

Help of Automobiles in San Francisco Calamity

By Howard J. Moss

Never since the advent of the automobile has there been so grand an opportunity to demonstrate its usefulness, nor has there ever been so severe, thorough, and general a test of the enduring qualities of machines of all classes and types as during and immediately after the fire which recently devastated so great a portion of the beautiful city of San Francisco.

passable for teams, but in many places twisted the road beds in such a manner as to give the car tracks the appearance of a mountain stream winding in and out among the rocks. In some places the streets sunk from two to four feet, and others were pushed up equal distances.

Following the quake immediately, fire broke out in many places and it



WHITE STEAMER ON RED CROSS WORK

The citizens of San Francisco certainly have reason to thank the automobile, as it was the means of saving hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of property and many lives.

The severe earthquake which shook the city early Wednesday morning, April 18, not only razed many buildings, piling the streets high with brick and debris and making them im-

was found that the convulsions of the earth's surface had so damaged the water mains as to leave the city practically waterless. This left nothing with which to fight the flames but dynamite. Haste was necessary, and here is where the automobile made itself useful. Rushing over the brick strewn streets and through seemingly impassable avenues, loaded with hundreds of pounds

of dynamite for the brave firemen and soldiers, who were doing all in the power of human beings to save the doomed city, the great machines worked all of Wednesday, Wednesday night and Thursday. No regard was paid to the speed limit these days, the monsters went at full speed through the streets, which were open enough to allow it, and climbed the steep hills and rushed down the other side in a manner that would have satisfied the most daring automobile enthusiast. One man at the wheel, one, or sometimes two, to take care of the load and another at the horn, keeping up a continual honk! honk! to clear the road for this devil wagon loaded with enough explosive to blow it and its occupants into unrecognizable bits.

It is a pleasure, however, to say that the automobile was not used solely in the work of destruction, but was just as active in the good work of rescue and relief. They rushed the sick and injured to places of safety or to the improvised emergency hospitals. They carried surgeons, nurses and medical supplies to the places where they were most needed. The drug stores, which still remained standing, were looted by the soldiers and the contents piled into automobiles labeled with the red cross. The dry goods stores were denuded of their stocks of blankets, pillows and all such necessary supplies, and again it was the powerful and ever ready automobile which was piled high with these goods and driven through streets which no animal-propelled vehicle could ever have passed.

Even to the removal of the dead was the automobile made useful. In many cases these finely upholstered, highly finished cars, which had been the scenes of many a frolicsome, happy pleasure trip, were turned into dead wagons and piled full of the unfortunates who lost

their lives in the first shattering shock of that fateful Wednesday morning.

Though we own to the big-hearted generosity of the westerner, it would be a little too much to expect that the men who owned machines in San Francisco would willingly give them up to be used in the rough manner and, in many cases, sickening uses to which they were put. It was not a case of whether they wanted to or not. Only a few hours after the earthquake, the city was put under martial law and everything needed for the fight against the flames, for Red Cross work and for food and supplies for the homeless was confiscated. When an automobile was needed and one passed, not in charge of a soldier, it was seized. Many times the owners were moving their own personal effects or their families, and objected to abandoning their goods to do work which the soldiers thought more necessary. But a gun is a powerful persuader and a man is very apt to do whatever he is asked to when its business end is close to his head and he knows that "the man behind the gun" has the authority to use it if his orders are not obeyed.

Every automobile owner in San Francisco to-day has his story to tell—how his machine was pressed into service and how it was used during the several days following the earthquake.

Every one has good words for the work done by the auto; but, strange to say, there are practically no photographs showing it in action during the conflagration. Fire pictures there are many—ruin pictures still more—but it seems the photographers were all too busy taking these to think about the good work being done by the autos. The accompanying picture, Fig. 1, I was fortunate in getting just as an injured man was being taken to one of the hospitals. Several women also are in the machine

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which is in charge of a regular army officer. The condition of the streets before they were cleared is shown here. The ruins in the background are those of the \$7,000,000 city hall whose wreck was begun by the earthquake and finished by the fire.

