

THE MINE HORROR.

Accidents Infrequent in the Utica.

IT WAS CONSIDERED SAFE.

A Talk With the Owner and Superintendent on the Disaster.

The condition of the Utica mine, near San Andreas, where occurred the terrible accident of Sunday, by which sixteen unfortunates lost their lives, is receiving some attention from interested parties. It seems incredible that a cave of such proportions could have happened without premonitory signs. Alvinza Hayward, one of the proprietors of the Utica, said yesterday that the mine was considered unsafe.

"We have the best evidence," said he, "that the men were warned not to go into the mine. Mr. Lane told them not to go in, and they were given the privilege of laying off. He said the mine was unsafe, but they went in there. We have the best evidence of that."

That there may be no misunderstanding of the import and directness of Mr. Hayward's statement, it should be said that he subsequently denied having made these remarks although he gave utterance to them in the presence of two persons. When C. D. Lane, the superintendent of the mine, was interviewed, Mr. Hayward insisted that his remarks were misunderstood and that he meant something else.

An hour after Mr. Hayward's interview, C. D. Lane, who came to the city late on Christmas night, said:

"I never advised the men not to go into the mine, nor did I even say to them that it was not safe. I believed the mine was as safe as any in the country. I thought there would have been a warning given of a cave, not of minutes, but of hours. George Williams, the boss of the timbermen, thought the mine was safe. About a month ago Williams came to my house, when I. M. Morgan and my wife were there. He said he was going to look over a piece of ground in the mine and wanted to secure it. I told him to do anything he wanted to do. 'Do anything you want, George,' I said, 'it doesn't make a bit of difference to me whether it falls or not, but don't lose any lives.' George said it looked a 'little shaky.' I told him not to let the price of keeping it up endanger any lives."

Mr. Hayward said it was from this statement made to him that he uttered the words quoted.

Mr. Lane continued and said the timbering had been done by Williams a year and a half ago. The accident had taken them all by surprise, as it was entirely unexpected.

"The causes? Excessive rains, heavy grounds and the perpendicular character of the levels. The ground went crashing through eighty feet of level, and I don't think a similar accident was ever heard of in the world before."

"We regret the loss of life and have never considered the pecuniary loss. If the whole confounded mine had sunk we wouldn't have cared a cent. It will take some months, if not a year, to recover the bodies. There are 50,000 or 60,000 tons of earth on the men, and there is yet danger. There is no use putting living men in jeopardy to take out dead men. We made every effort to get at the unfortunates when the accident happened, but we were assured that every one was killed."

"The best evidence of the safe condition of the mine is found in the timbers that still stand at both ends of the ledges. They are as sound and firm as any one could wish. The Utica mine was opened by Mr. Fair over thirty years ago. It was abandoned and for twenty years lay idle. Then with some friends I bought it in. Eighteen months ago Colonel Hayward and Mr. Hobart bought it in and they kept me as superintendent. We have no fear of any damage suits, as the people about there knew the situation and understood the mine was perfectly safe. One of the dead had only been with us two days. Work will be resumed at once," concluded Mr. Lane, "and we will try to get at the bodies."

"The report that the mine was 'unlucky' is untrue," said Mr. Hayward. "We have had very few accidents in the Utica. In the last five years there has been one man killed in it. No one feared to work there, and the men we had were all with us for years."