

MINING MATTERS.

Verdict and Comment on the Neilson Mine Disaster.

The slopes at Drifton are working fourteen hours a day and will continue for six or seven weeks until all necessary machinery to repair the Oneida breaker has been made.

Just as a truck load of men were ascending Hazle mines yesterday at noon they discovered two sets of timber out of place, and in such a position that would prevent cars from operating on the east track. The discovery was a timely one and the means of averting a catastrophe which would have resulted at the hoisting of a car of coal, as there would have been no person to notify the engineer of danger.—Hazleton Standard.

Several miners employed in the Cranberry mine, at Hazleton, quit work on Wednesday, fearing a repetition of the disaster at Laurel Hill. An old slope in the Crystal Ridge mine is filled with water and it is feared this will break through at any moment into the Cranberry mine, where a large number of men are employed. At Oakdale colliery (Markle & Co.) a number of miners also refused to blast coal, as they were aware of their close proximity to the line dividing them from an old, abandoned slope filled with water.

The verdict in the Neilson colliery accident is as follows: "We the jury empanelled to hold an inquest over the dead bodies of John Burt, Frank Shukes, Joe Bartoskie, Noah Geary, Ferdinand Ginter, Nicholas Dhonaint, John Yeibel, John Ryan, Patrick Brennan and Wm. Brennan, miners and workman who lost their lives in No. 11, or Red ash vein on the north dip, west gangway, at the Neilson colliery, Saturday morning, April first, 1893, between the hours of 7 and 8 o'clock on said day and morning, find from all the evidence and information gained from twenty odd witnesses that the aforesaid men lost their lives from inhaling smoke caused by a fire in a shanty in the No. 10 vein at the bottom of the shaft, said fire having been caused by the filling of a lamp with torch oil in the hands of John Orbitzkie from a can said to have contained from a half to a gallon of said oil, which by the dangerous custom of pouring or squirting oil from can on the wick of said lamp in his hands when lit, ignited fire in said shanty, and from all the evidence and their existing circumstances believe it was impossible to save their lives."

The Shamokin Daily Herald says: The Neilson mine disaster will ever remain a mystery. The evidence of the witnesses was so conflicting and void of corroborative facts that it is simply impossible to determine positively upon whom rests the responsibility. The only positive fact brought out before the coroner and jury and Mine Inspector Edwards was that John Orbitzkie, a laborer working at the bottom of shaft in No. 1 vein, did go into a shanty a few yards from the shaft, which is cut in the rock with a plank front, the top, bottom and three sides being solid rock, heated by steam, used for drying and shifting clothes, (the place being very wet so that the workmen are sometimes obliged to change their outer garments during the day) and that a box was in said shanty where oil was kept (torch oil) used in a double spouted torch lamp which is placed at the landing to light the miners and working men going into and coming out of said No. 10 vein, the place being so wet that a small lamp will not continue to burn. Neither can they use good miners' oil, must be something that will give a large blaze on account of the continued dripping and splashing of water.

It is said that there is never more than one gallon of this oil kept there at one and the same time and that there was not over a gallon of the oil in the shanty at the time of the fire, from the fact that they take oil down every day when working at noon to keep up the supply.

Now Orbitzkie went in the shanty the first thing in the morning to fill the lamp, while in the act of doing so the fire ignited like a flash. Whether it was caused by the oil or other inflammable matter, such as gas or dry air, is not clear. Orbitzkie says the shanty was very hot when he opened the door and entered to fill his lamp hotter than he ever experienced it before, having been closed from Thursday evening until Saturday morning, as there was no work on Friday.

It has been freely circulated that he poured oil from the can on the burning wick after the lamp had been filled and this caused the explosion, but it has also been proven that this was a customary practice by all working at that particular place from the fact that often the wick would get wet from the continued dripping of water and they were obliged to either squirt or pour oil on to keep the torch burning. But the question here arises, how could the oil explode without burning the man?

Such a thing has never been heard of or is it known or recorded that it could possibly explode without saturating his clothes and burning him. The man was not burned, scorched or hurt in any manner. This fact is in his favor and surrounds the accident with a mystery hard to solve and gives rise to a possibility that there was an explosion of gas of some kind that so quickly enclosed the whole top of the shanty in a flame, which is corroborated by several witnesses that the flame burst out in the top and not in the bottom of the shanty where the fire would certainly be the fiercest had the oil can exploded and the oil box stood, which is naturally saturated with oil from continued use for several years. Therefore the mysterious occurrence of this destructive fire and dreadful calamity will ever remain a matter for theorizing and will never be positively and certainly accounted for.