

# EIGHT MINERS ENTOMBED

## A CAVE-IN AT THE HAZLEDELL COLLIERY AT CENTRALIA.

THE ACCIDENT WAS CAUSED BY THE ROBBING OF A PILLAR OF COAL LEFT STANDING TO SUPPORT THE ROOF—BEFORE NIGHT ALL BUT TWO OF THE MEN WERE RESCUED.

POTTSVILLE, Penn., Nov. 19.—A cave-in occurred this forenoon at the Hazledell colliery at Centralia, operated by L. A. Riley & Co., whereby eight men were imprisoned in the mine for some hours, and two others were quickly taken out very badly injured. This colliery is situated about two miles from Ashland, and is a very large concern, shipping its product over the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

The two men first rescued were Ira Rothermel and his son from Mount Carmel.

The cave-in was caused by the robbing of a pillar, or column, of coal that was left standing to support the roof. Hazledell and Centralia Collieries are about half a mile apart, and are operated by the one firm, and the breaker proper is called Centralia. These collieries are situated on the Locust Mountain Coal Company's lands, and have been operated for many years, running back to before the war. In consequence there are many miles of old workings in which the pillars have been left standing, and these pillars in the aggregate contain hundreds of thousands of tons of coal. For many years these old workings have laid full of water, but by the cutting of a half-million-dollar tunnel, over a mile long, this water was drained into the Mahanoy Valley, coming out near Ashland.

This freeing of the old works of the accumulated water gave the operators a chance to take out all of the supporting pillars in the abandoned workings of the Hazledell Colliery. It was while engaged in this hazardous work this morning that the accident occurred which imprisoned eight men. They were 300 feet from the surface, and the cave-in is so extensive that a yawning abyss now shows on the surface where before had been a culm bank.

Two other miners working near by managed to escape. The accident is supposed to have been partly due to the accumulation of water from yesterday's heavy storm in old surface breaches. The colliery officials, as well as the owners, who live near by, did all they could to rescue the imprisoned men, but the fall is a large one, and the ground settled so that the work of rescue could not be immediately prosecuted with the vigor usual after such disasters.

Very narrow escapes were made by Ira Rothermel and his son William, who were employed as miners in the Hazledell workings. Both are badly used up, and they tell a wonderful story to an Associated Press reporter. The former had a leg broken and is otherwise injured, while his son is badly battered. They say that shortly before 10 o'clock they fired a rather heavy shot, which started a pillar of coal running and at the same time opened up a large body of water which had accumulated in a breach from yesterday's storm. As the pillar ran and the water forced itself through, it brought the roof with it, and at the same time came in so great a volume that it washed Rothermel and his son 100 yards to the mouth of the drainage tunnel, at which point they were rescued.

The only exit from the part of the workings where the cave-in occurred was at the point where the fall occurred, and, as the mammoth vein is 45 feet thick and about 300 feet from the surface, it was calculated by practical miners that there were 700 feet of coal to be cut through before the men could be reached. This seemed a very great undertaking, but the operators of the colliery and the bosses began the task, and turned the streams of water used in washing the coal into the cave-in with the hope of washing away the barrier which inclosed in a living tomb eight persons. The ablest mining engineers and mine experts were on the ground all day, and after a thorough examination of the workings had been made and the great danger attending the removal of this mass from the inside had been considered it was decided that the hydraulic power was the safest and by far the quickest means of getting at the men.

The work of rescue was under the direction of Superintendent Edward Williams. The correct list of the men who were entombed is as follows:

JOHN KETMAN, Jr., single, driver boy.  
ROBERT STAHLER, miner, wife and two children.  
JOHN RYAN, miner, wife and four children.  
ALLEN HOFFMAN, miner, widower, two children.  
HENRY MARTIN, miner, single.  
FRANK RYAN, door boy, single.  
THOMAS M'DONALD, miner, single.  
A POLANDER, single, name not known.

All lived at Centralia and the deepest gloom prevailed all over the little town.

This gloom was turned to the wildest kind of joy shortly before 4 o'clock by the announcement from the mine that the washing away of coal and dirt had progressed so rapidly that the rescuers had been enabled to communicate with the imprisoned men. The driver boy, Ketman, acting as spokesman, announced that all were uninjured and well and awaiting rescue.

They were shut up in a cave-in and to this fact is due their escape from instant death.

The work of rescuing the men was carried on during the afternoon, and at 4 o'clock an opening had been started: While this work was going on below other men were engaged in the more hazardous undertaking of cutting through the mass and effecting an entrance at the roof of the gangway to where the men were thought to be. This opening was bratticed and timbered as the work progressed, and the bottom was also flanked. As soon as the opening had been cut through John Ryan, uninjured, crawled out, the opening being just large enough for one man to pull through lying prostrate on the planks.

Then one after another of the entombed men crawled out until at nightfall but two remained, John Chapman, Jr., and Robert Stahler, the former being badly injured about the body and the latter having a leg broken. They will, however, be taken out during the night if no accident occurs. To get them out will require the assistance of the rescuers.

Frank Ryan, the door boy, stated to an Associated Press reporter that the entombed men had given up all hope and had laid themselves down to die, anticipating the horrors of death by gradual suffocation or starvation. The men were inclosed in the west gangway of the mammoth vein on the second lift, which was below the water level. Chapman and Stahler were carried by the concussion of the air 100 feet from where they had been working into the gangway, and were thus spared from instant death. They were both covered with muck when found by the six others, and were made as comfortable as was possible while awaiting either death or rescue.

Late this afternoon Ira Rothermel, who, with his son, William, was rescued shortly after the cave-in occurred, died from his injuries. He had a leg broken and was injured internally.