

**Bureau of Mines Bulletin 616:
Historical Documentation of
Major Coal Mine Disasters in
The United States
Not Classified As
Explosions of Gas or Dust,
1846-1962**

**May 27, 1871; West Pittston Breaker Fire; Pittston,
Pa.; 20 Killed**

*(From Reports of the Inspectors of Coal Mines of the
Anthracite Coal Regions of Pennsylvania, 1871,
pp. 261-274)*

Between one and two o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, May 27, 1871, a wooden breaker constructed near the shaft caught on fire. No second opening for escape had been provided for men working underground. The men perished from inhaling the gases and impure air caused by the burning breaker.

THE DAILY OREGONIAN
Wednesday, March 6, 1872

MINE DISASTERS

(From the Scranton (Pa.) Republican February 9th.)

Of course an investigation must be made as to the cause of the late explosion at one of the mines near Pittston by which three men lost their lives. These investigations cannot be avoided as it is one of the duties of mine inspectors to make them. That they are of any practical benefit to the living or dead has not yet been established on the contrary experience teaches that they amount to nothing for the simple reason that the friends of the victims are often silenced by the pittance of a few hundred dollars from carrying the matter beyond the verdict of the jury of inquest. Since the terrible disaster of the West Pittston and Eagle shafts it is not wonderful that these investigations are regarded as the most stupendous farces. The jury in the case of the West Pittston holocaust last May rendered a most just and fearless verdict showing that the mine had been operated in direct violation of the ventilation law and that the mine Inspector under that law had been criminally perjured in his duties that he had permitted the mine to be operated in violation of law and that to this negligence and the cupidity of the operators the fearful loss of life was solely chargeable. What was the result of this honest and fearless verdict? It might just as well never have been rendered. After a fund had been contributed by the charitable people of all parts of the country the money was divided between the poor widows and orphans, each receiving a few hundred dollars in consideration of which the sufferers were induced to sign releases for all damages to the operators of the fatal mine! The mine inspector was even retained in his position, and there the matter ended. With such an example before us—where a sweeping verdict of criminal negotiations and disregard of law are equivocally charged—it is a question whether investigations are really worth the paper the evidence was written on. The same thing was repeated in the case of the Eagle shaft disaster though the verdict of the jury in that instance was less explicit.

It is now charged that the late casualty near Pittston was the result of negligence and disregard of the mine ventilation law. Whether this is so or not we do not know but we have no idea that anything will be done about it even if the jury so find. Investigations into the causes of accidents in mines to amount to anything must be carried out in accordance with the verdict rendered, otherwise they might as well be dispensed with.

COSHOCKTON AGE.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT
COSHOCKTON, OHIO.

T. W. COLLIER, Jr.,
EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

Correspondents, and not the Editor, are
responsible for the views entertained in Com-
munications.

Friday Morning, June 2, 1871.

ANOTHER HORROR.

A Coal Shaft Burned—Terrible Loss of Life.

PITTSBURGH, May 27.—The breakers of the West Pittston shaft caught fire this afternoon while the men were at work in the mine below.

PITTSBURGH, May 28.—2:30 P. M.—All the men in the mine, thirty-eight in number, have been brought up. Eighteen are dead. At half-past 12 last night the men succeeded in effecting an entrance at the bottom of the shaft and brought to the surface Andrew Morgan; they also found Hiram Curtis dead, lying with his face in water. At 12:45 they sent up word that the men had barricaded themselves in, and sent up a cage for men and tools.

This morning the excitement at the shaft was greater than ever. Up to 8 o'clock twenty-four men had been brought to the top, of which number six were dead. All were insensible when brought out. One or two have so far recovered as to be able to give an account of themselves. Morgan, the first discovered, is still alive, though his recovery is yet doubtful; he is still unconscious. The exploring parties were compelled to proceed with the utmost caution, and were frequently brought out asphyxiated with foul gases. At 10 A. M., thirty men had been brought out, ten of whom were dead, and at 12 not more than one or two remained in the mine. Every one of the men brought up for the past two hours were found stone dead.

The fire originated in spontaneous combustion, by the friction of the wood-work of the breaker.

PITTSBURGH, May 29.—Every man who was taken out of the pit alive, yesterday morning, is in imminent danger. Most of them can live but a few hours, and a few of them are dead this morning. It is impossible at this moment to obtain the names of those who have died to-day, but physicians in attendance now emphatically assert that not one of those thought to be rescued can recover from the injuries sustained.

There was a great difference between the arrangement of the West Pittston shaft burned on Saturday and that of Avondale. In the Avondale shaft there was a furnace, but here there was none, and air was forced down by means of a large fan.

It is now confidently believed that if the men in charge of the rescue had thought of this construction of the work, and had procured a new fan and set it in operation immediately, enough air could have been forced down to maintain life in all the men who were behind the barricade; but no fan was brought until it was too late, and most of the men perished for want of air.

The Evening Gazette.

PORT JERVIS, N. Y., SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 1871.

The Calamity at Pittston—A Strange Presentiment.

