

employed about the foot of the plane inside, near the foot of the shaft. Some of the connections of wire rope on the plane broke and let down the trip of cars. He was caught and crushed so badly that he died the next day from the effects.

Accident No. 29.—Michael Grout, a driver boy, aged 15 years, working in the Avondale shaft, D. L. and W. railroad company. He was driving as usual, when near the top of the plane where he was to stop his trip, he fell under the cars, a part of the train ran over him, and almost severed one of his limbs from his body. He was taken home, and died in about four or five hours from the injuries.

Accident No. 31.—Patrick M'Donough, a driver boy, aged 17 years, working in the mines of the Mocanaqua coal company, Shickshinny, after coupling up his trip, he called to his team to start them, and just as they started, he fell between the loaded cars, and was instantly killed.

Accident No. 4.—May 27, I received the sad news of the West Pittston calamity, where twenty persons lost their lives. The breaker was discovered to be on fire between one and two o'clock P. M., as will be seen by the testimony of various witnesses before the inquest.

I arrived there about 5 P. M., and at that time the whole structure of the old breeder had been entirely consumed, nothing was left except the smouldering ruins. The mouth of the shaft, where a few of the timbers were still burning, was the centre of attraction. It was thronged by thousands moving to and fro in anxiety and suspense.

Not until about 12 o'clock that night, were we able to rescue the first person from the shaft, but continued to get them one after another; sometimes found singly, and others were found in groupes, until about 2 P. M. the next day, when the last person was hoisted; to the astonishment of all he was alive, but died subsequently. Twenty persons perished from inhaling the gases and impure air caused by the burning of the breaker. No second opening for escape had been provided as required by law.

I will here give the testimony as recorded by the coroner's jury and their verdict; also the testimony taken before the inspector of mines and a committee of respectable citizens of Pittston, who were solicited to witness and assist the inspector in this examination. They were one merchant, two mine superintendents and two practical miners.

#### THE INQUEST.

A jury being summoned, a coroner's inquest was held at the town hall of Pittston. Dr. O'Malley acting as coroner. The following testimony was elicited:

*Coroner's inquest.*—Jurors—James Walsh, M. Bolin, S. T. Barret, Morgan Jones, James Fitzpatrick, J. W. Freeman.

James M'Dermott, sworn—I was engineer in charge of the machinery on Saturday at West Pittston shaft; the first I knew of the fire was when Superintendent Kendrick came into the engine house; when the large doors were opened I saw the fire and gave the alarm at the bottom of the shaft; also gave the alarm through the speaking pipe; was in the fan house at 1:05 o'clock, with the superintendent, and all was in good order; don't know the exact time the fire broke out; the engine could be easily disconnected; the superintendent and myself measured the air and found 24,000 cubic feet of air passing through the air; the cracker box was 50 or 60 feet higher than the floor of the engine house; there was no communication of alarm between me and the cracker box; Rolland Gorman oiled the machinery; fire might occur by a hot journal; don't know what the condition

of the air was in the mine; no place to get out but the one; Inspector Williams was in the mine last Thursday; he made no complaint to me; the slope was begun about some eight months ago.

David Harris, sworn.—I am a miner, have worked there sixteen months; stopped work about the 16th of January; was out about three months; was not in the mine at the time of the accident; ventilation is very poor; the slope is 1,152 feet from the bottom of the shaft; the weighmaster at the bottom of the shaft gives signals from the engineer to the men in the mines, (Thomas Phillips is weighmaster,) who came up in the first carriage after getting the signal of danger without passing the signal to the men inside; Richard Clark, footman, came up with Phillips; suppose fifty men in the mine; seven came up with him; there are fourteen chambers, two men in each, and two with four men each; also four drivers and footman, two runners, two boys tending doors, one trackman, one man at the fan, and some others whom I didn't know; four mules and two horses. In his opinion there was opportunity to sink another shaft 150 feet beyond the mouth of the shaft. Work for the improvement of ventilation has been going on. The inspector was in my gangway last Tuesday; I told him the air was very bad; after blasting the smoke remained nearly all day; have not done anything at the new slope for the past three weeks on account of the gas: not more than three in a shift can work the slope.

Thomas Phillips, sworn.—First time I ever worked in the mines was at West Pittston; was weighing coal there on Saturday; I first heard the alarm at the foot; two footmen helped me to push the car of coal on the carriage and hearing the signal pushed it off again; John Jones is the only man who came up with me; I ran to the speaking pipe but could get no answer; told the footman to give four raps, but received no answer; put on my coat and locked my slate and books up in the scales; I went to the foot of the shaft and got on the carriage and went up; I did not go back in the mine that day while the men were at work; did not know what the alarm of danger was; was never informed it was my duty to give the alarm to the men; have worked there about twenty-one days; John Jones was inside boss; he was not there when the rapper struck; think I went up on the third carriage; was weighmaster the first time on the day of the accident; was footman before; I took the place of the man who was either discharged or changed to some other place.

