

*Mr. R. McKenzie* : More dangerous, anyhow.

152. *Mr. McLean* (to witness).] You completed the balance of the tunnel, and through our joint management we overcame the difficulty of the water. Were there any sills taken out after that?—No.

153. And there was never any question of leaving the sills in?—No.

154. That is the main sill?—Yes.

155. From the time we picked up the ground and completed the tunnel the main sill was left in the brickwork, and the ground sill was left in until the length was picked up?—Yes.

156. It was then taken out, and the hole filled with concrete?—No, it was left in altogether.

157. It was left in altogether and then the hole filled with concrete?—Yes.

158. Is that [pointing to the plan on the wall] a fair representation of the method that we carried out the work by?—Yes, that is.

159. Would you consider it safe in carrying out this work in bad ground to leave the legs out altogether and depend on these posts to support that length?—No, I would not.

160. It would be a trap?—Yes.

161. So that it is absolutely necessary to have the sole-plate in that ground?—Yes, you cannot do without it.

162. You consider that in that ground you could not possibly do without that sole-piece to support those legs and the timbers?—Yes.

163. Take the sole-plate out, and leave the legs to rest on the ground to support this weight, and they would give way?—They would sink into the ground.

164. And the result?—Everything would fall down; you might as well take them out.

165. So that sole-piece is absolutely necessary?—Yes, absolutely.

166. *Mr. Crowther* (to the Chairman).] May I ask the witness his reason for stating that they would sink into the ground?—The ground being wet and soft.

167. But the ground, in starting excavation, was of a particularly hard nature?—Yes, we had to shoot it sometimes.

168. But what was the result when water came on it?—It would go over one's boot-tops, very nearly.

169. *Mr. McLean* (petitioner).] And consequently, if we had to depend on these legs without any sole-piece, of course they would sink into the ground?—They would not carry their own weight without sinking.

170. And so this tunnel was carried out in a manner similar to works that you had been employed on before?—Yes.

171. In a thoroughly up-to-date manner?—Yes.

172. You have your credentials on you from your former employers?—Yes.

173. *Mr. McLean* (petitioner) : I would like him to put them in to show his qualifications as an experienced man in tunnelling.

*Mr. Hales* : There is no dispute about Mr. Donohue's qualifications.

*Mr. McLean* : It does not matter, then, if the department are satisfied as to his knowledge of mining.

174. *Mr. Duncan*.] Had you any previous experience in mining in wet ground before you started tunnelling?—Yes.

175. In what part of the world?—Tasmania.

176. How long have you been at that work?—I have been mining ever since I was eighteen years of age.

177. *Mr. Morrison*.] You say you had experience in Tasmania in connection with soft ground. Was the method pursued in Tasmania the same as that pursued here?—It was similar; but that was mining work.

178. It was not a tunnel?—No.

179. Speaking as an experienced miner on all classes of ground, you think the method pursued by Messrs. McLean was a correct one?—I do.

180. *Mr. Hales*.] You, of course, were employed by them only after this slip occurred in the tunnel, and remained there some time?—Yes.

181. You know nothing about what preceded the breakdown?—Certainly not. I was not there.

*Mr. McLean* : Mr. Donohue was employed by us a very short time after the break.

*Mr. Hales* : I wish to know whether it was previous or subsequent?

*Mr. McLean* : Subsequent.

182. *Mr. R. McKenzie* (to witness).] You were employed by Messrs. McLean from the break until the completion of the tunnel?—Yes.

183. And you have had considerable experience in railway-tunnels?—Yes.

184. *Mr. Crowther*.] I would like to ask if the witness was there at Christmas-time?—I was there subsequently.

*Mr. McLean* : He was working in the tunnel a year afterwards when Christmas came round.

185. *Mr. Crowther* (to witness).] The slip had not been cured when you arrived there?—Yes.

186. *Mr. R. McKenzie*.] Was there any headway made from driving the tunnel from where the slip took place when you went there?—No.

187. *Mr. Morrison*.] Do I understand that the slip took place at a Christmas-time?—I was not working for Messrs. McLean when the slip took place.

188. *Mr. Hales*.] What time between the two Christmases were you there?—I cannot say exactly.

The Committee at this stage adjourned till Tuesday, the 14th December.