

301. And in the Extended Mine?—No serious accidents were reported to me from there. Wilcox and Conn were burnt. I only got the information when I asked the manager for it.

302. You wrote to Mr. Fletcher for a return of the cases of burning during the last two years—that was in January?—Yes.

303. Have you any reason to suspect that that list is not correct?—No.

304. You report every month to the Under-Secretary for Mines?—Yes.

305. Your report contains a summary of your inspections of the various mines for the previous month?—Yes.

306. Have you found gas in the working-places in Ralph's Mine?—Never.

307. And have you made a thorough inspection of the working-places?—Not with a safety-lamp.

308. Have you used the ladders and examined the working-places?—Yes.

309. And you never found gas there?—No.

310. Have you examined the old workings?—I have.

311. Have you found gas there?—Yes.

312. In large or small quantities?—On one occasion 212 cubic feet, and in another place on the same day somewhere about 550 ft. It was a gaseous mixture, with a percentage of about 6 per cent.

313. How many times did you discover gas in the old workings since January last?—Speaking from memory, about three separate times.

314. Was that gas cleared away?—Yes; one time I might have found it and the next time I would not.

315. In May you wrote to Mr. Fletcher asking him to water the coaldust: that was because of inconvenience caused by the dust to the men?—Yes, I thought it was unreasonable to expect a boy to work there.

316. On the 11th July you wrote again to Mr. Fletcher pointing out the danger from coaldust, and asking him to appoint shot-firers and to water the coaldust?—That is so.

317. You had not prior to the disaster any knowledge of the extreme inflammability of the coaldust in this mine?—No.

318. And with your experience that the directions you gave in regard to watering the dust and the appointment of shot-firers were sufficient to secure the safety of the men in the mine?—Yes.

319. I understand that you met Mr. Reed at the Thames about the 5th September of this year?—Yes.

320. Was it arranged that he should come to the Thames to see you?—He came to the Thames to attend a conference with Warden Burgess, Inspector Paul, and myself to inquire into an application for a loan which was made by one of the gold-mining companies. Also, it was understood that should I be advised that there was a reasonable chance of my securing a conviction against the Taupiri Coal-mines (Limited) in reference to Ralph's Mine, he was to assist me with the prosecution. He had also arranged to make a visit of inspection to the mines in the North Island.

321. Was that inspection made?—No.

322. Do you know why not?—I understood from Mr. Reed that he had to hurry back to the West Coast in connection with the State coal-mines.

323. Were you aware of the memoranda which had passed between Mr. Reed and the Under-Secretary in regard to Ralph's Mine?—No.

324. Did Mr. Reed ever impress upon you his fears of the dangerous condition of Ralph's Mine?—We had conversations on the subject, but as I had a more perfect knowledge of the conditions of the mine I regarded my opinion as superior to his, and I had no authority to accept any instructions from him. Unless there were any instructions from the Under-Secretary I preferred my own opinion.

325. I think the inspection of the old workings which was commenced some years ago was undertaken at your suggestion?—Yes.

326. To Mr. Fletcher?—Yes.

327. In your inspections of the mine did you measure the quantity of air passing through it?—Yes.

328. In your opinion was the ventilation in Ralph's Mine adequate?—Yes.

329. Is there anything further going to be done by the company in regard to ventilation?—Yes, the manager notified me early in the year of his intention to sink an air-shaft at Ralph's and to install a powerful ventilating-fan.

330. In regard to the disaster, can you form any opinion as to the amount of gas in the place where Martin was on the morning of the accident?—I am of opinion that in that cut-through in No. 6 bord, beside where Martin's body was found, and which communicates with the old fall in No. 5 bord, was the only accumulation of gas in that section of the mine, and that caused the disaster. There was probably 2,000 cubic feet of gaseous mixture—perhaps less than 2,000 cubic feet.

331. Have you formed any opinion as to which way Martin got into No. 6?—I am thoroughly convinced that Martin entered through the little door at the head of No. 6 bord, going through the main haulage-road and through No. 5 section. My reasons for saying this are that there were other workmen found close by Martin's body just outside the brick stopping. I do not think he came in from the Little dip section, because the examining deputy had only reached a point further back near No. 3 pump, and the boys, Brownlie and another, who went round to bring the rails, got scarcely to the point between the intake and the return on the old horse level, and from that point to where Martin's body was found is a very considerable distance, and it is not likely that he could have been that far ahead of the boys.