

Correspondents sending in letters or reports for insertion in Saturday's "Chronicle," and these should be brief, are requested to let us have them on Fridays, where at all possible. Otherwise insertion in Saturday's issue cannot, owing to pressure of space, be guaranteed.

TO ADVERTISERS.

Advertisers will kindly send in all substitutes for standing advertisements on Friday mornings. We cannot guarantee to insert in Saturday's issue any advertisement received after 2 p.m. on that day.

THE LIMERICK CHRONICLE.

(ESTABLISHED 1766)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1926.

THE DROMCOLLOGHER HOLOCAUST.

The appalling disaster at Dromcollogher on Sunday night has sent a thrill of horror not alone throughout this country, but cross-Channel, from where numerous messages reached this office yesterday asking for detailed account of the dreadful tragedy. To-day the West Limerick town is the seat of mourning and tears, as it is computed that one in nineteen of the inhabitants perished in the conflagration. The earlier account of the catastrophe that reached Limerick City gave the number of dead at six, but as the day wore on the death-roll began to mount up, until it was ascertained that the total had reached fifty. All the reports point to the conclusion that the cinematograph entertainment was given in the upper hall of a detached timber structure in the town, and that it was approached through a narrow door by a ladder or staircase; that the only other means of egress were two barred windows at the rear of the hall, and that the operator's apparatus and table were within ten feet of the door. The evidence given at the formal opening of the inquest confirms these reports, and even goes further in its horrifying tale of death and desolation. It was the second performance given at the hall, and long before it was timed to commence the building was crowded with men, women and children. The entertainment had not been long in progress when a film caught fire, and the blaze seems to have extended to other films on the table. In a few seconds the place was enveloped in flames, and became a death trap. A scene of indescribable confusion and panic ensued, men, women, and children being burned to death, or asphyxiated in the congested passage, while others were killed by the collapse of the floor. There is no parallel in these islands since the cinematograph industry was initiated for the calamity that has fallen on Dromcollogher. One entire family has perished, and the whole town has lost, it is no exaggeration to say, a relative in every family. The heartfelt condolence of the nation will go out to those who mourn the victims, and share in the message of sympathy sent by President Cosgrave to the Very Rev. Canon Begley, P.P., Dromcollogher. While comment must be reserved on the question of apportioning the blame for such a terrible tragedy, it is essential to remember that there is an Act of Parliament governing the control of picture houses in the Free State. Houses, the statute of 1909 points out, that give regular performances require to be licensed for the public safety; but one of the provisions says that no licence is required for houses where not more than six performances are given within a year. In such cases the occupier must satisfy the County Council and the police that he is complying with the statutory regulations. That being so, a searching Governmental enquiry must satisfy the people of this country that the provisions of the statute were complied with in the case of Dromcollogher.

FARMER SHOT.

Shocking Co. Limerick Affair. Agrarian Dispute Sequel.

A dastardly outrage was committed at Abington on Sunday morning, when a man named William Holmes was fired at and dangerously wounded. It appears from the particulars gathered that Holmes, who is a farmer, aged 28 years, was returning from Abington Creamery to his home at Murroe, after delivering milk, and had only got a short distance when he was fired at with a double-barrelled gun from behind a wall. He got the full contents of the charge in the head and shoulder. A little later he was picked up on the roadside and word was conveyed to Murroe Civic Guards, who had the injured man medically attended to and later removed to the County Infirmary, Limerick, where he lies in a critical state. Enquiry made elicited that Holmes is progressing favourably in the Co Infirmary. He was only a short distance from the creamery when the shooting occurred, and it is believed that it was in connection with some land at Farnane, which he, with three others, had purchased. Up to the present no arrest has been made.

WORKERS INJURED ON SHANNON SCHEME.

Man's Leg Amputated.

Two accidents to workmen occurred on the Shannon Power Scheme last evening, when William O'Halloran, Killaloe, aged 22, and John Cox, Mungret street, Limerick, were injured, the former seriously. O'Halloran was working on the railway at O'Halloran's Bridge, the head of the proposed canal, when he was knocked down by an engine, the wheels passing over his leg, practically severing the limb. He was removed to St. John's Hospital, where it was found necessary to amputate the leg below the knee. The operation was performed by Dr. McGrath, and the patient is in a critical condition. Cox was employed on the scheme at Parteen, when he was struck by a heavy lorry, and sustained injury to the back. His condition is not serious.

Co. Limerick Cinema Fire Dromcollogher Holocaust WILD STAMPEDE OF AUDIENCE. APPALLING DEATH ROLL.

