

SUFFOCATED IN A MINE.

THREE MEN KILLED BY WHITE DAMP IN A PENNSYLVANIA COLLIERY.

SHENANDOAH, Penn., July 27.—This place was convulsed to-day by the startling announcement that three of its most prominent citizens had been overcome and suffocated by what is known to miners as "white damp." For a period of a year or more the Thomas Coal Company's colliery has been poorly ventilated and the miners have continually complained of it. Men who work in the mine were compelled to leave it before they had done a fair day's work. It had been charged that the existence of damp in the mine was because two locomotives are used to convey the coal through the main gangways. These engines generate a very poisonous gas, which, added to that emanating from decaying timbers, stagnant water, &c., goes to form white damp, which, in other words, is carbonic oxide. The gas is of such a character that men enter it unknowingly, and when it is strong they are knocked senseless, and unable to help themselves. Death ensues in a short period if they are not removed from where it exists.

The Mine Inspector was to have stopped the colliery in question to-day if the gas caused trouble. In order to escape this, the Superintendent of the colliery, Jonathan Wasley resolved to make an attempt to improve the air. He accordingly held a consultation with John Reese, District Superintendent, who agreed to do all he could toward improving the condition of the mine. Mr. Wasley entertained the idea that the cause of impure air lay in the fact that an abandoned portion of the mine was not properly cut off. The day before this part of the mine had been cut off from the rest by putting a brattice across an airway leading to it from the slope. The two men, in company with Frank Wilman, decided to examine this old working, and accordingly descended at 11 o'clock last night. They failed to return to their homes, and in the morning their families, fearful that something had happened, informed Mine Inspector Gay of the occurrence. This gentleman proceeded to the point where they had entered, and, in company with a half dozen miners who had come out to work, determined to make a descent. By this time the news had spread rapidly, and about 2,000 persons were gathered on the spot.

The mine inspector, with his crew, descended, but had not gone down more than 30 yards when he was overcome, and he cried for help. He was taken to the surface in an insensible condition. People continued to arrive at the scene by hundreds, and the greatest excitement prevailed. The Inspector was speedily driven home, and proper restoratives applied. Another crowd of men attempted a descent, but two of their number being overcome, they were compelled to return with them. Several small fans were placed at the mouth of the opening, in the hope of breaking the treacherous gas, but this plan proved fruitless. While the fans were in operation, a gang of 50 workmen made an attempt to go down the hole. One-half of them were taken up insensible. They were stretched upon the ground, and a dozen physicians did all in their power to resuscitate them. The men were resuscitated gradually, but even at the present writing a majority of them are on the sick-list. A stream of water was next forced down the outlet, in the hope of removing the gas, but this also failed to serve the desired purpose. Fully 4,000 people were on the spot now, and the excitement continued unabated. Every mine boss and coal Superintendent for miles around was on hand. There was a conflict of ideas as to the best mode of rescue, and no progress was made until after dinner. The general belief was that the three men were dead, although a few persons claimed they were still alive. Pipes were next connected to the large fan at the slope-house, but before this was done a gang of workmen decided that, if the brattice which had been put up the day before in the slope were torn away, it would ventilate the portion of the mine in which the three men were. This was done, and, after allowing ample time to pass to change the air current, a body of men, headed by Col. D. P. Brown, descended. They were compelled to return unsuccessful.

They again went down, this time with better success. The three men were found. This was at 1 o'clock, 13 hours after the unfortunates went down. They lay with their faces to the ground in close proximity to each other. All three were dead. They were brought up, and the physicians on hand said that death had occurred almost instantaneously. The men were bloated, and their faces presented a darkish-brown hue. A shout of despair rent the air when the large crowd saw the unfortunate men. They were immediately conveyed to their homes. The feelings of their families, all of whom are large, on seeing them, can be better imagined than described. All three belonged to the Masonic order, were highly respected, and their loss will be deeply felt by the community. They will be interred Thursday morning. Thousands are visiting the scene of disaster. The general opinion is that the men perished soon after entering the mine.