

DISASTROUS FIRE IN FREMONT MINE

Thirteen Men Descend into the Burning Shaft
Only Two Escape.

Last Saturday afternoon, just after dinner, eleven men lost their lives as the result of a fire which started in some unaccountable way in the Fremont mine during the noon hour, while two others barely escaped after three hours of wandering through the drifts. As is usual all the men had come up at about ten minutes to twelve. After dinner thirteen workmen, which was the first load down, started down the shaft, having no idea that the mine was on fire. The skip contained two Austrians, five Italians and four Americans, who were riding the bail, the others being in the bottom. Just as they passed the ten hundred foot level it seems that those on top smelled the smoke for the first time, and signaled to the engineer to stop, which he did. By the time he had stopped the skip was about thirty feet below the level. Antone Penotti, an Italian, and who was one of the two to escape, says that the first he knew that an accident had occurred was when the men above him commenced to fight, and fell into the skip and onto him. Being in the bottom of the skip he did not know that there was a fire. It is supposed that the heat became so great that one, or maybe more of the men on top the skip stepped out and started for the ladder, but in the excitement some one rang the bell to hoist. According to Penotti the skip moved only about four feet, having run over one man and cutting him frightfully. The skip then turned over, so that the only way left to get out was by climbing to the level above and going through the drifts to the Gover shaft, which is about eight hundred feet away. The two mines are connected through the seven and thirteen hundred levels of the Fremont, and the draft at the time the accident to the skip occurred, was going down the Fremont shaft and up through the Gover, so that they had been lowered almost to the fire before they knew there was any.

As soon as the skip became jammed, Penotti and his partner, G. Bologna, an Italian, climbed to the top of the skip. But one of the men grabbed the former by the foot and asked him to help him out. Penotti told him to let go of his foot until he could get out his matches to light a candle, all of which had gone out during the scuffle. But he accidentally dropped the box, so he called to his partner to follow, and started to climb the ladder to the ten hundred drift, leaving the others to their fate. He says that two others started to follow but when he got to the level he did not see them and supposed that they had gone back to help out the others. As soon as they got to the level they broke the only candle in two that they had and lit the parts with a match Bologna found in his pocket. Penotti says that he reached out to pull the bell, but just as he did so flames shot up from below and the heat was so great that he could not stand it, so the two ran for their lives. At this point there are two drifts, one south and the other north. It is fortunate that the two men took the north drift, or they would never have been able to have reached the surface. Both men were almost totally ignorant of the workings of the mine, having been there only a short time, but they knew that the mines were connected on the seven hundred level, so they made for it. They would try a slope and find that it led to nothing, but finally they came to the right one, and climbed to the seven hundred level. As soon as they got into this their candles were blown out on account of the strong draft, so they had to crawl on their hands and knees for about eight hundred feet to the Gover shaft. They had reached a place of safety after more than three hours of wandering through a mine of which they knew little about, and not knowing what minute was to be their last.

When the engineer found that he couldn't move the skip he notified Harry Osborne that an accident had occurred. Osborne immediately jumped into the other skip and started down to see what was the matter. When he had let the skip out about seven hundred feet he received the accident signal from those already down. As yet no one on top knew that the mine was on fire. So he

stopped the skip, intending to tell Osborne that they had so rung, but before he could do so he had bells to lower. The skip had gone only a little lower when he had bells to stop and raise, which he started to do, but this was quickly countermanded, and he started to lower again. Almost immediately he had orders to hoist, which he did. Before the skip got to the top Osborne yelled for them to hurry up that he was suffocating. From his story, after he had passed the seventh level, the men below him rang him up, thinking that another load of men were coming down, and would meet the same fate. But he reassured them that there was only one aboard, so started down, but they warned him away, and rang him up again. By this time he had begun to feel the effects of the gases, and knowing that nobody could live many minutes in such atmosphere, went to the top. As it was he was never dead than alive and a few more breaths of the same air would have surely killed him. By this time the draft had changed a little, but when the skip reached the top it drew the smoke with it, coming out in great volume for hours.

