

85. Would you consider it necessary in the face of that section of the Act that the manager should have to consider his conscience for standards of duty other than the Act in carrying out his duties ?—No, he simply has to comply with the Act.

86. You think if he complies with the Act and special rules he is doing his duty ?—Yes, I think so.

87. *The Chairman.*] You would not consider yourself bound by the rules if you had some better means of getting over a sudden emergency ? You would do the best you could, rules or no rules ?—Yes, most decidedly.

88. *Mr. Dowgray.*] But the manager's conscience plays some part in it ?—Yes, of course.

89. *Mr. Napier.*] In the new Bill one of the principal officers of the Department is appointed by statute : do you not think that the Government of the country or the Public Service Commissioners ought to have the power to appoint the best man to positions under the Act ?—Yes.

90. The best man that can be got, even from Europe, at such salaries as we can pay : do you consider that one man in the Service should get the position ?—No, not any more than was done in regard to the appointment of the General Manager of Railways.

91. Do you not think that all Inspectors of Mines ought to be experienced, cultured, and level-headed men with good judgment ?—I do.

92. You would not agree that they ought to be of the type mentioned by St. Paul : " A reed shaken by the wind." He ought to be a man of some stability of character ?—Yes, a man to whom we can look for assistance.

93. It has been suggested in the course of this inquiry that the Inspectors, the Inspecting Engineer, and other officers of the Department should not communicate any advice to mine-managers to help them in the conduct of their work : do you agree with that ?—I think it would be a very good thing if we had men to advise us in time of trouble.

94. You said that you looked to the Mining Inspector for advice ?—Yes.

95. That is a fact ?—Yes.

96. And it has been customary for them to give advice ?—Yes ; I have on occasions had advice from the Inspector.

97. And do you not think that the officers of the Department ought to be in a highly competent position to advise mine-managers as to the best means of carrying on their work, just as the Agriculture Department advises agricultural people ?—Yes, I think it would be a good thing ; and the Department should carry on experiments for the safe working of mines, as they do in England.

98. Yes, the same as other Departments of the State assist people interested in the various industries ?—Yes.

99. You do not think the Mines Department should content itself with perfunctorily seeing that the law is carried out ?—I think they should combine the two functions—to tender advice and see that the Act is carried out.

100. *Mr. Tunks.*] In regard to the sinking of the third shaft, that was undertaken because it was suggested, I think, that there was a danger of the river breaking into the mine ?—Yes, that was the sole cause.

101. The question of escape from an explosion was not a factor at all ?—No ; I was asked by Mr. Justice Denniston, was there any circumstance under which I could imagine a third shaft would be an advantage. I said, " Yes, in the event of an explosion."

102. That reason was not suggested by the Department as a factor in that case ?—No, it was merely the water coming in.

103. *Mr. Macassey.*] In regard to ladders in the air-shaft, were they put in before your time ?—No, I put them in.

104. I think Mr. Reed or Mr. Bennie suggested that wire netting should have been put over those ladders ?—Mr. Bennie wanted me to partition the shaft. I argued the matter with him and pointed out that doing so would impede the ventilation. We had a very long discussion over that matter, and came to the conclusion, on my suggestion, that netting should be placed over the ladders.

105. Did Mr. Reed suggest that to you ?—No, never.

106. *Mr. Dowgray.*] You come from the County of Durham ?—I do.

107. How long is it since you left ?—I came away in 1887.

108. Then you will not be an authority on what would be now classed in England as a dusty mine. Was dust seriously considered in 1887 ?—It was just then becoming a matter of great notice. Professor Galway was the first to move in the matter.

109. You would not consider yourself, as an authority, in a position to compare this mine with dusty mines in the North of England ?—I must say that this mine was not as dusty as mines I have worked in in the North of England and in Wales. You know how your nostrils and your spittle becomes affected with it. We do not get the same effect here that they do in the North of England and in Wales.

110. These mines which you are referring to would not be dusty mines ?—Yes.

111. You could not compare them ? Practically all the mines in England are admitted to be dusty mines.

112. Did I understand you to say that you were in charge of the Marsden Colliery, Durham ?—No ; I was manager's assistant.

113. In your evidence before the Coroner you were endeavouring to show some connection between the White Island eruption and the disaster here ?—You hardly put it correctly. What I meant to imply was that there had been an earth tremor which had liberated an extraordinary quantity of gas in this mine, and that that theory was borne out by the fact of that eruption at White Island.

114. Was the tremor felt to any degree in Huntly ?—I cannot say that it was ; but it is not necessary for a tremor to be felt by a person. It may be a small one, only recorded by a seismometer.