

791. Which of these plates did it most resemble?—It was most like this one [second plate of Hall's report]. There was no flame in ours; nor did I see any ignition when I first went into the tunnel. I went quicker than the air was travelling. Of course, the inrush first would be a little quicker; and the restoration of the ventilation would not have taken very long if the stoppings had been there. You could almost calculate the time the ventilation was in being restored if you estimate that the air was travelling at the rate of 5ft. or 6ft. a second, and that the total distance it had to travel would be 90 chains (= twenty-three minutes).

792. *Mr. Proud.*] I suppose you consider the bord and pillar system the best?—Yes.

793. What is the size of your bords?—The bords were driven 18ft. wide, and 11 or 12 yards was the greatest width of the pillars.

793A. Do you drive the bords by marks?—We cannot drive them by marks, as the coal has an undulating roof.

794. What was your system of taking the pillars out?—In commencing work, the system is to take a strip alongside the pillar, and when you get that strip along there you bring back the remaining part of the pillar to the end [indicated on plan].

795. *Sir J. Hector.*] Can you explain the reason why the general direction of these bords towards the fault suddenly varies?—I suppose it is in consequence of some change in the rock.

796. Do you not think that indicates any proximity to the big fault?—No doubt some change will be found some distance before you get to the fault.

797. How far do you consider you are from the fault?—2½ chains.

798. Was the fault clean on the western side?—Both sides are clean.

799. Did not you go into a great mass of coal in driving through the fault?—Yes; we got one patch of 900ft.

800. Did that interfere with the tightness of the faults?—No; it is only a local thing.

801. *Mr. Proud.*] What percentage of coal do you get?—We expect to get 40 per cent. on the first working, and I suppose we lose 10 or 15 per cent. in pillar-working.

802. You have not tested your safety-lamps by gas?—No; we have no apparatus of that kind.

803. It is in use in some mines?—It is a very valuable thing, no doubt.

804. *Mr. Skellon.*] Do you think that the coal found on the rails in the No. 4 bord came from the shot-hole?—A portion of it might. I think it would be a portion of the ring of the hole that had been blown away. I do not think it is reasonable to suppose that all this coal for a width of 5ft. went bodily everywhere. I think that there is coal gone from the face, as the face is considerably shattered.

805. Is it not likely that the rib has been weathered by the air, and that the concussion of the explosion has knocked the coal down?—It is quite possible; but when you come to consider that all the shot-holes used in drilling that bord are still there, and that the line of every succeeding shot is to be seen on the side of the rib, some being pretty low down, I do not think that the coal has gone. I have looked at it in that light myself; and the only chance I could see of from where else this coal could have come and gone to is where it is still lying, immediately in the corner where there is a break.

806. Would not the coal weather?—Undoubtedly. But the nature of this coal is very hard. Had the shot-holes not been there, it would have shown that the explosion was not accountable for that quantity of coal.

807. You think that this hole might have been heedlessly fired?—I am not saying that.

808. You believe it was fired that morning?—Judging from what I saw, I do.

809. Do you think that any practical miner would charge a hole like that without doing some preparatory work?—I am quite sure a careful miner would not do it. They do err in their judgment, and I will not say that a practical miner would not do it. It is not the work of a man who has been some time considering what he was going to do before he did it.

810. *The Chairman.*] It would take a practical miner to bore such a hole?—It would take a man who knew how to use the drilling-machine.

811. *Mr. Skellon.*] He would naturally put his rammer in to see how far the hole was in?—I think it is quite possible that he would know from his boring-machine how far the hole was in.

812. Supposing that hole had been bored previously, he would naturally put his rammer in to see the depth, would he not?—Very likely he would; it is quite natural to suppose that he would test the depth.

813. At any rate it is not the work of a practical miner to bore or fire a shot like that?—I do not think so; he might have been a practical man who has been in haste and not considering what he was going to do.

814. The firemen were both lost?—Yes.

815. Did your under-viewer make a daily report in reference to the work of the mine?—Yes.

816. And entered everything that occurred in his report-book?—Yes.

817. Can you tell how many times during the last twelve or thirteen months gas has been reported by him to you?—I cannot say from memory; you have the books.

818. Do you think that it was on forty days that gas was reported?—Quite likely, considering that the safety of the whole mine depended upon his reporting it.

819. He was supposed to examine the air-courses carefully?—Every week.

820. He would note that in his note-book?—He travelled the air-course.

821. Are you aware that it is only mentioned ten times for thirteen months?—Probably he was in error in not entering it. I know that every week he came through it, unless I was absent. I know he came through that return.

822. Did you not examine his report-books to see that it was entered?—I saw his report every day.

823. Did you know that it had not been entered?—I conferred with him every day. He would not miss reporting that fact although he did not enter it.