

Brunner Mine, 23th July, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—As having some bearing on the question now under consideration of your Association, I may be allowed to inform you that the present uncertainty is causing a permanent loss of trade, as the company are now refusing to renew certain important contracts; indeed, I may say the contracts in question have been the mainstay of the Brunner Mine for some considerable time, and if lost to us the demand for Grey coal for some considerable time, at all events, will be much less than it has been for some time past. And if this is so, it may be affirmed that the need for reductions will be greater than ever. My object in writing you is to suggest that you should, as speedily as may be consistent with proper consideration, give consent for the matters now in dispute being dealt with by a Court of Arbitration. Meantime the work, at least so far as I am concerned, may proceed. Hoping you will consider this matter, and the serious consequences likely to arise from a loss of trade, I am, Sir, yours truly, JAMES BISHOP.—P.S. : I believe I am right in saying that Wallsend Mine may be left out of your consideration, as the company see no hope of carrying it on with the large outlay of capital now required.

Brunner Mine, 30th July, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to have to inform you that your proposal for a settlement of the difficulty as to hewing-rates falls far short of what is required to meet the end. In order to make the position clear to yourself and all concerned, I send you herewith a table showing the working-cost, calculated on the average output obtained from the Coal-pit Heath and Brunner Mines: the Wallsend is left out of consideration. The amount for hewing is calculated at 2d. a ton reduction, in order to see how it would affect the position; and in many items there is reduction, such as overmen, &c. By studying all the items you will see how the total cost is arrived at; but when done I shall be glad if you will be good enough to say how the deficiency is to be met. From my standpoint the hewer can make a very large concession without feeling any bad effects: at all events, it is reasonable to expect the hewers to give way to the extent of the advantage gained by them owing to change from one system to another, the price for gross weight having been fixed on a wrong basis. It has been said the past six months has been a time of exceptional cost: granting this, I see no chance of costs being much reduced during the next six months. Extra pumping-power to apply at Coal-pit Heath, new pumping-power to apply for Brunner dip, and new workings to open up, all involving extra cost, give but poor hope of reducing costs: instead of reducing, additional expense has to be incurred on every hand. And I fear that if the workmen cannot take less than they are now getting the mines cannot be worked. Hoping you will give the matter your careful consideration, and favour me with early reply, I am, Sir, yours truly, JAMES BISHOP.

Brunnerton, 1st August, 1890.—Mr. James Bishop, Mine-manager.—DEAR SIR,—I have to inform you that the proposal for the hewing-price on pillar-work to be reduced 2d. per ton is now withdrawn. Your suggestion for the Association to undertake the working of the mines is under consideration. In regard to the stopping of Wallsend, it is not at all likely any settlement will be arrived at which does not provide for the re-employment of all the men now locked out. It is to be regretted so little consideration was given to the proposed reduction in favour of the company, and the apparent deadlock in negotiations that has now occurred for a settlement on the tonnage-price.—I am, &c., SAMUEL ANDREW, Secretary.

Brunner Mines, 1st August, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew.—DEAR SIR,—I am in receipt of your favour of this day's date, and note you are considering the suggestion for your Association working the mines on contract, including all labour on coal delivered into railway-trucks. Wallsend.—For reasons which I have already explained to you, the stoppage of this mine has been under consideration for a long time, and it is now absolutely forced upon the company. And to say that it is not likely any settlement will be arrived at which does not provide for the re-employment of all the men now unfortunately idle is to my mind importing an element into the dispute which has no right there. The stoppage of this mine has nothing to do with the matters in dispute, and is not being carried out with the object of affecting the result in any way, but I may say, further, that if I had carried out my instructions the stoppage would have been given effect to three months ago, and it was very much owing to my wish to keep all hands going that the mine has been kept open till now. On one hand, we are blamed for having too many hands; on the other hand, we are blamed for reducing hands; although I must say that you are mainly responsible for the large number of extra hands. I do not say that it is a fault on the part of your Association, but we cannot be blamed for what they have insisted upon, much to the injury of the company. As to consideration of the matter now under dispute, surely we cannot be blamed for having failed in this respect. The subject is under constant consideration; and, so far as we are concerned, there need be no such thing as deadlock. I may say, in conclusion, that the company will use their utmost endeavour to provide working-places for the men dispensed with in the Wallsend Mine; but, as you are doubtless aware, there is a large amount of work to be done before this can be accomplished, and progress in this direction is being delayed owing to present uncertainty. Once let this be removed, and the necessary work will be put in hand. Regretting we have not made more progress towards a settlement, and hoping for better things, I am, Sir, yours truly, JAMES BISHOP.—P.S. : In a letter of yours appearing in yesterday's issue of the *Brunner News* you speak of two surface "bosses" at Brunner Mine. As I am not aware of any "boss" on the surface works at Brunner, it may not be asking too much for you to let me have the names of the men you had in your mind at time of writing.

