

THE ILL-FATED UTICA MINE.

Blame for the Fatal Cave Seems to Rest on the Timberman.

UNHEEDED WARNINGS AS TO THE DANGER.

Timbers Which Were Entirely Incapable of Upholding the Weight Upon Them—Many Miners Who Refused to Work in the Dangerous Depths—The Owners of the Mine Are Said to Be Blameless.

[Special to the EXAMINER.]

SAN ANDREAS, December 29.—Business and gambling at Angel's Camp are going on as usual, and the town has resumed its normal appearance. Nothing is being done at the mine, and some say nothing ever will be.

It was known, mining experts say, that the mine was sinking, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding, for it was spoken of by Lilly on the day of the accident, but Lane, the Superintendent, was not at the mine when the accident occurred.

There are hoisting works on both shafts, the hoisting machinery being perhaps 100 or 150 feet from what is known as the gallows-frame, over the shaft. The gallows-frame over the south shaft is leaning and liable to topple over at any time.

Thomas Corwin, one of the men who escaped and was seriously injured, was caught under some falling timbers last June and severely bruised, with five other men, Elmer Miller, James Chapman, N. Dreerick and A. Pleinani. Miller was killed.

Two weeks ago a man named Dominic Massa was working in the 500-foot level when falling rock broke the staging, hurrying him twenty-five feet and causing injuries from which he died in a day or two.

Last October there was an accident in which several were injured. In fact, the mine is widely known as an unsafe one, although no serious blame is attached to the owners. The fact that two and three foot timbers have to be used alone makes it dangerous.

The immense cavities they worked out, supported only by these timbers, have always led to the belief that sooner or later an immense cave would occur, and it has come to pass as prophesied.

The cause of the poor unfortunates now being buried in the mine can be attributed here to no other source than mismanagement on the part of the unfortunate Williams.

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NO CENSURE FOR THE OWNERS.

Citizens here do not censure the gentleman, but do think it strange that old and experienced miners should venture into such a mine when they were aware of its dangerous condition, especially after being warned by Messrs. Lane and Lilly. It seemed as if Mr. Williams did not realize the danger, or thought, by his superior knowledge as a timberman, he could prevent further caving. The miners are, as is to be supposed, divided in two factions in regard to the safety of the mine. There are men who condemn the mine and its management in private conversation, but upon talking to them in public they refute their former statements. One class, composed mostly of foreigners, are outspoken and say they can substantiate their statements that the mine was unsafe, and the owners knew it.

L. Lewis, a practical miner of years' experience, said that over a month ago he quit work in the Utica mine on account of its unsafe condition. Mr. Lewis has been a miner for twenty years, and states that, in all his experience, he had never seen such a dangerous mine. He said that owing to its size it never could be worked in safety, and at any time it was liable to cave and kill every man in it.

Mr. Lewis also said that it was improperly timbered, according to his ideas as a miner.

AFRAID TO WORK IN THE UTICA.

John Revira, a practical miner, quit work in the Utica mine some time before the accident. He refused to work there on account of the danger in the mine. Mr. Revira was certain that it was dangerous; and further, it is plain to be seen that the management of the mine have rehearsed the same story over time and again to all the miners in their employ.

It is said that when an attempt is made to get at the fact that the mine was for years supposed to be dangerous, which is known throughout the county, the parties that have some business interest at stake or a good situation will invariably head off the person being interviewed and commence explaining why the mine was safe. Of course all known facilities to support the mammoth lead were at all times brought into requisition by the management.

It was a point on the management's part to always furnish the best precautions, as it seems that they were aware of the dangerous condition the mine was in.

Alvinza Hayward, one of the owners of the Utica mine, hired Thomas Williams, the ill-fated timberman, on the strength of his reputation as being an expert in that line of business, and gave him full charge of the timbering in the mine, and he was put in on that condition. Neither the Superintendent nor foreman had any right to dictate to him.

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WILLIAMS WAS WARNED.

It is positive that the Superintendent and foreman both warned him on that ill-fated day that the mine was dangerous, and stated that \$20 a day would be no inducement to them to work there. Andrew Swenson stated that he had worked in the Lane mine for over a year, and that he knew the mine was unlucky, as well as unsafe.

The timbering at the point where the accident occurred was ragged, defective and unsafe. He was at work when the cave occurred at the same point a year ago, and then stated that the timbers were defective, and these timbers they were about to replace when the cave occurred.

A year ago last August Mr. Swenson, with two other men, was at work in the shaft, when they set off a blast, and signaled for the engineer to hoist. He did not do so, and one man, C. Cavagnaro, was blown to atoms. Swenson says that it was the carelessness of the engineer that caused the accident. He also stated that J. Perrola had been killed by falling ground.

LOCATION OF THE MINE.

The Utica mine is situated nearly in the center of the town. The vein is northwest and southeast and nearly vertical, and is from twenty-five to thirty feet in width, and a great deal of it is worked the full width. The hanging walls are debrite and slaty, and the water coming down from the surface between the seams is the main cause of the cave. There are two shafts, known as the north or "H. H." shaft, and the south shaft, they being about 100 feet apart. The south shaft has been pretty nearly worked out, and, not being sufficiently timbered, Messrs. Hoba & Hayward sunk what is known as the north shaft, levels being run between the two every few hundred feet.

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