

## AWFUL!

**Terrible Explosion at the Umpire  
Mines Kills Many Men.**

Brownsville, Pa., Sept. 23—At 9 o'clock this morning, an explosion of gas took place at the Umpire mine, wrecking the pit and killing men outright.

The extent of the accident is not fully known, but enough to see that the explosion is horrible in its details and extensive in its destruction of life.

There are two entries to this mine and both are said to have exploded, and from which seven bodies have been taken out at 2 o'clock, as follows:

William Pritchard, married, James Bennett, senior, and James Bennett, junior, both married.

—Hazlett, colored, married,

John Hager, unmarried,

J. Hall, married,

John Cartwright, married, and has a large family.

The scene which surrounds the pit mouth can be imagined; wives, children and relatives of those known to be dead, and hundreds of anxious and frenzied women waiting for the truth, terrible or joyful as it may happen. At least 30 men known to have been in the mine, are as yet uncounted for. Exploring parties are in the pit, and at work, though it is necessarily slow and very dangerous.

One boy who escaped tells a frightful story of death and terror as he crawled to the air over dead and mangled bodies.

All the doctors from Brownsville with appliances hastily gathered, for relief, are in attendance, and doing what they can, and in instant readiness to do more as the bodies may be fetched to the surface.

Coroner Fitzpatrick hastened to the mine, and is on the spot rendering intelligent assistance.

A message was sent to Mine Inspector Louttit to come at once, but he was absent, at Fayette City, on duty, and the message was repeated there to him. He is probably now at the Umpire mine.

The mine is operated by Snowdon & Co., and is situated one and one-half miles below Brownsville.

Eight bodies have been taken out at 3 o'clock.

# **TERRIBLE MINE EXPLOSION.**

## **Notes of the Disaster**

The cause of the explosion will remain a mystery, but miners who escaped say that Henry Hager, the dead driver, must have entered room 13 with a naked lamp, as his burns indicate that he was in the center of the explosion, and he was found in room 13. The usual danger sign was at the entrance. Why Hager went there when he knew it was dangerous, cannot be explained.

Several miners say that the company knew the mine was dangerous some months ago, and discharged a pit boss, fire boss and two miners for meeting Mine Inspector Henry Louttit at Monongahela, and requesting him to examine the mine. It is said these men have never been reinstated, and one, Whetsell, had a brother in the disaster.

Nelson and Davis met Smith and Whetsell at 10 parting entry, and Smith having a light, they soon reached the air course. There Davis gave way under the strain and excitement, and his hair was found to have turned gray.

One of the curious phases of the disaster was that long after the bodies were recovered, John Barker, colored, was found working away in entry 6, unconscious of the calamity that had befallen his comrades.

The company had employed a competent fire boss, Mr. Farrar. The regular fire boss, John W. Matthews, is sick at the West Penn hospital. This man's duty is to inspect working rooms at 4 o'clock each morning, and Farrar had gone his rounds, marking dangerous places before the men went in. They were especially told to avoid room 13.

The mines had been shut down for several week, and only resumed operations Saturday. It is said that Mine Inspector Louttit, of the First bituminous district, had inspected the mine but a few days ago. The owners deny this. He was at the mine yesterday, and will conduct an investigation today to place the blame. The Coroner has empaneled a jury to hold an inquest to-morrow.

The victims were among the most reputable citizens. Prichard was a member in good standing in the Royal Arcanum. He had been employed in the mine but two days, having left the the Beaumont mine.

Mine Inspector Louttit went yesterday to the scene of the explosion, and is there now. Inspector Louttit will be the principal witness in the case from his expert knowledge of the causes of such explosions and his connection with that mine through his official position. Dr. Smith said the responsibility lay between Inspector Louttit, C. L. Snowden & Co. and the fire and mine foreman. As to these points there are different stories told.

**The Explosion--Funeral--Some Comments on the Mine Law.**  
Special to the Republican

Brownsville, Pa., September 25.—This quiet old town is extremely sad to-day, during the forenoon the body of John Bennett, one of the Umpire victims, was laid to rest. This afternoon hundreds of sad faces can be seen going to perform their last human service to our friend, John Cartwright, many having worked with him in the Umpire, and adjoining mines during other years, came long distances to view the remains of their old dead friend. The Steamer Isaac M. Mason brought up the Normal Royal Arcanum from California, which joined with the Brownsville Council, and marched in a large body over to the Washington County side to attend the funeral of William Pritchard. Poor Will, we've worked beside him many a day, always at work always striving to get something honestly, to provide for his babies, yet never too rushed for self to give a hand to turn a chunk of slate or lift a car that jumped the track. Hundreds attended the services held at the residence up on the Knob, overlooking the Monongahela. The farmers from all the surrounding country turned out in respect to one who was regarded as one of the best citizens of the community. The services were conducted by Elder Robert Wilson; "Nearer my God to Thee" was sang by the audience. It was truly soul inspiring and hope giving to hear that sung rendered. Elder Wilson spoke feelingly of his old time friend, after which the audience joined in "Jesus Lover of my Soul," when the funeral procession started to the burial ground at Low Hill.