The *Scranton (Penn.) Republican* tells the following sad story of one of the victims of the late Pittston disaster:

"William James expired about three o'clock on the afternoon of the Tuesday following the catastrophe, and was the last added to the list of those upon whom the death angel laid his hand in that awful havoc. He was a Welshman, and had been in this country about seven months. On the morning of the dreadful day in question, he had taken his breakfast, and his wife had made ready his dinner and set the pail aside. For some time he sat wrapped in thought, his arms folded, his eyes fixed vacantly on the stove, and a deep melancholy apparently brooding over him. He was aroused from his reverie by his wife telling him that his dinner was ready, and that he would be late, as the bell had rung. He started to his feet, and gazing upon her for a moment with a look full of tenderness and significance, said to her, "If I should not come back alive would you be in such a hurry getting me out?" The wife answered "No," but remarked that "if he was going at all it was time he was gone." He lifted his pail without saying a word, and after kissing his wife, kissed his four children, who were sitting playing on the door step. When he had got about fifty yards from the house, he returned again, and kissed his wife and children once more with great fervency. His wife noticed that he was the victim of gloomy forebodings, and as he turned away she was about to entreat him not to go to work if he apprehended any danger. But hope and courage and the pressing necessities of their family overcame her intention, and she let him go. She stood in the door and watched him on the way to the fatal pit. When at a point where he turned out of her sight, he turned and cast a wistful look toward his home and the little ones, and seeing his wife, waved with his hand a last adieu. He parted with his loved ones forever."

Fort Wayne Daily Gazette

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Wednesday, May 31, 1871

THE COAL MINE DISASTER.

Preparations for the Burial of the Dead.

A Sad--Tale Men Missing Each Other in Agony of Despair.

The Mine Inspector and Coroner Quarrelling Over the Dead.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FUNERAL.

NEW YORK, May 30.—A special from Scranton says that great preparations are making for the funeral of the dead bodies of David Edwards, John Lloyd, Benjamin Jones and George Cull, who will be brought to this city for burial in the cemetery at Hyde Park where several of the Avondale unfortunates were buried. The programmes of exercises are arranged and the ceremonies will be very imposing. Hyde Park miners and the people generally will turn out en masse, and all business will be suspended.

CURIOUS VISITORS.

A special from Pittston, last night, says the trains on the roads leading into that place from Wilkesbarre, Scranton, and other places, have brought hundreds of people, most of them visiting the locality of the late disaster out of mere curiosity. There is little to be seen, however, beyond the smoking ruins of the breaker and a huge pile of coal on it.

THE DEAD.

Nineteen are now dead among those conveyed to the Lusarne House on being taken from the mine. All have been removed to their homes but four of those taken out alive, who have not yet regained their senses; and though the physicians profess to have strong hopes that most of them will recover, the sufferers certainly look as though death, even now, holds them in its grasp.

A SAD STORY.

Thomas Edwards and his son, aged twelve years, have both so far recovered as to be able to walk about. Edwards's story of their trials in the mine is truly heart-rendering. Strong men, unused to prayer, invoked divine intercession for their safety. Hymns were sung and men kissed each other in agony of despair.

THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

The coroner's inquest is not yet concluded, but will go far toward censuring, and perhaps severely punishing, both the officers of the company and the mine inspector, T. M. Williams, of Wilkesbarre.

A DISGRACEFUL SCENE.

An animated scene transpired between the coroner and inspector of the mines. The latter claimed the right to examine witnesses. The coroner denied the right, but extended the privilege as a matter of courtesy. After some parleying and snubbing on each side, the inspector arose and told the coroner: "You are not competent to conduct this investigation; neither are the jurors fit men to arrive at a rational conclusion." The coroner responded quickly: "Inspector, leave this room." He at once left. The affair throughout is disgraceful. There is a prominent deficiency in the investigation, the parties whose interests are at stake having no representation. The Workingmen's Benevolent Association have no counsel. The inspector denied a hearing save as a witness. After reassembling in the afternoon matters assumed a better shape, and the examination was conducted more decently; but a profound ignorance as to the means of eliciting testimony was evinced.

A LIVING TOMB.

The Calamity at East Pittston!

The Fate of the Miners.

WEST PITSTON, Pa., May 29.—The terrible calamity at the mines at this place has cast a gloom over our whole valley and the excitement attending the sudden advent of the king of terrors has caused many kinds of rumors to be put before the public. As near as can be ascertained from the excited state of things we draw the following facts:

The West Pittston shaft, owned and controlled by the Bridge Valley railroad company and operated by P. A. Blake & Co., of New York, was discovered to be on fire at 1 p. m., Saturday. The fire was caused by the friction of an improperly oiled journal of the shine or pulley over which the wire rope for hoisting carriages from the shaft is run. This occurred in is called the head house, some forty feet above the mouth of the shaft. The fire rapidly communicated to the breaker, and soon the whole structure was in flames.

