

# AS A LAST RESORT.

## A BURNING MINE IN PENNSYLVANIA NOW BEING FLOODED.

SCRANTON, Penn., Oct. 5.—The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company has determined to flood the burning mine at Olyphant, and water is rushing down the shaft at the rate of 13,000 gallons per minute. Flooding is the very last extremity even in the case of a burning mine, and is never resorted to until all other efforts to extinguish the fire have failed or prove unavailing. It is estimated that in the present case it will take at least six months to effectually flood No. 2 Colliery and pump the water out again, and as the mine was the principal industry of the thriving borough of Olyphant the people of that place are greatly depressed over the misfortune that has befallen them. The loss to the company and its employes will be enormous. Six hundred men are thrown out of work by the fire in the mine, and at least a thousand persons in all are thus deprived of the opportunity of earning their daily bread.

When the mine was in working operation it turned out 1,300 tons of prepared coal every day through its two breakers, the Eddy Creek Shaft and No. 2 Shaft. These shafts are situated 1,000 feet apart in a ravine on the right and left banks of Eddy Creek, and owing to the more favorable location of No. 2 the torrent of water with which it is hoped to flood an excavation of 400 acres averaging six feet to the height of the vein, rushes into that deep, dark receptacle. The shaft is 402 feet in depth, and as one stands on the edge of it and listens to the deafening roar of the foaming water that plunges in sixteen feet lower down, through a sluiceway, and then tumbles to the bottom, he is impressed as by some awful mystery that makes its presence felt, but hides its majesty from human eye. The width of the shaft into which this volume of water is poured gave opportunity for the lowering and hoisting of the carriage containing workmen until recently, but this experiment has since been considered dangerous.

The foreman in charge of the mine, Mr. John T. Mooney, a bright, intelligent, and active young man, says it was a thrilling sight for those who were lowered down the shaft to a depth of 100 feet to see the white, foaming torrent rushing past them and plunging with terrific force and a mighty roar to the bottom of the shaft, a depth of 402 feet. The location of the fire is in a fallen tract of about 30 acres on rising ground exactly 4,000 feet in a straight line from the mouth of the shaft, or a mile and a half by road. The burning vein is on a level of ninety-two feet higher than the bottom of the shaft, and it will be about the last portion of the mine that can be reached by the water. The manner of determining that the fire has been extinguished will be by means of a water indicator thrust into the shaft, and showing the height to which the water has risen. A comparison of this with the mine surveys will tell when it is time to call a halt on the swift and noisy river that is now rushing into the shaft.

The water is taken from Eddy Creek and the Lackawanna River. Eddy Creek is an uncertain stream flowing down from the Moosic Mountain range. In Summer it is an insignificant thread of water, but in rainy seasons it rises swiftly and pours a torrent into the Lackawanna, to which it is tributary. Four pumps force water from the Lackawanna through four pipes a distance of 250 feet. They discharge their contents into a large wooden sluiceway 600 feet long, and in this a considerable stream flows to reinforce the Eddy Creek at a short distance from the shaft. The combined volume is carried into the shaft through a subterranean passage about thirty feet from the surface, and the current flows on day and night to its allotted task. Of the 600 men who were working in the mine when it was in full operation, about twenty now find employment attending to the engines and pumping machinery that are used to force water into the shaft. It is thought that the mine itself accumulates water almost as rapidly as it is poured in, and this will greatly assist the work of flooding.

The first indication of the accident which led to the present costly undertaking was on the 21st of August, when a fall of roof occurred at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. On the day following the company's General Mine Superintendent, A. B. Nicoll, led in a party of experienced and reliable men to ascertain the extent of the damage done. While holding their lamps above their heads at a certain point to make a close examination their lights came in contact with a large volume of firedamp and there was an explosion which shook the mine and burned Mr. Nicoll and his men so badly that all, with the exception of one man, have since died of their injuries. By a supreme exercise of heroism Mr. Nicoll, who was one of the most fearless men in the mining regions, reached the foot of the shaft, bringing his men with him, while the clothing hung in burning shreds from their charred bodies, and all were hoisted to the top. The fatal firedamp had done its work, however, and four brave men died. The mine pumps were stopped Sept. 17, and the company's machinist, Mr. Christmas, was directed to provide machinery at once for pumping water into the mine. The fire is generating great volumes of sulphur, and the fans will be kept running until the water has risen so high that they can no longer be operated.

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