Robert Cox, sworn.—Am a miner; commenced about the 8th of May; have mined coal about eight years; I think the ventilation was very bad; I was driving an air-course, and after I had it done I came out with six men, on account of the bad air; we told the boss about the men having to stop on account of the new air-course; it is the business of the weighmaster to give the alarm.

Edward R. Jones, sworn.—Am a miner; have been such twenty-five years; worked at the West Pittston shaft about ten days; was at the foot when the signal was given, waiting to go up; I saw the fire above while at the bottom of the shaft; I went back about one hundred and fifty yards and called my three friends to come, there was danger; I ran back and got on when the carriage came down; my friends came up on the second carriage after me; the air was good where I worked, but believe the air generally was bad; have been a miner twenty-five years.

Cross-examined by Inspector Williams.—We worked three shifts; four of us in my chamber; don't know of any others who worked three shifts.

Superintendent Kendrick.—The Lehigh Valley company own the mine; C. A. Blake works them; have been superintendent since first of January; my duty is to superintend the general management of the books above and

below ; I think the ventilation was sufficient for the number of men we had to work. There were twenty-eight to thirty men in the morning shift last Saturday ; I employed Phillips ; I gave Frank Keller orders to surrender his position to Phillips, and inform Phillips of his duty ; the duties of the weighmaster is not necessarily to attend alarms or signals, but it is the duty of the footman ; four raps at the bottom is to listen to the speaking tube. Inspector Williams has been all through the mine with me several times, and gave no directions to have whistles at top and bottom of the shaft ; Williams and I measured the air last Thursday, in the passages, and found 11,000 cubic feet per minute. [At this stage of the proceedings Inspector Williams, after having had extended to him the usual courtesies, got on his defence and indulged in the most insinuating remarks, reflecting upon the competency of the coroner and jury, when he was politely requested to leave.]

The inquest adjourned at 1½ o'clock P. M., to meet at the Town hall.

Mr. Kendrick, resumed.—The difference of depth from surface to bottom of shaft and bottom of slope is, the latter is about five yards lower ; they were working to find the basin so as to know where to sink the shaft ; think the mine inspector has been there about three times since last January ; have had charge of mine about ten years ; don't think the ventilation as good as he would like it, but the best they could get.

Inspector Williams, sworn.—I am mine inspector ; I visit the different mines at my convenience ; I was at the West Pittston shaft last Thursday. [Here Williams exhibited a panoramic view of the mine, giving the result of his last visit to the mine, the substance of which was that there were 1,680 cubic feet of air to the square inch per minute.] He stated that he also recommended the shortening of the speaking tube so as to be nearer the footman. He then examined the fan, which was driven very fast, and the upcast air-way very small. He did not know that there was more men than there was air for ; thinks that for twenty men there was sufficient. They have been trying to make improvements in the ventilation ; never knew that the breaker was on fire at one time soon after the Avondale disaster. They were working, in his opinion, under the twenty men clause, in the mine ventilation bill, on the 12th of September ; they were 1,500 feet before the present proprietors had possession ; at the last inspection, January 14, 1871, found the quantity of air very much improved. Mr. Williams had expressed to Supt. Kendrick his approval of the improvements. He denied having told Mr. Kendrick that he counted more than fifteen men in the shanty ; this occurred on the occasion of his visit in May ; said he told Mr. Kendrick that he might work in violation of law ninety-nine years, or he might not ninety-nine hours.

J. R. Gorman.—I was fireman at the breaker on Saturday ; I attend the breaker engine, oil the fan, etc. I stopped the fan as soon as the alarm of fire was sounded, by order of Superintendent Kendrick ; I stopped the fan ; don't know how the fire originated ; think the engine that run the fan occasionally run faster on account of the governor getting out of order.

Richard Clark.—I was footman at the shaft from Thursday till Saturday, at the time of the fire ; his and the weighmaster's duty is to give alarms ; when he heard, I staid at the foot till the next car came down the shaft ; there were seven or eight men at the scales ; Phillips did not go up the shaft till after I did ; no one went back to give the alarm, that I know of ; the fourth carriage was the last I saw come up ; don't know of there being any inside-boss but Mr. Kendrick.

Michael O'Boyle.—I was a laborer in the shaft ; I was in the old works when the fire broke out ; as soon as I heard the alarm I went to the foot, when I saw the fire coming down the shaft ; there were five men with me ; I went back to bring some others, but could not find them ; I went back to the foot and found the car had gone up ; I went up on the last car that took anybody up ; I think the air, where I worked, was good.

John M. Jones.—I am a miner ; have worked there two years ; think the air was good enough in the mines ; I am inside-boss when Mr. Kendrick is not there ; about two years ago they began an air-hole about 200 feet from the shaft, but abandoned it last summer, with the project of sinking a new shaft, and commenced the slope.

Simon Thomas.—I was a miner at the shaft ; have been there for three years ; think there was not sufficient ventilation in the mine ; the superintendent intended to mine up from the west heading towards the north, to sink an air-shaft there ; think that with the requisite force they might have got it completed by this time. They worked a few weeks on the slope during suspension ; I believe that the fire originated by friction of the joints of the fan ; was near the fire when it occurred ; could not work inside on account of gas ; there are usually about forty men inside on the morning shift ; there were more men went out at the time the shift changed than afterward, which was at the time of the fire ; the shift changes about three o'clock ; fire occurred some time between two and three o'clock.

