

SERIOUS RAILWAY ACCIDENT IN IRELAND

As we were informed by cable at the time, a very serious railway accident occurred near Roscrea on July 19. The accident occurred through a portion of an excursion train becoming disconnected from the engine and rushing from Roscrea platform along the Birr line, a distance of five miles, when it crashed into a passenger train coming out from Birr. A reserved carriage occupied by some fourteen priests returning from a retreat bore the brunt of the collision, and there was not one of the occupants but received injuries more or less serious. The carriage was telescoped. The runaway train was completely wrecked, yet, by the promptness of the driver of the Birr train, an even more disastrous catastrophe was averted. 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 and the guard. However, before his train could be got under way the crash came, and the line was strewn with wreckage. The driver managed to retain his place on the footplate, while the fireman was hurled into an adjacent field.

The following is a list of those injured:—Father Cunningham, P.P., Kinnitty, seriously; Father Slattery, P.P., seriously; Father Costigan, P.P., seriously; Father Scallan, C.C., Birr, arm broken; Father Crowe, C.C., Birr, injuries to the chest; Father Bannon, C.C., Banagher, collarbone broken; Father Tuohy, C.C., Loughrea, injured; Father Nohilly, C.C., several serious injuries; Miss Cramp-ton, Birr, injuries to the arm; Miss Finnegan, seriously; Miss Barnwell, Mrs. Gaffney, Mrs. Sheehan, Mrs. Scully, Miss Power, Mrs. Finane, Thomas Talbot and son, Miss Callaghan, all of Birr, and badly injured; Mr. P. Egan, D.C., Kinnitty, broken leg.

Broughal, the engine driver, on being questioned, said: 'Only I had time to stop and reverse the accident would have been one of the worst recorded in Ireland.' There

were over 200 persons on board the colliding trains, and of these over 100 sustained injuries. Father Cunningham's injuries are even more serious than was at first thought.

It appears that Mr. Hayes, station-master, on observing the carriages leave the station, ran and managed to mount the footboard. He endeavored to allay the panic which was breaking out, and when he observed the Birr train on the line he frantically waved his hat. As the train collided he jumped and reached the embankment, suffering only a few scratches.

Out of the sixty or seventy injured, it is estimated that six or seven will prove to be very serious cases, twelve may be described as serious, and the remainder are more or less slight. Many lady passengers suffered very much from shock.

Father Martin Tuohy, the Abbey, Loughrea, who was suffering from a broken leg, gave the following account of the collision:—'When the carriages started off down the incline without the engine I realised at once what had occurred. There were fourteen priests in the carriage with me, and we all knew that the ordinary 9.20 train from Birr was travelling towards us. Meanwhile the runaway train was rapidly gathering speed. We were travelling at a fast pace, and, when looking out, we saw the Birr train steaming towards us. Father Cunningham then told us that we might prepare for the worst. We all knelt down and received absolution at his hands. The Roscrea station-master 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, I believe, the engine driver had not time to reverse his engine before we crashed into it. I shall never forget my feelings as I saw our train dashing headlong into the engine of the other train. When all hope of averting the terrible collision had gone, I thought it was better to chance my life and leap from the carriage window. I got 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.'

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