

## THE RAILROAD DISASTER.

Scenes and Incidents of the Terrible Wreck at Chatsworth, Illinois.

Miraculous Escapes and Awful Experiences of Surviving Passengers.

Plundering the Dead—The Railroad Company Bitterly Censured.

### At the Scene of the Wreck.

A close inspection of the wreck causes one to wonder how a single person escaped death. The momentum of the train must have been appalling. The cars not only telescoped but in some cases were crushed down into the earth. On the flooring of one car the bulkhead of the rear car had torn the boards up for a distance of ten feet. Iron work had been torn and twisted to a formless mass, and chairs, partitions, and stoves crushed into fragments. It



was as if a cyclone had lifted the train up bodily, whirled it round with resistless force, and then dashed it to the earth in a chaotic heap.

### The Company Blamed.

On all sides, too, the railroad officials are blamed for the accident. It is charged that the inspection of the road was neglected, and this in face of the fact that it was about to send a train of unusual length and weight over the line. People think that the officials should not have been content with the ordinary and regular inspection of the track and its supports. That hundreds of passengers were allowed to go over it in a long train, it is argued, was more than usually careful investigation of the track should have been made. Again, the company is charged with almost criminal heedlessness and recklessness in allowing a train of such length to go over the line loaded to its full capacity with human beings.

### A Chicago Man's Thrilling Experience.

Thomas Trimm, a Chicago commercial traveler, tells the following story: "I was sitting on the coal-box in the rear of the fifth coach back of the baggage-car, and the first warning I had of the accident was the sound of the screech of the front and realized at once that there was trouble. In a moment the car I was in began to sink and I jumped for the strap that holds the bell-cord, but missed it; and at that moment the car was telescoped. The lights went out, and instantly I found myself wedged in as in a vise between the door of the car at my back and car-seats, irons, beams, sticks, and a heap of humanity, dead and alive, all around me. I soon found that my legs were wedged in so that I could not get out. I was not hurt, and began to feel around near me to learn what was holding my legs. It was very dark, and I could not see anything."

"My chin was resting on top of a dead woman and all around me were the bleeding dead and wounded. Under my right arm was a man struggling and crying for help, but in a short time I knew that he was dead. The air was filled with the most melancholy and heart-rending cries, some calling out the names of loved ones, either in the wreck or left at home, and others begging for aid. For three hours I remained in that fix, and to add to the other horrors of the situation I could smell smoke and sawed and charred, and of course I thought the cars were afire, and believed that if aid did not come soon we would be roasted. The dread of being wedged in there with all my senses retained, and having a fire slowly creeping upon me to surely roast me was too horrible to be told—it must be experienced to be fully realized."

"At first when I learned that I was not seriously injured I had hopes of getting out sooner or later, but when I turned my head and, looking out, saw sparks my heart sank, and I longed for my gun so that when the fire would be too close to be bearable I could end my life. I tried getting my pocket knife out to use if I found that I was to be roasted, but could not get it into my pocket. Great beads of sweat ran down my face, but my mouth and tongue were parched. Every one and everything in our car was confined in a space about ten feet square, and about two-thirds of those

difficulty they were assisted to the ground. Mr. Murphy then went back into the hole and brought out alive a little baby. He had torn it from the arms of a dead mother. After that he helped out an aged woman whose back had been injured. These five, together with two others, were all that were rescued from that car. "When the hotel-keeper came down I asked him how it happened that he was not killed. He replied that when the crash came his wife was sitting in one seat and himself and the baby were in the one just behind, near the front. As he stooped to turn up the gas he shot into the mass of ruins ahead. Just at that moment, he said, a timber penetrated the car, shooting across the place where he had been sitting and struck a young lady who sat opposite in the neck. He was thus pinned down by the timber, which also protected him from being smashed and saved his life. He looked across the aisle and saw the young lady's head

had fallen over on the back of her seat and hung only by the skin. The sight of the dead and wounded lying in the adjacent fields was horrible. They were lying in little groups about fifteen all had been killed in a different manner. The entire side of one man's face would be mashed in, while a hole as large as your fist in the forehead of another would show where a timber had penetrated. Three-fourths of the dead never knew what killed them. It was a sight I never want to look upon again. There were young ladies in picnic dress, with their white skirts saturated with blood and the front of their faces mashed beyond recognition. One young-looking mother had held her baby in her arms, and a timber, striking the child in the back, impaled both victims in instant death. The mother's face did not bear a scratch, but the expression upon it will haunt me to the grave."

Mr. Church said that the action of the railroad officials after the accident was condemned by almost everybody. Hundreds of people got as far as Forest on their way to the wreck, and had to walk the rest of the distance—six miles. Officials rode up and down the tracks, and a few slow trains brought in the dead, but the wounded and dying were left on the ground, with no relief except that which their partners in life could give. The rain fell all night, and the fields all night, with the rain beating down, while their groans and cries went up in vain. As fast as baggage could be taken from the cars, no matter whose it was, it was torn open, and dresses and shirts appropriated for bandages to dress the wounds of the suffering. After the physicians and nurses had finished with the trunks, thieves rifled them and carried off what was valuable.

