

'God Himself could not sink this ship'

THE 'TITANIC' DISASTER

The White Star Leviathan, R.M.S. "Titanic," of 46,328 tons register, was built at Belfast by Messrs. Harland and Wolff Ltd., and sailed on her maiden voyage to New York from Southampton on April 10, 1912.

Whilst in latitude 41.45 North, longitude 50.14 West, she collided with an iceberg and sank within two-and-a-half hours.

Over fifteen hundred lives were lost in the disaster.

The fact that the seven hundred survivors included a very large proportion of women and children spoke well for the heroism both of the crew and the male passengers, many of whom faced certain death to give the first chance of safety to those least able to help themselves.

The heroism and sacrifice displayed were worthy of the best traditions of the sea.

Shock

The appalling catastrophe shocked the world. Many Irish homes were plunged into mourning, and Limerick and district, too, had its dead.

One of the lucky passengers rescued was Miss Nellie Dwyer, of High Street, Limerick. She was one of the last women to leave the doomed liner.

1912 was a notable year for shipping disasters, and must be regarded as one of the worst in the history of marine insurance.

The Titanic disaster involved 1,500 lives and insurance claims of between two and three million pounds. Another serious loss was the sinking of the P. and O. liner "Oceana" off Eastbourne, although practically all the the bullion on board, amounting to £750,000, was subsequently recovered.

Besides this, there had been at least half-a-dozen disasters, each involving a loss of £1000,000 or more and a large number of casualties.

Rumour

But the mammoth shadow of the Titanic disaster completely blacked out all others from the minds of the public whose blind trust in size, material and appliances was completely shattered.

Rumours, theories and sensational statements were rife in the days following the disaster, but at last the facts came to light. At 11.45 on that clear and starlit night the Leviathan struck a submerged iceberg, which ripped open her starboard side.

The shock was so slight that it was scarcely felt by those on board - some of them were enjoying a game of cards - but the stopping of the engines was an indication that something was amiss.

An eye-witness account of the tragedy, given by a Mr. Beesley, of London, appeared in the "Limerick Chronicle" of April 20: "I heard the order shouted 'all passengers on deck with lifebelts on.'

There was a wonderful absence of panic.

The women were collecting on one of the decks preparatory to their being transferred to the lifeboats, and what a harrowing scene it was.

In some cases they were torn from their husbands

the Fund. Father Devane, Vice-President of St.

mer; Bridget O'Sullivan, Glenduff, Ashford, reported

SEVENTY years ago this evening, on the late night of April 13-14, 1912, the "Titanic" hit an iceberg and, early the following morning, the mighty luxurious floating palace, praised as the ultimate in the art of shipbuilding, perished in the icy Atlantic.

and passed into the boats, but in many instances they were allowed to remain since there was no one to insist that they should go."

One extract from Mr. Beesley's narrative gives us a glimpse of the final scene as far as the great ship was concerned—"In the distance the Titanic looked enormous; her length and her great bulk was outlined in black against the starry sky.

Every porthole and saloon was blazing with light. It was impossible to think that anything could be wrong with the Leviathan, were it not for the ominous tilt downwards in the bow, where the water was by now up to the lowest row of portholes.

"About two o'clock we observed her settling very rapidly, with the bows and the bridge completely under water. She slowly tilted straight on end, with the stern vertically upwards.

Lights

As she did so, the lights in the cabins and the saloons, which had not flickered for a moment since we left, died out, flashed once more, and then went out altogether.

At the same time, the machinery rolled down through the vessel with a groaning rattle that could have been heard for miles. It was the weirdest sound, surely, that could have been heard in the middle of the ocean.

It was not yet quite the end. To our amazement, she remained in that position for a time, which I estimate as five minutes.

It was certainly for some minutes that we watched 150 feet of the Titanic tower-

Michael's Temperance Society, announced that, the members of the Dramatic

missing; Patrick Dooley, Chicago, was visiting his aged father in Patrickswell,



"... We watched the Titanic towering above the level of the sea, looming black against the sky, then with a quiet, slanting dive, she disappeared beneath the waters."

Class had decided to accept Mr. Fogarty's offer, and a presentation of the Irish drama, "The Rebel's Wife," was arranged to take place on May 17.

About thirty passengers from Limerick and district booked with local travel agents for the Titanic's maiden voyage.

Some of these, not having their arrangements completed in time, travelled by the Mauretania, but many other passengers from the district who made the jour-

reported lost.

Patrick Treacy, Cratloe, and Daniel and Mary Sullivan booked for the Titanic's first voyage and probably saved their lives by waiting for the ship's second trip, scheduled for May 2.

Escape

The late Mr. H. Vaughan, O'Connell Street, Limerick, also had a fortunate escape. As a ship's barber, he was working with the White Star Line in the Mediterranean area at the time and expected a transfer to the Titanic.

The transfer, however, did not take place. A last-minute change of mind by Mr. Michael Roberts, Clonroad, Ennis, probably saved his life, too.

