

19 DIE IN LEITER MINE

Others Still Below And May Have Perished Too.

EXPLOSION A MYSTERIOUS ONE

Portion Of The Mine On Fire, But This Was Sealed Up—Leiter And His Bride On The Scene.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]
Benton, Ill., Jan. 10.—Nineteen men are known to have been killed in the mine of the Zeigler Coal Company, at Zeigler, shortly after midnight this morning by a mysterious explosion.

The Zeigler mine had been closed for weeks on account of a serious fire in the working places last month, when Joseph Leiter, president of the Zeigler Coal Company, came with his bride, formerly Miss Juliette Williams, of Washington, and took charge of the work of extinguishing the flames. So effective was the work of Mr. Leiter and his expert assistants that the fire was confined and sealed in a small portion of the workings. The debris was cleared away and everything put in condition to resume operations.

A small quantity of coal was hoisted yesterday, and it was the intention of the management to put on the usual force of miners the coming week. The night shift of men, 25 or 26 in number, went into the mine at midnight and had been down but a short time when an explosion occurred. Of this number 21 have been gotten out, of whom 19 were dead and 2 alive, one being apparently little hurt. The second is in a serious condition. The other men have not been recovered, and it is not known whether they are dead or alive. Those who have been brought out of the mine are:

Omaz Wallace,	John Kasay,
Joe Richardson,	Arona Gangoff,
Fred Morgan,	Tom Hubbard,
J. O. Evans,	Apostle Andreasoff,
Robert Kerr,	Stephen Franzoff,
John Phillips,	Charles Smothers,
Gale Jones,	Seeler Puckett,
Joe Tate,	(Three unknown.)
James Phillips,	

Smothers and Puckett were natives of Franklin county. Four were negroes and the others foreigners. Their bodies are badly burned, making recognition difficult. Coroner Dye, of Christopher, held an inquest. After hearing the evidence he took an adjournment until 9 o'clock tomorrow, when the jury is expected to return its verdict.

Joseph Husband, an intimate friend of Leiter, and his guest at Zeigler, was overcome by the gases in attempting to recover the bodies, and it was with considerable difficulty he was revived. Mr. Leiter was much affected by the loss of life, and labored unceasingly all day with the relief party.

The explosion was remarkable in that it was not heard or felt by the residents of Zeigler. The only warning that anything had happened was a small gust of black smoke emerging from the shaft. The engineer thereupon summoned assistance. A rescuing party was sent down and the taking out of bodies was begun.

Mr. and Mrs. Leiter are still in Zeigler and have been engaged throughout the day assisting in the rescue work and attending the injured. Mr. Leiter denies a report that he contemplates closing the Zeigler mine or retiring from the management. Speaking of the explosion, he says it is one of the mysteries yet unsolved.

The interior of the mine was not damaged nor were the top works and there is scarcely any trace of the explosion, which proved so deadly to the men working below. The theory advanced by the miners and experienced mining men of this city is that the working places, which had been sealed to confine the fire, had broken and allowed a quantity of black damp to escape. It is asserted that had the explosion occurred from other sources it would be easily discernible.

The Zeigler mine, which is one of the very best equipped and most modern in the State, has had a spectacular career. It was opened in 1903 and two years later a strike was declared by a miners' union and many exciting scenes were experienced in the following two and a half years. In April, 1905, a terrific explosion occurred, in which the lives of 51 men were lost and the mine badly wrecked and rendered idle for several weeks. After that disaster the mine was operated without extraordinary accidents until last night.

"Joe" Leiter's Hard Luck.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

Chicago, Jan. 10.—The explosion in the Zeigler mine this morning is the latest of a series of troubles that have piled on Joseph Leiter since he tried to corner the wheat market in 1897 and failed. His pecuniary losses at that time are estimated at from \$9,000,000 to \$11,000,000.

Mr. Leiter founded the town of Zeigler in 1901, built all the houses and so worded the leases that he became the autocrat of the place. He bought the most expensive mining machinery ever installed in the West, and started under fine auspices to mine a 10-foot vein of coal under a 7,000-acre tract which he owns.

Success was notable till 1904, when a strike took place and bitter hostility between Leiter and the union miners ensued. Leiter barricaded Zeigler and placed armed men from Chicago to guard his property. He decreed the mines should thereafter be worked with nonunion labor, and won a victory over the unions.

In 1905 a mine explosion resulted in the death of many men. This was an expensive disaster for Mr. Leiter, but it did not take the heart out of him. He resumed operations, and a few weeks ago a fire broke out in the mines which threatened for a long time utter destruction. Under Mr. Leiter's leadership the flames finally were conquered, or at least confined, and just as matters were shaping up for a new lease on industrial life at Zeigler the accident of this morning occurred.