A holocaust of a grim and dreadful character, involving the incineration of close on fifty men, women and children, took place on Sunday night at Dromcollogher, the well-known County Limerick town, situated midway between Charleville and Newcastle West, and has created a profound sensation, as well as general sorrow, throughout the entire country. An appalling calamity, unparalleled in the history of the country, it has produced a terrible shock and caused untold suffering and mourning amongst every class in the community, especially to the many Co. Limerick families which have been afflicted.

This terrible disaster occurred during an amateur picture performance in a local hall that was hired for such a purpose. It was in the upstairs portion of this building that the catastrophe occurred with great suddenness and alarm.

The building was a wooden structure of about 60 feet in length and 20 feet in height. The lower portion of it was utilised as a store, while the upper portion, to which access was gained by means of a stairs running from the ground floor, was provided for entertainments.

On Sunday evening a cinematograph entertainment, conducted by William Ford, and at which Patrick Christopher Downey acted as operator, was announced and was generally supported, upwards of one hundred and fifty persons occupying seating accommodation within the upstairs portion of the building.

The performance had only been a short time in progress when a film, which was one of a number on a table at the entrance door, became ignited and caused a fire of an alarming character. Efforts were made to subdue the flames that broke out and assurances were given to the audience that steps would be taken to avert any danger, but unfortunately the conflagration spread, and in a brief space of time the entire building was a seething mass of flame.

The audience realised the terrible situation and its members were quickly thrown into a state of terror and desperation. It was a horrifying spectacle and all its horror was intensified by the shrieking of the many women and children who were in the gathering. A regular stampede for the only exit, that by the door leading to the staircase to the lower portion of the premises, and a scene of indescribable confusion ensued. Owing to the smallness of the exit the escape of the audience was rendered very difficult and in a short space of time the doorway became congested and some heartrending incidents were enacted. Some of the audience endeavoured to reach the street by means of two windows located in the rear portion of the building, and iron bars that were fixed outside such windows were quickly removed in order to expedite their departure, but the small size of these openings prevented any exit by such means. One or two of the younger people did succeed in leaving the burning building in this way, but congestion again occurred, and the vast majority of the gathering were trapped within the blazing building.

Throughout the terrible period many of the male members of the audience, including Sergeant Long and Guard Davis, endeavoured to get men, women, and children out of the room through the stairs entrance, and in many instances such efforts succeeded, but the bulk of the audience were forced to remain encompassed in the burning furnace. Struggling, screaming, and suffering intense anguish, they were overcome by the flames and dense smoke, and were burned to death. Heartrending cries for help were raised by these unfortunate creatures, but none could be given. They had to be left helplessly to their doom. The fire raged with terrific intensity, and after a short time the roof of the building fell in burying its incinerated victims underneath its fire eaten debris. It was a horrifying and ghastly termination to such an appalling tragedy.

Assistance was promptly rendered by the residents of the town, aided by Very Rev. Canon Begley and the clergy, as well as the members of the Civic Guards' barracks, from the moment that the disaster occurred, and many acts of heroism were recorded throughout such an agonising and horrible occurrence.

It was not, however, until the flames had spent their fury that the appalling destruction in human life became evident, and the people of the district were then confronted by a gruesome sight. Within the smouldering debris were to be seen the charred remains of nearly fifty men, women, and children. It was a horrifying scene, many of the bodies being burned beyond recognition.

A large number of the audience who succeeded in escaping from the burning building sustained injuries and burns, and were attended to by the doctors who quickly arrived on the scene. A number of these cases were afterwards removed in ambulances to the Croom Hospital for additional treatment.

The sad task of recovering the bodies of the victims was then entered upon by the sorrow-stricken people. These bodies were placed in a position to the rear of the destroyed building, but identification was only possible in a some instances.

List of Victims.

It was impossible to secure a full list of the persons who lost their lives in the terrible calamity, but as far as could be gathered the total deaths, including the ages of some of the victims, were as follows:— Mrs Florence McAuliffe (45) and her son and daughter, John McAuliffe (14) and May McAuliffe (16); James Quaid (36), William Robert Abern (32), Thomas Buckley (60), Mrs J. Barrett (49) and her eight-years-old child; Hanora Long (60), James Kenny (13), John Kenny (8), Mrs Daniel O'Callaghan (62), Jerh. Buckley, N.T. (45), his wife, Mrs Buckley (40), his daughter, Brenda Buckley (11), and his sister-in-law, Kitty Wall (42); Mrs O'Brien (53), and her daughter, Nellie O'Brien (19), both of Kells; Mrs Dan Collins (52), and her daughter, Kitty Collins; Mrs Bridget Kirwan and her daughter, Norah Kirwan