The scene now beggars all description. It being well known throughout the town that the men in the shaft, working although contrary to the provisions of the mine ventilation bill, which provides that not more than twenty men shall be allowed to work in a mine with only one opening, and those to be employed in making a new one, notwithstanding this law there were at least sixty men down the shaft, and wives, mothers and sisters rushed to the scene of disaster, filling the air with cries and lamentations. One poor woman had a father, husband and three brothers burned in this living tomb. The engineer stood nobly at his post and commenced the work of bringing out the miners as fast as possible, but only succeeded in hoisting the carriage three times, when on the fourth trip the rope broke, precipitating the carriage and its occupants to the bottom. The engineer still kept to his post, however, keeping the fan in operation, which supplied the mine with pure air until so badly burned, when the fan stopped and thus cut off the supply of the life giving element for the poor fellows below.

Dispatches were quickly sent to Wilkesbarre and Scranton for fire-engines to assist in subduing the flames, and they were as quickly forwarded by rail, special trains being provided for the purpose. Upon arriving on the ground it was found there could be no water procured nearer than the Susquehanna about 3,500 feet distant. Fortunately hose enough had been brought, and one engine was set to work drawing water while the other played on the fire. The work of subduing the flames continued until about 6 o'clock p. m., when they were sufficiently under control to commence the work of removing the debris of the breaker, which had fallen over the mouth of the shaft. Rigging was hastily constructed for the purpose of lowering as soon as an entrance could be effected, and at 11 a. m., this object was ascertained and a dog lowered into the shaft to ascertain the condition of the air. After remaining about three minutes he was drawn up alive. This gave hope to the crowd of anxious watchers. A man was then lowered thirty feet, and upon being drawn up reported the air foul but still bearable. Volunteers were then called for, and speedily found, for the humane yet fearful task of entering the shaft for the rescue of their comrades. Early this morning the first man was brought out alive, and cheer after cheer rent the air. The work of mercy then progressed as rapidly as possible, but still very slowly for those watching for their beloved ones. The men were brought up one and two at a time in the following order:

Andrew Morgan, alive; Hiram Curtis, dead; John Burroughs, alive; Owen Macken, dead; James Jones, dead; John Price, alive; Charles McGinness, dead; Pat Farley, dead; Thomas Edwards, alive; Martin Coony, dead; Anthony Ford, alive; Martin Cox, alive; George Edwards, alive; Aaron Smallcombe, dead; William Smallcombe, alive; Thomas Smallcombe, alive; Robert Smallcombe, alive; W. R. Davis, alive; Geo. Sull, dead; Martin Crayon, dead; John Gibbs, alive; Dan. Connor, alive; Thomas Savage, alive; David Edwards, dead; J. Williams, alive; Wm. Powell, alive; T. Ruan, dead; Wm. James, alive; John Lloyd, alive; P. Davis, dead; Joseph Farrel, dead; Thomas Bossart, dead; Pat Cardin, dead; Evan Davis, dead;

Indiana Democrat

A Living Tomb - cont.

Joseph Fetts, alive; Ben Jones, alive.

Jones died soon after being brought out, as did several of the others. Thos. Edwards one of the men brought out, is able to converse, and says when the shaft was discovered to be on fire, some of the men grew frantic and vainly endeavored to scale the sides of the shaft, which is two hundred and fifty feet deep, only to be driven back by the falling embers. Others fell to praying and singing hymns. Fathers and sons and brothers kissed each other and bade farewell, knowing full well their fearful doom.

A party of twelve went towards the eastern gangway and built a barricade, writing on the outside, "We are all here." Five of them only were living.

During the day people from Wilkesbarre, Plymouth, Scranton, Carbondale and the surrounding towns and villages have visited the scene of the disaster, and it is thought no less than ten or twelve thousand. It is thought several of those who were got out cannot live. The feelings of the community can be better imagined than described, and now that all anxiety for those in the mine is past, every one seems to be looking for the welfare of those living, yet so near death.

It is thought that the deaths were caused by suffocation, although some assert that two or three of them were drowned. The men were found in the extreme western portion of the mine, as far back as they could get. Their sufferings must have been terrible. Mr. Wm. Abbott one of the Pennsylvania coal company's men, says that when he went down in the mine he found that the water was but three or four feet deep, but the air was so bad that it was only by the most strenuous exertions that he was able to retain strength sufficient to get the men out. He had two assistants, who were almost unable to aid him in the least. The people here, while sorrowing for the day, cannot help giving vent to feelings of thankfulness that so many were saved.

PITTSBURGH, May 29.—Every man taken out of the pit alive yesterday morning is in imminent danger. Most of them can live but a few hours, and a few of them are dead this morning. It is impossible at this moment to obtain the names of those that have died to-day, but the physicians in attendance now emphatically assert that not one of those thought to be rescued can recover from the injuries sustained. There was a great difference between the arrangement of the West Pittston shaft, burned on Saturday, and that at Avondale. In the Avondale shaft there was a furnace, but here there was none, and air was forced down by means of a large fan. The breaker caught fire at two o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The fire was entirely extinguished down to the bottom. It is now confidently believed that if the man in charge of the rescue had thought of this feature in the construction of the work, and had procured a new fan and set it in operation immediately, enough air could have been forced down to maintain life in all the men who were behind the barricade; but no fan was brought until it was too late. Most of the men perished for want of air.

