

Dannevirke helpers had sufficient good sense to make the earthquake taboo as a subject of conversation.

The relief train had not yet started leaving Waipukurau when we went north, but the next day when they did, committees were at work there, and the Dannevirke work was repeated there and at other towns as well.

Our first glimpses of actual damage wrought by the 'quake came as we neared Waipukurau, which, though badly shaken, was not greatly damaged. Chimneys were levelled, here and there a telegraph post was leaning drunkenly, and one or two brick dividing walls had given way. The further north we went the worse the damage became. By the time we reached Te Aute day was just beginning to break, and in the hazy light we caught a glimpse of fallen brickwork and damaged roof. Even then, though, it was difficult to realise that this peaceful countryside had been broken, and that wholesale destruction lay ahead. One momentary glance at Hastings was enough to show us that the reports of terrific destruction were not at all exaggerated, but later, when we reached Napier, we realised that Hastings had been fortunate in escaping the fire demon which added so fearfully to the havoc at Napier.

**PHOTOGRAPHS** of practically every portion of the two damaged towns have appeared already, but even these cannot convey an adequate impression of the horror which fell so suddenly and devastatingly upon the Napier and Hastings people. In two minutes which were an eternity to those actually there two prosperous towns were laid into heaps of ruins more complete than those of towns which had suffered heavy bombardment. It was like a glimpse of war with the added

frightfulness of war upon the women and children of a civilian population. The whole of the business area in Napier had been swept to ruins, and matters made worse by the terrific fire which followed, and which completed the gruesome work of destruction.

By the time we arrived rescue work had been in full swing for some time, hundreds had passed through the dressing stations and on to temporary hospitals, and ruins were being searched in the hope that others would be brought out alive. The residential portion of the town had not suffered to nearly the same extent, but practically all chimneys were down, most houses were damaged to a greater or lesser extent, and the ubiquitous

everything is straightened out, and relatives put in touch with each other again.

On Wednesday hundreds—probably thousands—of cars arrived from all over the North Island, being sent by various automobile associations to assist in evacuation. By Thursday a smoothly-working organisation was dealing with evacuation, and cars were leaving every minute for the various places that were taking charge of the refugees. Never before has the main south road carried so much traffic, for as fast as the cars left Napier filled, their places were taken by others arriving empty. Nothing like the scenes at Nelson Park can ever have been witnessed in New Zealand before, and the way in which the multitude was kept fed was marvellous. The food organisation was solid throughout, and at no time was there anyone wanting food and unable to obtain it. What that means can best be gauged by remembering that shops had all gone, and that, in addition to Napier residents, hundreds flocked in from the countryside, fearing further disaster.

**TERRIBLE** as were the scenes in the devastated business area, where the destruction of life and property had been so heavy, there was one which was sadder still—the wreck of the nurses' home at the public hospital. The big building collapsed like a pack of cards, the heap of ruins being reminiscent of the very worst pictures of the great Japanese earthquake, and some of the sleeping nurses were buried. No one could see those tons of wreckage without being profoundly moved. If any one thing could bring home the full depths of sorrow and tragedy that have been plumed in the devastated area, it is that silent heap of wreckage and the story it tells. The remaining nurses had to carry on within sight of that gruesome pile of ruin, and the fact that they did so speaks volumes for their courage. Wherever we went among the nurses in the various camps, dressing stations, and temporary hospitals, we found them working for dear life. Their eyes told the story of nights without sleep and days without rest. They were living on their wonderful spirit—"carrying on," and they did it magnificently.

The courthouse was turned into a morgue, and many a silent drama was enacted within those four walls. Unidentified bodies were taken there and full description given as to where they were found. We heard of many cases of hope being turned to despair when it became only too clear that some relative had not been able to escape, although, as always hope had remained till the grim ruins yielded up their dead. Then, too, there was the other side of the drama, and the police were able to tell us of cases where people had come feeling certain that some of their loved ones were among the dead, but went away rejoicing when they learnt that the police knew of them, that they were safe and well, and had left the town in the relief cars.

There were miraculous escapes—hundreds of them; in fact, when we had seen the full extent of the holocaust our wonder was not that the death-roll had been so large, but that it had been so small, in proportion to the extent of the disaster. In many cases people in buildings had the awesome experience of having those buildings actually shaken away from under their feet, and yet found themselves dazed, but absolutely unhurt when the

'quake was over. We spoke to one man who was on the second story of a brick building near the Cathedral, who saw the Cathedral crash while his own building was swaying sickeningly. The walls of his own building gave way and crashed outward, and in some way—he knows not how—he was precipitated into the street with nothing more than light bruises.

There were many stories of wonderful escapes, some true, some exaggerated in the passing-on of the story, but there was one for which we can vouch, which, if read in fiction, would be laughed to scorn. Mr. Husheer, senior, managing director of the National Tobacco Co., was ill in bed in a four-storied concrete private hospital on the Marine Parade. His own son had the fearful experience of seeing the side of his father's room torn out and flung bodily to earth, and his father lying upstairs in the wrecked room, unable to be reached. The prisoners had been released from Napier gaol when the 'quake came, and three of them volunteered to go up and get Mr. Husheer. Taking a rope, they climbed perilously up water-pipes and succeeded in reaching the room, and lowered Mr. Husheer to the ground. The fact that the National Tobacco Co. was one of the first to plan the re-starting of operations is but another instance of the indomitable spirit that has been evident in Napier and Hastings.

#### At Port Ahuriri.

**PORT AHURIRI** suffered just as badly as Napier, and twisted wharves and gaping roads tell the story of the earthquake demon there. The buildings there were all smaller than those of Napier, and many being wooden did not suffer. Where bricks and mortar had been used it was the same old story of piled up ruins. Lighters had been taking wool out to liners in the roadstead at the time the 'quake occurred, and it was like visiting a long-dead city to see the bales in the various stages between wool-store and lighter. Just how much water is left at the Port will not be known for some time yet, but it certainly looks as if not the least serious part of the whole disaster will be the loss of harbour facilities.

Much of the land there is reclaimed ground, and here the earthquake had certainly played havoc, huge cracks appearing in the roads, approaches to bridges being rocked away, and more actual damage to roads done than anywhere else.

Fires had done work of destruction there, too, and we saw firemen asleep on the running-boards of the fire-engines, having dropped there from sheer exhaustion after being almost



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marines had found injured in many houses and transferred them to relief camps or hospitals.

**BEFORE** the fire which followed the 'quake had got much of a hold, committees had been organised to gather food from the shops and transfer it to a central depot, and this, together with food sent from the Veronica, comprised the nucleus of the store that later was used to feed the thousands passing through the relief camps. At Nelson Park there was ample accommodation in tents, plenty of bedding, and a band of workers organised by the Red Cross, who worked day and night at fever heat to feed the people.

The scenes at the camps were as pathetic as those in the town were awe-inspiring. Naturally enough, with families arriving from all parts of town and country there was confusion, and children became separated from their parents, or families lost touch with one another. The heartrending feature of these camps though, was the ceaseless search being made for missing relatives. Wherever we went round the grounds we saw anxious, care-worn people patiently trudging round the long lines of tents in the hope of finding a missing friend or relation. In the confusion which naturally existed at the start, when the one thought was the rapid evacuation of the women and children, many were rushed away without proper checking of names, and it will probably be some weeks before