

As against an average without extras of 14s. 8d. per man per day.

83. That another statement put in by the mine-manager shows the respective earnings of "A," the most successful pair of coal-miners in each mine, and also the earnings of "B," the pair who received the lowest wages per fortnight's work from the 24th March, 1890, to the 28th June, 1890. From this the Commissioners extract the following figures :—

Wallsend	....	A, highest average, £20	3s. 4d. ; B, lowest average, £9	12s. 5d.
Coal-pit Heath		"	£17	8s. 9d. " £10
Brunner	....	"	£17	17s. 1d. " £13

General average of highest .... £18 9s. 9d. ; of lowest £11 8s. 3d.

Which, on being reduced to a daily average per man, gives for the highest 15s. 5d., and for the lowest 9s. 6d., free of broken time or expense for blasting materials.

84. That the possible wages of the miners referred to in the Commission for the reasons already given cannot be definitely ascertained, but would evidently exceed the actual wages by a considerable amount, assuming the hewers to be active men, working ordinary hours, skilful at their work, unencumbered with surplus labour in the places, free from useless and unfair restrictions, and able and willing to make the best use of their time both for their employers and themselves.

85. That it is alleged by Mr. Kennedy, managing director, and by Mr. Bishop, the mine-manager, that at such pillar-work, which involves much less pick-work, good men could readily make £1 5s. or £1 10s. per day at the rates recently paid, and, whilst this view may be somewhat exaggerated, it is evident to the Commissioners that, whilst making remarkably good wages, the miners have not made the best use of their time and opportunities for their own interests.

86. That at Denniston, where the work is in solid coal at 2s. 10d. per ton unscreened, the Commissioners received from the mine-manager of the Westport Company's mines a statement of the amounts earned by four different parties working at "top-and-bottom" coal for the six weeks ending the 7th June, 1890, and which shows that two of these parties, working in different places, made an average of £1 2s. 4½d. per man per day, another £1 1s. 8d., and the fourth 19s. 4d.

87. That before leaving the subject of wages, both in its principal aspect as a part of the inquiry enjoined on the Commissioners and in its direct bearing on the subject of interruptions to the working of the mines in the Grey Valley, the Commissioners would fall short of their duty if they did not refer to their impressions of the conduct of the men affected by these questions.

88. That the Commissioners therefore have the honour to report that, in view of the amounts actually earned, or which could have been earned, by the coal-hewers in these mines, they are surprised at the support accorded them during the lock-out, both by the men on daily wages at the mines and by the wharf-labourers with whom they were associated, and which could result in nothing short of direct loss and privation to themselves, and that the loyalty and devotion of those who were thus associated in a labour union comprising such discordant elements was in itself admirable, though perhaps mistaken, and indicative of a staunchness which was worthy of a better cause.

89. That the same aspects were visible during the strike, both on the part of the same men and on the part of the coal-hewers, when they jointly abandoned lucrative employment on the arbitrary instructions of the leaders of the Maritime Council in Dunedin, without apparently having any clear idea of the immediate reasons for the issue of such instructions.

90. That the strike so far as it concerned the Grey Valley was, in our opinion, an exercise of despotic power on the part of the leaders of the Maritime Council, and a wanton sacrifice of the Grey Valley Coal Company and its employes, inasmuch as it involved an interruption to the trade and work just at the time the seamen's struggle in New Zealand on behalf of others in Australia had proved itself to be already a defeated cause, the "Brunner," which was the occasion of the strike, being amongst the last of the Union Steamship Company's steamers which resumed its usual traffic, the larger steamers on the more important lines having been previously re-established on their usual lines.