

949. Very readily?—At once.

950. Did you go through the return air-course?—I did.

951. What did you think of it?—It is a very decent air-course for an old mine; certainly ample for requirements.

952. When you went in, what was the state of the ventilation of the mine?—At the commencement?

953. Yes?—Just about as wretched as it could possibly be. The ventilation was not coming through its right course during the first part of my inspection, and the pillar-courses were not then ventilated. They had not enough timber for that part, and the air was circulating round these workings [indicated]; but on the other side there was nothing going through, so that if there had been firedamp in the mine previous to the explosion you would naturally have expected to have found a large quantity afterwards, but nothing of the kind was there; that is one feature of the thing that surprised me very much.

954. And also strengthened your theory about the coal-dust explosion?—Personally, I have no doubt about that.

955. Did it strengthen your opinion?—Most assuredly it did. I expected to find a large accumulation of firedamp almost everywhere.

956. Which only would have been so had it been a gas explosion?—There is no reason that there should be. If there was an accumulation of gas it only proved that the ventilation had been disarranged. You would naturally expect to find a larger accumulation then, when there was no ventilation at all in another part of the mine.

957. I suppose that there is no chance of gas coming from the goaf?—Do you mean in reference to this explosion?

958. Yes?—None whatever; it had nothing whatever to do with this explosion.

959. Supposing there was gas coming out of the goaf, would it reach the men who were working or would it reach the return air-course first?—It would certainly go into the return air-course, because the ventilation runs in such a direction as to take the gas away from the men. Every precaution is taken to sweep the impure air into the return air-course.

960. Supposing the old workings on the other side to have been bad, would there be any chance of gas coming from there?—Those are "fast" places; there are no old workings there.

961. *Mr. Beare.*] As a manager yourself, would you say that the usual conditions of coal-mining were fulfilled in connection with the Brunner Mine, and that the Act and rules are fully complied with?—So far as I am aware; but that is a question I can scarcely answer, as I know nothing about what was done previous to the explosion. There are many indications in a mine in regard to the roads, brattice, &c., which show whether a thing is fairly managed or otherwise.

962. Briefly, your opinion is that the mine was fairly well managed?—I do not think there is any doubt about it.

963. You would see what the stoppings were composed of, and you have said that they were more than sufficient—in fact, ample—for the working of the mine: have you anything to add to that?—The stoppings were all that was necessary. It would be a bad job if these stoppings had not gone down. Nothing in this world could have saved the men who were there, as it was.

964. I believe you were the first to discover the blown-out shot-hole?—Yes, I was seeking for it, and I was the first to discover it.

965. Are the roadmen employed in your mine required to make daily reports?—Certainly not. There is nothing in the Act to provide for that so far as I am aware.

966. Would there be any other material difference in the effects of a gas explosion and a coal-dust explosion that you would naturally look for?—A gas explosion could not produce the same conditions. It is simply impossible. A firedamp explosion has a very feeble flame compared to this. The flame must have been most intense—in fact, the bord where the blown-out shot occurred must have glowed like a furnace for a time, because large quantities of gas have been distilled from the coal by the fire. The force of the heat must have been also most intense on the same side of the pillar that the blown-out shot occurred. That is the same pillar from which I myself took off an inch of distilled coal. The pillar itself had the silvery-grey appearance of pure coke, and I asked that the dust should be taken off and kept as a memento of my visit. It was a most astounding thing to look at. No firedamp explosion could have produced the same conditions.

967. Can you say anything as to the rapidity of the blast: supposing there had been a gas explosion, and supposing there had been a coal-dust explosion?—That is a scientific question that I can scarcely answer. I should say a firedamp explosion would travel like a lightning flash, but a coal-dust explosion is slower and more intense, having to provide its food as it goes along.

968. Looking at the disastrous effect of this explosion, if it had not been a firedamp explosion, would you not say that there must have been a considerable accumulation of gas to produce the effects?—From what I saw, a firedamp explosion was impossible. Every little bit of gas seen in the mine has been faithfully reported by the men. I knew the underground manager and the fireman well, having known them for twenty years. I would go anywhere with them and trust them anywhere—Roberts and Morris.

969. What opinion would you express as to the workmanship of the blown-out shot? Do you think it was a shot put in under proper management?—The management cannot be held responsible for anything of that kind, for it is impossible for the management to keep one man to watch every other man. They can only prevent these things by finding them out before they are done.

970. Seeing that there was no under cutting, and that the shot had been put pretty well into the solid, I suppose you would say that it was not a shot put in under the management of the fireman?—I dug my hands into the floor, and the floor does not show any marks, and there were no indications of any under cutting having been done. There may have been under cutting, but I could not see any.