#### VERDICT OF THE INQUEST.

The inquest held by the coroner, Dr. O'Malley, have concluded their labors, and rendered the following verdict :

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, }  
*Luzerne County,* } ss :

An inquest indented and taken at Pittston, in the county of Luzerne, the 30th day of May, A. D. 1871, before me, P. J. O'Malley, coroner of the county aforesaid, upon the view of the bodies of George Cull, Martin Crahan, David Connor, Timothy Walsh, Martin Cooney, Patrick Carden, Thomas Ruane, Patrick Farley, Thomas Prosser, William James, Charles McGinnis, Aaron Smallecombe, Benjamin Jones, David Edwards, Peter Davis, Evan R. Davis, then and there lying dead, upon the oaths of James Walsh, Michael Bolin, S. T. Barrett, Morgan Jones, James Fitzpatrick and J. W. Freeman, good and lawful men of the county aforesaid, who being sworn and affirmed to inquire on the part of the Commonwealth, when, where, how and after what manner the said George Cull, Martin Crahan, David Connor, Timothy Walsh, Martin Cooney, Patrick Carden, Thomas Ruane, Patrick Farley, Thomas Prosser, William James, Charles McGinnis, Aaron Smallecombe, Benjamin Jones, David Edwards, Peter Davis, Evan R. Davis came to their death, do say, upon their oath and affirmation, that the said George Cull, Martin Crahan, David Connor, Timothy Walsh, Martin Cooney, Patrick Carden, Thomas Ruane, Patrick Farley, Thomas Prosser, William James, Charles McGinnis, Aaron Smallecombe, Benjamin Jones, David Edwards, Peter Davis, Evan R. Davis, on the 27th of May, A. D. 1871, at West Pittston, in the county aforesaid, came to their deaths from the effects of impure air, caused by improper ventilation in the West Pittston mine, and from the effects of carbonic acid gas produced by the burning of the breaker in said mine, and that the fire was communicated to the breaker from friction of one of the journals of the fan ; that Blake & Co. commenced operating the West Pittston mines on or about January 1,



1871; and further, that there is but one air passage for fresh air to descend to the mine, and but one passage for the escape of impure air, both of which passages are through a shaft 280 feet in depth, having their out-lets directly under the breaker, and that no work was in progress at the time of the fire, or any contemplated second shaft, tunnel or slope above or below ground for the supply of fresh air to the miners; and further, that repeated attempts to improve the quantity and quality of the air were made by said Blake & Co., and that each and every one of the successive attempts were inadequate for the purpose of proper ventilation, as required by law in an act, entitled "An Act providing for the health and safety of persons employed in coal mines," sections 3 and 7, approved 3d of March, 1870. Furthermore, that there was negligence upon the part of the employees of the company in not keeping the journal of the fan properly oiled; furthermore, that Blake & Co. did have in their employ, working in the mine at one shift and at one time, more than twenty men, and that upon Saturday, May 27, 1871, the said Blake & Co. had in their employ, and engaged in mining and producing coal, upon one shift, and at one time, not less than forty-three men, in violation of the aforesaid act of Assembly.

And furthermore, that Thomas M. Williams, mine inspector for and in the district in which said shaft of Blake & Co. is situated, has visited the said mines since the 1st of January, 1871, at least twice, the last time being May 24, 1871; that he has passed through the mine and inspected the operations and works of said Blake & Co.; that the said T. M. Williams suggested improvements in the ventilation of the mine; and furthermore, the said T. M. Williams was aware of the violation of the aforesaid act of Assembly by Blake & Co., and the said T. M. Williams has not protested against the violation of said act; and furthermore, the said T. M. Williams has failed to perform his office duty in not exercising due diligence to ascertain the number of men engaged at one time in said mine, and that the said T. M. Williams neglected to perform his official duty as required by law in not instituting legal proceedings to restrain the said Blake & Co. from violating the aforesaid act of Assembly.

In witness whereof, as well the aforesaid coroner as the jurors aforesaid, have to this investigation put their hands and seals, on the day and year, and at the place and time first above mentioned.

PETER J. O'MALLEY, *Coroner*  
 JAMES WALSH, *Foreman*.  
 M. BOLIN,  
 JAMES FITZPATRICK,  
 J. W. FREEMAN,  
 MORGAN JONES,  
 T. S. BARRETT.

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#### INSPECTOR OF MINES' EXAMINATION.

The following is the testimony taken at the examination last week by the inspector of mines, Thomas M. Williams, relating to the West Pittson shaft disaster, on May 27, 1871.

Committee appointed by government inspector, Mr. T. M. Williams, to witness any matters brought before the inspector during this examination, Messrs. Thomas Smiles, Israel Watkin, Alfred Heffron, John Reed and Oscar F. Gaines.