

know one of the men named John Bayley, who was working the stone drift from the second fault, and the secretary, Mr. Andrew, who was here yesterday. They put the bore-hole down 110ft. or 115ft. I can give you the names of the men. These works have been contracting ever since the amalgamation. In the Coal-pit Heath they are winning the levels there connecting to the main fault.

1390. Is that in consequence of the amalgamation? Do you think that since the amalgamation the fault-proving has been carried on with less vigour than before?—Yes, I do.

1391. Have they done anything in that direction?—Very little that I am aware of.

1392. That is to say, the Grey Valley Company have done nothing?—I will not say “nothing,” but very little. Of course, the Wallsend Mine being now fault-bound, we are off work there at the present time.

1393. You do not know that mine, do you?—I have been in it. I was there after the explosion.

1394. Does the seam look to you the same as ever?—It is a good seam of coal.

1395. Are there not places in it very stony?—There are some parts stony, but there are some parts of the Coal-pit Heath and the Brunner dip very stony. Of course I am not certain regarding the Wallsend, but my opinion is that the reason they have closed the Wallsend is that the principal part of the workings has been under the river-bed, and they would not dare to attempt to work the pillars. There certainly has been a falling-off in the trade since the amalgamation.

1396. Suppose the mines opened out to-morrow, how many men would be out of work?—I should think half the miners. There is only the Brunner Mine and the Coal-pit Heath Mine now. In July, 1889, there were employed at Wallsend seventy-nine men coal-hewing, so they are all thrown out.

1397. *Mr. Brown.*] Do they get work at the other mines?—Some get work, of course, as the work has been shared.

1398. *Mr. Moody.*] In your opinion, has the cost of the coal at the Brunner been more than it ought to be, on account of the great many more day-wage men being employed for the production of the present output?—I should consider the cost has increased.

1399. What are the duties of the deputies?—What we called deputies at Home were the road-men and the timber-men, and what we used to call overmen at Home are called deputies here.

1400. Do the miners get any special pay for setting the timber?—No; that is included in the tonnage price. There is another point with regard to tonnage price, and that is that they are supposed to drag the coals 50 yards and then down the incline another 16 yards.

1401. How did they get their timber-supply?—The timber is put at the flat sheet. The miners do not take possession of it at the bottom of the incline, but at the top.

1402. You have to jig it up. You have to take it round the flat sheet and take it into your face, and then you have to set it?—Yes. Practically speaking it is the trucker's duty, but the miners are expected to do it. I have done better in the Old Country owing to that saving of time.

1403. What wages did you make in the Old Country?—I have had as much as 15s. for eight tons.

1404. Is that screened coal?—No, unscreened coal.

1405. Even though your wages were less at Home, what were they?—The last pay I had in Great Britain was 7s. 2d. for six hours' work. We never worked more than six hours for some years.

1406. Where was that?—In County Durham.

1407. What was contract work?—It was at the rate of 1s. 6d. per ton.

1408. Then you have done better owing to the excess of work thrown on the hewers here that should properly be trucker's work. You have done better at 1s. 6d. per ton than at the present rate?—Yes.

1409. What was the thickness of the seam?—3ft. 8in. to 4ft. at the seam, County Durham. The floor makes a great deal of difference in getting coal.

1410. *The Chairman.*] As to the present difficulty between the miners and employers, can you give us any accurate information about that, and how the Government were asked to make some concession of royalty, or the Railway Commissioners of haulage, or otherwise, so to reduce the cost of coal at the shipping-place, so as to increase the miners' earnings?—As regards the miners' earnings I had better begin and go up to the case. After the amalgamation took place the Newcastle strike began, and a larger number of men were employed. Then, since the Newcastle strike collapsed, the Brunner Mine in December closed one district called the fireclay district, as, of course, the importation of Newcastle coal commenced again. A large number of men had to leave the district. In March of the following year, 1889, the Brunner Mine was closed altogether, and the company then demanded 6d. per ton reduction. The result was that Committee which was held, better known as the West Coast Coalfields Committee (report No. I.—6, 1889).

1411. That was because the company demanded 6d.?—It was partly through the stoppage of the mine and the falling-off of trade which had taken place. The falling-off was to the extent of 24,000 tons for the six months from January to July, 1889, as compared with January to July of 1888. The price of coal had been risen by the amalgamation—that is, to the steamers.

1412. Do you know what extent the rise of price was?—I can give it to you. I gave that evidence before the Committee. The price paid here by the dealers before the amalgamation was 12s. 6d. per ton for round screened coal, and after the amalgamation it was 15s. per ton. Nuts were risen from 7s. 6d. per ton to 9s. per ton.

1413. Then you think in some way the falling-off was due to the action of the company?—The raising of the price would naturally cause a falling-off in the consumption.

1414. Why did they raise the price?—Because they had a monopoly.