

THE AVONDALE CALAMITY.

The Inquest Begun—The Testimony Given Yesterday—Miners Not Present in Force—They are Represented by the Presidents of Their Unions—The Suspicion of Foul Play in the Fire Strengthened by the Evidence.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

SCRANTON, Penn., Sept. 11.—The inquest began at 11 A. M. to-day in Shupp's Hall, Plymouth, Esquires WADHAMS and ENO acting as Coroners. The following is the testimony of to-day:

C. H. Wilson, M. D., sworn: The cause of the death of the men found in the mine was the inhaling of carbonic acid gas, producing asphyxia.

Christopher Savage, sworn: I am familiar with the Avondale Mine, and was a footman in it; I was not at work Monday morning, and was last in the mine on Saturday; there was then a fire in the furnace, which had been kindled on the 2d inst., after the suspension; there was always good air in the mine up to the time of the accident; the flue of the furnace was cut through solid coal and attached to the shaft by a brick-work shaft; it was pretty wet at the time of the fire; the furnaceman in charge at the time commenced on the 2d of the month; there was another man there before the suspension; there was always a general feeling among the men that the shaft might take fire, and, if it did, all would be lost, but no one ever suspected that it would take fire from below; hay was carried loose down the shaft in a car, the stable boss going in the same car; I do not know whether he carried an open light or not; I have been connected with the Avondale Mine from the time of its construction; the Union Mine is immediately below Avondale; I think there would have been little difficulty in making a gangway between the two mines; there was no other means of ventilation, egress or ingress to the Avondale Mine, except the one shaft, which was 230 feet deep; the brettice in the interior was all of wood; there was a stable and tool-house of wood in the mine a short distance from the bottom of the shaft; Evan Hughes, the inside foreman, feared fire from a defect in the flue and some time ago had it repaired. (This witness was examined at great length by several persons, but he was not a miner and had little definite knowledge on the points in dispute.)

Conrad Lee, sworn: "I was the outside foreman of Avondale Mine; Lyman Minnick attended at the head of the shaft on Monday morning; it was his first day in that capacity; I was not present when the fire was discovered; had no idea how it originated; there was no fire about the top of the shaft to have caused it; never knew of a man to go down with hay and have a light with him; I have been down in the mine half a dozen times, and observed matters when down; the wood work in the mine begins at the bottom of the shaft furnace, and was not connected with it by wood; the draft was very strong in the flue; never saw any sparks in it; the fire in the shaft broke out about a quarter before ten A. M.; the fire was kindled in the furnace about half-past six A. M.; two days before work started I heard Evan Hughes, the inside foreman, say he intended to drive a tunnel so as to make a second entrance to the mine, and to take men and mules in and out that way; it would have been nearly done then but for the suspension; there was no up-draft in the carriage-way of the shaft; I considered Hughes and his predecessor careful, prudent, experienced miners; Hughes, however, was not a man of many ideas; one object was apt to engross his attention, whatever it might be; he did not encourage the idea of driving a tunnel through from Avondale to Union mine; he said it would injure his ventilation and bother him with water; I am convinced that every mine should have two openings.

Charles Wilcox, sworn: I was ticket boss of Avondale Mine; I was at the top of the shaft when Palmer Steele went down; I did not see him go down, that is, I did not watch; a number of cars were hoisted from the mine after he went down before the fire was discovered; the first I saw of the fire it was at the head of the flue above the mouth of the shaft; I supposed it came from the new fireman not knowing exactly how to build his fire; the flame shot up very rapidly; no effort was made to extinguish it; we had no time or facilities; there were two large tanks of water two hundred feet distant, used for supplying water to the boiler; they had no hose attachment.

Anson Dunn, sworn: I was in the shaft the morning of the fire; I went down at nine o'clock A. M. to get work; I remained three-quarters of an hour, and saw a number of men down there; several talked with me and said it was a good place to work; I promised to go to work in the mine next morning; I went past the furnace and back in the mine; everything so far as seen was all right; there was no wood in the furnace, it contained simply a mass of coal; in going up the shaft I saw no fire or indication of fire anywhere; I saw no steam or smoke and felt no heat; I think I got out of the mine about forty-five minutes past nine A. M.; I then went home; immediately across the river, just as I got home, I saw the breaker on fire. (This witness was the last person who ascended the shaft prior to the fire.)

