

FIVE MEN BURNED TO DEATH IN PRINCETON MINE HORROR

Explosion and Great Wave of Flame Follow Imperfect Blast of Powder, And Ten Men Are Caught--Two More Will Die, it is Expected--Terrific Force Drives Coal Clear to Head of Shaft.

Journal-News Special Service.

PRINCETON, Ind., March 23.—Five dead and five burned, two so seriously that death seems inevitable, are the results of an explosion of coal dust and firedamp that occurred at 3:35 o'clock Wednesday afternoon in the pit of the Princeton Coal and Mining Co., one-half mile northwest of Princeton.

—The Dead—

EDMUND GEISER, 21, single, son of John Geiser, a miner.

ALBERT GEISER, 23, his brother.

WILLIAM DIGGS, 40, wife and four children.

HUDSON WEATHERLY, 35, wife and two children.

HARRY TAGGART, 40, single.

—The Injured—

George Dill, 55, married, burned on face and body; can not live.

John Dill, 22, his son; will die.

William Jones, 65, married; will recover.

Joe Ward, 55, married, wife and four children; will recover.

General Cole, 55, wife and four children; will recover.

TERRIBLE GUST OF FIRE.

It was at 3:35 o'clock, when part of the miners were out of the shaft, through with their day's work, and when not more than fifteen remained either in the shaft or in the pit, that the explosion occurred. Investigation has not been made concerning the causes, and will not be until the arrival of State Mine Inspector James Epperson some time to-day, but the most reasonable explanation is that the ignition came from a "windy shot." The powder after being rammed and fired, was not sufficient to dislodge a section of coal, but instead spent its force in a great flash of flame that engulfed all the surrounding men and timbers. It was enough to ignite the coal dust and damp, and then came the terrible gust of fire that swept through the entries, with the accompanying shock that sent timbers flying and blew coal and slate to the pithead on the surface, 487 feet from the base.

PARTY TO THE RESCUE.

By the flying coal and the muffled

quake the engineer at the surface, who was then lowering and lifting the cages, knew that there had been an explosion in the mine. Almost immediately the cables of the cages slackened, so powerful was the force of the explosion that it lifted the ascending cage faster than the engine was pulling it.

The engineer lifted the cage with its human freight, there being five miners in it who were coming to the surface. Most of the miners who had come up were still around the pithead, and at once a rescue party was organized. William Remy, Levi Lockhart, Richard Jeffries, and Thomas Smith were the first to make the descent.

But it was a half hour before they could go into the entries where the dead and dying lay. The flames following the explosion spent themselves in less than five minutes, but then followed the afterdamp, as deadly in its power as the other. To overcome this the rescuers built brattice work, or partitions, along the entries, groping their way slowly toward the section where they knew the last of the shift had worked.

HOW COLE SAVED HIMSELF.

Soon they met George Cole, crawling toward the mouth of the pit and moaning in agony. Cole would have died with the rest had he not possessed sufficient presence of mind to fall flat at the first warning of the awful shock and fire and draw his overcoat tightly over his head and face. In this position he outlasted the fury of the flame, but not without terrible scars, for the hot blasts swept his hands and arms, and came near suffocating him.

Next the party found the two Dills side by side, unconscious. They were coming to the mouth together when the blast overtook them.

The work of rescue continued until 6:30 o'clock, when the last dead man was removed from the shaft.

The dead were terribly burned, but death must have been quick with them, for the air was superheated from the explosion of dust and damp, and it is probable that they were suffocated almost instantaneously.

PATHETIC MOMENTS AT MOUTH.

The news of the disaster spread like

wildfire, and within ten minutes dozens of men, women and children of those who worked in the mine or were caught by the deadly fire were around the pithead, asking for the safety of their beloved or bemoaning the certain death that must have overtaken some.

Mrs. George Dill, whose husband was brought up out of the mine dead, was at the shaft while the work of rescue was going on. When she saw the lifeless body of her husband she fainted and was removed to her home. By the death of her husband, four little children are left fatherless. William Biggs, another of the victims, is also survived by a wife and several children.

The force of the explosion was awful. Props and heavy timbers in the vicinity of the explosion were blown out and wrenched and twisted, and particles were carried from the scene, 1100 feet away from the shaft, clear up to the surface of earth. The rescuers say the effect was worse than a cyclone.

LAST OF THE GEISERS.

By the death of Edmund and Albert Geiser, John Geiser loses the last of his sons. Edmund accidentally shot his brother Edgar last fall while the two were in a corn field. Geiser is the elderly man who owns the ground where most of the oil wells are situated, and, during the excitement here, was a much discussed man because of the income which he was expected to receive from the product of two of the best flowing wells in the field.

The cause of the explosion and the responsibility, if any is to be fixed, will be ascertained after State Mine Inspector Epperson arrived. He will make a thorough investigation, as he does of all mine accidents, and will work in conjunction with the coroner.

The Princeton mine belongs to Hubbard & Vogel of Indianapolis, and is operated by William A. Jackson, superintendent. Nine years ago, when it was the Maule mine, there was a similar explosion, in which nine men lost their lives, as the result of a premature explosion. The mine has been improved, and during the busy season employs 250 men.