(17); Norah Sullivan (21); Myra Sullivan (19); Violet Irwin, Peenagh (18); R. Walsh, N.T., Milford (45); Anthony McCarthy (30); a young girl, Norah Hannigan, who was on a visit to the district from London; Daniel Fitzgerald (42), and his wife, Mrs D. Fitzgerald, and three children; P. O'Donnell (50); W. Quirke (19); Maurice Hartnett (14); Rita Noonan; Eugene Patk. Sullivan (9); D. Horan (9); Mrs J. Egan; Wm. Savage (55); May O'Brien (24); Mrs Maurice Collins (74); Bridget Sheehan, of The Pike (13); — Stack, Mrs Madden (65), Mrs Turner (73); Mrs John Egan (46).

INQUEST ON VICTIMS.

Evidence of Cinema Owner and Operator.

An inquest was opened in the Courthouse, Dromcollogher, last evening by Dr Timothy Hannigan, Coroner.

Superintendent O'Reilly and Inspector Kenny represented the Civic Guard, and Mr J. Donnelly was present on behalf of the Industrial Section of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

The first witness was William Forde, who had hired the hall and the films, and was giving the entertainment. After being duly cautioned by the Coroner, he gave evidence that the projection machine was in the centre of the hall, about 15 feet from the door. It was totally unprotected. The films were on a table about 10 feet away on the side, and they were also unprotected. There was a candle burning on one end of the table. There was no fire extinguishing apparatus in the hall, nor had he any buckets of water or sand. The operator, he continued, was a man named Downing, and he was assisted by two boys, William Quirke and Batt. Barry. It was about 15 minutes after Downing had started the machine that one of the films on the table caught fire. This would be about 9.45 p.m. "I made an attempt," he said, "to quench the fire with some others, but did not succeed, and the rest of the films then took fire suddenly. I then went to the end of the hall, and I could not get out, and I returned to the entrance door and got out. When the films took fire the people rushed for the door, and some of them went to the back of the hall, and they could not get out there. Part of the roof was on fire when I got out." He added that he had no experience of cinema work.

The next witness, who was also cautioned by the coroner, was Patrick Christopher Downey, 42 McCurtain Street, Cork, who gave evidence that he had 10 or 12 years' experience of cinematograph work. He had only come to Dromcollogher that day, and had brought the films with him from Cork in cases, but they had no metal boxes. "I was working the machine," he said, "when I looked around and saw a glare on the table. I immediately cut off the current from the machine, and this automatically lit up the hall. I ran over, and just as I got to the table I clapped my hands on the burning films." Asked by Supt. O'Reilly if there was a lighted candle on the table, witness said: "I believe there was, but I did not see it." Supt. O'Reilly—When you went over to extinguish the fire, how many films were on fire? Witness—Two.

How did you try to extinguish them? I ran over and clapped my hands on them, but unfortunately someone came along and lit the burning film with a cap, and the flame went on to the other films. What did the crowd do at this time? The crowd stayed still for a while as if expecting the fire would be quenched; then they ran to the door, and I shouted, "Keep cool; keep your seats." But they rushed down to the door. I stayed there for a good bit. Honestly, whether it was the excitement or not, as true as God is above in Heaven, I thought there was nobody else in the hall when I rushed out myself. Then, continued witness, there was a general stampede, and they sat for a moment again, but then a few rushed to the door and others must have rushed to the back of the hall, where they were trapped. "How long did you remain?" asked the Superintendent. Witness—I stopped until I thought everyone had gone out. I stopped in it as long as I thought it was safe, and I was not burned. I did not get hurt until I got out. Coroner—How did you injure your hand? Witness—I went to the back of the hall and I went up a ladder and tried to rescue some of the people, and when I was bringing out somebody the ladder fell down on top of me and my hand was injured. Supt. O'Reilly—When did the door catch fire? Witness—The flames licked along it from the table. Superintendent—Was the table completely on fire? Witness—It was, and the flames were running round the wainscoting. Superintendent—What about the roof? Witness—The roof had not caught fire when I came out, but when I tried to get back again the flames were burning through the door. Witness then added that he ran out on the street and called on some men to help, and then went around to the back with the Civic Guard and some others. They obtained a ladder and put it up against the wall, and some climbed on to the roof of the hall to try to pull out some people, but the ladder fell down and the whole place was in a mass of flames in a few minutes.