Wallsend, 2nd August, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Grey Valley Coal-miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—I send you herewith a list showing prices that I am prepared to recommend the company to pay for coal-hewing and all attendant labour inside of the Brunner and Coal-pit Heath Mines, the prices so named to include all labour connected with the delivery of coal on to the pit-bank, exclusive of pumping and the underviewer's salary. This offer, I hold, must be appointed by and be paid by the company. In addition to the figures asked for by Messrs. Newton and Phillips, I take the liberty of stating alternative proposals, and I may say the company are prepared to contract for any of the systems; but you will please bear in mind that any proposal discussed by us, or which I may place before you, must be subject to the approval of the directors of the company. Hoping you will consider these proposals favourably, I am, Sir, yours, &c., J. BISHOP.

*Proposals for working Coal at Brunner Mines under a Contract System.*—1. For all coal delivered on pit-bank, the contractor doing all labour except pumping and underviewer, prices as under:—Coal-pit Heath: Pillar-coal, 3s. 4d. per ton gross weight; solid coal, bords and 4s. gross weight, if paid on coal shipped 4s. 2d.; on coal shipped, 4s. 8d. Brunner Mine: Pillar-coal, 3s. 8d. per ton gross weight; solid coal, bords and 4s. 6d. gross weight, if paid on coal shipped 4s. 2d.; on coal shipped, 4s. 8d. 2. For coal delivered into railway-trucks, this contract to include all labour and stores, the company paying mine-management, railage, royalty, my office, price per ton, 5s. 6d. 3. The company will accept the sum of 1s. a ton for use of plant sunk. The contractor to sell the produce as now done by the company. The above offers are made subject to approval of the board of directors.—J. BISHOP, Manager.

Wallsend, 5th August, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Grey Valley Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—Your offer for delivery of coal on to pit-bank from Brunner and Coal-pit Heath Mines has been fully considered, and I find the present offer is a very close adherence to the former offer of 2d. a ton reduction. In reference to this, I think I may venture to say that none of your members who have experience of the work in question can conscientiously say that 2d. a ton is a fair concession to make, and if I am right in this I hold it is their duty to deal with the question fairly, and make such concession as will give the company some chance of carrying on operations, and at the same time allow good pay to be earned. With every desire to see the matter speedily and amicably settled, I regret cannot recommend acceptance of your offer, but submit the following for your consideration: 3s. 8d. Coal-pit Heath pillars, 4s. 1d. Coal-pit Heath solid; 3s. 6d. Brunner pillars, 4s. 6d. Brunner solid (all offers made subject to company's approval).—Yours, &c., J. BISHOP.

Brunner Mine, 7th August, 1890.—Mr. Samuel Andrew, Secretary, Miners' Association.—DEAR SIR,—I have forwarded wire in reference to your proposed deputation to Wellington. Answer will be sent you soon as it arrives. In thinking over the subject since our interview I must say that I have no confidence in any concession being obtained from Government or railway authorities; but, taking this view, I can only urge upon the members of your council the necessity for coming to some decision on the proposals now before them. Persistent agitation