THE MINE DISASTER.

Who is to Blame for the Pittston Calamity?

NEGLIGENCE OF A MINE INSPECTOR.

Persistent Violations of the Mine Ventilation Law.

FUNERAL OF THE VICTIMS TO-DAY

All Pittston With Closed Doors and in Mourning.

THE INQUEST UPON THE BODIES.

The Facts of the Horror as Told by the Survivors.

Where Lies the Fault of the Calamity?—A Negligent Inspector—The Mine Ventilation Bill Disregarded—The Miners Themselves Partly to Blame—The Funeral of the Dead To-Day—Pittston in Mourning.

WILKESBARRE, May 29, 1871.
The very full, correct and graphic reports of the mine horror at Pittston published in the HERALD of Sunday and Monday leave very little more to state in the way of detail. We hear no more the wailing of bereaved friends, and strong, earnest men laboring to save life afford no longer thrilling interest to the scene at the shaft.

PUBLIC EXCITEMENT HAS WANED
and the work of the journalist approaches an end almost as speedily as the devouring element licked up the man-trap at the West Pittston shaft. Newspaper readers have been duly supplied with the events of the dire calamity by which so many human beings have been cut off in the flower of their manhood, and the question now naturally is, what was the legitimate cause of this most direful effect?

A COUNTRY JURY
will be called on to discuss it in all its bearings, and the probabilities are that the world will be just as wise when they get through as they are now. The jury in the Avondale disaster did not censure anybody in particular, but merely contented themselves with declaring that the system of ventilation was dangerous, and recommending that all mines should be provided with two openings that the men might have a means of escape in case of accident. In that instance the people supplied to the verdict what the jury omitted, and the opinion was universally expressed that

CURIOUS AND RECKLESS DISREGARD
of human life on the part of the owners of the Avondale mine led to the terrible result. That decision has never been reversed, and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company has been furnishing evidence for nearly two years that it was strictly correct. In the case of the West Pittston calamity, it may be said it was caused by a preventable accident. That it can and will be set down to gross carelessness, as indicated in my despatch of last night, there cannot be a doubt.

THE FACTS
are simply that the mine has been driven to its full capacity since resumption took place, in order that the benefit of the increased price of coal might be realized by the proprietors. Three shifts of men have been working eight hours a day, thus showing that the coal has been produced through the whole twenty-four hours. In the hurry and scurry to get the coal to market the machinery had been in almost constant operation, and there has probably been too much business to allow a thought that the journals might require oiling. There seems to be no excuse for this neglect, and the Coroner's jury must find that somebody has blundered, with most fearful and fatal effect. Now that the smoke and confusion has subsided people have already begun to canvass why the provisions of the Mine Ventilation bill have not been complied with by Messrs. Blake & Co., lessees of the mine. The law providing that all mines in the anthracite coal field shall have two openings has been in operation nearly eighteen months, and it does not appear that any movement has been made at the West Pittston shaft to provide that most important adjunct to the miners' safety. The bill declares that, while work is being carried on in driving a second opening, but ten men shall be employed in the mine. It does not say twenty miners and their laborers, increasing the number to forty, or even sixty, as it has been construed at the West Pittston shaft, and there has been

A DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE ACT,
for which somebody must be held responsible, and that somebody the operators of the mine.

There is already a very strong feeling against the mine inspector for this district—Mr. Thomas M. Williams—and many miners are censuring him in the harshest terms. It is reported that the inspector has been remiss in his duty, in not seeing that the mine was not overcrowded with workmen, and it is also intimated that strong influences have been at work to secure an evasion of a wholesome enactment by several mines in the district. It is hardly just to prejudge the case of Mr. Williams, and much fairer for all parties concerned to await the developments made by the Coroner: but these are facts which people will talk about:—Why was not proper attention paid to the machinery, and why were there more men in the mine than allowed by law? That the number of

DEATHS WAS GREATLY INCREASED
by the crowding of the mine cannot now be denied, and it must be decided legally who is to blame. At this point it is but candid to say the miners themselves have been much to blame in the matter by putting more men at work than is allowed by the Mine Ventilation bill. They have been so anxious to go to work that they have shown a disposition to take all the chances in order to obtain a chamber. This fact has been fully illustrated at Pleasant Valley. When Mr. Blewitt, the inspector for the Upper District, posted his notice on Sworer's works that the mine was employing a number of men contrary to law, the men were very indignant, and declared their intention

TO WORK, LAW OR NO LAW,
and they have been working ever since, regardless of danger and the enactment of the Legislature. The catastrophe at West Pittston will have a tendency to decide whether a law designed to protect the miners against the cupidity of the operators shall not be enforced to shield them from acts of their own personal recklessness. This will be an interesting issue throughout the whole anthracite coal field. In view of the terrible calamity work will be suspended in Pittston till after the funeral.