Superintendent—There was no fire extinguishing apparatus in the hall.—No. And there was no means of exit, except through the entrance door.—That is so. Is it usual to start a performance like that without making proper arrangements for the safety of the people? Witness—When I came down here I did not want to start the thing at all. I did not like the place, but Mr Forde said he would like to start the first performance that night. Coroner—You did not think it was suitable for the performance. Witness—No, I did not. Superintendent—As an operator of 12 years' standing, you know it is your duty to take all precautions to prevent accidents.—

Yes. Superintendent—And when the films are not being used in the machine they should be enclosed in metal cases! Witness—Yes. Coroner—Were there any metal cases with the film? Witness—No: I brought them in a port-manteau without any cases. Coroner—You know that was not safe? Witness—I put them on a table fifteen feet away, and there were two people in charge of them. Another witness who accompanied Downing also gave evidence of the arrangements. The inquest then adjourned.

President's Message.

Tribute of Sympathy. The following telegram was received yesterday by Very Rev. Canon Begley, P.P.:—"Very Rev. Canon Begley, Dromcollogher, Limerick—Have just learned with horror of the appalling disaster in Dromcollogher on Sunday evening. Would be glad if you convey to the afflicted relatives of those who lost their lives and to the injured my very sincere and heartfelt sympathy.—Cosgrave."

Bishop's Sympathy.

His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Keane, Bishop of Limerick, who was prevented from visiting the district yesterday owing to some engagements, sent his secretary to Dromcollogher to express his deep sympathy with the people in their great sorrow.

The Mayor's Sympathy.

The message sent to-day by the Mayor Councillor P. A. O'Brien to the Very Rev. Canon Begley, P.P., Dromcollogher, expresses the feelings of the citizens over the terrible disaster which has befallen the town, many of whose inhabitants occupy positions in the city. In this connection it may be stated that the Rev. Fr. O'Callaghan, C.C., St. Patrick's, lost his mother in the appalling tragedy. The Mayor's wire is:—"To you and your sorrowing people I tender very sincere sympathy of our citizens.—O'BRIEN, Mayor."

Other Messages.

Mr Murray, representative Todd & Co., Limerick, wired: "Shocked at terrible news. Deepest sympathy with you and your parishioners." Mr Nolan, T.D., Foynes, wired: "Accept deepest sympathy; regret dreadful tragedy." Mr O'Connor, manager, Wholesale Co-operative Society, Tralee, wired: "Have heard with profound grief of terrible calamity. You and your parishioners have our greatest sympathy."

Pathetic Interment Scenes.

Population Stunned.

Pathetic and harrowing scenes were witnessed at Dromcollogher to-day, when the Requiem High Mass was celebrated for the victims of the catastrophe. People from the surrounding country streamed into the town and took up positions at various points, discussing the awful tragedy. The approaches to the church were congested, and in the grounds the coffins containing the dead were laid in rows at either side of the walk, while further down a common grave, several feet long, was dug for the interments. The sight that met the gaze in the church grounds was one that it was difficult to realise in the quiet country town. Some of the caskets were rather crudely constructed, and were of all sizes, and many bore labels of identification, but the condition of the bodies were of such a charred character, that it was only a question of mere speculation if the identification label was on the right coffin. Gazing at the rows of the coffined dead was an unforgettable spectacle, and viewing the position generally it looked as if the whole population were stunned. That was the impression made on a visitor to the town, which has been cast in gloom and desolation. The celebrant of the Mass was Rev. Fr. O'Callaghan, C.C., St. Patrick's, Limerick (whose mother perished in the fire); deacon, Rev. Fr. O'Callaghan, C.C. (another son of the dead lady); sub-deacon, Rev. Fr. Punch, C.C., Dromcollogher.

The Bishop presided at the solemn obsequies, and imparted the General Absolution at the interment. There were over fifty clergy in the choir, and the church was crowded to its utmost. During the service many people, relatives and friends, wept bitterly, and their moans and sobbing were quite audible throughout the sacred edifice. At the close of the service the interment took place in the common grave, where there was a renewal of the pathetic and poignant scenes that took place in the church.

The last sad rites having been paid to the dead, the coffins were reverently placed in the grave, which soon after closed over the victims of a disaster without parallel in the history of this country. President Cosgrave, who was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Coogan, arrived in Limerick by motor this morning at eleven o'clock on his way to Dromcollogher to attend the Requiem High Mass for victims of the tragedy. Asked if he had anything to add to his message of sympathy, the President replied that he had not. At Limerick the President was joined by Rev. E. R. McCarthy, Command Chaplain, and Commandant O'Rean.

The Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Keane, with a number of clergy, has proceeded to Dromcollogher for the obsequies. In all the city churches this morning, at the Masses, the victims of the disaster were prayed for, and last night at the meeting of the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family Rev. Fr. Cleary, C.S.S.R. made a brief allusion to the awful tragedy, and prayers were offered for the souls of the victims.

