



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OFFICES
OF THE JAPANESE HYDROGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT
IN TOKYO.

By the Earthquake of 1st September 1923.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE DIRECTING COMMITTEE.

ON the 12th September 1923 the Bureau received the following cable-gram from Admiral UCHIDA, the Hydrographer of the Japanese Navy : —

« Hydrographic Department totally burnt after earthquake and begs assistance for recovery, kindly inform Associated Hydrographic Services ».

Circular-Letter N^o { 9-R. }
 { 23-H. } was sent out on the following day informing all concerned of the above, and requesting the Hydrographic and other Offices of the Members of this Bureau to render assistance by supplying all documents which might be of value in rehabilitating the work of the Japanese Hydrographic Office.

A Supplement to this Circular-Letter was despatched on the 28th September, giving the new address to which documents, etc., intended for the Japanese Hydrographic Office, should be sent ; the address is as follows : —

SUIROBU,
KAIGUNSHO,
TOKYO.

Information of the action taken by certain Hydrographic Offices in reply to the above request has been received at varying dates by the Bureau, and it shows clearly that practical steps are being taken by the principal Offices affected to make good all losses as far as possible ;

no request for the supply of information under this head had been made by the Bureau but it is evident that all concerned are showing their practical sympathy in the required direction.

In confirmation of his cablegram of 12th September, Admiral UCHIDA wrote on the 6th October to say that he regretted to inform the Bureau that the Hydrographic Department Establishment, together with all valuable printed matter, had been destroyed by the raging fires which occurred simultaneously with the earthquakes of 1st September and, after requesting copies of all printed matter issued by the Bureau together with copies of all correspondence both to and from the Japanese Hydrographic Department, he adds :

« I avail myself of this opportunity to thank you most heartily for all the trouble you have taken in uniting the Hydrographic Offices of the Associated States for aiding us to rise, literally, from the ashes ».

This terrible catastrophe occurred about noon on the 1st September ; it was the most destructive of any of the numerous earthquakes which have visited Japan since that of November 1854 ; the general localities affected were in the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama (which are about 15 miles apart) and in the surrounding districts.

As has so often occurred previously in all parts of the world, the earthquakes were rapidly followed by the horrors of fires, to which, on the coasts, were added the terrors of destructive seismic sea-waves ; both these accompaniments tended to increase the frightful destruction of life and property which had been caused already by the earthquakes.

In the capital city of Tokyo, of the 335,000 buildings which were destroyed, only a little more than ten per cent collapsed under the earthquake shock, the remainder being burnt ; in Yokohama about seventy five per cent of the houses were destroyed, those remaining being of comparatively small value.

The Naval base of Yokosuka, about 10 miles south of Yokohama, was destroyed by the combined effects of the earthquakes and the subsequent seismic sea-waves ; the Imperial Museum, the Imperial University and all the principal Government buildings at Tokyo were almost completely destroyed.

The annihilation of life and property on such an enormous scale is appalling to think of, but when the destruction of such institutions as the University, with its priceless library, and Government Offices, with their valuable archives, is considered it is impossible for those who have never witnessed such scenes of wholesale desolation, to

realise the incalculable loss which this terrific convulsion of nature has caused, not only to the Empire of Japan, but to the whole world.

The Bureau received in January 1924 a chart showing the result of a superficial examination made with the object of ascertaining the changes in the depths of Sagami Nada which lies just outside the entrance to Tokyo Kaiwan.

At about the centre of the bay extraordinary changes of level have occurred.

The greatest depth found at this point during a survey made in 1919 was 847 fathoms. The cursory examination made in November 1923 shows that, within half a mile of this deepest point, there is now 835 fathoms of water, *i.e.* the bottom of the bay has risen 72 feet.

In general, before the earthquake, the depths ranged between 500 and 700 fathoms with several deeps and shoals; the average change of depth is in the neighbourhood of 50 or 60 fathoms; so far, no change exceeding 260 fathoms has been found.

Owing to the total destruction of the Hydrographic Department it is obvious that the Hydrographer will be anxious to obtain copies of all previous Japanese Hydrographic publications, and in this special connection it is suggested that the Hydrographic Offices of the Members of this Bureau may possibly be in possession of duplicate copies of such works which could be spared and forwarded to Tokyo for this purpose.

It is certain that all nations will unite in helping Japan in its terrible affliction, and it is hoped that the Hydrographic Offices of the Members of this Bureau will do everything in their power to enable the Japanese Hydrographic Office to continue its valuable work in all its spheres of activity.

Special sympathy will be felt for Admiral UCHIDA, who had only recently been appointed to the post of Hydrographer, and whose whole energies now have to be devoted to the extremely arduous and difficult task of re-constructing his service so that it may, as he himself says at the end of his letter of 6th October, "rise, literally, from the ashes".

