

which tends to materially reduce the earnings of the men, and that is that there are constantly men out of places—they are thrown out of places from time to time—from 3 to 5 per cent. of the men.

1571. You mean there are more men on the place than can be employed?—I mean that there are constantly that number of men out, because there are not sufficient places prepared for them.

1572. And is that altogether apart from the extra labour about the place wanting to get in, or the changing of places?—Yes. In the whole coal it would be for want of mine-room, and on the pillars it is for want of places and mine-room, because it seems as if the room was always being curtailed. Why should they be off work if the pillars are not ready?

1573. Is that a defect in the management? Whose business is it to prepare the pillars for work?—It may be sometimes a defect on the part of the management in not setting out sufficient work, or in the miners coming to too close quarters.

1574. Being brought within the limit of safety?—Yes.

1575. That makes short time?—Yes.

1576. Is there any other cause of reduction of earnings?—I have nothing further to state.

1577. *Mr. Brown.*] Tools and lights cost you 6d. per day?—Yes.

1578. Is powder and fuse included in that 6d.?—No; because powder and fuse are taken off the averages you have before you.

1579. It is a previous deduction?—Yes.

1580. Lights you get?—We find lights and tools. It costs very nearly 4d. per day for lights alone, and I am sure you could not allow very much less than 2d. for tools.

1581. *Mr. Moody.*] The company sharpen the tools?—Yes.

1582. Do they repair them?—Not that I am aware of.

1583. What do you think would be a fair price for working the pillars—the price per ton as it comes out in the gross?—I think about 2s. 6d. per ton is a fair price; and, for the Coal-pit Heath, for the pillars, I think 2s. 10d. is little enough.

1584. *Mr. Brown.*] In reference to the accident statement, would it not be fair to take it this way: If the men pay 6d. per week, which 6d. is contributed by them all, it is really 1d. per day, which should be put down as an abatement from the wages, as the payment is spread over the whole, and not merely over the number of accidents?—Yes; that is really the deduction which may be drawn on that point. It is not 3d. per day from all the men.

1585. It would be 6d. per week on every man employed, but the total cost has been 3½d. per day for those who have been hurt?—Yes; that is what is paid in. Then there is another 6d. per week to come off for the doctor; that is 2d. per day altogether.

1586. *Mr. Moody.*] The men pay him a certain amount every year, and he has private practice as well?—Yes.

1587. *Mr. Brown.*] Then the proper deduction is 1d. per day all round for the accident fund and 1d. per day for the doctor?—Yes.

1588. That comes off all hands?—Yes.

1589. *The Chairman.*] What has been the average weekly time of late years, since the amalgamation—how many days a week?—I could not tell that. I know Mr. Kennedy stated to the Premier in Wellington that it was not possible to do an average of four days a week. That is what the union average was in taking the Brunner average for eighteen months and the Coal-pit Heath average for eighteen months. It is not quite eight days a fortnight for the Coal-pit Heath.

1590. *Mr. Moody.*] Was that brought about by the amalgamation, do you think?—No, I do not think so. The causes of that lie more in the harbour and shipping arrangements, also the West Coast weather and the floods in the river.

1591. Are all these holidays made by the miners included in the loss of these two days per week?—I think so. Yes.

1592. Can you tell us what the holidays are?—I have a copy of the miners' rules, which state the holidays. When a meeting is required urgently the manager is asked whether it is convenient to grant an idle day, and oftentimes it is postponed for several days in order to complete a shipping. The holidays which Mr. Moody has asked about are all mentioned in the rules of the Association. The only holidays that the miners take over and above or apart from the general holidays are the 14th June, 18th March, and the two following days after Boxing Day. These holidays were made to enable the men to attend the Dobsontown sports, but since the bridge has been put up there has been no need for them, as the sports have been done away with. Last year one of these days was done away with, as the Association did not recognise both days; they only now recognise one.

1593. *The Chairman.*] How many days do they amount to?—There are ten, including the six general holidays which are recognised all over the colony.

1594. Is there not a week at St. Patrick's Day and another week at Christmas?—It is usual to work all the Christmas week excepting Boxing Day and the 31st December. There are only four holidays recognised apart from the general holidays.

1595. *Mr. Moody.*] I know you are a practical miner, Mr. Robinson. Will you tell me whether it is easier, in your opinion, to work the pillars than the whole coal; and do they make more money at the pillars?—Well, in some of the pillars it is easier work, yet it is more dangerous; but there are exceptions to every rule, and there is certainly an exception to that one.

1596. *The Chairman.*] How do the exceptions arise—from the nature of the coal or from the character of the pillar?—Yes; it may be from the character of the pillar sometimes.

1597. Is there any danger arising from the management, or rather from the manager, not visiting the mine every day, or the Inspector, at what is considered necessary intervals?—The deputy or the charge man examines the mine every day.

1598. At every place?—When the overman does not the deputies do. They are the foremen as well.