

ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE

MANY VILLAGES DESTROYED

TERRIBLE SCENES IN RESCUE WORK

The special correspondent of the Press Association at Florence, telegraphing yesterday, gives the following account of the havoc wrought by Tuesday's earthquake in the Tuscan province of Massa Carrara:—

The scenes I saw to-day at Fivizzano were a repetition on a small scale of what was witnessed at Messina in 1909 and at Avezzano in 1915. It was the same nightmare, disaster, terror, and ruin. By the same recurring miracle walls remain standing in the midst of destruction as if preserved by magic. On broken pavements wrecked houses lie in shapeless piles, and everywhere there is the litter of crushed and broken furniture, splintered glass, and oddly preserved household treasures. In Fivizzano the arcade and municipal offices are still standing, although the edifice above them has collapsed, and farther on the traveller has to pick his way over heaps of debris in search of the road, of which not a vestige is left. Amidst this wreck of what was a few days ago a flourishing town, almost the only building standing is the church with its belfry, which, by some strange chance, escaped, while the house attached to it collapsed, burying the Post Office and the entire family of the postmaster, composed of eight persons, of whom only one, a boy, escaped. Among the first persons I met in the main square in the centre of the town was Admiral Solari, who, with his flag lieutenant and another officer, was directing the rescue work, which was being carried out with admirable devotion by sailors from the Dreadnought Cavour and soldiers hurriedly brought to the spot. Signor Solari, the Food Controller, arrived shortly afterwards to arrange for the despatch of necessaries to the stricken town.

THE KING'S PRESENCE

The terrific shock of the earthquake has again awakened a sense of brotherhood in a nation distracted by foreign and internal discord. King Victor, on hearing the news, hurried from San Rossore, his hunting lodge near Pisa, accompanied only by his aide-de-camp, General Cittadini, to the stricken region, and personally helped in the work of rescue. Dressed in his field grey uniform, the King went about rendering assistance wherever it was possible, looking as calm and kind as in the days when one saw him at the front during the three years' war. The only difference is that his hair is greyer and his carriage that of an older man. His Majesty visited every quarter of the town and entered buildings, everywhere disregarding the danger from tottering walls which a fresh tremor might bring down. He spoke words of cheer to the survivors and comforted the injured, expressing his profound grief at the misfortune that had befallen them. Seeing an old woman lying on a stretcher, the King went up to her and laid his hand on her forehead. The poor woman, with her eyes filled with tears, tried to kiss his hand, sobbing—"My little grandsons, my little grandsons." The King asked what had happened them, and, finding that almost the entire family had been buried, only the old woman herself and two little grandchildren having been saved, the King promised her that he would look after the children. "May the Madonna bless you. You are indeed the father of your people," murmured the old woman. The King inquired as to the conditions in which the survivors of the disaster were left, and learning that some had not eaten for 30 hours, distributed the provisions he had with him in his car and gave orders that food should be immediately brought into the town, and that those people who were under no obligation to remain in Fivizzano should be removed to places where food was available.

The Pope telegraphed to Cardinal Maffi, directing him to go to the spot and take material help as well as religious and moral support to the afflicted people, but the Cardinal had already left for the devastated district without waiting for orders from Rome.

"LIKE A LOST BATTLE"

"Every earthquake disaster is for Italy like a lost battle," said Signor Luzzatti, former Premier after Avazzano. As after every lost battle many days must pass before the extent of the calamity can be known, it is not yet possible to calculate how many hundreds of people have been killed and how many thousands injured by the upheaval in Tuscany. Five hundred injured people are reported to be lying in hospitals at Spezia. Three hundred more are being treated in Lucca, while others are distributed in tents about the fields. Everyone is thankful that the weather keeps fine, although at night it is very cold, especially on the slopes of the Appennines and in the moun-