WORK ON THE SHANNON SCHEME.

A tour of inspection of the Shannon power scheme was made during the week by the chief German engineer, Herr Heintze, who was accompanied by Dr Kleen and Herr Dittich. It is stated that operations on the construction of the canal are to be unified, and in this connection it is significant that the Parteen pay office has been closed and merged with the office in Ardacrusha. The erection of a post office at Ardacrusha, near the workers' camps is the latest feature in connection with the scheme, which, during the past few days, has been visited by Senator Sir John Keane.

Nurse O'Leary, who had 21 years' service in Nenagh Hospital, has received a superannuation allowance of £43 a year.

SPORTING

DONCASTER MEETING.

FITZWILLIAM STAKES. Bright Land (Perryman) ... 1 Dawson City (Jelliss) ... 2 Gavin (C. Ray) ... 3 Also ran—Nethou, Canhego, Pasha, May Duke, Brixton, Saint's Bell, Chandos. Winner trained by W. Nightingall. Betting—3 to 1 agst Brixton, 7 to 2 Gavin, 11 to 2 Dawson City, 10 to 1 Pasha, Chandos, and Canhego, 100 to 8 others. Won by half a length.

HIGH-WEIGHT HCAP. Birchbrook (A. Balding) ... 1 Runnymede (J. Leach) ... 2 Blueberg (J. Dines) ... 3 Also ran—St. Bevan, Amethystine, Bella Minna, Donzelon, Winker, Little Red Rat, Tontou, King of Clubs, Treasurer, Set Fast, Heah, The Owl. Trained by owner. Betting—4 to 1 agst Blueberg, 6 to 1 Birchbrook, 180 to 14 Bella Minna, 100 to 8 St. Bevan, Tontou, King of Clubs, 100 to 7 Heah, Donzelon, Amethystine, Runnymede, 20 to 1 others. Won by 2 lengths.

CHAMPAGNE STAKES. Damon (H. Beasley) ... 1 Call Boy (R. Jones) ... 2 Sickle (Weston) ... 3 Also ran—Dingaan's Day, Toureen, Hot Night, Applecross, Giovanni. Winner trained by Perse. Betting—7 to 2 agst Hot Night and Applecross, 4 to 1 Damon, 9 to 2 Sickle, 10 to 1 Call Boy, 100 to 8 others. Won by a neck.

STAND HCAP. Lemstar (Thwaites) ... 1 Thistabel (Carroll) ... 2 Gamvros (Dines) ... 3 Also ran—Bondsman, Gyges, Black Cargo, Olivebury, Theology, Coburg, Little Eva's Rose, Doubler, Pivotal, Hettie Day, Count Lion, Royal Rosette, Battle Song, Livitoffe, Petty Curry, Carnforth. Betting—3 to 1 agst Thistabel, 9 to 2 Gamvros, 5 to 1 Theology, 10 to 1 Bondsman, 100 to 8 Black Cargo, Olivebury, Gyges, and Coburg, 100 to 7 Lemstar, 20 to 1 others. Won by a neck.

CLAREMORRIS MEETING. STEWARDS' PLATE. Glenmore (M. Hynes) ... 1 Brackbawn (Lombard) ... 2 Cappy Lass (Fitzgibbon) ... 3 Also ran—19th Hole. Trained by Mitchell. Betting—Evans Glenmore, 2 to 1 agst Brackbawn, 6 to 1 19th Hole, 100 to 12 Cappy Lass. Won by 2 lengths.

TRADERS' PLATE. Fighting Bird (J. Lombard) ... 1 Silverfield (J. Hamilton) ... 2 Trained by Lombard. Betting—3 to 4 on Fighting Bird. Won by a length.

COMMITTEE PLATE. Glenoge (Slavin) ... 1 Light Hassar (Banahan) ... 2 Bachelor's Daisy (Farragher) ... 3 Trained by Lombard. Betting—Evans Glenoge, 11 to 10 Light Hassar, 100 to 12 Bachelor's Daisy. Won easily.

CLAREMORRIS PLATE. Glenoge (Lombard) ... 1 Jink (Moloney) ... 2 Tipperary Boy (Owner) ... 3 Trained by Lombard. Betting—2 to 1 on Glenoge, 5 to 2 agst Tipperary Boy, 7 to 1 Jink. Won by 2 lengths.

THE MAN TO BET WITH. MR LAYS ALL TELEPHONE 363. OFFICE—30 PARNELL STREET.

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