

THE ARIZONA DISASTER.

MORE PEOPLE THAN REPORTED BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN DROWNED.

PRESCOTT, Arizona, Feb. 23.—No definite news has yet reached here of the loss of life or the damage caused by the break yesterday of the Walnut Grove dam. Arthur Allen, formerly in the enterprise, and John McDonald, owner of the Blue Dick mine, have just returned from the Dozoris Divide, fourteen miles south of the town, from where a view of the dam could be had. With their powerful glasses the break in the stonework of the dam was plainly seen. The break is sloped to the eastward, leaving the impression that the main break was on the east side.

There can be no estimate of the loss of life or property yet, but the latter will reach into millions, while the loss of life will without doubt be great, as many of the families were living near the stream in the narrow cañons. The confirmation of the news of the loss of the big dam has heightened the excitement, and more definite news is now anxiously awaited, but as the wires are now down near Prescott Junction, it is hardly probable that any additional information will be received to-night.

Not the slightest doubt had been entertained of the safety of the dam which gave way yesterday, and numerous houses had been erected by miners at various places along the course of the stream. These were uplifted by the raging waters as though they had been corks, and floated down stream until they were dashed to pieces.

The first intimation of the disaster was a sound resembling thunder, and at the same instant a perpendicular wall of water, fully fifty feet high, came rushing down the narrow valley with almost incredible speed. Fortunately there were comparatively few people living near the bottom of the hillsides, and of these a large number were warned by the awful sound and escaped to higher ground.

The valley widens above Wickenburg and much of the town lies upon the lowlands close to the course of the stream, and it is almost certain that the vast body of water which rushed out of the reservoir has carried away many houses at that place. It is believed here that fully as many people were drowned there as immediately below the dam.

The ruined dam is cut from the top almost to the bottom, as though a section had been dragged out, and the water above is only a few feet deep. Heavy rains have fallen for several days, and Friday night it was apparent that the water in the lake was approaching the danger line. The rain continued throughout the night, and early yesterday morning the water rose to the top of the dam and cut a small passage near the centre, which rapidly widened and deepened as the water poured over it, until in less than twenty minutes the little stream had become a roaring cataract.

The storage company is blamed for not having provided a sufficient outlet for the water in times of danger. The only way of letting off water was through the flume, and this afforded no appreciable relief. This is the first of the great storage reservoirs projected in the Territory, and it is believed that yesterday's disaster will operate to discourage the construction of similar dams.

A courier who brought telegrams for the owners of the Walnut Grove Dam notifying them of their loss arrived about 8 o'clock last night, and left immediately after daylight this morning. He could give but few particulars further than to report the number of the missing, five bodies having been recovered and identified when he left. The distance to the storage dam from Prescott by the shortest trail is forty miles, while the service dam, where employes were situated, is fifteen miles further down the stream. Immediately on the receipt of the news here Adj. Gen. O'Neil started for the scene of the disaster with two surgeons to care for the sufferers and to superintend the burial of the dead. A representative of the *Journal Miner*, a local paper, accompanied the party and will send a special courier with particulars, but it will take twenty-four hours or longer to make the round trip.

Yesterday's courier came from the lower dam, and, as the road does not come by the upper dam, it was only surmised that it had given away on account of the immense quantity of water. A more hopeful feeling exists this evening on account of no news being received direct that the upper dam has given way. It is now hoped that the reservoir is still intact, and that the flood was caused by opening one of the gates to relieve it from the threatening danger.

The New York Times

Published: February 24, 1890

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