

1002. You have not the right to say. His Worship might have been called upon to say so ?—In my opinion they are most serious accidents.

1003. Which are ?—Any burnings by gas-explosions by which men are kept off work two or three weeks. I consider it most serious.

1004. You consider it ought to have been reported ?—Yes.

1005. Mr. Fletcher took a different view ?—Yes.

1006. Now, then, Mr. Fletcher having exercised his intellect, and having taken a different view, where is the evidence of concealment ?—The evidence is that he never reported it in proper manner, and was liable to be punished for it.

1007. That is, assuming that it was held to be a serious case ; but if Mr. Fletcher considered in good faith that it was not serious enough, where is the concealment ?—He nevertheless concealed these burnings.

1008. He did not report it. You say that the fact that he did not report it because he did not think it was serious was a concealment ?—I do.

1009. Why, sir, I might as well suggest that Mr. Reed concealed his colliery experience because he did not tell it to us ?—He should have reported it, and the very fact that he did not report it means that he concealed it. I say again that he concealed it. I have proved it. that the concealment occurred.

1010. We have it down to this : that notwithstanding what I have placed before the Commission you still say that Mr. Fletcher deliberately, and with intention to deceive somebody, concealed those cases ?—I say he concealed them ; what his intentions were I do not know, but he concealed that information from the Minister.

1011. Do you say that Mr. Fletcher deliberately and with intention to deceive somebody concealed those cases ?—I shall not say he deliberately concealed them.

1012. You do not say so ?—No.

1013. I am not asking the question as to whether the information reached the Department or not ?—It never did.

1014. I am trying to convince you that there was no concealment of it ?—You cannot convince me.

1015. You are still of opinion that he deliberately—— ?—As facts have proved, he concealed those burnings from the Minister.

1016. Then, non-reporting was concealing ?—Under the conditions, yes, in view of the danger.

1017. Now, you have shown us by all your letters to the Department and the Under-Secretary how uneasy you were. I am only sorry your suggestions were not carried out. I am acting for the company, and also realize that you have made strong statements against the company ?—And I believe them to be true.

1018. Now, can you say that Mr. Fletcher was made in any way acquainted with your opinion as to the extreme danger that existed in Ralph's Mine ?—I do not know.

1019. So far as you are concerned, did you do anything yourself to make him aware ?—No, it was not my duty.

1020. So far as you are aware, was any other person connected with the company made acquainted with your views ?—No.

1021. Did you take steps yourself to make any other person than Mr. Fletcher connected with the company aware of your views ?—I do not understand who you refer to.

1022. Did you take any steps to make any person connected with the company other than Mr. Fletcher aware of your views ?—No, it was not my duty.

1023. Then, so far as your views are concerned, Mr. Reed, there was nothing to bring them to the knowledge of Mr. Fletcher, or any one else connected with the company, except anything that might have come to the Inspector ?—From the Under-Secretary ; that is correct.

1024. Now, sir, we have had all the correspondence between the Inspector and the manager put in, and you have seen it ?—I did not hear their evidence and have not seen it.

1025. There was a letter from the Inspector of Mines dated 30th May, 1914 ; Mr. Fletcher's reply of the 4th June, 1914 ; a note by Mr. Bennie in the manager's report-book dated 2nd July, 1914 ; a letter dated 25th August, 1914, from Mr. Bennie to Mr. Fletcher ; Mr. Fletcher's reply of the 26th August, 1914 ; then a further letter from the Inspector dated the 11th July, 1914 ; and Mr. Fletcher's reply of the 20th July, 1914. I think that is the whole of the correspondence that took place between the Inspector and the manager. Now, then, my question is this : With the exception of anything that appears in that correspondence, there is nothing to acquaint Mr. Fletcher with the fact of your views as to the danger in the mine ?—There is not, unless verbal communication may have taken place between the Inspector and Mr. Fletcher.

1026. There is no evidence of any such verbal communication ?—Oh !

1027. We may take it that neither Mr. Fletcher nor any one connected with the mine had been made aware of your views of the danger in Ralph's Mine ?—I am not aware.

1028. And you will admit that the correspondence does not disclose any such evidence ?—The correspondence mentioned does not. In one of your letters you made the point that safety-lamps ought to be used in the mine ; that was in your letter of the 13th August ?—Yes.

1029. It is quite clear that the company were never recommended to use safety-lamps ?—I do not know what the Inspector of Mines recommended verbally.

1030. Unless there was a verbal recommendation we may take it that no such recommendation was made ?—Except it was made verbally, I have no knowledge of it.

1031. You made reference to the shaft-pillars ; they have nothing to do with the cause of the explosion in the mine ?—But the Commission is empowered to deal with the matter of safety precautions generally. That is included in No. 5 of their order of reference.