The following is posted around town:—

NOTICE.
In view of the sad calamity which has just befallen our community, and to afford opportunity for assisting in burying the dead, the members of the Pittston Board of Trade are respectfully requested to close their places of business to-morrow, Tuesday, May 30, till five o'clock P. M. By order of the Pittston Board of Trade.

C. K. CAMPBELL, Secretary.
By authority of the Burgess and Town Council of the borough of Pittston it is hereby ordered that all places of business be closed to-morrow, May 30, until five P. M.; and it is most especially ordered that all saloons where liquors are sold be likewise closed. By order.

JOSEPH P. SCHOOLEY, Burgess.

THE ROLL OF DEAD.
Owen Mackin, one of the victims, died this afternoon, at six o'clock. John Lloyd died between seven and eight. The funerals of the sacrificed miners will take place to-morrow, at four P. M. The deaths now amount to twenty. The other victims of the casualty are slowly improving, and it is thought that no more deaths will occur. The feeling in the community is very strong against the company; but, as intimated above, the miners are themselves in a measure to blame. The work of

CLEARING AWAY THE DEBRIS
of the burned shaft and breaker continues, and the dead animals will be removed from the mine as soon as possible.

THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

Testimony of the Engineer and the District Inspector—No More Than Twenty Men Allowed to Work at Once in a Mine—The Signal of Alarm Not Conveyed Immediately to the Miners.

Pittston, Pa., May 29, 1871.
At the inquest held by the Coroner's jury, at the office of Coroner Dr. J. P. O'Malley, to-day, the jury being composed of Joseph Walsh, foreman, James Fitzpatrick, M. Bolon, J. W. Freeman, S. H. Barrett and M. Jones, James McDermott was

THE FIRST WITNESS
called. He testified:—I was engineer in charge of the machinery on Saturday at the shaft of Blake & Co., in West Pittston; the first I know of fire was when Mr. Kendrick came into the engine room and hallooed fire; the large door obscuring the shaft from my sight was opened and I saw the fire on the inside brattice next to the fan, which is some ten feet above the engine house floor. I gave the alarm by pulling a wire in the room that was connected at the bottom with an alarm hammer. I also gave an alarm through the speaking tube. I do not know at what time the fire broke out. I was in the fan house at five minutes of one P. M. with the superintendent, and all was in good order. We had three engines at work at the time which could be discontinued. Myself and Mr. Kendrick vacated the air and found 24,000 feet passing through the mine. The cracker box is some fifty or sixty feet higher than the floor of the engine house. There was no communication for an alarm between me and the cracker top. It was the business of Roland Gorman to oil the machinery. I could not tell whether the fire occurred at the fan or at the top. If it occurred at the fan it might have been caused by a hot journal. I do not know whether there was proper ventilation or not. There is no place to get out of the mine but through the main shaft. We were only working one vein of coal. M. T. Williams,

the inspector, was in the mine last Thursday; heard no complaint from the Inspector about men working in the mine; the company are driving a slope for the purpose of sinking a shaft; the shaft was commenced some six or eight months ago.

David Harris testified:—Ventilation of mine was very poor; the slope has been pushed 1,132 feet from the foot of shaft; it was the duty of the scaleman at the foot to watch for signals from the engineer and communicate warnings of danger to the men; Thomas Phillips was on duty that day; Phillips came up on the first carriage after he received

THE ALARM OF DANGER
and did not communicate the intelligence to the miners; the footman, Richard Clark, came up with Phillips; there was plenty of room to slip an air passage for the purpose of improving the ventilation now going on; at the time a foundation was being laid for a new fan; if a blast was made in my "breast" the smoke would remain all day; I and Thomas Price were driven out of our "breasts" on Saturday on account of smoke.

Thomas Phillips sworn:—Was weighing coal on Saturday; I heard the sapper; the footman and myself had put a car on the carriage, and when we heard the signal we pushed it off again; I went to the speaking pipe, but did not use it. Told the footman to signal, but he received no answer. I put on my coat and locked up the books and slate in the scale. When I learned it was fire I came to the foot and went up. I don't think it was two minutes from the time I commenced to prepare to leave till I was ready. I did not know it was my duty to give the alarm to the men in the mine.

Mr. William Kendrick sworn:—I am superintendent of the West Pittston shaft, under Blake & Co. My duty is to take charge of the mines, lay out work and have a general superintendence of the work above and below. I considered the ventilation sufficient for the number of men we had at work

WE HAD THIRTY
belonging to the shaft and at work at the time. I employed Phillips. Did not give instructions to him as to his duty. I gave Frank Keller instructions. The duty of the weighmaster was to weigh coal. It is the footman's place to attend and respond to signals from the engine room, or tell the weighmaster to do so. There is only one rafter. Four raps was to communicate with the speaking tube. It is not a warning of danger, but calling attention to the speaking tube. The speaking tube was in working order. Increased means of ventilation should be made as soon as possible. Thursday the Inspector and myself tested the air in the passages and found 11,600 feet per minute passing through. The company courts a thorough investigation by the Coroner. Several men had gone down to change shafts.

