

702. Was that coal-dust?—Yes. It was Noble's case. A bump in the roof in the Coalpit-Heath Mine sent up some coal-dust, and his lamp was standing on the road. The coal-dust fired from the lamp, and burnt the man very severely. The explosion did not extend.

703. Can you give any reason why it did not extend?—There is the powerful effect that would be produced by a blown-out shot. We had a similar instance in Durham, when several men were burned in a coal-pit.

704. There was not then a concussion?—No.

705. If you had a powerful air-current running through the mine, would it not have tended to clear the mine of dust?—I do not think it would.

706. Do you consider your return airway sufficiently good for a man to get out?—Yes. It would be rather difficult to get out in case of an explosion. I do not consider, however, that any such airway could have been made that would have helped any man to get out after that explosion.

707. Can you suggest any opening or aperture which could be made in order to allow some means of escape?—I do not know anything unless there was a special drive made and kept in reserve. The ordinary return airway could not be made accessible without you have another return air, as the air return must have been filled with gas, and the products of the explosion would go through the air-course.

708. By having several air-drives not connected at all, would not that have assisted?—We might have avoided the explosion; there are many things that could be accomplished in that way.

709. Would it be possible to divide your mine into districts?—The mine was so small—containing sixty-five people all told—that I think it would have been contracting it too much to divide it into two separate mines. We had other portions of the mine working—in the rise and the dip; and if the Coolgardie portion had been connected with the dip by a drive as suggested those men would have lost their lives also.

710. The Coolgardie men?—Yes.

711. You think there is nothing practical about having a drive from Coolgardie, and a furnace and fan there?—No.

712. Do you consider the crib-log stoppings used in the mine good stoppings?—Yes; most authorities agree that it is a very good stopping where the bottom is inclined to heave. It is better than brick. We could have brick stoppings along the dip.

713. Is it possible to construct stoppings that would resist the force of an explosion?—It might be possible—it would not be right to say impossible; but in well-equipped mines—equipped with the very best appliances—they still have their stoppings blown out.

714. You used board stoppings at the same time?—No, merely brattice-cloth. It makes very good temporary stoppings for the working-faces, better than boards.

715. Did you not use board stoppings?—Very few; I think there was one board stopping.

716. They are not any good in a mine?—Not wherever the floor lifts; there was no serious danger from having this one in the position it was in.

717. You had some doors in the mine also?—Yes.

718. Were they well constructed?—Yes.

719. What were they made of?—Of timber—of lin. timber properly hinged. There were two near the motor-house, and one in the west mid-level.

720. Do you think that the coal lying in the fourth bord came from a blown-out shot?—I think so; I do not know of any other place it could have come from. The indications of charring are present on the side of the pillar. If the coal had come from the side of the pillar the charring would not have been much, because it would have fallen with the heat.

721. Do you think it could have come from the roof?—No; the roof is charred all over.

722. And the crispness on the floor—do you think that that is a patch of coke that has fallen from the roof?—I think so.

723. How long ago is it since you have known any one to be working in No. 4 bord?—Several months since; it must be seven or eight months.

724. Has any gas ever been found in its vicinity?—No; it was quite safe.

725. You have no recollection of gas being reported as being found?—No.

726. Would there be a larger accumulation of coal-dust in that bord than in any other part of the mine?—I do not think there would be.

727. It would be only a small amount?—Yes.

728. Then, a small amount is as likely to produce as great an explosion as a large amount?—I attribute the explosion to the ignition of the coal-dust.

729. You say you do not consider the mine dry or dusty?—Not as the mines we have heard spoken of are under the English Act; they have to be watered.

730. Do you consider it was fiery?—No.

731. What would you define as a fiery mine?—I consider a mine fiery when all the working-faces are giving off gas, and you have always to work with locked safety-lamps everywhere.

732. But you do not consider a mine fiery where you can use naked lights?—No.

733. You have no doubt about the age of the tramway?—No.

734. It may have been used when the bord was made?—Yes.

735. What is the floor of the bord composed of?—Black-bottom—carbonaceous matter first, and then fireclay, and lime afterwards.

736. What did you use for tamping in the Brunner Mine?—Bottom stuff.

737. Did you use fireclay?—Yes.

738. How did the men get it?—They took it off the floor.

739. Do you not think it would be better to provide the men with fireclay?—They were not careful; but I have examined their tamping and found it was mainly composed of earthen material and fireclay.