

THE AVONDALE CALAMITY.

Adjourned Session of the Inquest—Further Important Testimony.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

SCRANTON, Penn., Sept. 14.—An adjourned session of the inquest began this morning at 10 o'clock. Even fewer persons were in attendance than on Saturday, there being never more than 100 in the hall. The miners were represented by E. L. MERRIMAN, and the Company by A. McCLINTOCK, and the examination was conducted exclusively by them. The affair from beginning to end was merely legal routine, eliciting no feeling whatever. The Company made no effort to prove incendiarism but confined the examination to show that their mines were managed with care. Where witnesses spoke of the origin of the fire, it was spontaneous or drawn out by cross-examination.

Daniel W. Evans, an experienced miner, deposed: Have been in Avondale shaft since the fire; in my opinion the fire originated from the flue, caused by a spark coming from the furnace; had there been another opening in the mine the men would have escaped.

Cross-examined—Never worked in Avondale; believe the furnace-boards were not far enough from furnace; they were not more than 139 feet by measurement; think fire originated near the bottom; within fifty feet or less there is not a piece of brattice left unburned, but it is burned in part all way from the bottom to the top; I reason that more burned at bottom because falling *débris* made greater fire there; some of the buntings were not burned at all all the way through the brattice one thickness; inside one burned completely out; examined shaft particularly on Saturday; never saw the shaft on fire before; never was in an Avondale mine before the fire.

Charles F. Ingham: Have been an engineer for thirty-five years; have been connected with mining engineering some years; have put up several breakers in this valley; know of one case, Buttonwood mine, where there was a fire which originated from furnace, and not at bottom of shaft; it fire so originating would not necessarily ignite the brattice at the bottom. It would be likely to ignite at the top; would consider that rather a matter of chance. No theory can be established on this point in the case of the Avondale mine. There was sufficient oxygen in the mine to feed the fire at the bottom; water in a small stream conveys air to the fire and feeds it; in the case of a separate air-shaft entering the mine men could escape even in a mine where the shaft was choked by fire; ventilation in parts of a mine would probably be better than ordinary mining with one shaft.

Cross-examined—Never examined Cottonwood Shaft after the fire; all I know of that is conjecture and hearsay; don't know of more than half a dozen mines ventilated by fans in Wyoming and Lackawanna Valleys; they are ventilated by furnace so far as I know; always heard of Avondale as a first-class work; know of many mines like that with breaker over the mouth and with but one opening. If in Avondale mine there had been a separate air-shaft there would have probably been a furnace of some kind at the bottom, or a small apparatus called a lightning-bug, the fire would have been so small as not to interfere with the escape of the men, but had then been a regular furnace, there would have still been danger even with the two openings; that the men would not escape in case of accident unless it was removed, but they could easily have done that.

Thomas Broderick, sworn: I carry on coal works; am interested in the Union mine, which adjoins Avondale; my partner and myself had a conversation with reference to making a passage between the owners of Avondale to cut a passage between the two mines, but it was never done; a buttonwood shaft took fire from the furnace about two hundred feet from the bottom; it had fifty or sixty feet of brick just above the bottom and then the brattice began.

Cross-examined.—If the owners of Avondale Mine apprehended that cutting a passage through into the Union Mine would flood their mine with water from the old McFarland Mine, it would have been an insufferable objection to cutting it. Until lately the furnace was the usual means of ventilation, but in new works fans are now used; I considered Avondale a first-class work; I consider a fire beginning at the bottom of a shaft likely to jump and leave the centre of the brattice unburnt, but there is no certainty about where it caught; it is as likely to take from the furnace, 150 feet up, as at the bottom; but coal fire would not have ignited the brattice far up; if I had been operating Avondale Mine I would have considered sloping the tunnel preferable to an opening into a neighboring mine, but the mouth of the tunnel being covered by the breaker, it would not have been effectual as a means of escape; I never heard of an accident like that of Avondale in an anthracite region before.

D. W. Evans recalled—I examined furnace in Avondale mine Saturday; found several large pieces of charred oak wood on the bars of the furnace, and many small pieces there also; witness exhibited one large piece of such wood to jury.

John Mitchell sworn: A mine with one opening is not safe; wood burning in a furnace 125 feet from the brattice the shaft can be fired from it, and most likely near the top, just as a chimney always takes fire at the top; sparks can be carried 500 feet by the draft, and have vitality enough left to ignite combustible materials they may then lodge upon.

Lewis Merrifield, sworn—I have been down Avondale shaft since the fire; I believe that fire caught from the furnace; I think about fifteen or twenty feet from the bottom; about eighteen feet was burned completely; above the brattice was not burned.

Benjamin Jones, sworn—I am a miner; I have been in Avondale shaft since fire, which I believe to have been caused by the furnace; I believe the fire was burning inside the brattice for some time before it was noticed at the top.

John Albrighter, sworn: I am one of the owners of Union mine; I had a conversation with Evan Hughes, inside foreman of Avondale mine, in reference to cutting a passage between the two mines, and I told Mr. Hughes that every soul must perish in those mines in case of fire; Hugh made no reply; this occurred two months ago; I believe if a passageway had been cut all in the Avondale would have been saved; I do not know that Avondale was higher than the old McFarland mine; in case it was lower Avondale would have been flooded by cutting through; judged it was 300 feet between the two mines.

Witnesses were here called by A. T. McClintock, counsel for Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Company.

Jenkins B. Jones sworn: Am inside foreman of Mill Creek Mine; have been engaged in mining many years; I went down in the Avondale Mine after the fire; the three bodies found were in the east gangway, near the base; the two inside the car were lying on top, showing they had died suddenly; the smoke and sulphur must have spread through the mine very rapidly; I examined the shaft, particularly the middle of the brattice going down and the upcast coming up, and found the guides in the middle way more burned than the others; the brattice in the upcast shaft was burned down thirty or forty feet, then a piece left sixty or seventy feet, and then bottom burned; I believe a current of air kept up some time after the fire began, and therefore that the fire began near top of shaft; I think the bodies of the dead show such to be the case; I cannot believe the fire originated from the furnace; if it had the men would have had more time to shut themselves in.

Cross-examined—As a matter of opinion, am positive the fire did not originate from the furnace, it might have commenced near the tunnel and might have been fired, but do not say that it was; Avondale was considered first-class work, preferable to many mines because it had no explosive gasses.

Benjamin Hughes, sworn: Am general inside foreman of D. & W. Railroad Company; have directed of the inside working of all their mines; placed EVAN HUGHES, my brother, in charge of Avondale; I regarded that as secure as any mine could be with one opening; the ventilation was excellent; I had work in progress for making a second opening by the tunnel; had there been no suspension, within eight months from now it would have been completed.

Other witnesses were examined.

At the close of the examination of witnesses the jury retired, and at 10:30 P. M. returned the following verdict:

That the said PALMER STEELE and others came to their deaths in the Avondale mines; that the cause of their death was the exhaustion of atmospheric air or a prevalence of sulphuric and carbonic acid gases in the said Avondale mines, caused by the burning of the head-house and breaker at said mine on the 6th day of September, thereby destroying the air-courses leading from the mine through the shaft; that the fire originated from the furnace in the mines taking effect on the wooden brattice in the up cast air-course leading from the bottom of the shaft to the lead house. The jury regard the present system of mining in a large number of mines now working by shafts as insecure and unsafe to the miners, and would strongly recommend, in all cases where practicable, two places for ingress and egress and a more perfect ventilation; thereby rendering greater security to the life of the miners under any similar accident.