

FIRE-DAMP ACCIDENTS

Two Explosions in One Day in Pennsylvania Mines.

Three Miners Fatally Burned in the Pine Brook Shaft, Scranton.

Seven Shockingly Burned and Bruised in Hampton Mine, Hyde Park.

Naked Lamps and Ignorant Miners the First and Second Causes.

The Mine Inspector Goes Through the Legal Farce of Investigating.

From Our Own Correspondent.

SCRANTON, Penn., Friday, April 26, 1872.

This city was once more thrown into intense excitement this morning. The news of another fire-damp explosion at the Pine Brook Colliery spread with the rapidity of lightning. This colliery is considered the most dangerous, so far as sulphur is concerned, in the anthracite region, and the frequency of explosions sustains the opinion. This morning HENRY DAVIES, the fire-boss, went his usual rounds, and discovered the red and treacherous substance completely covering the roof of a new chamber lying directly under the Shoplaudrow, on Mifflin-avenue, in the heart of the city. DAVIES thoroughly inspected the rest of the mine, his safety-lamp protecting him from explosion, and afterward ascended to notify the miners who were waiting for orders. Those employed in close proximity to the new chamber were told either to wait until MORGAN BOWEN, the inside boss, arrived, or go home for the day. It seems that DAVIES' orders were disobeyed. Five men descended the shaft and proceeded to the new chamber, four carrying safety-lamps, and one a naked lamp lighted and hooked on his cap. This man remained in the gangway, while the rest were "whipping out" the sulphur. Had he extinguished his light, there would have been no accident to record, but the moment that the "whipped-out" sulphur from the new chamber came in contact with his naked lamp, a fearful and disastrous explosion ensued. No one was killed outright, but three of the five were so terribly burned that they are hourly expected to die. THOMAS O'HARA, THOMAS ALLEN and LARRY KARMEN, miners, were frightfully burned on the face, back and hands. HENRY STRONG and DENNIS NELSON, laborers, luckily escaped with slight injury.

Mine Inspector P. BLEWITT held an investigation, according to the requirements of the Ventilation act. Such investigations have never yet amounted to anything more than a legal formality to place the fact on the State records. No verdict is rendered, and suggestions are hardly ever made to remedy defective legislation.

It appears that the men in the Pine Brook shaft were not thoroughly-experienced miners. They belong to the class who toward the end of the suspension last year went to work despite the intimidation of the miners, and thus broke up the suspension. They were employed then in the Briggs shaft, which, with the Pine Brook shaft, is owned by the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company, JOSEPH H. SCRANTON, President, and were in the party led by WILLIAM WALKER SCRANTON, son of the President, from the Briggs shaft to their homes under protection of the military when the riot in which two Welsh miners were shot by one KEARNS occurred. They were removed to the Pine Brook shaft, as it was not deemed safe for them to remain at the Briggs Mine, and the Company desiring to keep the men who had done so much for them. But the removal has been more fatal than the enmity of the miners could possibly have been, for the Pine Brook shaft is so dangerous that only first-class miners should enter it; and these comparatively unskilled men have melted away before fire-damp and other destructive agencies, mainly through their heedlessness and disregard of instructions of mining bosses, until half of them are in their graves or maimed for life.

E. R. W.

The New York Times

Published: April 27, 1872

Copyright © The New York Times