The machine here shown is a White Steamer, and, I believe, is one of the half dozen or more owned and operated, all during the disturbances, by the Hensley-Green Co., large real estate dealers and

San Francisco's long struggle against destruction will never be recorded with anything approaching completeness, but those who read the accounts of the struggle from day to day have surely gained a new respect for the people of San Francisco. The courage, self-possession and self-help of her citizens in the days when these qualities were put to the supreme test, and the hearty, spontaneous and abundant sympathy and aid that flowed to these people from every point are two



MOBILE CARRIAGE COMPANY'S GARAGE

Col. J. Levy, a well-known San Francisco autoist, in auto, who did heroic Red Cross service

owners of San Bruno Park. I mention this because I believe this to be about the only good picture in existence of any machine actually engaged in rescue work, and one likes to know the names of those who come forward and offer their services, as those people did in the time of need. There are many others, but I do not know their names. The conspicuous acts of endurance, devotion and heroism that marked San Fran-

touches of light and cheer in the somber picture of San Francisco's desolation.

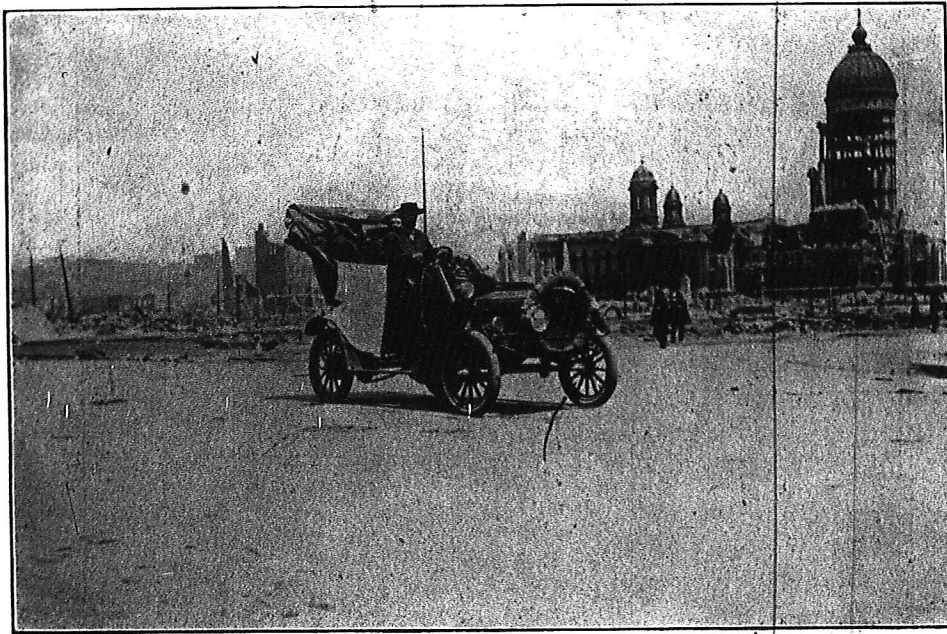
Without doubt, the destruction of this beautiful metropolis of the West was the greatest calamity which ever befel this country—or any other. The records of previous great fires, beginning with the burning of Rome in the year 64, with their resulting loss of property and values, will pale into insignificance when the figures can be ascertained and the

actual loss has been determined. It will be recorded that the conflagration which swept San Francisco was the greatest the world has ever known.

It will not be possible to obtain all the records, maps and other documents which are in the vaults of the insurance companies for some time. These vaults are badly damaged and hot inside, and should an attempt be made to open the doors, until the interiors are cooled, the supply of oxygen admitted would burst

er and more prosperous than when smitten by calamity.

It is true the fires which lighted San Francisco's pathway to destruction were a consequence of the earthquake which shook down the frailer structures and disarranged the multitude of wires laden with electricity. Had these wires been underground and properly safeguarded, and scientific rules of stable and enduring architecture been observed, there would have been little damage from the



ANOTHER AUTOMOBILE DOING SAMARITAN DUTY ON VAN NESS AVENUE

into flame and totally destroy the valuable records. It is therefore impossible to ascertain or even approximate the losses at present.

