

EVIDENCE TAKEN AT INQUEST.

[NOTE.—All the Coroner's inquest witnesses who were subsequently examined by Commission (with the exception of John McGill) were requested, on being sworn, to confirm their evidence given at the inquest proceeding. Their inquest depositions is consequently embodied in the Commission evidence. The following depositions (apart from the evidence of John McGill) were made by witnesses at the inquest other than those who appeared before the Commission.]

Frederick Berry, sworn, saith: I am a stableman at Ralph's Mine. I went down the mine on the morning of the accident at 5.30 a.m. I proceeded to the stables with Thomas Cummock, a pump-man. I attended to my duties at the stable, and came up at ten minutes to seven. I did not see anything of the deputies down the mine. The engine-driver let us down; his name is Dudley Starr. I did not notice anything unusual down the mine that morning. The mine, as far as I could see, was in its usual condition, and the air good. I had to go down early to get the horses ready for work. I did not see anybody at the top of the shaft when I came up. Cummock went into No. 1 pump about 100 yards from the bottom of the shaft.

Frederick Berry, recalled: I did not go down previous to the deputies—that is, the examining deputies. I presume I was after them. I do not know when they went down. I had a naked light—an acetylene-lamp. Some miners use acetylene-lamps and some oil-lamps. I did not get "all right" from the examining deputies when I went down. As a rule, I used to go down with these men every morning. As far as I went, they used to go with a naked light. I knew it was safe as far as I went.

Dudley Starr, sworn, saith: I am engine-driver at Ralph's Mine. I went on at midnight, and was on duty until 8 a.m. on the morning of the 12th September. The fan and pumping-engines are kept going all night. A pumper, Mr. Cummock, went down at 4 a.m. The deputies—Whorskey, Skellern, and Peckham—went down at 5 a.m. Fred Berry went down soon after the deputies; he usually goes down with the deputies in the morning. This was not a regular working-day. Just before seven o'clock O'Brien went down: he is the onsetter. The main body following shortly after. There is no one to supervise and say who is to go down or not.

By Mr. Tunks: The fan is not allowed to slacken down at night.

By Mr. Bennie: I have never known of the fan being stopped. It has been stopped on Sunday for repairs. I am quite positive it did not stop on the night before the accident.

William Brocklebank, sworn, saith: I am a clipper-on at Ralph's Mine. On the 12th instant I went down the mine with five others in the cage at 7 a.m. There would be forty or fifty others went down about the same time. I saw Darby, the deputy, in the cabin along the shaft. He gave me instructions to go down Dooley's dip. In going in that direction I passed No. 6 cabin. I saw John Whorskey there; he is fireman. He was smashing carbide for his lamp. I passed the time of day with him, and went on. I overtook Arthur Ruston. I did not see any one else. When I got about 200 yards past No. 7 flat sheet I felt a gust of wind coming behind me. It carried me on and knocked me down. My light was blown out. It was an acetylene light. Arthur Ruston was with me: we both went down. We spoke to each other for two minutes after that. I got up again and fell down again, when I lost consciousness. I could not breathe freely. It was the after-effects of the explosion that caused me to lose consciousness. It would be the gas. I was not burnt at all. I did not see any flame. It must have been six or seven hours before I remembered anything more. I recovered consciousness and crawled out to the rescue party. It was about an hour before I got to the rescue party when I recovered consciousness. I came out at the Taupiri West shaft. I had been working in the mine about nine months this time. I did not notice any smell in the mine. I had not gone very far before I reached the rescue party. I did not notice anything different about the mine that morning from any other morning. I have never heard any complaints about the mine being a bad mine to work in or insufficient air. The way from No. 6 cabin to where I went used to be very bad with dust. I went along a road only used by clippers-on—the haulage road.

By Inspector Bennie: This is the first time I have ever been out Taupiri West shaft.

By Coroner: I was about the last man to go down the mine. The first man would have gone down about five minutes before me.

Alexander McGill, sworn, saith: I am a clipper, employed in Ralph's Mine. I was in company with the last witness, Brownlie. I accompanied him to the stables, and from there until we came out. We went down the little dip, and through two trap-doors. We were there struck by a gust of wind. There were small lumps in the coaldust blown by the wind. Morton was in front. After the explosion we went to the shaft. Morton we found lying in water, bleeding at nose, and his knee was hurt. I have been employed in the mine about nineteen months. I have not known gas to exist in the mine before. I work on the main rope-road.

By Mr. Bennie: I know the road from No. 6 cabin to No. 6 special. There was a little dust on that road, but it is watered now. It is two months since I went that way. They were watering it then.

By Mr. Tunks: Ransome was watering it then.

James Wilkie, sworn, saith: I am a trucker, employed in Ralph's Mine. I went down the mine on the morning of the 12th instant at 7 a.m. I had my ordinary acetylene-lamp with me. When I got to the bottom of the shaft I went down the haulage-road. I got to the road turning into No. 6 special. Joseph Richards was with me. A gust of wind caught us from behind. It knocked us down. It lasted a minute or two. I thought one of the air-pipes had burst just behind us. The