tains near Carrara. The survivors of the earthquake describe the shock as terrifying. The air was choked with blinding dust, and in darkness the peasants thought the end of the world coming. Old world Tuscan towns, whose walls still bear traces of destruction wrought by Arab raiders from the sea, ancient round towers and pinnacles, fortresses which have survived from the Middle Ages, now all seem tottering to their fall. At Massa Carrara the handsome ducal palace, which was the summer residence of Napoleon's sister Elise, is seriously damaged. Many extraordinary and affecting incidents are reported. At Frigotti a priest celebrating Mass was struck by falling masonry in the act of raising the chalice. His hands and face were covered with blood, but he reverently and solemnly finished the divine office before attending either to himself or his flock. Less fortunate was Father Riccardo Bruscolletti at Castanovo, who was killed by the collapse of his church while celebrating Mass. The work of rescue is greatly hampered by the difficulty of reaching many villages which are situated high up on almost inaccessible mountains, also by the lack of electric light at night, the earthquake having broken down the electric wires.

RELIEF MEASURES

Summing up the disaster it may be said that 327 deaths have already been reported, but it is impossible to ascertain the exact number, as many dead lie under the ruins. There are plenty willing hands for rescue work, but food, blankets, and medicines are scarce, and the want of ice is especially felt, as so many of the injured are suffering from cerebral concussion. One of the gravest difficulties encountered in the rescue work is the fact that the earthquake caused enormous displacements of earth and rocks from the hills, obstructing the roads and destroying all means of communication. First-aid has been improvised from local means and surgical posts have been established wherever possible. The Red Cross has despatched 100 beds, many tents, and supplies of medicines in the care of surgeons and doctors to the scene of the disaster, and other benevolent associations are contributing to the work of relief as best they can. Many private persons put motor cars and motor lorries at the disposal of the authorities for the transportation of the injured and the distribution of supplies. Transport is very urgently needed, as thousands of people are camping in the open air.

RUINED VILLAGES

Fivizzano, the flourishing little town perched on the slope of the Appennines, sung by Carducci and by Robert Browning, was surrounded by old walls and possessed the remains of an ancient castle. Now it is a mere heap of ruins. Many inhabitants are buried under the debris, and heartrending groans and cries reach the survivors, who are working feverishly to extricate the bodies of their kinsfolk, dead or living, from the wrecks of their homes. At Vignetta, which a few days ago was a smiling village, the same scenes may be witnessed. At Toperia the survivors were removed by force from collapsing houses, as they absolutely refused to leave the village, which had become the tomb of their families. Houses fell at Colle d'Elsa, Poggbonari, and Voltarri. At Pistoja the dome of the Church of the Madonna del Umilta, designed by Vasari, fell, and it is feared that the entire church may collapse. Other buildings in Pistoja are also injured: Villa Collemandina is razed to the ground, and Sant Alessio has also suffered severely. At Marina, near Carrara, the roof of the church fell in during divine service. Fortunately the church was almost empty, but three women were killed and one seriously injured. In some places the shock set the church bells ringing. At Villa Collemandina the house of the Mayor, Signor Bindi, was destroyed, and his wife and two children were killed by falling walls. Signor Bindi, with admirable fortitude, himself extricated the bodies from the wreck of his house, and, finding nothing more could be done for them, calmly set to work to help his neighbours. In this place alone 34 dead have been recovered from the ruins. At Marina a lady and her seven children perished together. Barca, a town of 9000 inhabitants and the birthplace of the poet Giovanni Pascoli, has suffered badly, as well as the neighbouring town of Fossaci. In this district 65 dead have already been recovered and are laid out in the little cemetery, whose dead, also, have been shaken in their last resting places by the earthquake.

The only relief to be found in the general scene of disaster and suffering is the touching eagerness of all classes and parties to help their afflicted compatriots. Clericals, Socialists, Monarchists, Republicans have been brought together by the common calamity.

A FURTHER SHOCK

Rome, Thursday.—Reggio Nell' Emilia reports a violent earthquake shock at 2.30 this morning, attended by serious damage in various communes of the province, notably at Caspedaletto, Busana, Toano, and Cavola.—Reuter.

[Reggio Nell' Emilia is on the opposite slope of the Appennines from Massa, Carrara, the scene of Tuesday's disaster.]