

60 PEOPLE INJURED IN COLLISION MANY PRIESTS AMONGST THE VICTIMS.

A shocking railway accident, involving injuries to about sixty persons, including a large number of clergymen, but fortunately unattended by loss of life, took place near Roscrea on Tuesday morning.

Portion of an excursion train, becoming disconnected from the engine, rushed from Roscrea station along the Birr line a distance of about four miles, when it crashed with a terrible impact into a passenger train from Birr, and was completely wrecked.

The runaway train was crowded with passengers on their way to Queenstown, and when they became aware of their danger many jumped from the carriages and fell down the steep embankment at either side.

A reserved carriage occupied by about fourteen clergymen bore the brunt of the collision, and all the occupants were more or less seriously injured, the carriages becoming completely telescoped. Just before the crash came Father Cunningham, P. P. Kinnity, fearing that death was inevitable, administered Absolution to his fellow-passengers. When the crash came he was hurled against the side of the carriage and received injuries of a shocking character.

The promptness of the driver of the Birr train, T. Boughal, averted what might have become the most direful catastrophe recorded in the history of Irish railways. On observing the engineless train coming towards him down the steep gradient, he at once reversed his engine, and his efforts were promptly seconded by his fireman, William Morgan, and the guard, Daniel Sharpe. Broughal managed to retain his place on the footplate after the collision, but the fireman was hurled into an adjacent field.

On the news of the occurrence reaching Roscrea, many willing workers were soon on the spot, including Dr Murray and Dr Holohan, Roscrea; Drs Graham and Wallace, Shinrone, and Nurses Mahony and Powell, the latter happening to be passengers on board of the ill-fated train.

The scene presented after the collision was a most distressing one. The wreckage lay strewn about in all directions, and it was seen that very large proportions of the passengers of the runaway train, who are said to have numbered about 500 in all, had received injuries. Many lay unconscious at the side of the line, while others were manifestly suffering extreme pain from fractured limbs, etc. The only consoling feature was the knowledge that as far as could be learned no life had been sacrificed.

The tremendous force of the impact may be judged from the fact that the smokestack of the Birr engine was carried away, while two of the runaway carriages were telescoped.

Many of the less seriously injured were treated locally, but over thirty were conveyed by special train to Dublin, and of these about 20 were treated in the city hospitals, the remainder being able to go to their homes.

PASSENGERS INTERVIEWED.

DOCTOR'S GRAPHIC NARRATIVE

A graphic description of the catastrophe was given by a young Roscrea medical man, Dr Houlihan, who rendered magnificent services to the wounded. He was the only doctor at hand at the time of the disaster, and worked energetically single handed for an hour and a half until additional medical assistance arrived. In a special interview with an "Irish Independent" representative he said:—

"Our train, consisted of about 15 carriages, including two special saloon cars, was waiting at the Roscrea platform about 9.30 yesterday morning. There were approximately 500 people in our contingent. The engine of our train coupled up with the Birr train, also an excursion train in which there was another large number of people.

"The engine backed the Birr portion down to where we were in order that our train might be coupled to it. In doing so our train was pushed back, and were sent down along the line towards Birr, and gathered speed each minute. The saloon cars were at either end of our train—the party of priests were in the rear one, and I and my friends—Mr Jackson, of Roscrea my brother Arthur (solicitor), and others—occupied the saloon which had been in the front portion next to the engine. The position had now been reversed, of course, and the priests were in the car leading the runaway carriages, and our car was now in the rear.

"I thought we were going back to Birr to pick up some more of the excursion party, and no one felt alarmed until I looked out of the window and saw a man leap from one of the carriages in front. I said, "Somebody is committing suicide—a man has just jumped off the train." This was about a couple of miles down the line, and we were going at about 25 miles an hour. I look out again and saw several more people jumping off the train, mostly priests, and called Mr Jackson's attention to the strange occurrence. There were 14 people in our carriage, and they got very much alarmed.

