

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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THE LATE DISASTER.

So fully has the press, daily and weekly, entered into details of the explosion at the Allan Shaft, that it is scarcely necessary that the Record say much other than what may be desirable for future reference.

The accident occurred shortly before 6 o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, 23rd inst.

At that hour the night shift was on duty. The number of men who had gone down, according to the number of safety lamps given out, was 96. Of this number nine got out alive, leaving a death roll of eighty-seven.

Up to the time of writing any opinion expressed as to the immediate cause of the calamity is wholly conjectural. Something, possibly, may yet be discovered which will give an inkling as to the promoting cause, and, yet, the possibility, perhaps we could say probably, is—as was the case in the explosion of 1880—that no definite, and fully acceptable, reason shall be forthcoming. The general opinion at the time of the 1880 explosion, was that it originated in the south side of the mine, where a number of men had been instructed to go and remove a drum not in use. It is presumed that some overhardy workman unscrewed the top of his lamp to get it relighted, or for another purpose. At that time the lamps were not "securely" locked, and at that time, also, the law in reference to pipes, matches, and tobacco was not, it is feared, rigorously carried out. Indeed the Record is assured by one who worked in the Foord Pit, previous to and up to the time of the explosion, that there were, on not rare occasions, violations of the law, or instructions. It is doubtful if, in 1880, special rules were in vogue at any of the collieries. The explosion of that year is responsible for the securing of many needed amendments to the Coal Mines Regulation Act. As in the late disaster, so in the explosion of 1880, no damage, of any nature, was done to the surface plant. There was no indication whatever on the surface of the devastation created underground. Fire followed the 1880 explosion, and after all inlets of air had been securely closed, a connection was made with the East River, and the mine flooded. An attempt was made in the late eighties to recover the mine, and to work the under part of the seam by a system known as the "umbrella" roof. From some reason—the point is a debatable one—the attempt, we dare not say ended in failure, was abandoned. Different reasons are assigned for the abandonment.

The damage done in the late disaster is reparable without any great expense, and the delay is not expected to be serious.

On the 23rd inst., and succeeding days, there was no lack of volunteers to aid in rescue work. A dislocation of some kind at the bottom of the shaft interfered with the proper working of the cage for a time. A number of men, nine in all, working in the 500 and 900 lifts, were taken up in the cage before the bottom of the shaft was put in order. These were the only men who escaped. Some declare that there was tremendous force to the explosion. Possibly, but the fact remains that it was not any noise or concussion that caused the men in the upper lifts to conclude that something unusual had occurred. No entrance could be made by way of the second shaft, as it was the uptake or outlet for the air, and of course at the time was charged with deadly gases.

Draeger men from Cape Breton were to hand in remarkably short time, ready to assist in any work that might be required of them. Mr. Tonge, of the Dominion Coal Co., and the ever ready T. J. Brown, were at the pit head all the way from Cape Breton within twelve hours after the explosion. These were followed closely by mining experts from far and near, and by miners from the collieries in the county. Indeed some of the officials of neighboring mines, accompanied by practical miners, were on the spot before many in the community had become fully aware that so terrible a thing had happened.

Deputy Inspector of Mines Gray was on the spot at six o'clock, as were all the mining and engineering staff of the Acadia Coal Co., with Mr. Prudhomme, General Manager, to advise and render encouragement. Malcolm Beaton, Malcolm Blue and Harry Coll, the three of them formerly superintendents of the colliery, were leaders of the various squads engaged in rescue and first exploratory work. As for helpers there were more volunteers than work or places at the times could be found for.

As has been characteristic of nearly all the great and lesser mine explosions in Nova Scotia, there were witnessed none of the distressing, heartrending scenes which the papers have described as following similar catastrophes in some other lands. The fortitude, the grave and appealing composure of the relatives of those imprisoned in the mine, was most remarkable. Each heart knew its own bitterness, and wisely, heroically, and of course unselfishly, forbore to add, by giving way to wailing expressions of agony, to the bitterness in the hearts of the others, in similar case. There was none of that piercing wailing which is contagious, and whose effect is confusing and dispiriting. Of the volunteers it may be truly said that they well maintained the best traditions, the grand reputation for fine heroism which has ever been accorded to the men of Nova Scotia, a reputation of "aye ready" when and where duty and danger call.

MINE VENTILATION.

Commenting on the late disaster the Eastern Chronicle devotes much space to that most difficult subject, "Ventilation of Mines." While the Record may hold opinions not quite in consonance with