

quently had no knowledge of pit-working and had never been down a pit. They frequently relied entirely on the butty for the proper working of the pit and appointed no agents, viewers or managers to look after the underground working on their behalf. As the Commissioner said in contrasting the probabilities of employment under a charter and employment directly under a colliery proprietor: "To illustrate this by an example taken from one of the more generally known and familiar occupations of workmen, which, let one ask, would be likely to be the preferable system for the employment of labourers in husbandry—the common one of a respectable farmer hiring, managing and paying his own workmen, or a system of contracting with a man of the labouring class to grow him his corn, hay, turnips, beans, etc., and to perform all the labour on the farm at a charter of so much a ton on the produce raised, the farmer having nothing to do with his land but to see that it was not improperly exhausted, leaving the hiring and treating of the labourers to the discretion of the contractor?" To ask the question was to answer it.

The wages generally and all over the country were in those days far below anything known to-day, but the following list of prices paid to holers and pikemen (i.e. hewers or colliers) in the Bilston area are instructive, especially when it is borne in mind that this is for a twelve-hour day and a man only averaged about two hundred days a year