At this point the inquest was adjourned until three o'clock. At reassembling Mr. Kendrick was recalled. He further testified that the company have not commenced to shaft. The mine inspector has visited us three times since January. He considered it necessary for another opening. I do not consider the ventilation good, but I consider it sufficient for the number of men employed. It is not possible to tell how many men were in the mine that morning. We only know how many men are in by the amount of coal mined in the day.

T. M. Williams sworn:—I am mine inspector of this district. I was at West Pittston shaft on Wednesday. In one portion of the mines ventilation was good, but in the other portion it was bad. Through the East Gangway smoke was so dense we had to grope our way. The law specifies that no more than twenty persons shall work at a time, including boys and all laborers. 1,650 feet air was passing into the mine for the supply of the miners. We examined the fan and found it driven very fast, and up cast airway very small. I did not think there were any more men than the law required. Only twenty persons are allowed to work in a mine. I did not put a direct question as to the number of men in the mine. The company have been trying to improve the ventilation, but have not been very successful. I did express my approval of the arrangements under course of construction in the mine. If I found more men than the law allowed I was to notify, and if they refused to reduce the force I was to go to the courts for an injunction. I said to Mr. Kendrick, "It may happen you may work contrary to law for ninety years, and then, again, you may not work ninety hours; and if anything should happen the company would be responsible, and a small company would be swallowed up."

Mr. Kendrick re-examined:—Mr. Williams did not ask me if I had more than twenty men in at any time that I am aware of. The number of men in on Wednesday and Saturday was about the same. I told Mr. Williams upon his question that there probably was more men in the mine than the law allowed. I had never any instructions from him that we were working against the provisions of the law.

Richard Law, sworn:—I attended foot on Saturday. I heard the signal on that day and knew that

THE BREAKER WAS ON FIRE.
It was my duty, and the weighmaster's duty, to give warning to the men of danger. I cried "Fire," but did not go back into the gangway. I went up on the third carriage I only recollect Mr. Jones going up with me. Phillips, the weighmaster, came up in the next car after me. There were men on the first, second and third cars, also on the fourth.

Simon Thomas sworn:—I am a miner at work at West Pittston shaft. I was at work on the outside of shaft on Saturday. The

VENTILATION WAS NOT GOOD.
The company intended to sink a shaft when the vein was reached. The work on the slope had to be abandoned on account of the gas. The number men employed in the mine at the time would not vary much from forty. I was engaged on the slope, and was driven out on account of the gas. At the time of changing shifts for a turn there were more in the mine, but on this occasion eight of the morning shift came out, and of the night shift two had entered. Heard no complaint from Inspector Williams as to quantity or quality of air. Here the inquest was adjourned till Tuesday morning.

A REBUKE TO THE INSPECTOR.
Inspector Williams, during the examination of witnesses, intruded upon the dignity of the official position of the coroner as well as the jury and received the well merited repute of being ordered out, which he did, picking up his traps and not stopping upon the order of going, but went at once.

THE MINE DISASTER - Cont.

STATEMENTS OF THE SURVIVORS.

Three More Dead Added to the List—The Experiences of Andrew Morgan in the Burning Mine—His Talk With Curtis—"Be of Good Cheer"—The Prayer Meeting in the Gangway—Heartrending Scenes.

PITTSBURGH, May 23, 1911.

The blue sulphur blaze from the burning coal in the colm heaps is the only monument that indicates the location of the ill-fated shaft. In every house the tears of the mourner are leaving traces upon the burning cheek, and a deathly silence reigns in many a desolate home. Since my last despatch to the New York Herald John Borrow, John Lloyd and Owen Moeken have been added to the

LIST OF THE DEAD ONES.

I arrived at the deathbed of the twentieth victim of the catastrophe just as the heart of the latter was vibrating its last. He died in a stranger's house, with a wife *enraged* and five children gathered round. Sympathizing friends were in attendance, but no relief could be offered. The appealing wife, no answer to her prayers, no responses to the agonizing cries of the little ones as they piteously called their papa to look at them. At times I was despondent. I did entertain hopes of being rescued alive. I took hold of Curtis, who was faint, and said to him, "If we have to die we might as well die together," and Curtis said in reply, "For God's sake, Morgan, stay with me. We will keep together;" and I stuck to him like a brother.

After that I

STAGGERED WITH NUMBED SENSES

toward the shaft and looked up. The most of the fire was over, and only a few pieces of fire were dropping down. I shouted to the men on top not to throw water down the shaft, as it would kill the men. This must have been nearly five o'clock. My greatest anxiety was for the fate of my family should I die, and I prayed in our prayer meeting for their welfare; and there were "some earnest prayers at that meeting, Mr. HERALD."

Morgan will recover, but it will necessarily be very slow.

Michael Cox was laboring at the stables. He speaks through the HERALD reporter his sensations and actions during the trying ordeal:—

"I was some fifty yards from the foot," said he, "with four others—Timothy Welsh, found dead in the mines; John Borrow, died since coming out; Joseph Falls, alive, and another man, name unknown to me."