It is estimated that less than five per cent of the actual ruin in San Francisco was wrought by the earthquake. The elemental disaster was comparatively slight. Fire was the real agent of destruction, and Chicago, Boston and Baltimore have all in their time withered under the flames, but have sprung from their ashes more beautiful, richer, proud-

seismic disturbance and no appalling conflagration would have resulted.

Carelessness and haste in construction, lack of proper precautions, and long immunity from disaster are mainly responsible for the destruction of the city. Man is himself to blame for the affliction which has visited him, and it has taught the people of San Francisco an unforgettable lesson in the stern but thorough school of experience.

But San Francisco is only wrecked—not ruined—and the work of rebuilding

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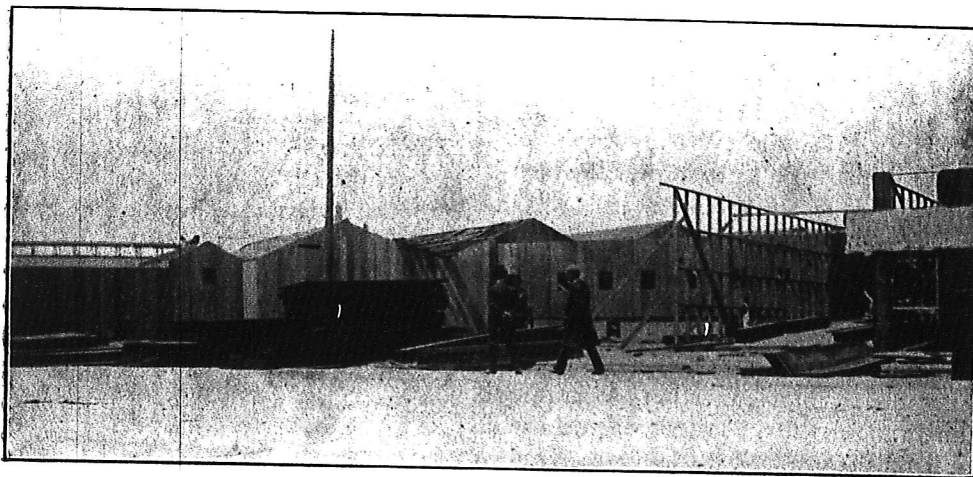
has already commenced. Why shouldn't she rebuild? She still has her beautiful situation, her climate, her Golden Gate and her wonderful harbor. San Francisco can be made the most magnificent city in the world—if it is done now. Everything is in her favor and she will never have a better opportunity.

Interesting to automobile people is the fact that the largest temporary structure erected in the burned district within two weeks after the fire, was that of a garage for the White Sewing Machine Co. This one-story frame building is at the corner of Market

the debris and bringing in the material for the greater city which is to come.

Captured the Autos

E. P. Brinegar, Winton representative in San Francisco, gives the Winton Motor Carriage Company the following graphic story of conditions in the stricken city: "Presume you are anxious to know the situation here. Can outline the whole matter by saying that hell could not be compared to San Francisco at the present time. Our building was within 100 feet of the dead line where the fire stopped. The building was dam-



NEW GARAGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION BY WHITE SEWING MACHINE CO., AT MARKET STREET AND VAN NESS AVENUE. COVERS 42,000 SQUARE FEET

street and Van Ness avenue, and contains 42,000 square feet of floor surface.

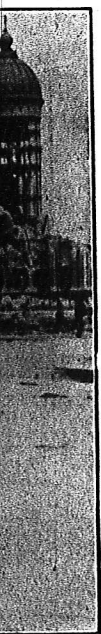
The citizens of San Francisco have a stupendous task before them, they have 10,000 acres, or about 15 square miles, to rebuild; but they are equal to the task. Optimism is a fine quality. "Never say die" is the motto of San Francisco, and her people will live up to it. Her rise will be even a greater marvel than her calamity.

The good work of the automobile is appreciated, but now comes the work for the heavy teams in clearing away

aged but slightly, being a wooden structure with metallic lath and plaster on the outside.

"The police and army officials have taken all our automobiles, old and new, and placed them in the hospital and other service; also confiscated parts, tires, gasoline, oil, etc. We are glad, however, to be able to render this service to aid the suffering. Want to say here that without the aid of the automobiles the suffering here would be tenfold, and the loss probably much greater. Every available machine has been

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