

The Falling Of Nine Arches And Fifteen Lives Lost At Ashton, April 19th 1845

Synopsis

A report of the accident and lamentation for those killed and their families

Text

Both old and young with feeling hears, one moment now attend
Of a melancholy accident, as true as e'er was penn'd
Near Ashton town in forty-five, April the nineteenth day
When fifteen workmen lost their lives on the Ashton Branch railway

Pity these poor workmen pray
Who were kill'd on the Ashton Branch Railway

The ground being low new arches raised to join the goodly line
Like structures of modern times appear'd grand and sublime
But looks were all, no strength could be, or why this accident
Caused such grief, heart-rending pangs, their friend's death to lament

Soon after three o'clock, that fatal afternoon it was
A crack in third arch appear'd, which fatal prov'd, alas!
The work gave way, nine arches fell, most awful to relate
When numbers on that fatal day, met their untimely fate

Like thunder's roar, the crash it made, struck terror and dismay
The people ran for to assist, their efforts were in vain
Grim death had claimed them for his own, 'twas awful for to see
So many in one movement, sent into eternity

The ruins as they cleared away, it was a shocking sight
Each moment to the gazer's eye, fresh terror brought to light
Arms, legs and thighs to pieces smashed, men in their health and bloom
Their dinners got but on that night, met with a living tomb

To see the grief and anguish, it is awful to relate
Children, fathers, wives, husbands, who that day had met their fate
Fifteen are dead, great numbers wounded or sorely mangled
In a moment's time call'd to account before the bar of God

Have mercy Lord on their poor souls, have mercy Lord we pray
That fatal day fifteen poor souls were quickly called away
To face their God, let's hope their souls for ever now are blest,
Where toil and labour ever cease, the weary are at rest

Grim death may come, none knows the time, 'tis best to watch and pray
Lest like those poor workmen killed on the Ashton railway
Such sights before we never saw, great anguish and distress
Left widows their loss to deplore, and children fatherless.

Glossary:

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Source of Text: Bodleian Library, *allegro* Catalogue of Ballads; Harding B 13(224)

Music. No tune given

Source of Music: No tune given

Printer: Harkness

Where Printed: Preston

Author : Anonymous

Variant Set: No Variants found

Date: 1845

Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background

Construction of the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Railway began in 1837. The Ashton to Stalybridge branch, which had been part of the original plan was deferred due to lack of finances. Despite the collapse of the viaduct in April 1845, the line was completed and opened in December. Some sources say that 17 men were killed. It is likely that the song was printed within days of the accident and the discrepancy in numbers may be due to two men dying of their injuries after the accident.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield,_Ashton-under-Lyne_and_Manchester_Railway

