of fear. Men and women prayed, groaned and shrieked. I saw one of the big buildings fronting on the square collapse. It seems to me, that scores of persons were buried beneath the ruins. Then I lost consciousness and I remember no more."

Refugees are pouring into Catania by trains, steamers and automobiles. They are half naked and stupefied with terror and suffering. Some of them appear almost insane from the horrors through which they have gone. In the beginning they could only babble "Messina has been annihilated. Little by little some idea of the indescribable horrors at Messina was obtained from these unfortunates. They declare that thousands of demented survivors are still wandering about among the ruins of the city.

ployes have been accounted for. same story told by all.

"Many of those who succeeded in escaping with their lives are incapable of relating their experiences coherently. I questioned all who were in a condition to talk. Most of them told the same story. They said the first thing they knew they were thrown out of bed, and amid crashing ceilings and falling furniture managed to make their way to the street. Then in the blackness of night and amid a pouring rain that added to their horror and distress, they rushed blindly away amid the crash of rumbling buildings and the shrieks and groans of those buried in the ruins. Many while trying to escape were struck down by falling balconies and masonry, and still many others lost their reason and are wandering aimlessly in the open fields outside the city or up and down the ruined streets they knew so well.

"The looters and the robbers were shot dead by the soldiers."

Messina and Catania, in Sicily, are the two largest cities that have suffered in this earthquake. Messina has a population of about 100,000, while Catania has about 140,000 people. Messina is on the west side of the Strait of Messina, near the narrowest part. Catania is south of Messina, on the east coast of the island.

Reggio is the capital of the province of Reggio di Calabria.