He had obtained a position as steward on the vessel, but decided to work with the Great Southern Railways in Ireland.

Nellie Dwyer, High Street, Limerick, was one of the last women to leave the liner. At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carroll, 138 East Third Street, New York, she gave a graphic description of the horror:-

"I was about dozing off to sleep when the big ship seemed to jar," she began. "I was not frightened, but got up to ask the other girls

people running around above, and we took the stairway to the upper deck.

"Then we heard them shouting to get the lifebelts and we knew something was wrong. We and some of the women with us knelt down on the deck and said the Rosary.

Boats were being lowered and people were being helped into them. Some were almost thrown in.

"Poor Paddy Lane," she murmured, "he was a fine young fellow. When the

It could not have been more than seven minutes before there was a terrible explosion. Oh! God, be merciful to us all! The cries that came from that ship I'll never forget.

I could see, just before the explosion, just dimly, the face of a woman who had on board her six children. I think none of the little ones were saved; the poor mother never left the ship.

Chinese

"Five or six Chinamen were found in the bottom of one life-boat. They were thought to be women when they left the ship, as they fixed their hair down their backs and had blankets about them.

"Towards morning we rowed over the place where the Titanic went down, but there were only pieces of wreckage floating about."

Nellie Dwyer went on to say that the ship's band played "Nearer My God To Thee" as the vessel was sinking. Her lifeboat was not provisioned with water or food.

She and her companions were picked up by the Carpathia and, as an angel of mercy, she went among the survivors, tenderly nursing them and cheering them with words of comfort.

When the Titanic was leaving Southampton on her maiden voyage a sailor boasted to a passenger; "God Himself could not sink this ship."

But God could - and did.

Choral society to visit Glenstal

SLIGO Choral Society, under the musical direction of Mrs. Maura Butler, are visiting Glenstal Abbey to give a Choral Concert, on Sunday (April 18 next), at 4.30 p.m. The 60-member choir was formed in 1975 and, since then has performed such notable works as Theodore Dubois' "The Seven Last Words," Gounod's "Messe Solennelle," Mendelssohn's "Come let us sing," and Schubert's "Mass in G."

A feature of the choir is that all the soloists for all performances are members of the choir itself of which the society is justly proud. Guest organist to the Society is Mr. Martin White, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

Their recent concert tours have taken them to Castlebar, Westport, Ballyshannon, Enniskillen, Tallaght and, in Spring 1981, were singularly honoured to be invited to perform in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. Their 1982 tour includes an appearance on the ever-popular television programme, The Late Late Show, on May 1 next.

A visit to Glenstal on April 18, should not be missed by lovers of excellent choral music.

FIRE

A FIRE caused extensive damage to a house at 80 St. Munchin Street, St. Mary's Park, yesterday morning. No body was injured.

Taken from the 'Chronicle' files

ing up, above the level of the sea, looming black against the sky; then with a quiet, slanting dive, she disappeared beneath the waters."

Thus disappeared, as Joseph Conrad put it, "... a sort of marine Ritz, proclaimed unsinkable, and sent adrift with its casual population upon the sea, without enough boats, without enough seamen (but with a Parisian cafe and four hundred of poor devils of waiters) to meet dangers, which, let the engineers say what they like, lurk always amongst the waves, sent with a blind trust in mere material, light heartedly, to a most miserable, most fatuous disaster."

Reaction

News of the loss of the Titanic plunged many homes in Limerick and district into mourning.

A Titanic Disaster Fund was opened and George Fogarty, proprietor of Theatre Royal, offered the free use of his premises for a performance on behalf of

ney in the Titanic were not registered locally.

Locals

Among those mentioned in our files were: Nellie Dwyer, High Street, Limerick; John Kennedy, Watergate; an unnamed passenger from Castleconnell; Patrick Lane, Clare Street, Limerick; Miss Nora A. Keane Limerick; Daniel Keane, Limerick; James Scanlan, Rathkeale (reported missing); Patrick Ryan Askeaton; T. Colbert, Kilconlea, Abbeyfeale (formerly a porter at Abbeyfeale station and listed missing); Berta and Daniel J. Moran, who were returning from a visit to relatives in Askeaton; T. Morgan (26) Limerick, a fireman on board; John Kennedy, Rosemary Place, Limerick; Mary Madigan, Askeaton; Mary Glynn, Clare; Dr. William F. N. O'Loughlin, Tralee, Senior Surgeon on board, who went down with his ship; Martin McMahon, Cragbrien, Ennis, reported lost; John Foley, Mount Plum-

what made the vessel act so. Then it was still.

For the longest while none of us could find out what had happened, then someone said that the ship had struck an ice-berg, but that it would take a power of icebergs to harm her.

Some time later we heard

saved know what that look meant.

"A poor girl just before me jumped for the lifeboats and missed. A man at the oars grabbed her, but she slipped from his hold and was drowned. As the lifeboat pulled away, I sat up in it to look at the big ship.

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