William Pritchard was a member of Redstone Council R. A., but owing to the hard times, the miners have had to make a living, he felt unable to keep up his assessment and keep a family of seven children: he decided to give it up last month, as it took more than he could pay, but Collector Greene told Will he was too poor to give it up, on account of his family, and told him to try again, and if he could not raise it, his brothers would help him, and Pritchard tried again; to-day as we look upon seven orphans there is silent joy in our sorrow to know that Will tried again, and provided them with three thousand dollars. Some say lightly when spoken to about insurance "you have to die to win" but how sad to think how many die and don't win. Thank God, though Will Pritchard died, he won.

There are many different explanations as to the cause of the explosion, but from a personal talk with those who are acquainted with all the facts in the case, I feel compelled to say there is only one cause: economy was the cause of the loss of eight human lives on Friday last, at the Umpire Mine. The Coroner's inquest may determine on Tuesday that the Mine Boss, James Broderick, or that Fire Boss, Henry Farrar was to blame. Yet back of all this, the whole story can be summed up in one word, economy.

Last March when Fire Boss Jack Armstrong reported the mine unsafe, the men struck, and Mine Inspector Louttit pronounced the mine as unsafe, and notified the company that it was extremely unsafe. The fire boss, Jack Armstrong, was invited to resign his position a little later, and miners who had requested an examination, soon got their discharges without a reason, given by Supt. Simpson. Mine boss Aquilla Underwood was also got rid of.

Luke Creevy, who is known as a very competent and painstaking man, who was next installed. During his term, everything went along very well, but the time came when there was no loading at the mine, Supt. J. D. Simpson's proverbial economical ways came into play, and Mr. Creevy too went the way in July last.

The mine was to again go in operation on the 13th of this month, with a mine boss from Carnegie in charge: the new boss came, but after an interview with Supt. Simpson, he went away to Carnegie. Before going, however, he told some of the miners that "his certificate ought to entitle him to living wages."

Again the mine stood idle until Saturday, September 17th, just six days before the explosion, when Broderick and Farrar were procured, and the mine put in operation.

Technical questions may be asked these two unfortunate men by mining experts, why thus and so was not done, but these very mine inspectors know it is a common fact, that where a mine boss or fire boss on the Monongahela River tries to have his employers live up to the present mining law, he loses his official head. They also know that the Coal Operator who wishes to run his mine on the basis that the Umpire mine has been on, is safe from the law so long as he has a mine boss or fire boss with a state certificate for a scape goat.

Mine horrors will increase owing to many of our mines becoming old, and gas accumulating in the old workings unless there are radical changes made in the mining laws of this state: to-day they are ineffective as any of our mine inspectors will admit.

Broderick and Farrar cannot be expected to know the Umpire completely in a few days, they are the scapegoats. Someone must be crucified, they are strangers, but Supt. Simpson knew the mine was dangerous, he discharged miners who knew it was dangerous, he would not keep officials under him who wished to prepare against such a horror as Friday's; he was too economical to keep Creevy or the man from Carnegie. He brought men who were strange to that mine, did he explain to them how dangerous Inspector Louttit said it was last March?

JOHN J. FITZPATRICK.



### The Mine Explosion.

Brownsville, Pa., Sept. 27.—The inquiry into the Umpire mine disaster was resumed this afternoon in the opera house, Coroner Smith having driven over from Uniontown in company with Inspector of Mines, Charles Connors.

Luke Creevy, a former mine boss at the Umpire, was again called to the stand. Creevy told how extremely dangerous the mine had been, how the brattices put up to force the air into No. 10 entry, where the gas generated, were broken, and some rotted down, got it so that he considered it safe if the fan was kept running, yet very dangerous if the fan should stop, he was discharged about July 7, 1898, never knew the cause. Creevy after being laid off by Supt. Simpson went into the mine and put up two danger signs, fearing someone would wander near the rooms on 10 entry where the gas was. The company had an anemometer to test the air, but it was broken, he declared he was not impeded by Supt. Simpson, while he was there. In answer to a question put by Edward McKay, of National Executive Board, U. M. W. McCreevy said he did not consider wooden brattice safe in a gaseous mine, they ought to be built of brick or stone.

Alexander Laban was next sworn, and told how the miners would not work last March until Inspector Loutt came and examined the mine, finding it unsafe. The fan being run three or four nights in succession the men went back to work when Luke Creevy, the new boss declared it safe. Andrew Carter a colored miner, told in a graphic way, how while he was bearing-in under a shot of coal, he felt the shock of the explosion, looking out to the mouth of his room, he saw the fire belch through the break-through into the mouth of his room, how in the dark he and his companions groped their way out through the black damp.

Israel Jones, another colored miner, knew nothing of the explosion until his light went out, got out of breath, then started towards the entry, could hear some of the boys groaning and others gasping for breath. Mr. Jones had never read the law governing mines and it had never been read to him by anyone, had brushed the gas out of his room with his coat, because the fire boss, Armstrong, had told him to do so, but did not know it was a criminal act.

Richard Walker who worked in room 22 on entry 9, was at work on Friday morning, first saw the flame pass the mouth of his room down from the head of the entry. After his light went out, he started down the entry in the dark and fell many times, owing to roof coal or slate, having fallen. Once he fell and gave up getting out, but Jake Davis came along and helped to drag him out. Walker did not see any bodies as he was coming out, but could hear them, and felt some as he was trying to crawl out.