DISASTER AT PRIMERO DUE TO EXPLOSION OF FIRE DAMP

Total Number of Victims Is Placed at Seventy-Nine

Marvelous Escape of One Man From the Shock and Burns of the Explosion

Primero, Colo., Feb. 1.—Yesterday's disaster in "main" mine of the Colorado Fuel and Iron company, which claimed a toll of at least seventy-nine men, was caused by an explosion of fire damp, according to a survivor of the catastrophe of Jan. 29, 1907, in the same mine in which twenty-four lives were lost. The same authority holds that the explosion was caused by the ignition of the gas from a flame originating probably through the carelessness of some miner in direct violation of mine rules, either through the crimping of a cap for a fuse, or the lighting of a match surreptitiously carried into the workings.

Officials refuse to give out any statement regarding the probable cause, claiming that it cannot be determined until the workings have been cleared and a thorough investigation made. However they admit that some violation of mine rules may be found to be responsible for the disaster. The Primero mine is equipped with the most modern appliances; each miner carries a safety lamp and all are searched for matches before they are allowed to enter the workings.

At 9 o'clock tonight the situation in the workings continued unchanged. Relief work was being pushed by frequent changes of shifts, the rescuing party having reached entry No. 12 A., about seven-eighths of a mile from the mouth.

A check of the bodies recovered tonight reveals that forty-seven have been removed, leaving a total of thirty-two still in the workings.

Tonight a large force of men was put to work digging graves in the cemeteries of Trinidad and tomorrow the bodies recovered will be taken to Trinidad for burial. Nine Japanese miners recovered will be buried in the Catholic cemetery. Three large drays have been transformed into temporary hearses for use tomorrow to convey the bodies from the train to the cemeteries. A total of seventy coffins have been brought to Primero today and to-

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SOLE SURVIVOR OF DISASTER IS BROUGHT TO PUEBLO

With his face, chest and hands so badly burned that his nationality could not be told at first, a negro who was the only survivor of the terrible mine disaster at Primero, was brought to the Minnequa hospital last night. The negro is suffering from concussion of the brain in addition to serious burns, but probably will recover. He is unable to talk coherently or even to give his name.

When the man was brought into the hospital, Dr. Baker thought that he was an Italian. He attempted to talk to the man in that language and it was not until the patient was stripped of his charred clothing that it was discovered that he was a negro. All efforts to obtain a coherent story from him were unavailing. He simply moaned and cursed and often lapsed into unconsciousness. He is showing signs of returning consciousness, however, and as the burns which he received are not of a fatal nature, his recovery is anticipated.

The man who passed through the terrible ordeal in which almost a hundred other human beings lost their lives, is of powerful build, so powerful that the shock which killed many instantly only rendered him unconscious. Within his unconscious brain it is believed lies the story of how the accident occurred, but it may be days before he is able to talk or tell the world the story of the underground horror. It is possible that when his faculties return he may not be able to remember the scenes which occurred during the few moments of consciousness, before he sank into insensibility.

Everything that science can suggest is being done for the unfortunate man, but the pain from his burns penetrate even his unconscious brain and he mutters and curses in incoherent sentences. Every effort has been made to ascertain whether he is talking about the accident, but so far he has said nothing which indicates that he has the faintest idea of his condition or what caused it. Dr. Baker repeatedly tried to ascertain his name, but failed. The negro could not understand a question sufficiently to reply "yes" or "no."

The man's burns are confined to the upper portion of his body and his face. It is a miracle that he did not inhale the flames and perish miserably like his companions. His face is almost charred, and his hands, arms and chest are blistered. Despite these injuries, however, it is altogether likely that he will live to tell the story of his survival.

Dr. R. W. Corwin, chief surgeon of the Colorado Fuel and Iron company, is at Primero, assisting in caring for the women and children, many of whom are in a deplorable condition as a result of the accident. Dr. Corwin telegraphed last night that thirty-nine bodies had been recovered.

POSTAL BANK IS DEBATED IN SENATE

Washington, Feb. 1.—The postal savings bank bill was debated at length in the senate today and consideration of the measure will be resumed tomorrow.

Senator Carter asked for an agreement that when the vote on it should be taken it should be by ayes and noes. The request met such vigorous opposition from Senators Bacon and Gallinger that it was withdrawn. The senators objected, declaring the manner of the vote should be determined when the bill was reached.

Senators Bacon and Cummins presented amendments to the provision regulating the deposit of postal savings funds and Mr. Cummins spoke in explanation of his suggestions, which provided for the deposit of the money in commercial banks in the towns and cities in which postal banks are located.

He said that if his plan were adopted the local postmasters would be prepared at all times to meet demands for the withdrawal of funds and would not be compelled to procure funds from Washington.

Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Gallinger, Senator Carter said the Philippine islands had not been included in the bill because they had their own postal savings system, while Porto Rico, Alaska and the canal zone, having no such system, had been embraced within its provisions. Mr. Gallinger still insisted that in any general measure of the kind the Philippines should be included.