265. Could you not make that portion of the mine safe in case of accident? It was really a man-trap in case of accident, because you had no other airway for the poisonous gases?—The men could get along by the return. We came up there, but there is no other way of driving the impure air out.

266. Still, the mine was full of gas, and, according to your evidence, the moment the explosion occurred everybody in it must have perished?—I think that once the explosion occurred, even if there had been a second outlet, the poisonous gas would have risen, and the men would have had no chance.

267. If the Brunner mine had had 1,000 men engaged in it they would certainly have perished. Is that not so?—If such a large number had been employed, there would probably have been other arrangements, and the mine would have been divided into districts. The force would probably then have expended itself in one district. The number of men employed was not large for one district—say, sixty men.

268. There were sixty-five men killed. Say, for instance, that you took a shaft out at Coolgardie, do you not think that would have purified the air, in case of accident? Say you used fire instead of a fan?—The ventilation would have been less, and it would not have been so good. The poisonous gasses would still have filled the return, even up to Coolgardie, and would have travelled up the hill and destroyed the Coolgardie Mine itself.

269. Say you sank a shaft from the top of the hill, would that have been any better?—And worked with a fan into the mine?

270. Yes?—I fancy the bad air would still have risen.

271. But do you not think the shaft would get rid of the bad air much quicker?—You mean the poisonous gases resulting from the explosion.

272. Yes?—In such a case it would not do so.

273. And there would be a greater chance for the men?—It would depend altogether on where the shaft was placed.

274. You could not place it in such a position as to prevent the gas reaching the men?—I do not see that it would make much difference.

275. Supposing you had an air-shaft, would you not get rid of the poisonous gasses very quickly?—The only difference would be that the gas might be drawn up the shaft.

276. That would leave your air free to come through from either side in the ordinary current?—If it were a shaft instead of a roadway and if there was no blow-out of stoppings, it would depend altogether upon the resistance of the stoppings; but I think most of them would be knocked down when the explosion occurred.

277. Then it all depends upon how long the good air took to get through?—Precisely.

278. How long is it since you went along this return-airway?—I think it was in July last I went through it.

279. Could you go straight through, or did you have to climb up the shaft?—I had to climb up a shaft.

280. For what distance?—It is a small shaft about 30ft. high, but it was more than was required by the Act. Instead of the 6,500 cubic feet of air per minute required, it had 12,000ft. per minute.

281. You said something about a 30ft. shaft in the return-airway. If you were getting out of the mine, would you have to climb that shaft?—You would require to walk up an iron ladder.

282. An iron ladder was provided?—There was one.

283. What was the width of the shaft?—I cannot say from memory.

284. About 6ft. x 3ft.?—It was a round shaft, I think about 4ft. or 5ft. in diameter.

285. Would that assist the passage of the air, or did it not stop it?—It would tend to stop it, but the moderate volume of air it would catch would be very little. I could not insist on it being made larger, because there was more than the required quantity of air passing in through the airway.

286. But if this return-airway had been a good deal larger, facilities for the escape of the men would have been better?—Undoubtedly.

287. In your opinion, as an expert, is that return-airway sufficiently large for the mine?—I could not have compelled them to make it larger.

288. Leaving aside the question of what you could have compelled them to do, I am asking for your opinion as an expert, and outside of your duties as an inspector, would you consider that airway was sufficiently large for the mine?—I think for a mine like this, which was to be exhausted in a year or two, the return-airway was reasonably good. It is a small airway, there is no doubt about that, but a fair return. It is not as if they had to travel it every day. There was the second outlet, and a big current circulating through it, much more than I could have demanded.

289. Looking at it from a common-sense point of view, as an expert, your opinion is that it was large enough?—It would have been better larger, but still there was more air passing through than the Act demanded.

290. You are only basing your statement on the fact that the mine would have been exhausted in a year or two. Considering the number of lives in that mine, do you not think that the airway ought to have been larger?—It was not a question of lives at all. I would depend upon what the conditions were. The men would never have got out, as they never could have reached the airway. The greater portion of return is very large.

291. If an explosion occurred in some portion of the Brunner Mine to-morrow, and there were 100 men in it, I suppose the whole of them would be lost?—If you placed them in the position where these men were working the conditions would be just the same; even with a shaft as you suggest, the foul air would go instantly to the mouth of the intake, so that the men would be bound to be cut off.

292. If you had a very large current of air passing round the mine, would not that current tend to drive out the noxious gases quicker?—Quicker, but not quick enough in case of an explosion.