

Terrible Accident in a Pop Factory.

A Soda Fountain Bursts, Killing One Man Instantly.

We have to record a frightful accident which occurred yesterday forenoon in Bilton's Soda Water and Pop Works, Dundas street, resulting in the instantaneous death of one of the employes, a young man named Robert Cooper. It appears Mr. J. E. Baker, fruiterer, had sent one of his copper fountains to be refilled in the usual manner. The process is to fill the fountain to its full capacity with pure water, and then force into it one third of the whole bulk of carbonic acid gas, thus forming the compound which is so grateful to the thirsty palate in warm weather. It was a part of Cooper's duties to fill and wash the vessels, and in the usual course of business he yesterday filled Mr. Baker's fountain and rolled it to the middle of the floor from whence it was to be lifted into the wagon. It was a jar-shaped utensil, and stood upon its bottom. While it was in this position Cooper and another young man named Welch approached it and were about to lift it by the handles. Cooper had no sooner bent over it than the fountain exploded with a terrific noise, rising like a rocket and striking against the ceiling with a force which broke through the lathing and shook the whole building. In its upward flight, horrible to relate, it struck young Cooper in the chest and under the chin, and bore him bodily up with it. His head struck against the ceiling about three feet distant, and also broke the plaster. He fell lifeless. His companion Welch was forced by the outlying gas across the floor amongst a lot of bottles, and narrowly escaped the same fate. Dr. Flock was at once sent for, and appeared five minutes after the accident, but too late to be of service. The body was carefully removed to Mr. Bilton's dining room, overhead, and coroner Moore notified. In the afternoon, at four o'clock, an inquest was held.

The following composed the jury:—Messrs. John White, A. Loughrey, E. Rowland, Thos. Whiskard, Robert Boyd, Henry Taylor, W. McCormick, Wm. Flock, R. Thompson, T. W. Smart, K. Miller, Edward Hill.

Mr. E. Rowland was chosen foreman.

R. Bilton, sworn,—Deposed that deceased was in his employment, his duty being to wash and charge the bottles with water and gas; the fountain in question held eight gallons of water; six gallons of water were pumped in and sufficient gas to make it flow; it is the charger's duty to measure the quantity of water each time. This fountain is one of the largest size; it belongs to J. E. Baker, Richmond street. We have had it filled three or four times a week in warm weather for the past four years; he has two of them, and when one is empty he sends it to be refilled while using out of the other; he got them new. I have known this fountain to leak before, but not to burst. It had been repaired twice by Mr. Hobs.

Coroner—Do you think they are as safe after being repaired as before.

Witness—I never knew one to be repaired before. I only know one other copper fountain in this neighborhood, and that gave out the first time I used it. My brother has some large ones in Hamilton, but they always stood out.

Coroner—Have you any means of knowing what pressure these will stand?

Witness—No—I have no pressure gauge.

Coroner—Then it is really more by guess than otherwise that the pressure is regulated?

Witness—No, it is regulated by a pump. I should think the pressure this fountain would have would be 60 lbs. to the square inch.

Coroner—Did you ever tell Mr. Baker this was a weak fountain?

Witness—The first time it burst I told him of it, and asked him if it could be fixed, and he said yes, to take it to Hobs's. This was about six weeks ago, before this boy came. I never thought much of copper fountains. I have examined this fountain, and find that the broken part shows a long crack which had been soldered over. When it was mended, the pressure came against the copper bottom, and not against the solder. The fountain is one of the best made, I have ever seen. I think it was bought in Philadelphia, and cost \$60. It weighs about sixty pounds.

Wm. Hobs, sworn—Deposed that he repaired the fountain in question. Repairing such things in his ordinary business; the fountain did not leak after it was mended. I think, he continued, if there had been a leak this time there would have been no explosion. The acid eats into copper and rots it. I do not think the solder had any thing to do with the explosion. If it had been sold it would have been the same.

Coroner—Have you any idea how much pressure to the inch that ought to bear?

Witness—Well, no - I should judge from my practice that that copper would bear about 150 lbs to the square inch.

Coroner—Did the solder make it as sound as before; wouldn't a new bottom be better?

Witness—Oh, well, I had no orders to do that. I had perfect faith in the solder.

Mr. White—That part must have given away where it was soldered.

Witness—Yes, that's where the leak was.

Mr. White—The solder don't appear to have had a very good hold to it along the side there.

Witness—Some of Mr. Bilton's men brought it to me, and said it was to be soldered.

Benjamin Dixon, sworn—Deposed that he repaired the fountain three weeks ago. It then looked rather rough around the bottom part. I was told it did not leak at the part where the solder had been put on. I formed the opinion that it was pretty rough soldering. It would be safe to solder if it had been properly cleaned and tinned with acid. Rosin soldering don't take so good a hold on copper as the acid. I don't understand anything about the regulation of pressures. I noticed rosin on the bottom when I looked at it, but whoever did it may have used some acid.

J. E. Baker, sworn—I owned the fountain in question; this is the third or fourth summer it has been in use, it first leaked about the 24th May. I ordered Bilton to get it fixed. I gave no directions how it should be repaired; I thought they would know best.

To Mr. Rowland—I consider the copper fountains quite as strong as the iron ones. I have seen many of these in New York, and never knew one of them to explode before.

To Mr. Boyd—This fountain cost \$50.

The Coroner—And what does an iron one cost?

Witness—About \$24 or \$26.

W. Welch, sworn—Deposed that he worked with deceased, and after he had charged the fountain and wheeled it on the floor to be lifted into the wagon, I offered to give him a lift with it. As we were about to take hold it exploded and took him up to the ceiling, and knocked me over amongst a lot of ginger beer bottles. I once took the fountain to be repaired; gave no instructions what should be done with it. I thought the man understood his business.

To a juror—I have been employed in the factory about four years.

Dr. Flock gave evidence as to the cause of death, and the condition of the body.

The following verdict was then rendered:—

VERDICT.

That Robert Cooper came to his death in consequence of the explosion of a fountain belonging to Mr. John Baker, while being filled at the establishment of Mr. Bilton; that in the opinion of this jury some means should be taken to ascertain the resisting power of all fountains, and that as soon as fountains become leaky, as this one appears to have been for some weeks past, they should be condemned.

It should be stated that the machinery and appliances of Mr. Bilton still remain intact, and no part of his works suffered by, or had any connection with, the explosion.

—Cut and Bohemian glass are the materials for bird cages now.