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ADVERTISING RATES ON APPLICATION

THE SAN FRANCISCO CATASTROPHE

The earthquake of April 18, that laid the most of San Francisco in ruins, is justly regarded as one of the most appalling disasters that have taken place on this continent, and it has excited the attention and sympathy of the whole world.

Fortunately the shock occurred in the morning, thus giving the majority of the people an opportunity to seek possible escape from falling buildings and to help others to avoid the impending dangers.

It is remarkable, in the circumstances, how few the deaths were. Had the shock taken place during the night time, or had it taken place later in the day, when the schools were assembled, factories running and business in full operation, the loss of life would have been frightfully increased. The number of lives lost is variously stated as from three hundred to one thousand or more. Even the lowest estimate is an immense sacrifice. But earthquakes rarely are marked by so small loss of lives. Records show these disturbances have in many instances caused the entire destruction of populous cities and towns,

and also the loss of lives of many thousands of the inhabitants.

At present everything relating to the disaster at San Francisco is in a condition altogether too chaotic and uncertain to procure accurate or even approximate data of the number of lives lost, or the value of the property destroyed; rough estimates place it at anywhere from \$200,000,000 to \$500,000,000. The fire loss itself must, however, be enormous, and doubtless, with the most moderate estimates, the losses to the insurance companies will aggregate about \$120,000,000.

In the confusion and excitement prevailing on such occasions, claims are likely to be rushed and paid, as it were, offhand, without much consideration or hesitation on the part of the companies, the strong desire being to relieve distress. It is even stated that the companies have decided to pay all claims in full without question or reference to the terms and conditions of the policies. Of course, that is sentiment, and as such it is worthy of admiration—indeed it is likely to be strenuously commended and forcibly urged on the companies by the local agents, but the fact should not be lost sight of that insurance companies are not built, nor should they be conducted, on sentiment or philanthropy, and that while in any case it is but right and just to deal leniently with claimants by giving them the benefit of all reasonable doubts in the adjustment or settlement of claims, especially in the present circumstances, still some discrimination should be made between claims, the more or less proper or just ones; certain it is that all should not be treated alike, without any distinction or discrimination whatever. That would not be justice nor ordinary fair play. Why, for instance, recognize as just or fair claims for loss by fire on buildings that collapsed and took fire *after*, and because of the collapse? In that condition they were not buildings, but *ruins*, and they were not insured as ruins, therefore no claims exist under the policies for loss by fire. We hold to the doctrine of fair adjustment, which as far as possible should be reasonably liberal, thereby carrying out