

## INTERNATIONAL NEIGH- BORLINESS

Lieutenant-Commander Belknap's book<sup>1</sup> recalls a thoroughly healthy and pleasant memory of our international relations. In times of terrible and overwhelming disaster to any nation, the sister nations of the world of to-day—in striking contrast to what has been true of past ages—are for the time being lifted above the plane of self-interest on which they normally move and must move, and show themselves capable of acts of sincere and disinterested friendliness.

The whole civilized world felt a shudder of genuine horror and a thrill of genuine sympathy over the news of the frightful calamity which had befallen Messina. Among the nations whose sympathy found

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<sup>1</sup> American House Building in Messina and Reggio. By Reginald Rowan Belknap. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. \$2.

immediate and practical expression our own country stood foremost. Congress at once made provision for furnishing relief to the sufferers; and the American battle fleet, then nearing the end of its cruise round the world, acted without even waiting for explicit orders. No small part of the respect and good will inspired by the United States in the world at large during recent years has been due to the known preparedness for war of the United States navy; and it is a matter for just pride to Americans that the very qualities which give the navy its military efficiency are also the qualities which have again and again—at Martinique, at Jamaica, at Messina—enabled the navy to give the most convincing proofs of efficient National good will to foreign peoples. When, by consultation with the Italian Government, it was found out exactly what shape our help should take in order to do most practical good, Lieutenant-Commander Belknap was sent to Messina to take charge of the work; and a number of the officers and enlisted men of the navy were detailed to serve under him.

In this volume the Commander shows just what the work was and how it was done. It was signally successful from every standpoint, and reflects the utmost credit on the Commander and all his subordinates, both those from the navy and those from civilian life; including especially the Red Cross. In efficiency, in economy, in speed, and in thoroughness there was nothing left to be desired as regards any part of the work.

Next to the ability, energy, and zeal of the workers, the main cause of their success lay in the admirable relations they were able to maintain with the Italian officials and the people of Messina—for the manner of giving is, of course, always as important as the gift. The book itself is dedicated to Commander Belknap's "devoted colleague," Lieutenant Brofferio, of the Italian navy. The commune of Messina conferred citizenship upon the American officers, Messrs. Belknap, Buchanan, Wilcox, Spofford, and Donelson (how truly National our navy is, is instanced by the fact that their respective birth-places are in Massachusetts, Indiana, Georgia, Oregon, and Mississippi), and the artist Mr. John Elliott. The Little

Sisters of the Poor sent a letter of thanks so touching that it deserves to be quoted in full:

*To the Directing Manager and Gentlemen engaged in the erection of Barracks at Messina:*

Gentlemen—I the undersigned, Superior Provincial of the Little Sisters of the Poor, having been apprised of your approaching departure from Messina, feel it my duty to thank you for the great kindness shown to our Sisters in that unfortunate country; no words can express our gratitude for the noble manner in which you have treated us.

We have every reason to hope that our Home will soon be reopened, as it is the desire of our Holy Father, Pius X, that the aged poor should be taken care of.

Gentlemen, you may rest assured that your benevolence for our work will never, never be forgotten; you will always be considered as our first benefactors, and our prayers and the prayers of our dear poor will follow you everywhere. If you come back to visit this desolate country of Messina, we hope you will come at once to see us, as we are really your "protégées."

Receive, gentlemen, my most grateful homage, and believe me

Your most humble servant in Christ our Lord,  
SR. AIMÉE DE LA PROVIDENCE,  
Provinciale des Petites Sre. des Pauvres,  
Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli, Roma.

August 8, 1909.

Where all did so well, it seems invidious to single out any for special reference; yet I think that all who saw the work at Messina took away a peculiarly vivid mind picture of the stalwart enlisted men of the United States navy. Taken as a whole, there are no better citizens of this country than the officers and enlisted men of our navy. If any other country has their equals, that country is indeed fortunate.

Perhaps the difference between what could occur in our navy and what is possible in any other navy may be illustrated by the recital of something that happened just at the close of our work at Messina. One of the civilian volunteers who worked hard and faithfully under Commander Belknap was Lloyd Derby, who had reached Messina immediately after Captain Belknap took charge. Derby had just graduated from Harvard, and was finishing a trip round the world, but when he reached Messina, finding that there was need of volunteers, he stopped, and for three or four months served under Belknap. When the work was over, he went to Rome to spend a few days, and

one day in the Forum suddenly espied a man in the uniform of an American sailor. His association with the sailormen at Messina had given him a strong feeling for them, and he made friends with the stranger. He found the man had come from an American war-ship, and had saved up his pay for some months in order that he might see Rome thoroughly. Accordingly when he drew his back pay and got leave, he came straight to Rome, hired a guide, bought a Baedeker, and was now methodically seeing everything best worth seeing, and, in addition, was improving his mind and utilizing the guide to further advantage by learning Italian from him. Derby was himself much interested in Roman history and antiquities, and he found that the enlisted man was a genial soul whose knowledge of the subject was even greater. After spending the morning together to their mutual satisfaction, they parted only after Derby had gotten his new friend to promise to take dinner with him that evening at his (Derby's) hotel; and the dinner proved as enjoyable as the morning had been.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.