

Sad City Drowning

Heroic Citizen Sacrifices Life for Child

A touching and drowning fatality took place on Sunday evening in the Blarney near the Castle Barracks, Limerick.

In a gallant attempt to rescue a four-year-old child named Patrick O'Dwyer, of Conway's Row, who had accidentally fallen into the river, a married man named John Griffin, (38), and father of one child, of 10 Jones Lane, off Watergate, was drowned, while the child O'Dwyer was saved by another man, Patrick O'Shea, who came on the scene a few seconds after Griffin hit water.

There was a strong ebb tide when the child fell in from the slip alongside Theobald Bridge, and Griffin, happening to be returning from the City Hospital, seeing the child's predicament, directed himself of his coat and plunged in. He unhappily sank in the icy cold water a few seconds after his brave act.

O'Shea, who was sitting further up near the Island Bank, was attracted by the commotion and also plunged in and brought the child to safety near the Castle Barracks, but Griffin had then disappeared.

O'Shea, though suffering from extreme cold, tried artificial means of resuscitation with the rescued child, and ultimately succeeded in bringing him to a state of life. He then went with him to Nolan's Cottages, where the child was conveyed to Harrington's Hospital for treatment.

A big crowd collected at Theobald bridge. Heads were bared, and prayers recited for Griffin's eternal welfare.

The body, two hours later, was found at the opposite side of the river, near the strand.

O'Shea, interviewed, said he had to struggle against a strong current. People were shouting to him to get various things. He saw nobody else in the river at the time, and he found difficulty in getting out. It was when going up Norton's slip he realized someone had been drowned, as children gave him his own coat and another. Some of them told him another man had disappeared in the river, but he was too exhausted to say anything further.

THE INQUEST

Mr J. B. McNamara, Deputy City Coroner, held an inquest on Monday evening.

Sergeant Doolan, Mary Street, conducted. Michael Griffin, brother, identified the body.

Patrick O'Dwyer stated with feeling of the tragedy, and bearing a child was in the water, saw John Griffin jump and saw the child floating in the back. He was about to take off his coat when someone told him to go for more help, and taking off his coat he jumped in. Another man got a rope, but Griffin was in difficulties and disappeared.

Michael Griffin, Catholic Priest, said he was unable to get the child in with the assistance of a rope. Griffin got into difficulties immediately. He saw a rope on the river, he took it to Griffin, who was in an attempt to catch it. It would take a strong man to catch the rope.

Dr. Hogan said he examined the body. Death was due to asphyxia, caused by drowning.

The Coroner's verdict was—"That death was due to asphyxia caused by drowning, while attempting to save the life of a child."

In delivering a eulogistic eulogy to the relatives of the drowned the Coroner said it was one of the saddest cases that had ever come before him. Although the man made an attempt to save the child but failed his own and nobody gave it to save the child. He was sure the citizens of Limerick would not fail to show their appreciation of such a courageous act of bravery, and that the same act might have made his entry here. The account of O'Shea's rescue was a study of the highest circumstances.

Sergeant Doolan associated himself with the Coroner's remarks, in behalf of the City Coroner. He desired to pay special tribute to the great assistance rendered by the Harbourside Boatmen, and the members of St. John's Boat Club in the recovery of the body. If the citizens started a fund for such a few ringers as the testimonial to the widow and child of this gallant man he could assure them that the Civic Guards would contribute generously.

With regard to O'Shea's action he would undertake to send the necessary particulars to the Limerick Press.

Mr Michael Griffin returned thanks for the vote of sympathy, and to all those who helped to recover his body.