

1308. They are not certificated, you say?—No; but there is a clause in the new amended Act providing that second-class certificates will be given to these deputies upon examination.

1309. Do you think this new Act will be an improvement?—It will go a long way, because the overmen will be put in possession of second-class certificates, and that will, of course, obviate the difficulty in this direction. That is section 5 of the amended Act. There would be nothing to hinder these second-class certificates being gained by the overmen.

1310. How many overmen are there?—There are at present a front and a back overman in the Brunner and in the Coal-pit Heath.

1311. And firemen?—The firemen are of course independent of them. There will be two firemen for each shift in each place—that is, four firemen.

1312. When will that Act come into force?—The Act is already in force; but no examination has yet been held for second-class certificates.

1313. Then the complaint you have tendered is one that is really remedied in that Act?—There is one thing in regard to it, and that is the length of time which intervenes between the visits of the Inspector of Mines.

1314. Is that defined or fixed by statute? Are there any definite times for inspection?—No; he might visit once in a week, or once in a twelvemonth. They have all the duties of an Inspector, but there is no definition of the time.

1315. You think that should be remedied?—We consider that the mine should be inspected at least once a month, especially where the pillars are being taken out. The changes which will occur in a month when taking pillars out are scarcely credible except to any one practically acquainted with the working of mines.

1316. Have you been working at the taking-out of pillars?—Yes; I have taken pillars out from the Brunner.

1317. In the high ground?—Yes.

1318. How high is the coal where you commenced to take it?—Eighteen feet at the fault end of the main level. That was the first pillar I took out.

1319. Has the roof settled?—No, it had not settled then, but it is all down now.

1320. How did it come down? do you remember?—In a body.

1321. Short?—No, not very short.

1322. Did it come away at the fault?—It broke away at the fault.

1323. That will be a settlement of 18ft. on the line of fault?—Yes; somewhere about that.

1324. Have you ever been on the top of the hill on the surface?—I make it a rule never to go about the works after my day's work is done.

1325. How long ago is it since you were working in that part of the mine?—About five years last May.

1326. Since then where were you working?—I was shifted about—first up to some solid workings there, when the Brunner Mine was drowned out.

1327. What do you mean by "drowned out"?—There was a leakage of water at the commencement that filled a certain portion of the mine; then I think there was a breakage in the roof, because the water rushed in very rapidly. It was left standing there, and was never pumped out. A good deal of it was let into the Coal-pit Heath Mine.

1328. That was after the amalgamation?—Yes. There was always an open space in the rock somewhere about this point. There was a clause introduced into the first Bill in Parliament known as the "percolating clause," and Mr. Martin Kennedy took a very hasty exit from here and went to Wellington, to get this percolating clause struck out. The object of the clause was to prevent any water percolating from one mine into another. In this case there was a barrier left, but it was opened by a break in the rock.

1329. Used this water standing in the Brunner workings to percolate into the Coal-pit Heath workings?—Yes. When these workings were drowned out I was sent into the fault workings.

1330. Can you remember how long it has taken to take out that piece between the two faults?—I commenced work there last May.

1331. Was that at the commencement?—Soon after the beginning of the working.

1332. Then, this piece has been taken out since then?—Yes; it has been taken out in the solid.

1333. And from this shaded portion on the plan all the coal has been extracted, even from the pillars?—Yes.

1334. Is this plan before the Commission correct?—Yes; the plan of the mines is generally correct.

1335. How has the roof behaved in that part of the mine?—Some of it is good, perhaps 2ft. 9in. and 2ft. false roof. It is lying on the top of the coals, and separated from the main roof by a parting. That is where the danger comes in. The difficulty to be contended with in working these pillars is the blocks of stone coming down.

1336. *Mr. Moody.*] Do they come down in large blocks?—Sometimes in blocks of two or three tons. In fact, I think there was a block of about four tons, which we at first thought was a small piece of coal. I was standing in a truck at the time, when a whole lot came down, cutting the prop and knocking me down.

1337. *The Chairman.*] What is the roof like above that?—It is as good as it can be above this 2ft. of false roof.

1338. If it breaks down in large blocks it is likely to go through to the surface?—Yes. The only thing to prevent that is the soundness of the bottom. The bottom may lift to the roof.

1339. Is the seam thick?—It is pretty thick, but it varies. You might have 8ft. of coal one day, and in a week's time you would not have more than 5ft. It is a rolling seam.

1340. What rolls—the top or the floor?—The top rolls; the bottom is fireclay.