In a small and poorly furnished room the soul of this man, who was begrudged by avaricious coal operators in this valley a mere pittance of wages, departed this world, having braved dangers that are never recognized until the whole country feels the tremendous shock of the criminal negligence and culpable ignorance of those whose money make them masters. The list of martyrs is becoming daily longer and sadder. William James is lying at the Luzerne House and is still insensible. Andrew Morgan, the first man brought out of the mine, came to his senses this morning. He was very weak this evening at nine o'clock, when the HERALD reporter had a talk with him. He remembers

SHAKING HANDS WITH THE MEN,

and accompanying Curtis, deceased, to the outside of the wall in the east gangway to watch for relief or any signs of a favorable change in the current of air. William Davis tried to get him to go back behind the wall; but he told him he would not, that he would go the foot, he said. I talked with Curtis the last. I spoke, and told him to have cheer. The men were at work on top as were we below, and though

THE FIRST NOTICE

we had of the fire was two successive shocks and rushes of wind, similar to the concussion after a blast of powder. One man, a Welchman, was the first to speak, and said he guessed an explosion had occurred somewhere on the west side, beyond the stable. My reply was that I thought that damage was done; I was near the foot, and I ran over to the foot and saw the timbers overhead, at the bottom of the shaft, on fire. This must have been at about three o'clock. I then hurried back and told the men the shaft was on fire. I did not see the carriage, but it might have been down in the rubbish. There was a great deal of smoke. On the road I met some men and told them of the fire. We all then went to the bottom of the shaft, and with tin cans and powder kegs we dashed water upon the beams overhead, until we were driven back by the smoke.

We did not stand it more than a few minutes. The throwing of water increased the cloud of smoke. We then ran to the door at the west and found the smoke driven by a strong current of air through one gangway and back again through the door. I then ran to the stables for my coat and put it in the cracks. The other men were putting up colm and dirt with their hands and hats against the door. While there we heard a man coming toward the door from the inside of the heading and had and heard him moan twice. I suppose it was Patrick Farley, afterwards found dead. We left there and ran to the east gangway by a cross heading, and found most of the men were working upon the wall they were putting across the gangway.

WE WORKED HARD,

and some were compelled to lie down before the work was done. We got the place secure against smoke and then we got shifting back and forwards to places where the air was coming in quite fresh. Men who were fainting were carried into those places for fresh air. We all prayed and sung. The last I remember I went back from the barricade a few steps to a small stream of water. My head ached, and I kept bathing it in it, and was on my knees, and I fell off into a sleep. How it was I do not remember, and do not know distinctly how I recovered after getting out. My brother Robert was one of the volunteers that went down into the mine and brought me out.

At half-past three yesterday morning

LITTLE JIMMY JONES,

twelve years of age, gave us the following particulars of his feelings:—"I was looking for one of the drivers, who had gone up the shaft, and when I got near the foot I saw the timbers on fire overhead. I looked up the shaft and saw the blazing flames, and some sticks were falling down. It was very hot and the smoke was coming down, and I had to leave on account of the heat and smoke. The air was coming down the shaft. At this time one of the carriages was down on the left hand side, and I did not see any coming in the right side. I went back inside of the door in the east gangway, and a good many men were building a wall. I helped fix up the wall. I fell down two or three times from breathing smoke. I took my coat off to stop up the holes where the smoke was coming through. I was thinking of the Avondale fire, and thought I should never get out, and I cried and thought mother was round the top of the shaft crying for me, and it made me feel bad. I was with the men when they had a prayer meeting. We found the smoke coming in at another place and so we built another wall. I thought if ever I got out of the mine I would never get down again. When I thought I was going to die I wanted some paper to write to mother, but could not get it. Some of the men told me not to cry, we would get out safe, and all were crying but Jimmy Smallcombe. John Price fell upon the ground and rolled and groaned, and William Davis helped him to get inside of the gangway. I laid down in William Davis' lap, and the last I remember somebody was carrying me. I drank water from the ditch. I was so thirsty that I could drink anything that was wet. Then I laid down in William's lap. I thought that if I was to die I wanted to die in his arms, he had been so good to me. He told me not to cry, and I put my head on his knees and tried to stop crying, but could not." When he came to his senses he thought he was at the top of the shaft, and when told he was in his home he would look around and say, "Where is my mother, if I am in my father's house?"

THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS.

The Committee of the Workmen's Benevolent Association have agreed that the Welch, English and Germans hold their funeral ceremonies at the grove, near the shaft, at ten A. M., and the Catholics at their church, at four o'clock P. M. A special train on the Lackawanna and Bloomsburg Railroad will carry some of the corpses to Hyde Park for interment. Mr. S. H. Brown, of the firm of Blake & Co., arrived on the scene of disaster this forenoon. He did not learn of the disaster until last evening while calling upon a friend in Boston. He has ordered all bills contracted for the relief of the sufferers or expenses in facilitating the work of relieving the victims to be presented to the company for liquidation.

The New-York Times.

VOL. XX.....NO. 6269.

NEW-YORK, TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1871.

