

557. Was the coal-dust in that incline ankle-deep?—I never went ankle-deep in it.

558. Did it ever get over the rails?—Not to my knowledge; the track was always a good one.

559. Did you ever have to get off the road in any way?—Not in my time.

560. When you cleared the road, did you pile up the dust on the sides, or take it out?—It was thrown on one side. I have seen the truckers scrape the flat sheet and throw the dust on top; the miners only dragged it on one side.

561. It would come off the full truck, would it not, and into the road again?—No; it went out.

562. How many times did you see that done?—A long time.

563. Did any of the miners do it?—None of the miners did it; the truckers did it.

564. How long have you known that coal-dust explosions are likely to occur from blown-out shots?—That is a question I cannot go into because I know nothing about it. I never knew or heard of a coal-dust explosion before.

565. You made an examination of this mine, did you not?—Since I have been in: in fact, I had charge of the survey. I had charge of Mr. Young, and to look after the safety of the survey party.

566. You have explored in the mine since the date of the explosion, have you formed any theory as to the cause?—I could not say I could give a correct theory of the explosion.

567. As a coal-miner, what is your opinion?—I believe that there has been an explosion in No. 4 bord of No. 2 incline. There has been an excessive burning there, and I have never seen these indications in small gas-explosions before.

568. Have you never heard anything about coal-dust before?—I know nothing about it.

569. Not of your forty years as a miner?—No.

570. You saw that blown-out shot?—Yes.

571. What do you think of the man who put that shot in?—My opinion is that he did not know what he was doing. If he knew what he was doing he was doing wrong to do so.

572. How do you account for the fact that no tools were found near that blown-out shot-hole?—I could not give any reason.

573. Do you not think, as a coal-miner, it is natural you would find tools in the vicinity of the shot?—I would naturally expect to find some tools used by the workmen.

574. These we have not found?—I never saw them.

575. What time did the men go to work?—I could not tell; it was the Friday before I got here. I was in the Seven-mile at the time.

576. Assuming a man wanted to get some coal out easily, do you think he would select that place as the most desirable place to get it?—I should not do so.

577. What would be his idea in putting that shot in?—The only explanation is that the men knew they were going to this place. They must have been finished in the other place, and knew they were going to be sent here, so they might have put the shot in in anticipation.

578. Why would they go there on that particular morning, would they not wait until later on?—No. If I am working with my mate in the bord above, and we were finishing perhaps that night, then there was no more to be taken off this pillar, this place would be put a certain distance back. We might have noticed that we would shift down the following day into this place, and, on finishing our day up above, we would go down to the new place most probably for the rest of the day.

579. Would not you take some tools down to bore a hole?—Yes; at the same time, there is a possibility you would shift your tools when firing that shot for fear the underviewer would come along and catch you.

580. It would be necessary for me to take the coal out as quickly as possible?—Not at all.

581. Would not the underviewer come in next day and see there had been a charge in the hole, and would not he know that there had been no authority for firing it in that place?—If the blast had been successful I do not suppose anything would be said, because he might have heard it fired, and had he gone into the place it might not have been done.

582. Would not the fireman know?—On the following morning he would.

583. He would know if the men were not to work in that face the day before that no shot ought to have been fired, and he would report it?—He would want to know who was working in that bord.

584. He would know the two men who were working?—Yes.

585. Would it not be an advantage to the man who fired that shot to bring his coal out immediately?—It is always the miners' practice to take his coal out, if ready, immediately.

586. In order to do so, he would prepare his road, first of all, along this blown-out shot, would he not?—The deputy generally makes the road fit for the truck to come along.

587. If a miner were taking the coal out himself, and the road was not fit, he could not wait for the deputy, what would he do then?—He could go on filling three or four trucks to keep his turn going.

588. Your opinion is that a man was not likely to go to that hole for coal?—I could not form an opinion as to whether a man went there or not.

589. Your opinion is that it would be likely, but if a man wanted to get easy coal he would go to that place for it?—I do not know what he might do, but the majority of men would not bore the hole in the same place. I do not think a practical miner would have fired the same shot.

590. Might not that hole have been put in when the bords were being constructed?—That I could not tell.

591. Is it probable?—It is likely; but I should say it is too wet.

592. But when that bord was being constructed ten months ago?—I cannot speak of that as I was not there.

593. Might not that shot have been put in and blown out in that period?—I really do not know. All I know is that there is excessive burning there, and the indications suggest to me that the force had started from about the blown-out hole.