Thomas Roney sworn: I was engineer at the Avondale Mine; I know where the furnace was located; it was about ninety feet from the bottom of the shaft; I have assisted in kindling a fire in it; I never heard any fears of it expressed by any one; I know that the brettice was on fire once before; that fire was in the flue-way, and had no connection with the shaft. (Witness was here cross-examined by HENRY J. PHILLIPS, Mining Engineer of the Delaware, Lackawana and Western Coal Company, which developed that there had been trouble between him and the Avondale miners, and they had prohibited him from working in the mine.)

Phillips then asked the witness if he had ever said that if he could not work there, no other d---d bugger should? He denied that he had ever used such expressions. The witness corroborated the previous testimony, that prior to the suspension, Evan Hughes had been engaged in boring a tunnel back so as to make a second passage to the mine, Hughes saying the mine was not safe. Witness and Thomas Morris, one of the killed, had been engaged in the tunnel.

Isaac Thomas, sworn: I worked in the Avondale mine two years; was last in the mine Saturday; I never heard that there was any danger from the furnace, and am certain that if men had had another outlet they would have escaped; the time consumed in erecting the barricade would have sufficed for them to have reached the second outlet before they were suffocated; I believe that the shaft did not take fire from the furnace, and always will; since the fire I have been down in the shaft, and find in the centre the brettice is not burned at all, only blackened; at the bottom it is burned; that occurred from the fire falling from the top; while I am sure that the fire did not originate from the furnace, I am unable to say how it did begin; I have seen currents of air in mines strong enough to carry small pieces of boards, but do not believe that the currents in Avondale could have carried a piece of burning board the distance from the furnace to the air-way; I never knew of any fire in the brettice; that fire spoken of by the previous witness was in the cross-way; as soon as it occurred, the Company took down the wood brettice and put up one of brick.

Thomas E. Davies, sworn: I worked in the Avondale shaft ten months, and am familiar with it; I don't believe that the fire began from the furnace, but it must have originated near the tunnel, as it is burnt there more than anywhere else; I believe something was thrown on the brettice; I believe it was set on fire; I feel positively certain it could not have originated from the furnace; I have seen men in the flue, between the air-way and the furnace, after a fire had been kindled; the current is strong enough to carry sparks from the furnace to the air-way; but I am sure those sparks could not have set fire to the brettice in the air-way, even if sparks had been so carried.

Alex. Weir, sworn: I was engineer of the mine some time ago; I told Hughes there was danger of fire in the shaft, my reason being that when I went down to pack pumps I was troubled by the heat, especially on the air-way side.

Geo. Morgan, sworn: I have been connected with mining since I was 10 years of age; speaking as an expert, I believe that every mine should have two openings to be safe; I was among the first to go down the Avondale shaft after the fire; the top of the brettice is burned completely, but from seventy-five feet below to thirty feet of the bottom, it was not burned at all; but below it was; I do not believe that the fire originated in the bottom; if it had, it would have been burned all the way up; I did not notice inside of the brettice, but am certain that the fire began a long way from the bottom; the guides along the side of the brettice, after three or four lengths from top, show no sign of fire whatever; at the bottom, again, they are burned; I believe this fire at the bottom was kindled by the burning debris falling from above; I have been in this valley, as a

miner, eleven years, I know of many mines operated as the Avondale is; far too many, and I remember one other shaft that was burned—Buttonwood Shaft Mine, years ago, but no lives were then lost.

At this point a question was asked, to which MORGAN answered that he supposed it was intended to condemn the system of working in mines with only one outlet, in which he heartily agreed. HENRY W. EVANS, who was acting as mouthpiece for the miners, then said that that was just what miners intended to condemn. They know that to work in a mine with one outlet was dangerous, and had known it all these years; but they must work in them or starve, and they intended on this occasion to show precisely to what perils they are exposed by the one-outlet system. This speech was followed by an outburst of applause by the miners present, which was promptly suppressed by the Magistrate.

