

LOSS OF LIFE IS UNKNOWN

Details of Disaster at Smuggler Union Mine are Meagre but Belief is That All Unfortunates in Mine Have Met a Horrible Death by Suffocation.

Denver, Nov. 21.—Only a meager report concerning the disaster at the Smuggler-Union mine near Telluride, Col., has been received at the local offices of the company. It is not known here this morning whether the loss of life will reach 100, as feared, or whether any bodies have been found in addition to the twenty-two which were recovered and identified last night. The damage caused by the fire in the loss of the buildings is estimated at \$150,000, fully covered by insurance, but the mine will have to be closed for at least a month.

The mouth of Bullion tunnel, through which the Smuggler-Union mines are worked, is located not over fifty or sixty feet from the burned buildings. The smoke from the start seemed to be down to the mouth of the tunnel and it encircled that point as if there were no other place of escape. This was due to the suction, as the air in the mine was warmer than that outside. On account of this suction movement the majority of mine and tunnel entrances have iron doors ready to lower in place at a minute's notice to stop smoke or fire. Unofficially the Bullion tunnel did not possess one of these safeguards.

It appears that much of the stupefying effect of the fire was due to the flames in the converter house, which was filled with oil, and emitted the darkest smoke imaginable. The tunnel is situated about midway between the apex of the mine and the ninety-foot level. It is an intermediate working tunnel. The seventh level is 1,750 feet below the surface, and the ninth level, where between seventy-five and ninety miners were working when the fire occurred, is 2,000 feet below the surface.

Seventeen of the twenty-two bodies recovered were found on the seventh level. The fire did not penetrate the mine workings and the frightful loss of life was due entirely to smoke. The mine was originally owned by a company of which John Porter, of this city, was the president, and A. R. Fowler secretary and treasurer. About two years ago the mine, with a number of others in the same locality, was absorbed by the New England Exploration company, of which W. B. Laurence is now the head and one of the principal stockholders.

The New England company is controlled by Boston capitalists. Mr. Lawrence went to New York about a week ago. Arthur Comins, manager of the mine, is also absent on a trip to Mexico. Jacob Filins, attorney for the company, left for Telluride last night to make an investigation.

The executive board of the Western

Federation of Miners, now in session in this city, discussed the disaster at their meeting to-day. They averred that agitation would commence in labor circles to procure legislation which would remedy the evils which caused the fire at the Smuggler-Union mine. In 1887 a slide occurred just above the Bullion tunnel in which twenty-seven people lost their lives, and it was only on July 3 last that the fighting consequent upon the miners' strike occurred.

All Hope Abandoned.

Telluride, Col., Nov. 21.—Persons who have come into town this morning from the Smuggler-Union mine, which is four miles distant between Marshall gulch and the mines, say workers have almost abandoned hope of finding any of the imprisoned men alive. Every entrance to the property is the scene of active work and the willing hands are only stayed by the fear of certain death if they enter the smoke-filled levels. Every few minutes men make a rush inside only to crawl back helpless and straggling as they meet the foul smoke which fills the tunnels and the levels. Officers of the company say that the work will be continued until every body has been recovered, and will be hastened in the hope that many may be found alive.

The telephone and telegraph wires were destroyed in the fire, and the only means of communication is by messenger.

Recovering the Bodies.

Denver, Nov. 21.—A special to the Post from Telluride, Colo., says: The work of rescuing bodies of miners who were suffocated to death in the Smuggler-Union mine yesterday morning, was resumed at 9 o'clock this morning. The searching parties were unable to work last night owing to the dense volumes of sulphur gas which permeated every portion of the 18 miles of underground workings. It is not expected that all of the bodies will be recovered before midnight, and it may even be longer.

The full number of dead will not be known until a complete roster of the employees has been secured and those who escaped accounted for. There may be fifty more bodies in the mine. It is certain that every man who was imprisoned in the mine is dead, no living being could have existed in the awful sulphur fumes for more than a few minutes. The work of bringing down the bodies of the victims was slow and laborious. The steep trail making it very difficult to carry them.