"When I looked out again I saw somebody in the front of our train waving a red flag, and on the lines ahead I saw the Birr passenger train coming up against us, and also showing a red flag. Then we knew what was the matter. Several passenger in my car wanted to jump out. I prevented one who had the door open, and I advised them to remain where we were, that we were practically safe, as we were the last car, and that the other cars in front would get the whole force of the collision. Then came the crash.

"Those in our carriage escaped except for a bit of a shaking at the moment of the collision. Shrieks, cries and prayers for help greeted us as we ran along to the front part, where we immediately set to work to extricate the unfortunate victims who were penned to the ground by the wreckage. In some cases we had to smash portions of the carriages to get people clear.

"I was the only doctor there at the time, and for about an hour and a half afterwards my hands were kept pretty busy, as I was called from one injured person to another, and several often calling for me at the same instant. Mr Jackson, my brother Arthur, and others gave me great help. They broke off the splintered woodwork, and collected handkerchiefs, and we soon had the most of the serious injuries dressed in these emergency splints.

"Three or four carriages were telescoped into each other, the engine funnel of the Birr train was lying beside the permanent way. The passengers in the Birr train—there were only about a dozen—had jumped off just before the collision. They were safe, as the train had slowed down and the engine-driver had actually started reversing the engine, but had no time to get the train into any kind of speed to lessen the force of the impact with our train. The engine driver remained on the plate, but I saw the fireman about halfway across a field as if he had been flung there.

"At the spot where the crash occurred—about four miles from Roscrea, and six from Birr—the embankment sloped steeply up for about five or six feet from the rails. Men and women were scrambling up this and falling down again in their hands to get clear from the line.

"I dressed 12 broken legs (10 women and two men), five broken arms, and bandaged up six scalp wounds, taking the more seriously injured first. Afterwards

I attended to the other minor fractures—collar bones, etc., and injuries. For an hour and a half we had to work, tending the wounded before help arrived. There were several cases of fainting and suffering from shock amongst the women passengers. Mr Jackson rendered admirable aid in looking after the injured, and afterwards helped to convey them to Birr in his motor car. Drs Murray, Powell (sen. and junr.), Wallace Esmonde and Graham afterwards arrived from Birr."

Dr Houlihan accompanied the injured to Dublin.

PREPARING FOR DEATH.

PRIEST GIVES ABSOLUTION

Father Martin Tuohy, who is only in the fourth year of his sacred ministry was detained for treatment in the Mater Private Hospital. A representative of the "Independent" waited on Father Tuohy that evening, and the rev. gentleman in an interview, said:—

"When the carriages started off down the incline without the engine," he said, "I realised at once what had occurred. There were fourteen priests in the carriage with me, and we all knew well that the ordinary 9.20 train from Birr was travelling towards us, and that we must crash into it a little further down the slope. Meanwhile the runaway train was rapidly gathering speed, and we were travelling at a good pace when, on looking out, we saw the Birr train steaming towards

"Father Cunningham then told us that we might prepare for the worst, so we knelt down and received absolution at his hands.

"The Roscrea stationmaster remained on the footboard all the way, waving a flag, and as we came almost against the Birr train we observed that it had been brought to a standstill, but unfortunately the engine-driver had not time to reverse his engine before we crashed into it."

"Could you describe the sensation you felt just as you saw yourselves about to crash into the oncoming train?" asked the representative.

"I shall never forget it," replied Father Tuohy. "I saw our train dashing headlong into the engine of the other train, so acting on the first impulse, when all hope of averting the terrible collision had gone thought it was better to chance my life and leap from the carriage window. I first went through the window before the trains crashed together, and scrambling on to the footboard, I leaped down the embankment and broke my leg. My escape from instantaneous death was Providential.

"I endeavoured, as soon as I recovered from the dazed condition into which I was thrown, to rise. It was then I realised that my leg was broken at the ankle, so I had to lie down again and await the arrival of Dr Houlihan, who, by the way was a passenger on the ill-fated train, and escaping uninjured, acted heroically in efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the injured. He spliced my leg with two splinters of wood that he took from the frame of the carriage in which I had travelled, and which had been smashed into smithereens."

"I'm feeling quite happy now" remarked Father Tuohy, in conclusion, "and I am sure I will soon be well again."