

# MINE DISASTER

Gas Explodes in a Rich  
Hill Coal Mine  
Causing 20

Deaths and 30 Injuries  
--Many Other  
Miners

Thought to be Imprisoned  
in the  
Ground.

RICH HILL, Mo., March 30.—An explosion of natural gas occurred in mine No. 6 of the Keith & Perry Coal Company, located about three miles west of the city, near the Rich Hill Gas Company's natural gas well, shortly after twelve o'clock noon yesterday. There are about 100 men employed in this mine, but at the time of the explosion only about thirty were below. Attempts were at once made to rescue the unfortunate men, and eight miners had been brought to the surface alive when a second explosion occurred at 3:30 o'clock, at which time Superintendent George Sweeney and five miners were in the shaft at work, all of whom were more or less burned, but none dangerously.

Another explosion is expected, as it is feared the 300 or 400 kegs of powder in the magazine in the mines may become ignited.

The scene about the mouth of the shaft, where the wives, mothers and relatives of the miners, wild with the agony of suspense over the unknown fate of their loved ones were collected was heartrending. The mines were examined about two weeks ago by Mine Inspector Wolfe and pronounced safe.

At two o'clock this morning a telephone message was received from the mine to the effect that fifteen men had been taken out the mine, fourteen of them alive. Mr. Manville, who is alert and doing all possible, is of the opinion that so long as the men taken out are not all dead it could not have been due to gas but to powder. He holds that gas always burns the oxygen and no one could live under such circumstances.

A reporter called at the residence of the superintendent at eleven o'clock last night and found him propped in a chair with his face and hands bandaged and scarcely able to talk, but he made the following statement:

At just seven minutes after noon I was telephoned that an explosion had occurred at No. 6, which is four miles northwest of town. I went out as soon as possible and found the south cage on which the men always ascend, stuck in the shaft about half way from the bottom with eight men on it.

I went down in a tub lowered with ropes and found them all badly burned and in a frenzy. In fact, they were crazy, some hallooing and others singing. I found it impossible to have this cage hoisted as the timbers were all blown out of position. We finally managed to be hoisted by means of ropes and pulley, in a fainting condition, and it was then ascertained that the north cage could be worked by clearing away some timbers which had been driven through from the south shaft. This was done by sawing them short off. I then called for volunteers to go down with me to see if any of the poor fellows at the bottom could be got out. Robert Bick, George Henry, Charles Smallwood and Mat Dulehand responded.

When we reached the bottom I looked through into the entry, and saw a light, and I asked who was there, and a voice responded: "Gray," and I told him to put out his light. I then asked him to crawl to me, but he was so exhausted that he could not do so, and I reached through the small aperture and dragged him on to the cage. Just as this was done a wind rushed with the velocity of a cyclone up the entry, putting out all our lights but one. This was followed by two loud reports and a seething flame of fire, which came with a deadening roar, completely enveloping us for a length of time which seemed like an age, and shot out the mouth of the shaft, two hundred and forty feet above our heads, and we were all horribly burned, and thought our time had come, but the flames receded as suddenly as they had come, and we had to abandon the attempt to save the others. I yelled to the men on top to hoist away, but it was some time before they got the signal or understood my meaning. The moments thus spent were a living death. I thought they could not hear me and concluded we would have to crawl through the south shaft and undertake to climb out that way. I was just in the act of doing so when I felt the cage move and we ascended about thirty feet, when the cage began descending. I thought the machinery broken and that we were falling to an awful and certain death. Oh! the wail that went up from those men was heartrending and I shall never forget it. The knowledge that at the top was their wives extending their arms ready to clasp and shield them from further danger was maddening and enough to destroy reason. All at once, however, the cage came to a sudden stop and again began responding to the pressure of rope and pulley and we were soon at the top.

A LATER ACCOUNT.

RICH HILL, Mo., March 30.—It was just 12:10 o'clock when a low rumbling noise was heard in mine No. 6, owned by the Keith & Perry Coal Company, four miles from Rich Hill. It was quickly followed by a fearful report which shook the earth for many miles. Had the explosion occurred a few minutes sooner it would have imperiled the lives of over a hundred instead of thirty-five, who were in the shaft. The excitement was as nothing compared with the suspense which prevailed.

Immediate steps were taken to rescue the miners who were imprisoned by the explosion and as soon as it was safe to do so, and the fire resulting from the explosion had been subdued, a rescuing party descended into the shaft. They had scarcely got to work when another explosion occurred and the would-be rescuers narrowly escaped with their lives. One of these was George W. Sweeney, superintendent of the mine, and he was badly burned about the hands and face.

The work of rescuing was thus delayed for many hours. The cries of the imprisoned men could be heard, but they grew fainter and fainter, and by nine o'clock ceased altogether. Thus far five have been taken out dead and fifteen alive. Most of the latter have suffered intensely from the fire and suffocation and their recovery is very doubtful. The dead are: Charles Smith, George May, C. McPherson, Frank Toller, Jordan Smith. The injured are: Joshua Strickle, C. J. Neptune, William Taylor, C. W. Young, R. Mason, Frank Jackson, W. Richards, J. L. Williams, K. Fernando, John Roberts, C. W. Roberts, Arch Marshall, John Lucas, D. C. Jones.

Frank Carr, foreman of the mine, was in it at the time of the explosion, but was not injured. Fifteen now remain in the mine, being in the west end and it is believed that most of them will be taken out dead. The work proceeds very slowly, being attended with great danger.

FAINTED FROM EXHAUSTION.

KANSAS CITY, March 30—The latest re-

ports from Rich Hill, the scene of the dreadful disaster in coal shaft No. 9, in Keith & Perry's coal mine, states that A. L. Kelly, superintendent of the Missouri Pacific mines, who was in charge of shaft 6 after Superintendent Sweeney was burned in the second explosion, worked until 4 o'clock this morning and fainted from sheer exhaustion. He succeeded in getting out twenty men, four dead and sixteen alive, one of whom has since died.

#### TWENTY DEAD.

The latest report at 10 a. m. states twenty miners are dead and thirty injured, with additional explorations yet to be made. Subscriptions are being organized at various points on the lines of roads in this city and state.