

IN THE COAL REGIONS

STORY OF EXPLOSION IN PENNSYLVANIA COLLIERY.

One of the Worst Mine Disasters in the History of the State Ruined the Glorious Tipton-Twenty Nine Lost—Many Injured.

(Special Letter.)

The Christmas season of 1899 will long be remembered by the inhabitants of Fayette county, Pa., as one of sorrow and horror, for it ushered in one of the most appalling colliery disasters in the history of that section of the state. Not since the Mammoth mine disaster in the neighboring county of Westmoreland several years ago, when 116 miners perished by an explosion, has such a tragedy visited that portion of Pennsylvania as that of Saturday at the Brazzell mine of the Blockville Coal Company, near Brownsville. Without the slightest warning an explosion of gas occurred in the Brazzell mine and almost in a twinkling 29 perished and 17 were injured. The Brazzell colliery has been running less than a year, having been opened up on Washington's birthday, 1897, last. The mine is reached by a shaft, 107 feet deep, in which a double cage, or elevator, works, so that when one cage is ascending the other is descending. North of the main shaft and distant 150 feet is the air shaft, also 107 feet deep. Some 10 miners and their helpers descended by the cages in the mine. They had not been long at work in the gloomy chambers beneath when there came a terrific explosion that shook the ground for miles and spread ruin and death within the mine. The cages in the main shaft were reversed, the bottom one being shot to the top of the shaft, where it lodged, and the other one crashing to the bottom, where it also became wedged. The iron roofs on the cages were ripped off and blown over 200 feet. The tippie, which extended from the top of the shaft, was damaged in places and the air shaft was literally torn to pieces, not one timber being left on another.


Wreckage of all kinds was blown out of the main shaft. Dinner pails, miners' lamps and pieces of timber and coal were shot upward to the surface. The bottom of the shaft was choked with wreckage which the explosion had hurled before it. There were splintered coal cars and mangled mules and twisted iron rails. The whole interior of the mine was transformed into a ruin.

The shock of the explosion was sufficient evidence to the miners scattered over a wide territory that a disaster had occurred, and soon the mouth of the shaft was surrounded by a fearful, distracted crowd—the friends and relatives of the imprisoned men. Rescue parties were at once organized and preparations made to enter the colliery. The first person to descend into the mine was the pit boss, William Jones, who slid down a rope in the air shaft. He found the interior a mass of wreckage, with here and there the bodies of the injured strewn around. Volunteers soon joined him and despite the after-damp, which filled the mine and almost suffocated the rescuers, the brave men worked on and succeeded in reaching to the surface 17 men, some in the last stages of exhaustion. One of the rescued was a young lad, Albert Messer, but relief came to him too late. Hardly had he reached the surface when he gave a gasp or two and then fell over dead. His father, too, perished.

Having rescued all those who could be reached through the air shaft entrance, the rescuers then applied themselves to fitting up the main shaft so the work could be carried on through it. After reaching the bottom of this shaft the rescuers found piles of wreckage, which it was necessary to remove before further progress could be made. By this time it became a certainty that all the imprisoned men were dead, as no one could long survive in the deadly after-damp that

rowful work of rescue was going on within the mine, there were other sorrowful scenes witnessed as body after body was being carried to a little blacksmith shop that was used as a morgue. Here the relatives of the dead miners gathered to identify the bodies as they were carried in.

Mike Grocek, a Hungarian, who was rescued through the air shaft, had a peculiar experience. He had been pulled through the mine by Pitt Jones and Michael Dukman and floated on their hands. At the bottom of the shaft one man had to hold him while the other tied a rope about his wrist. It was felt that the sufferer might lose a limb and it was reasoned that one arm gone would not amount to so much as his life. The men at the top were given the signal and the stay was hauled up the 107 feet, his body dangling from side to side of the shaft. He recovered his sense when he struck the pure air, to find himself dangling at the end of the rope, and weakly whispered: "For God's sake, get me out of this." The men had to balance the body before they could catch hold



THE TIPPIE TOWER.

(After Explosion.)

and drag him safely across the brink. This man's arm was powerless when he was set free.

The explosion was caused by a miner's naked lamp, which, experience has shown time and again to be one of the greatest perils in coal mining. The miners carry them in preference to safety lamps because they show more light. Up to last week Tuesday safety lamps were used in the Brazzell colliery, but on that day Pitt Rose Jones issued instructions to the effect that the miners could use naked lights. These instructions were given although it was a well-known fact that there was much gas in the Brazzell mine. The night before the explosion Fire Boss Radcliffe spent the greater part of the time trying to locate the presence of gas. Notwithstanding this the men were allowed to carry naked lamps into the mine, with the awful result noted.


PORTUGAL'S QUEEN.

Goes Among the Plague-Stricken as Doctor and Nurse.

Letters in St. Louis Globe-Democrat.—Queen Amelie, of Portugal, the only crowned head who has acquired by study and bona fide examinations the right to add the letters M. D. to her name, is showing so much courage and sympathy for suffering in connection with the outbreak of the Asiatic plague at Lisbon and Oporto that it is amazing that so little public attention should have been accorded the matter. Most people who have followed the course of this pestilence in Europe are aware that Dr. Pestana, one of the leading physicians of Portugal, succumbed to the disease while engaged in attending to the wants of those afflicted therewith. But what is not known is that this eminent scientist and brilliant physician was nursed to the very last by his Queen in person; by that handsome young Queen who, since the outbreak, had been his principal assistant and lieutenant in combating the plague. The moment that Dr. Pestana discovered that he had caught the malady he devoted himself with preternatural courage and force of will to the duty of recording his own symptoms. How important this was may be gathered from the fact that panic was believed to play a considerable role in bringing about the fatal result. Had this been the case Dr. Pestana would have survived. For he retained the fullest use of his faculties and the utmost composure to the very last, dictating to the Queen a minute diagnosis of his condition, and of his agonizing pains, a diagnosis stated to be of the utmost scientific value. His last words to the Queen, who was weeping by his bedside, were as follows:

"I have now only five minutes to live. The tetanic spasms have returned. Adieu, Madame; I deeply thank your majesty for having honored my deathbed by your presence. Do not approach me, as my breath is dangerous." He then breathed his last in a sort of convulsion. The civilized world, in time gone by, has gone wild with enthusiasm over the courage displayed by Empress Eugenie, by King Humbert, by the late Czar and his wife, and by the late King Alfonso of Spain. It is merely visiting the wards occupied by patients suffering from Asiatic cholera. But it seems to have no words of commendation left for a Queen, who, not content with mere visiting hospitals, actually takes up her position there beside the bedside of the dying, as physician and as nurse, the disease with which the patients thus cared for are afflicted being of an infinitely more repulsive and contagious character than the Asiatic cholera.

Some publishers do right and others the wrong.



A PATHETIC INCIDENT.

(A young girl identifies the body of her brother and kisses his mate.)

Then, overcome by the strain, she becomes insane.)

Filled the mine and frequently forced the rescuers back to the surface. When one shift of rescuers was exhausted another took its place and thus hour after hour and day after day the work of reaching the dead and recovering the bodies was continued. The bodies found near the foot of the shaft were fearfully mangled. One body had been decapitated; several bodies were almost torn in two; many were minus a leg or an arm; one was twisted around one of the timbers of the mine. In one case a foot and an arm had been blown up the main shaft and was found on the ground 60 feet from the entrance to the mine. While this sor-

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