

The Hidden Treasure Mine Fire.

In the Press of last week was a brief account of the fire at the Hidden Treasure mine. Placer county, where two miners lost their lives and a number of others had very narrow escapes. Concerning this fire the Auburn Republican says:

The cars which bring the gravel out of the Hidden Treasure mine at Sunny South are hauled back into the long tunnel by a horse. About 1 o'clock last Friday afternoon as the animal was drawing a train of empty cars into the mine, he proceeded only a few hundred yards, when he stopped, and sniffing the air refused to proceed. It was with the greatest difficulty that his driver urged him forward as far as the blacksmith shop, which is in the tunnel about 5700 feet from the entrance. Before he reached the forge the driver discovered that something was wrong with the air, and he told the blacksmith, Forrest Brown, that something must be on fire. About 75 feet below the forge—that is, toward the mouth of the tunnel—is a shaft which leads up into the air drift above. Mr. Brown hastened to this shaft, and when he ascended he found the timbers in the air tunnel on fire and could hear the loud roaring of the flames. The fire was undoubtedly caused by sparks which had gone through the flue leading from the forge to the air tunnel to conduct away the gas. The fire shut off the current and the mine immediately began to fill with gas and foul air. Mr. Brown quickly gave the alarm to the miners. There were about 70 men in the mine, only 15 of whom were above the forge. Eight of these 15 and all the others who were below the forge escaped from the tunnel without much difficulty, although many of them were greatly exhausted before they reached the open air. One of them, John Bowering, better known since 1850 among miners as "Yank," unconcernedly started to walk out of the tunnel, but he fell on the way and died almost as soon as his companions carried him outside.

There were now seven men remaining in the mine above or beyond the blacksmith shop—six Chinese and a white man named William Rogers. Several men at once volunteered to go to their rescue, and the party consisted of Supt. Harold Power, Winfield Davies, John Kelley, J. B. Thomas, Robert McKavohnie, Charles Halstead and a Chinaman. As they proceeded into the tunnel, one by one they were overpowered and fell unconscious. Power, Davies and Kelley managed to reach a point within 60 feet of where they knew the miners were, but they could not see them and were unable to give an alarm before they themselves fell exhausted.

There was now a large number of excited men and women at the entrance to the tunnel, and as the first rescuing party did not return, others were formed and ventured in to save, if possible, those who were already in the mine. None, however, were successful, and nearly every man was overpowered by the foul air before he had proceeded far underground. At one time during the afternoon there were 30 men lying on the dump—all exhausted, and some of them unconscious after their efforts to penetrate the deadly air in the tunnel. The women worked hard in reviving the men, and had it not been for their efforts it is probable that several of the men would have died.

At last a party of three, Patrick and Thomas Halligan and Charles Middleton, entered the mine. This was Patrick Halligan's third trip, but the three succeeded in forcing their way to a point 60 feet above the forge. There they found the dead body of Robert McKatchnie. He had

fallen with his face in the ditch at the side of the track and had been drowned. He leaves a wife and four children in Michigan Bluff. The three men were unable to proceed any further, and returned to the eager people outside with the report that those in the mine must have perished.

During the three or four hours when what has been related occurred, most of the first rescuing party were lying unconscious where they had been overcome. It seems, however, that the foul air confined itself to the main tunnel and did not penetrate the gangways where Rogers and the six Chinese were at work. At last Rogers took some loaded cars down to the main track and then discovered the condition of the air. Believing that there was a fire somewhere, he ran back for the Chinese and they quickly made up a train of empty cars and hastened to escape from their peril. They found Power and his party on the way and carried them into a gangway, where they regained consciousness. The Chinese then pushed out the cars carrying Harold Power, W. Davies, John Kelly and four Chinese. On the way they picked up J. B. Thomas, who was lying insensible across the track. The joy of the anxious throng who waited, expecting that these men were dead, knew no bounds when they found that they were safe.

It was after 5 o'clock when the last man emerged from the tunnel. The fire in the upper drift gradually died out, and a thorough examination shows that the actual damage to the property is only nominal, as the timbers were burned for a distance of only 70 feet, and the loss will not exceed \$200 or \$300 at the most. But if the loss of time be counted, the accident has cost the owners a much larger sum. Repairs have been made, and work was resumed in the mine on Monday morning.

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