

reported. Of the three fatal accidents, only one—that which happened to William Hewitt, in the Banbury mine, Westport—can be taken into account, for the other two fatalities happened to trespassers in no way connected with the working of the mines, and who had no business in them at all. It is nevertheless much to be regretted that they should have paid the penalty of their lives for their indiscretion, and this should act as a warning to others of the danger of trespassing in coal mines. Mr. Binns made inquiry into both of these accidents, and the graphic description of them given in his appended report of the 31st of January will repay perusal.

Putting these two accidents, therefore, out of the question as affecting the working of the Act, there has been one fatal accident during 1881 for 337,000 tons of coal raised, a rate which I believe will compare favourably with any country in which coal is worked. This fatal accident occurred through a fall of coal, and a full inquiry into the matter is included in Mr. Binns's report, which shows that the accident was not caused by any breach of the Act. And of the six other accidents reported, only one was serious, so that the result of working the coal mines during the year 1881, with reference to accidents, has been much more than ordinarily satisfactory. On the 1st of April last a fatal accident occurred in the Brunner mine to a miner named John Kalka from a fall of coal. As it appeared from the circumstances reported that this accident was caused through neglect to set timber, and the Inspector had shortly before called special attention to the necessity for having timber set wherever required, Mr. Binns laid an information against the under-viewer of the mine for neglecting to see that timber was used where necessary for safety. Owing apparently to insufficient evidence, although it was admitted that there had been neglect of duty or error of judgment somewhere, the case was dismissed; but no doubt the prosecution will nevertheless, as Mr. Binns remarks, have a good effect. A full report of this inquiry will be found in paper No. 4 in the appendix.

CONCLUSION.

Although so few accidents have fortunately occurred during the past year, the efforts of this department to establish a system of precautions against danger from all causes will in no way be relaxed; but mine owners and managers, and all persons connected with the mines, cannot be too often reminded that this system can only be effectually carried out, and immunity from accidents secured, by constant watchfulness and care by themselves in attending to every detail which may be necessary to avoid danger.

It should especially be borne in mind that a very large proportion of accidents and deaths in mines is attributable to apparently slight causes, arising from neglect to take ordinary precautions, and that there are men who will deliberately expose themselves to such dangers, if they are not prevented from doing so by those in authority over them. Fortunately, however, there are very many managers and other persons immediately connected with the working of the mines, who regard the strictest attention to every possible precaution against accidents as a most inviolable duty, and it is in the anxious and constant care of such men that we recognize the most powerful agent against the dangerous element which must always pervade the progress of this industry.

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