

11 MEN PLUNGE TO DEATH DOWN SHAFT

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rant of the fire that roared for its victims in the darkness below. A short, sharp signal to hoist was his first intimation of danger. He reversed his engine. The skip refused to move.

Then began a hurried investigation. The foreman was lowered in another skip and came to the surface to report a fire at the 1100 foot level.

General Manager Goodall ordered his men to approach the burning shaft from the Gopher mine through the side drifts, but it was too late. The smoke by this time had filled every shaft and rescue was impossible.

While the men watched and toiled there came staggering out of the drift connecting the Fremont with the Gopher shaft two men, black with smoke and with staring eyes.

The first one to reach the outside air was besieged by an anxious crowd, for the knowledge of the accident had become quickly known and the fate of all the party was in doubt.

"Where are the rest of the men?" shouted Superintendent Arthur Goodall. "Did any of them escape?"

While he was asking this question another of the three came out of the mine, breathless and delirious.

"Fire! Fire!" was all that he could shout.

Then for the first time the anxious watchers knew of the deadly peril that menaced the missing men as well as the immense property.

The horror-stricken crowd on the surface learned by piece-meal of the accident to the skid and the awful plunge of the ten men below. The survivors told how they had been lowered singing and laughing into the shaft; how of a sudden they shot through a wall of flame and into the suffocating smoke; how the rails gave way on the burning timbers and the skip overturned; then how they crawled, inch by inch and foot by foot, up the incline, gasping and fighting for breath every step of the way. When asked of their companions they shook their heads and pointed below.

Tonight the drifts leading to the burning shafts have been bulk-headed in the hope of smothering the fire. That the presence of the fire was not known until the men had been lowered into the mine is owing to the fact that the draught in the mine is downward. The origin of the fire is unknown.

It is presumed that a candle dropped through the candlestick of some miner when coming on top and it fell on a greasy sill caused by the cable and ignited.

The Fremont and Gopher Consolidated mines are situated in Amador county at New Chicago, about three miles from Sutter Creek. It is a large property, working about 170 men and equipped with a 40-stamp mill.

In every town in Amador county late tonight men and women are gathered in groups eager to hear some cheering news.