

there is forty-four men, there being eleven faces. There was a discussion yesterday as to whether there were ten or eleven, and I am giving the company the benefit of the doubt. They cannot get at the solid now on account of the water.

1365. Have you ever been at the face of the fault?—No; not in the Coal-pit Heath, as the time they got there was the time I got my leg broken.

1366. How many surface-men and truckers would be employed with these forty-four men?—I could not give that exactly: I should say, four truckers to each shift. There would be other day-wage men, of course—such as deputies, haulers, and road-men—on each shift. They are about an equal number to the hewers.

1367. Suppose the mine started to-morrow, there would be eleven faces open, you say, employing forty-four men; that would also employ a considerable number of truckers and surface-men?—Yes.

1368. Do you know, from the coal available at the present time, what number of men could be employed at the Brunner Mine?—I believe they could employ twenty-six men each shift coal-hewing—that is, fifty-two miners in the two shifts; two men in a place at thirteen faces. That was what was going on when the stoppage took place.

1369. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other point which you wish to bring up?—Yes, there is another point which will have to take a prominent place: that is, with regard to the non-practical miners being taken into the mines at the present time.

1370. You assert that it would be dangerous in the state the mines are in at the present time?—In the Coal-pit Heath and the Brunner it would be detrimental both to the interests of the employers and the men to do so. They should put in skilled men to take these pillars out.

1371. Has it been done yet?—I mean the employment of unskilled labour?—No, not at present. I may say that I consider the miners in the Grey Valley are some of the finest in the world—in fact, they are the pick. I brought this question of unskilled labour under the notice of Sir Harry Atkinson some months since, and requested him to insert a clause in the new Mines Act to provide that no man should be employed without having previously had two years' experience in a mine. There is a clause to that effect in the Old Country. Before a man is allowed to take charge of a face we consider he should have had first about two years' work in a mine; otherwise he does not know how to set timber, and he does not know whether the roof is safe or not.

1372. *Mr. Brown.*] You mean that every new-comer should first have to work with a practical man?—We mean that they should not be allowed to take in non-practical men—for instance, a seaman, who has never before been inside a mine—and that it would be dangerous both to the property and to the miners' lives.

1373. Do I understand you to recommend that the non-practical men should go and work under a man that is a practical miner?—That is not objected to, of course. When a trucker, for instance, wishes to go on to coal-hewing, we take that step now—we allow the trucker to be put with an experienced man. Experience should be gained either at trucking or by working with a practical man before a man is really allowed to take charge of a place. The Government of Great Britain has taken that matter up, as they found that accidents arising from this cause were so numerous.

1374. Since when has that law come into force in England?—I think it is about two years ago.

1375. That is, in fact, a species of apprenticeship for two years?—Yes.

1376. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other point?—The question I was going to bring under the notice of the Commissioners was as to the dangerous state of the Coal-pit Heath Mine, where they are weakening the pillars. I think that a competent expert should be sent to examine the Coal-pit Heath Mine, both in the interests of the Government and in the interests of the miners and mine. There is also the question of ventilation of the mine. I consider where they have solid workings there should be splits made in the air.

1377. Is not that done?—It has not been done to the extent it should have been done. In fact, if the Mines Act was carried out, the air would be properly managed. When a body of air is carried round perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight places, no man can say it is pure air.

1378. What length are the pillars driven?—Fifty yards. The air at present is sent past the men in blasts, and becomes impure. They carry the whole of the same air round all the faces, and it becomes contaminated. The whole column is driven round, and that supply is for ten, twenty, or thirty men, or whatever number there may be. These men should be supplied with a certain amount of fresh air, and that air should be carried over and not allowed to go into any other places. That has not been done sufficiently in the Brunner Mine. Now the men, instead of getting pure air, are getting powder and smoke.

1379. You use powder there?—Yes, in some places.

1380. *Mr. Moody.*] Are there not brattices used?—Yes; they had to use brattices.

1381. Are there brattices on the bord-ends at all?—There is only one put on the bottom of the incline.

1382. Have you employed any trappers at all here?—I have never seen trappers since I left the Old Country.

1383. You mean the boy to work the air-door?—Yes.

1384. *The Chairman.*] Have you seen much fire in any of the mines?—I have seen gas on several occasions in the Brunner Mine, but not more than you generally find.

1385. Have you been in at the second fault?—Yes, I have worked up to the second fault.

1386. Did the coal thin before you reached it?—There was not a great deal of difference in the coal when I worked up to the fault.

1387. Then you did work up to the fault?—Yes.

1388. You have no knowledge of what like this fault is?—No.

1389. Do you know who had charge of the facings of the new level to the second fault?—I