

ZEIGLER COAL MINE AGAIN A VAST TOMB

**Nineteen Men Killed There as
the Result of a Mysterious
Explosion.**

DEATH ROLL MAY INCREASE

**Former Disaster in Same Shaft
Is Recalled.**

Benton, Ill., Jan. 10.—Nineteen men are known to have lost their lives in the famous mine of the Zeigler Coal company, at Zeigler, in this county, shortly after midnight as the result of a mysterious explosion. The Zeigler mine had been closed for several weeks on account of a serious fire in the working places early this month when Joseph Leiter, president of the Zeigler Coal company, came down from Chicago with his bride and took charge of the work of extinguishing the flames that threatened the destruction of the valuable property. So effective was the work of Mr. Leiter and his expert fire fighters that the fire was confined and sealed in a small portion of the workings and the debris was cleared away and everything placed in condition to resume operations.

A small quantity was hoisted yesterday and it was the intention of the management to put on the usual force of miners during the coming week.

The night shift of men, twenty or twenty-six in number, went into the mine at midnight and had been down there but a short time when the explosion occurred. Of this number twenty-one have been recovered, nineteen of whom were dead. The other two are alive, one of the number being in apparent good shape, while the second is in a rather serious condition.

THEIR FATE NO KNOWN.

The remainder of the men have not yet been found, and it is not known whether they are dead or alive. Those who have been brought from the mine are Omas Wallace, Joe Richardson, Fred Morgan, J. O. Evans, Robert Kerr, John Phillips, Gale Jones, Joe Tate, James H. Phillips, John Kassey, Arone Ganoff, Tom Hubbard, Apostle Andreasoff, Stephen Ivanoff, Charles Smithers, Seeber Puckett and two unknown.

Of this number only two are natives of Franklin county. These are Puckett and Smothers. Four of the others are negroes, while the remainder were foreigners. Their bodies are badly burned, making recognition difficult.

Coroner Dye, of Christopher, was summoned and held an inquest over the bodies of the nineteen men. After hearing the evidence adjournment was taken until 9 o'clock tomorrow, when the coroner's jury is expected to return its verdict.

The explosion is the most remarkable that ever occurred in the Franklin coal field. In that the explosion was neither heard nor felt by the residents of Zeigler, and the only warning that anything wrong below had happened was a small gust of black smoke emerging from the mine shaft. When this was seen the engineer summoned assistance and men were sent down when it was found that an explosion had occurred and the work of rescuing the bodies was begun.

ASSIST IN RESCUE WORK

Mr. and Mrs. Leiter are still in Zeigler and have been busily engaged throughout the day in the rescue work and attending the injured. Mr. Leiter says he has no idea of the cause and that it is one of the mysteries yet to be solved. The interior of the mine was not damaged, neither was any of the top works and there is scarcely any trace of the explosion which proved so deadly in effect to the men who were working below. The only 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.

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 1902 and two years later a strike was declared by a miners' union and many exciting scenes were experienced during the following two and a half years. In April, 1905, a terrific explosion occurred in which the lives of fifty-one 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 the last night's explosion.