

Another Terrible Disaster.

Explosion of Fire Damp and Serious Loss of Life.

While the inside boss at Henry Clay Colliery, near Shonakin, Northumberland Co., Penn., and about three o'clock in the afternoon, was examining some of the inside works with an open lamp, he passed into a portion of the mine marked out, when the flame of the lamp set fire to the gas there accumulated, causing an explosion which blew out the timbers, causing a squeeze of earth and the caving in of the mine at the point of egress, preventing the escape of the men therein employed. At the time of the explosion thirty-five men were in the mine. As soon as the accident occurred the alarm was given, and every effort made to relieve the men inside, and at five o'clock the men outside, risking their own lives in encountering the noxious gasses, succeeded in taking out thirteen men, eight of whom were dead. At six o'clock two more dead bodies had been recovered, and still the efforts of the men were unceasing, reliefs being put on as a portion of the rescuers were worn out with the straining toil.

The body of the inside boss was found lamp in hand, showing that he had met his death almost instantly; and the body of Mr. John Hays, the outside boss, who went into the mine to assist in its inspection, has also been recovered. The body of Drumheiser, the inside boss, was terribly blackened and disfigured.

The work of the men on the outside for the relief of the suffocating men inside was attended with great risk on account of the after-damp; but they worked manfully, though to little purpose, as most of them were past human aid when help came.

As soon as the explosion occurred men were summoned from the adjoining mines. Before dark large numbers of men were present to assist in the work of recovering the bodies and to inquire about the safety of friends employed in the mine, and the most intense excitement prevailed.

A correspondent who visited the scene of the disaster writes: The details of the accident at Henry Clay colliery I find upon arrival are most horrible. I learn that the colliery was generally well managed, but had not been inspected for a year and a half; that it worked sixty-five men on the day shaft, but more on the night, turning out seven or eight thousand tons of coal per month.

The following particulars are from an employe present at the time of the accident. He says the disaster occurred at ten minutes after two o'clock; that Conrad Drumheiser, inside boss, went into an old mine working on waterlevel. Ten minutes or so after an explosion occurred. He must have fired a fire-damp in the old working. The explosion drove the after-damp down the airways from the water level into the slope below, where the men were working, and drove it through every particle of the workings.

The men in this region, not being used to black damp, formed the opinion that it was not sulphur, but kegs of blasting powder that had exploded. They therefore stayed in the works until overcome with black damp, and then started to come up the slope and met the body of after damp and fell senseless, smothering in the slope. The strong men got out and gave the alarm, and others came out and fell senseless at the edge of the slope. John Hays, outside boss, heard the alarm and went to the rescue, but 500 yards from the bottom of the slope fell face downwards in a pool of water and died. A Polander, named Enoch Magruskie, was drowned by his side when going to the rescue. They were the first two brought out dead. The other men got in and brought out four dead. Shortly after two more dead were brought out. Another dead was added. A German was brought out insensible, but, being restored and taken home, he drank a glass of water and died instantly.

There was no cave in of the mine, as first reported, but the explosion drew down the air batteries and abatis, and knocked down the pillar in the bottom of the slope. Four hours after the occurrence air was good in the mine, showing good ventilation, and that the accident resulted from old gas exploding in the disused working.

The scenes about the mine at the hour I write are heart-rending in the extreme. By the dim and flickering light of miners' lamps weeping, sorrow-stricken wives are hunting among the dead and dying lying together on the ground, or bending over the lifeless forms of their husbands, filling the air with their lamentations. Children are crying over their fathers' corpses, and a great, pitying crowd surge about the wagons as they come up at the slope each time to gain the name of the next unfortunate. Women rush up to the cars as they come up, with lamp in hand, and frantically call the names of their loved ones that went down in the mine to-day full of life and vigor. The men brought up, not yet dead, lay shivering upon the ground, while their friends are bending over and laboring hard to restore them. Some, better than the rest, are walking about among the excited assemblage, relating their story of the accident and their recollection of the terrible scenes in the cavern of horror, through which they had just passed. At the time I close my dispatch the work of looking for the bodies still continues and the excitement is unabated. No one appears to know who or how many were in the mine at the time of the explosion, and many more have probably lost their lives than can be ascertained to-night.