

1151. *Mr. Beare.*] You say, from your different examinations of the mine, that as far as you can see the management was good in every respect. Did you at any time have occasion to refer to the Inspector as to any want, or did you find any deficiency in the Inspector's reports?—No; I was quite satisfied with Mr. Cockrane's report.

1152. Did you examine the blown-out shot-hole very closely?—Yes.

1153. Do you think it was put in under efficient management?—I could not tell that. I cannot tell what it was tamped with, or how it was tamped; but at any rate the hole seemed to be put in such a way into the solid that it was likely not to break away the coal but to blow out, and that very likely caused the explosion.

1154. That is to say, it was too much into the solid?—Yes.

1155. Would you say it was put in under the fireman's instructions?—I could not tell.

1156. Do you think, if there had been another shaft or another outlet in the mine, it would be the means of saving the lives of the miners?—I think there was sufficient opening to give plenty of air for all the miners working in the mine.

1157. Can you speak generally as to the mines in New Zealand where blasting operations are carried on in getting coal?—I cannot speak generally, but evidently there was blasting being carried on in this mine at the time, and that caused this explosion.

1158. *Mr. Joyce.*] If there had been more openings, do you think the men would have had a better chance of escape?—An explosion of that description is very sudden, and even with more openings I do not know whether they would have had much chance of getting out.

1159. Then, no matter how many openings you had, sufficient after-damp would be generated to overpower the men who were not killed by the explosion?—Yes, I think so, as none of the men got far away from the workings.

1160. Could you suggest anything to make the mines safe in case of an explosion?—The only way to prevent a coal-dust explosion would be to keep the bords well damped.

1161. Outside of that, could any means be devised to work the mines by shafts, drives, or tunnels?—I do not think so; you could not make any change that would prevent any explosion of that kind.

1162. Do you think it necessary to damp the sides, roof, and floor within a radius of every shot—say, 20 yards?—It is not absolutely necessary, but it is always safer; there is a far less chance of a coal-dust explosion occurring if all were damped.

1163. The use of salt is also a preventative?—Yes.

1164. You have had a good deal of experience in shooting and blasting?—Not in coal; but a good deal of experience in blasting.

1165. In your experience in blasting have you ever noticed that blown-out shots are inevitable?—Occasionally.

1166. In the light of this recent explosion at Brunner, do you consider it is necessary that shot-firing should be carried on under the charge of a competent person?—I think it is advisable.

1167. Do you think, in the light of this recent accident, that it is absolutely necessary?—I think that in a coal-mine a man ought to be told off to do it who understands the business.

1168. You also say that a spray of water should be used?—I say that spraying or watering would prevent to a great extent coal-dust explosions.

1169. Do you think an ordinary miner could find his way out of this return-airway in the Brunner Mine in case of explosion?—I believe he could.

1170. Would he not have a difficulty in getting away, assuming lights were out?—True, you would have some difficulty in finding your way out of any coal-mine unless you knew the actual road in. If you were in the main intake you would go against the air.

1171. You were asked about the slit down the side of No. 4 bord. Did you notice if the force went up that slit?—It went in both directions.

1172. Not down the side of the slit?—Part of the force went down, but the greatest force went upwards.

1173. Assuming the great force had gone down that slit, would not you see marks going downwards?—They showed distinctly that the force came downwards, but the greatest force in all the principal bords and inclines showed that it had gone upwards; the props were standing in a leaning direction upwards, showing that the force went upwards.

1174. I just wanted evidence about that particular slit?—No doubt the force was upwards here [indicated on the plan], but there was a great force downwards.

1175. And all the marks as far as that particular point are in a downward direction?—I do not know that that would be so. The upward force seemed to be the greater force.

1176. Do you not think you would have a big force going downwards, and that it would have split when it got lower down?—I think the explosion would be intensified.

1177. Do you not think there would be a large deposit of coal-dust there?—There was a large deposit of coal-dust there, and there was also a large deposit in the main heading.

1178. It would not be intensified by the coal-dust going down that way to the face?—The coal-dust would be in the shape of coke; the coal got coked at several points. The shot going out caused the roof of the bord to be entirely coked.

1179. Would not the rebound after it came back with greater force strike the high side of the bord near where the blown-out shot met it?—No; because the force split and went up the second incline, and also up No. 3.

1180. Really you would not have much force going back that slit, and the rebound would not be great?—It was not so great as in some of the others.

1181. Do you think it would be as great as the downward rush?—There would be a considerable rush upwards, where it would find a way out.

1182. Would the water at the bottom level act as a rebound or a wall?—There could not be any water the day the men were working, because on the Monday afterwards there was very little