### A Remarkable Escape.

Mr. Murphy, a farmer living at Cuba, Fulton County, Ill., in speaking of the disaster, says he felt a premonition that one would come to the train from the time it started. In the first place, he did not believe it was a good rail road to place both engines in front. The terrible wreck could be almost certainly to be put down any frail bridge. The train started half an hour late, and stopped quite a while on the other side of the Illinois River. At another station at which the train stopped the brakes were not thrown off of one of the coaches, and when it started the coupling broke, which necessitated sending to Forest for another coach. All these delays threw the train over an hour late, and it was running at a terrific speed to make up for lost time. Mr. Murphy says the estimate of forty miles an hour usually given was too slow. When Mr. Murphy and his wife stepped on the train they entered the second coach, the sleeping car, finding no two seats together unoccupied, they went forward two or three, and tried to get seats in it. They failed, and to this failure they owe their lives, as every one in that car was killed. Returning to the car which they first entered, they found two seats which had been turned so as to face each other which were occupied by E. S. Harter and wife, of Peoria. On expressing a wish to occupy one of these seats Mr. Harter at once courteously complied, and they sat down and were chatting pleasantly up to the time of the disaster. These seats were in the rear, and of the whole party occupying the car, about forty-five, only five were saved—Mr. Murphy and

his wife, Mr. Harter and wife, and one other, unknown.

The first intimation of the disaster was a bumping sound, followed almost immediately by a sound resembling the hissing of steam, caused by the cars sliding over each other. The next minute passed as though in a dream. Mr. Murphy waking up to find that he was badly bruised and that the car was in ruins. There were few groans, as nearly all were killed as quickly as though struck by lightning. The roof of the car had fallen in with the exception of the little corner occupied by the party alluded to. In that corner, for some reason, was still clinging a man, breathing back and forth as though it might fail at any moment. A bright light shone in through the roofless car caused by the fire on the bridge and probably from the reflection from the locomotive headlight, and Mrs. Murphy exclaimed, "My God! The train is on fire." Mr. Murphy, whose shirt was covered with blood, realized for the first time that he was badly hurt. Mr. Harter at once kicked out a window, crawled through, and was followed by his wife. The light at this time had gone down, and in the mist of smoke, Egyptian darkness that preceded the storm, Mr. Murphy crawled through the window and stood on the outside, when he realized that he was at a considerable height from the ground. How far he did not know, but he told his wife he would jump, and, if he could safely, for her to follow. He then leaped into the unknown distance, found it about nine feet, encouraged his wife to do the same, and, being a strong, stalwart man, was able to catch her in his arms and hold her.

### Shocking Incidents.

Both Mr. Kirk and Mr. Wadsworth relate many shocking incidents of the work of rescuing which came under their observation. The latter tells of finding a woman of singular hardship who was caught in the tender close to the front. Both legs were broken, and she managed to sit up and watched and advised the men who were sawing the timbers to release her. In the end of one car where Mr. Kirk worked among the bodies no less than twenty-five dead were taken out. This car had gone inside another car and its occupants had all been jammed together at one end. The car of Superintendent Armstrong was in the thick of the wreck and was crushed to pieces, yet none of its occupants were injured beyond scratches. This is accounted for by the circumstance that there was little in the car to hurt anyone. Its slight contents did not make a creak so grinding and close that escape was unlikely.

Mr. Divine, of Ellenville, N. Y., was in the second sleeper from the front. He saw much of the tragedy and his account is graphic. "I had not retired," said he, "when the first shock came. I had just taken the button from my collar and was going forward with my undressing when I felt the car quiver and divided at once that there was a collision. I dropped flat in the aisle, and was scarcely jarred. The shock over, I got up and went to the front of the car, where the first thing that caught my eye was the burning culvert. I called all the men in the car to turn out as quickly as possible to aid those in the wrecked day comes, and advised the ladies to turn out themselves, as it might not be possible to move the sleeper in the case of the fire extending. All this time, from the moment of the collision, the cries of the wounded came back in a perfect roar. I got into one car and found the little Snedaker boy, whose leg has since been amputated. I next found little Bertha Blandin, whose mother was killed. The first thing the little one did when I lifted her was to beg me to find her mamma, and I promised to do so, though I was hopeless as I could see three dead women in the car. I then stood around upon the women who were twisted together in the timbers, though they did not seem to be broken. I leaned her back against a cushion while I helped a boy out, and when I turned back to release her she was dead. I subsequently found that my sleeves were bloodied when I had reached my arm around her neck to raise her, and I suppose her head must have been crushed, though I did not notice it. There was simply no end to such scenes and such experiences."