It was nearly seven before manager Goodall would consent to the men bulkheading the shaft of the Fremont, and the two connecting levels in the Gover. In this way the mine was made completely air tight. All hopes for the escape of any of the men had been given up by this time, so when the two Italians came out through the Gover after three o'clock it was a great surprise to everyone. At midnight the fire was still raging, so the water from the ditch just above the mine was slanted to the shaft and allowed to pour into the mine.

When the two drifts were bulkheaded a small opening was left and only a piece of box wood placed over it. Candles, matches, and axes were put there so that if any of the men should get that far they could break their way through. But they were not disturbed.

Sunday afternoon the bulkhead was removed from the top of the Fremont shaft and a lantern and candles lowered into the shaft. They did not go out after running down about three hundred feet, so four men, including manager Goodall, who always went first and did not put his men into any danger that he would not encounter himself, were lowered, but when they got a little below 300, the smoke was hanging in a dense cloud, so that they had to come to the top again. A great amount of air had entered with the water, and the smoke forced down. Monday morning early they tried the same thing, but could only go down about two hundred feet, so they tried again later, but this time could only get a little over a hundred feet.

All day Sunday they had been going up and down the Gover shaft, without noticing any odor of the fire. So Monday afternoon Goodall, Osborne and three others went down as far as the eight hundred foot level, when the engineer received the signal to hoist. When the skip reached the top Goodall and one of the others were found lying in the bottom of the skip in an unconscious condition, while the other men were so badly gone that they all fainted as soon as they got to the fresh air. They did not remain unconscious very long, but it took an hour and a half to restore Goodall to consciousness. A physician was called in immediately. A few seconds longer and all five of the men would have died for want of fresh air. As it was Osborne could hardly pull the rope to ring the bell. Compressed air was then turned into the Gover shaft to clear the mine of the foul gases.

Tuesday the fire in the Fremont started up again so the water was again turned into the shaft, while the air has been forced into the Gover steadily in the hope that if any of the men should be alive this will supply them with air. Since Saturday the bells have been ringing from time to time, supposedly caused by either rocks or timbers falling against the rope. The supposition now is that when Osborne went down the mine that the bells received by the engineer were rung by the men that were down the mine, but Os-

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borne cannot now recollect that he made the assertion that he had talked with the men. He was too far gone when he reached the top to know really whether he had talked with any one or not. He was completely out of his head for some time.

The entombed miners are Dennis O'Brien, who leaves a wife and eight children living in Placerville; L. K. Wilson, who leaves a wife and five children in Plymouth; Joseph Manly, and James Drew, Luigia Nana, who has a family of five children in Italy; V. Mazzetti, A. Martinotti, Antone Zanzucchi, Marco Casadeglio, Dan Skero, and Tagio Buzolich. The two who escaped are G. Bologna and Antone Penotti, who has a wife and five children in Italy.

J. F. Wilson. Dentist. Hours 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. Phone—Office, black 44; residence, black 38; Jackson.

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To Whom It

May Concern:

Office of W. H. Greenhalgh, Superintendent of Schools, Amador county, Jackson, Cal. Nov. 25th, 1907.

The board of Education of Amador county, will meet at 10 o'clock, a. m. on Saturday, December 14th, in the office of the Superintendent of Schools, for the purpose of making out and adopting questions to be submitted to the applicants for teachers certificates.

The examination will begin at 9 o'clock, a. m. on Monday, December the 16th, and continue until completed.

On December the 21st the Board will renew certificates, grant recommendations for State Educational Documents, adopt supplementary and Library books, consider excuses presented by absentees from the teachers' Institute held in Sacramento, Oct. 22, 23, 24, 25th, and act upon other matters as may come before the Board.

Respectfully,
W. H. GREENHALGH,
Supt. of Schools, Amador county.

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