PRICE FOUR CENTS.

FIRE-DAMP AGAIN.

Explosion in Eagle Shaft,
Pittston, Penn.

Seventeen Miners Shut Up in a
Gangway.

The Work of Removing the
Obstructing Rocks.

Foul Air Impedes the Progress of
the Relief Parties.

All Hope of Saving the Miners in
the Shaft Lost.

Recovering the Bodies of the Un-
happy Victims.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

PITSTON, Penn., Aug. 14.—This morning, at about 10 o'clock, it was rumored that the fire damp in the Eagle shaft had exploded, warning in the miners and laborers employed there, numbering seventeen in all. At the scene of the disaster, where there were at least 1,000 people assembled, many of whom had relatives or friends at work in the mine, the grief of the women was beyond description. They crowded about the mouth of the shaft, and the air was filled with their heartrending lamentations. Preparations to descend the shaft were immediately made, and at 10:35 o'clock about twenty men descended, and after a quarter of an hour of anxious waiting they reappeared, bringing the body of BENJAMIN DAVIS. He was found near the foot of the shaft, and was lying on his face, dead. JOSEPH JONES, a driver, was also found at the foot of the shaft. He was alive, and did not seem to have suffered a great deal, although he was deathly pale. Work was rapidly continued, and at 12:40 the body of EVAN JONES was found in the south gangway, about 800 feet from the foot of the shaft, and lying face upward. The features were distorted, and he presented an appearance of great suffering. At this time the wildest confusion prevailed, and the women who had husbands, children or friends working in the shaft were eagerly pressing forward to learn their fate. The work of removing the rock and debris caused by the explosion inside the shaft, and which debarred the workmen from the place where most of the men were supposed to be, progressed very slowly, but as fast as was possible under the circumstances.

The air was so foul and deadly that it was only with great difficulty that the men could breathe, and only those who were accustomed to the mine could be of any service. At 3:35, the body of THOMAS LESHONG was brought up. He died, judging from the appearance of his countenance, a very painful death. He leaves a wife and four children, and was about forty years of age. A gentleman who had been down in the mine since 11 o'clock in the forenoon came up at 7½ o'clock, and reported that the air was very bad, and that most of those who had volunteered to rescue the miners were so much exhausted that restoratives had to be applied. He thought at least four hours would be required to reach the place where the men are supposed to be. Nine men explored the mine as far as they were able to go, but found no traces of either the bodies of the victims or of the cause of the accident. Other volunteers were on hand, and descended the shaft at once, but no more corpses were found until 4:10, when the body of JAMES MORGAN was brought up. His arms were bent, with the hands tightly closed, and his face was horribly distorted. He leaves a wife and three children. At 4¼ DAVID HARRIS was found. He looked as though he died in great pain. He leaves three motherless children. At 4:50 two volunteers, named DAVID R. WILLIAMS and GEORGE BRADLEY, were sent up in an almost dying condition. Restoratives were immediately applied, and every effort was made to resuscitate them, but they were sent home still insensible at about 5 o'clock, though their ultimate recovery is hoped for. The following are the names of all the men in the shaft at the time of the disaster: David Harris, taken out dead; J. Morgan, taken out dead; Thom. Leshong, taken out dead; EVAN JONES, taken out dead; David Owens, Thom. Reese, Jas. Jones, Charles Price, Jno Reese, Robert Hughes, Ben Williams, taken out dead; Edward Owens, John Morgan, Richard Owens, M. Quinsley, Martin Morgan and Ben Davis. The Eagle shaft is owned and operated by ALVA THOMPSON, and has always been considered a "fire-hole," to use the expression of a miner with whom we conversed, as it has always been with the greatest difficulty that a sufficiency of pure air could be forced into the shaft. The theories and con-

jectures as to the cause of the disaster are many, some of the opinion that there was a great fire of coal in the chambers or passages a mile or more from the shaft, which drove the pure air out of the mine, leaving the men to die. The general opinion is, however, that the calamity was caused by the explosion of the fire-damp, the first intimation that anything was wrong being the rattling and jostling of the descending car, as the air rushed out of the shaft with such velocity as for a moment to stop its descent.

MIDNIGHT.—Three volunteers have just been taken out insensible, and no further attempts to recover the bodies will be made before daylight. Five bodies only have been taken out.

Dispatch to the Associated Press.

PITSTON, Penn., Aug. 14.—A fire-damp explosion occurred this morning in the Eagle shaft, operated by ALVA THOMPSON. Twenty men were working in a new gangway at the time of the explosion, which tore away the timbers supporting the roof, causing it to fall, and leaving the men imprisoned behind the rocks, with no means of escape until the debris shall be cleared away. BENJAMIN DAVIS, who was working outside of the gangway, was instantly killed by the explosion. The men imprisoned are most likely dead, or will be before they can be reached.

AFTERNOON.—Of the twenty men working in the mine sixteen were employed on the new gangway, and are imprisoned by the falling roof. Three others, working in other parts of the mine, escaped uninjured. Further particulars will be sent as soon as obtained.