### Plundering the Dead.

Mrs. Charles Carlton, of Oneida, one of the



survivors, corroborated the stories of robberies committed, and says that there were instances in which the vandals cut off the fingers of imprisoned women to secure the rings. Four men were seen to be cutting off the fingers of the dead, immediately after the disaster, and to have engaged in the awful sacrifice of stripping the desolate dead under cover of darkness and confusion. That such impious pillage prevailed is not to be denied. Mr. H. D. Gould, General Freight and Passenger Agent of the road, caught one of the devils in the act and kicked him within an inch of his life, forcing him to desist. Another scoundrel caught in the act said he was merely securing a memento of the wreck. J. D. McFadden, one of Peoria's dead, was robbed of \$20. Mrs. Deal's purse was stripped from her fingers. Mrs. Portch, whose son was robed, though unhurt. F. B. Weinert's pockets were turned inside out when his body was found and his watch and \$2.00 were gone. The wife of Capt. Dale, the harbor-master, swears that her husband was stripped of \$4,755, and there are other cases. The entire Zimmerman family, three in number, were robbed.

### The Mysterious Suicide.

Inquiries regarding the identity of the man who shot himself to be rid of his agony are without avail. The best information concerning him was obtained Sunday from a man from Lacon, Ill., Mr. E. Wadsworth. He was a passenger in one of the sleepers. "I was awakened," he said, "by a bump, as I was thrown against the end of the berth, and of course was soon up and dressed and doing what I could to assist the wounded. I heard cries in the field, and going to the source found a young man of about twenty whose leg was so broken that the bone protruded and whose cries of agony were



dreadful. I went to him, and he said he had got out of a wrecked car himself and crawled to the side of the then car. I got a mattress and pillow for him and some water, and a lady who had brandy gave him some of that. He talked reasonably for a moment or two, and then said he was from Macomb, in Macoupin County. I asked him what more I could do for him, and his only reply was 'Stay with me.' I heard a woman screaming and told him I must go to her. I had gone but a little way when I heard a pistol shot. He had shot himself in the forehead."

## CHARLOTTE WOLTER.

The German Tragedy Queen—Sketch of Her Life.

Charlotte Wolter, who has for years

been connected with the Burg Theater

of Vienna, is expected to be brought

to this country under the management

of Messrs. Conried and Hermann, during

the course of the winter of 1887

and 1888. The German tragedy queen has recently celebrated by a jubilee

performance the twenty-fifth anniversary

of her engagement at the Royal Burg

Theater. The Emperor, Crown Prince,

and other high dignitaries were present,

and the house was literally packed.

The play was "Sappho," with Madame Wolter in the title role. She was received

with an encore of enthusiasm and was

overwhelmed with flowers. The Emper

or presented to her a diamond

bracelet, and other gifts came from all

parts of Austria and Germany. At the

close of the play Madame Wolter made

a touching speech of thanks to the Em

peror and to the audience at large.

She was presented to the Austrian Em

press by her rightful title as the Count

ess O'Sullivan. But the Empress in turn

presented her to the Court as Madame

Wolter, saying, "I am proud of you as

the Wolter, as that is the name I like to

present you. I have so many Countesses

at Court that your other title conveys

no distinction." Madame Wolter

was born in the city of Cologne in 1834,

of poor but respectable parents, and

had to overcome many difficulties, and

battle through innumerable hard times

before obtaining the recognition her

talent deserved. She now occupies the

undisputed place of the first among

German tragic actresses, and only her

objection to play in foreign countries

has prevented her name from becoming

one of world-wide fame. In 1855 she

married Count Charles O'Sullivan, but

family considerations obliged her to

keep the marriage secret for many

years. Not only Vienna, but all Aus

tria, may be said to be at her feet, and

although she is over 50 years of age,

she is still young-looking and attrac

tive, as the accompanying cut of her

shows.

### Conquered with Napoleon.

Trousers came into use for general wear with the French revolution. The gentleman, the supporter of royalty and sound constitutional principles, wore breeches. The term "sans culottes" sufficiently explained what were not worn by the masses who forced constitutional reform into revolution. By an apparent contradiction of purposes and principle, says the Atlanta *Constitution*, the "sans culottes," who denounced every one who wore breeches, finally went beyond their oppo

nents and wore twice as much cloth

around their legs; in word, adopted

the modern trousers and made them

the badge of a party as well known as

a class. Napoleon, who was too thin

at one period of his life and too stout

at another to look his best in small

clothes, nevertheless wore them on

state occasions after he had set up a

throne and gone into the Emperor

business. His army was the first that

wore trousers, and trousers made

progress in general adoption step by

step with the march of the French

army. The French trousers and neat

gaiter were seen in Egypt, in Spain, and

Italy, in Germany, in Poland, and in

Russia, on the banks of the Tagus and

those of the Vistula. People thought

that the manner in which a great con