Thomas Thomas, sworn: I have been a miner for thirty years; I am sure that a one-shaft mine, especially with a wooden building over its mouth, is extremely dangerous; I have had many conversations with old miners concerning such places, and it was always agreed that in case of fire not a man would come out alive; in the case of Avondale I do not believe that the fire originated from the furnace; it was too distant.

At this point the inquest was adjourned till Tuesday next at 9 A. M. It has been agreed that some one of the miners shall conduct the examination of the witnesses, which will greatly expedite future proceedings. The following circular has been issued by the Relief Committee:

PLYMOUTH, Penn., Sept. 11, 1869.

The Relief Committee appointed during the disaster at Avondale met last evening at the First National Bank, Plymouth, and organized permanently by electing E. C. WADHAMS President, H. GAYLORD, Treasurer, and W. LANISON Secretary.

A Committee of seven persons was appointed to look after and supply the immediate wants of the afflicted, to furnish them their requirements for at least one week, to take a census of the families of the unfortunates, and to report their action at the meeting to be held Monday evening, and also to devise a system for an equitable distribution of funds and other contributions.

It is requested that persons into whose hands contributions are placed will forward the same to H. GAYLORD, at the First National Bank of Plymouth.

(Signed)

E. C. WADHAMS,

President of Committee.

Services in the Churches of Scranton Yesterday—Bitter Feeling of the Miners Unabated—The Firing of the Shaft Fully Believed—National Enmity Excluded from the Motives to the Crime.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

SCRANTON, Penn., Sept. 12.—In the various churches of this city, reference was made to-day to the Avondale calamity by the ministers, and especially by those of that section called Hyde Park, where the miners reside. Some of the discourses were of great power, deeply moving the listeners. This being the first Sabbath since the catastrophe, the churches were fully attended, and the audiences very attentive.

There is little subsidence of the feeling among the miners concerning the disaster, and the new theory developed by the testimony is discussed with vehemence, and the probability that the incendiarism will be proved is eagerly canvassed.

The bitterness of the miners is the natural result of seeing one hundred and eight of their comrades brought dead from the fatal shaft, and they have said things in their wrath that cooler judgment will not justify, nor do they justify them. It is generally sincerely believed that the shaft was fired, but no miner is so unjust now as to charge the crime upon any nationality. Nor is it even supposed that the person committing the horrible act intended to accomplish the death of a single miner, but only to frighten them, and stop the working of the mine for an indefinite period. The Welsh miners, especially the leading men, do not admit the possibility of such depravity as would be required to fire the shaft, with the knowledge that the result would be the death of every human being in the mine. Aerimonious feeling exists and always has between the Welsh and other nationalities, but it has never produced any outrage of consequence upon either person or property, and the nationality that suffered almost exclusively by the disaster is ready now to admit that it is not likely that the first outbreak of vengeful feelings would have been of such a diabolical character. That the shaft was fired they believe, but not with the intention to take life.

The evidence to be taken on Tuesday or the succeeding days will include that of several intelligent and experienced miners and persons connected in various capacities with the mines, which will be interesting and important. The arrangements now made will effect the taking of pertinent testimony rapidly, and thus clear the case of a mass of verbiage that threatened to bury it. At best the inquest promises to be protracted.

The Relief Fund—Amounts Received by the Plymouth Treasurer.

PLYMOUTH, Penn., Sept. 12.—Subscriptions for the relief of the Avondale sufferers has begun to reach the Treasurer, HENDERSON GAYLORD, at the First National Bank, Plymouth. The following have been received up to Saturday night:

Samuel Bonnell, Jr., New-York.....	\$100
Frishmuth & Co., Philadelphia.....	100
A. T. McClintock, Wilkesbarre, Penn.....	100
Mrs. Mallaby, Garrison's, N. Y.....	10
F. L. Dubois, Chelsea, Mass.....	5
W. H. Post, Yonkers, N. Y.....	30
National Stock Exchange, New-York.....	500
A New-York gentleman.....	20
W. G. Fargo, of Buffalo, N. Y.....	100
Samuel Cary, New-York.....	20
Second National Bank, for citizens of Scranton.....	1,000
Citizens of Bloomsburg, Penn., by Cashier Tustin.....	400
Total amount thus far received.....	\$3,385