

425. You examined the whole of the mine?—I think, fairly.

426. Did you notice anything where you came to the damper portions of the mine?—Yes; in places where the mine was more damp than other places there was less evidence of fire.

427. Would you say that on account of the dampness of the damper portions that the fire had spent itself as it reached those places?—Most likely.

428. Did you notice that any of the men had been able to run a little distance?—All the bodies had been got out before I arrived.

429. Did you examine the ventilation of the mine?—Yes.

430. On the whole, what was it like?—Very good indeed.

431. And the stoppings?—Most of them were blown out.

432. Did you see what they had been like?—Good jig-stoppings or crib.

433. There were other kinds of stoppings?—Yes.

434. Do you think the crib-stopping was as good as any other kind in that mine?—I think it is a very good and substantial stopping. My own practice is to use brick; that is because I can get brick more cheaply than anything else.

435. Did you notice any means of escape in case of accident?—Through the ordinary return-air course. I was through it. It was quite sufficient.

436. Did you examine the machinery about the mine?—I suppose you mean the general hauling machinery?

437. Yes. Do you think it was sufficient?—Yes. I only looked at it generally.

438. And the appliances for getting the coal out of the mine?—They were ample for the demands upon them. In fact, there was a certain amount of surplus mining machinery about the place doing nothing.

439. In connection with this mine, is there any likelihood of the explosion having taken place through gas from the goaf?—I do not think so.

440. Why?—To begin with, there is no goaf here. It is on this side [indicated], and all the evidence I saw of any flame having come here was from the sump-side.

441. Does the outlet prevent any gas from the goaf coming to the sump-side?—Yes.

442. And from the workings where the men were?—Yes. Any gas which could come from this goaf would get immediately into the return, and could not possibly get to the men in those workings.

443. That is to say, it would have to cross the return-air current?—It would have to blow the air back to get to those men.

444. What deductions would you make from the men having been working an hour and a half before the explosion occurred?—I think the deduction would be that everything was all right when they went to work.

445. And the explosion would occur from some cause that arose afterwards?—Yes.

446. Of course, that would be compatible with your theory about the explosion?—I consider that it was caused by a blown-out shot, intensified by coal-dust.

447. In the mine you are manager of what do you blast with?—I prohibited blasting some time ago, not as a matter of safety, but as a matter of saving the coal. We do not blast there except in very exceptional positions and circumstances. It would not benefit us to blast as a general rule.

448. *The Chairman.*] What coal do you get?—Superior brown coal. We “hole” and wedge it down.

449. *Mr. Park.*] What kind of lights were used in the Brunner Mine?—I must ask you to bear in mind that I did not see the mine under ordinary conditions; therefore I do not know what its condition was like before I went there. From what I saw afterwards, when I was expecting to find more than the ordinary amount of gas, I did not find any large escape at all. I did find a little, but only a very small quantity.

450. Does that answer imply that naked lights would not be dangerous generally?—Not generally.

451. I suppose we may take it that, after an explosion of that sort, you would expect to find a considerable quantity of gas?—You would in this case, owing to the disarrangement of the ventilation. The ventilation would not be as thorough as under ordinary conditions of working, and naturally you would expect to find a little gas where you would not expect to find it in ordinary work. That is the common experience in all explosions.

452. *Mr. Guinness.*] From what you saw with regard to the ventilation of that mine, if you visited it while the ordinary working operations were in progress, do you think you would have noticed less gas or any gas?—With the exception, I think, of one case only, the only gas I found was over “falls.” The exceptional case was the deserted part of the pit, which had not been worked before the explosion; otherwise I did not find any gas excepting where there had been a fall of the roof.

453. That would, I presume, take place in consequence of the explosion?—Most likely; it may have been before or after, but on the west side in the upper workings, from the bottom level I naturally expected to find a little gas. I examined for it there, but did not get any. The brattice had been taken down, and I naturally expected to have found a little gas there.

454. With regard to the brattice, what do you say with respect to the workmanship of that?—It was very good.

455. Just go back to the blow-out hole where the explosion occurred. Could you tell, by an examination of that hole, whether it had been recently drilled, or whether it had been there for some time?—I could not tell. The only part I remember was the hole having some evidence of powder about it. It was disfigured, and had no appearance of newness. But I noticed that a little hole had been cut in the side to allow the foot of the drilling-machine to stand, and this seemed to me to be rather new.