

went on for 18 months it is perfectly safe to allow it to continue, while the pillars in question are removed. I say if fire travelled during the assumed 18 months a certain distance, what is to prevent it travelling a further distance on the re-admission of air?"

These extracts should be sufficient to show how utterly unreliable are Mr. Wills' statements.

No. 40. Mr. Wills may yet remember his coming out as an expert (April 15th, 1890) and spending three months at the mines to advise as to the Foord pit, the agent recognizing the very serious nature of the questions at issue (p. 699.) His report does not mention some of the points he dwells now on. He then knew that the Foord pit bottom could not have been cleaned up without the admission of air.

No. 17. He knew that the Store pit, &c., were as effectually sealed as the character of the ground allowed, and that air did not "pour" in at the Fan pit, as the bottom was crushed and closed. This Fan pit was put in his hands September 16th, 1890, but he left it alone till December, when he worked in the bottom coal. Although he now says the leakage of air should have been stopped months ago.

Mr. Wills gave directions when out as an expert in May that he did not think the admission of air a serious matter.

No. 18. Mr. Wills says he assumed charge at the beginning of 1891. He was asked to make suggestions before returning in June to England as to what should be done in his absence. On his return he went down the Foord pit Sept. 16th, 1890, and assumed charge, though he did not go again until Oct. 6th. His salary began then, and he also put in a charge for horse keep at that time although he used a horse from the agent's stable.

No. 12. It is certain the agent never told him "fire did not exist towards the crop," for a restink was evident to the meanest nose.

No. 35-40—Continued. He further says: "At one junction water was turned on in large quantities from the Back mines. I am, he says, convinced intentionally to cause damage." This is a scoundrelly charge which he could not substantiate. The Foord pit is subject to an extra flow of water at certain seasons that cannot be prevented. Much of the crushed surface cannot be drained. It may be well to note that although presumably holding such an opinion of the agent he ventured his reputation by making a further engagement to associate further with such a man. The fact, however, was plain, he had assumed more knowledge than he possessed, and his experience had been too limited for him to realize the nature of the job he undertook so lightly, so to cover up his failure he had to find fault with some one else. He further says "he was hindered, &c." He forgets to say he was not hindered at the Vale in the erection of a coal cutter there as he recommended when he came out