

mediately after this, viz., on the 14th May, I received a letter from Mr. Shore, the manager, asking for exemption from the safety-cages and hooks, on condition that a communication by drive was made. Acting under authority from the head office, I granted this request, on condition that two men were put on to drive at once, but very shortly after the pit was abandoned.

ACCIDENTS.

During 1887 the number of accidents has been as unprecedentedly large as it was gratifyingly small in 1886. Instead of fifteen accidents, injuring fifteen people, none fatally, we had in this Island thirty-one accidents, injuring thirty-four people, four of whom died.

The average number of deaths in this Island for the seven years ending 1886 was 1·857 per annum, while for 1887 the number was, as already stated, more than double. Mr. Inspector Gow has investigated most of the accidents on the West Coast, and has been good enough to send me a list, in order to make up a table for this Island, and enable me to give the death-rate, &c. From all sources I obtain the following table:—

Classification of Accidents during 1887.

Below—				Separate Accidents	Persons injured.
Trucks	...	...	...	6	6
Fall of roof and sides	...	...	...	17	17
Gas explosion*	...	...	...	2	4
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	2	2
				— 27	— 29
Shafts—					
Working	...	...	...	1	1
				— 1	— 1
Above—					
Fall of coal	...	...	...	1	1
Crushed by horse	...	...	...	1	1
Powder	...	...	...	1	2
				— 3	— 4
Total	...	...	...	31	34

In looking at this table it will be noticed that, as compared with 1886, the sixteen additional accidents are due to the following causes. Increases in 1887—trucks below ground, 5; falls of roof and sides, 9; gas-explosion, 1; miscellaneous below, 2; fall of coal above ground, 1; crushed by horse, 1; and powder above ground, 1; total increase, 20. Decrease in 1887—powder below, 1; sinking shafts, 1; trucks above, 2; total decrease, 4. Net increase 16, of which more than half are due to falls.

Another thing that strikes one in looking at the table is the way in which the fatal accidents occurred in the early part of November. After working for twenty-nine months with only one death, we had three men killed in thirteen days. Another noticeable point is the frequency of accidents at the Greymouth Wallsend Mine, thirteen men having been hurt for an output of 53,313 tons, or one for 4,101 tons; at the same rate that would be 119 men injured for the Middle Island. Taking the number of men employed above and below (though all the accidents happened below), we obtain one man injured out of every eleven employed. In the Kaitangata Mine they have in five years raised 242,064 tons of coal, and employed 588 men, for an accident-list of one killed and five wounded. Taking this as six accidents, we obtain 40,344 tons of coal, and ninety-eight men employed, per accident. During the past year only one man was injured.

It is not to be expected that where quantities are so small, as in the coal-production of this colony, a regular average of deaths and accidents should be maintained: thus, in 1886 we had no deaths, and in 1887, four. Taken however over the whole period since mining has been subject to Government control, we have, I do not doubt, a death-rate which will compare favourably with that of any coal-mining country in the world.

REMARKS ON ACCIDENTS.

No. 6. Accident to John Dempster, at the Wairio Coal-mine. This was never reported, as Mr. Knight, the owner of the mine, was in hospital at the time: not, however, that this fact made much difference, for he seemed unaware of any obligation in that direction. Dempster was in charge, and, when some coal fell and injured him somewhat severely.

No. 7. Explosion in the Wallsend Mine, Greymouth. (Separate report of Royal Commission, already published.)

No. 16. Accident to Thomas Smart, whom I saw in the Westport Hospital on the 30th October. He seemed very badly injured, and informed me that a piece of clay fell on him, and that there was no scarcity of timber.

No. 17. J. Stephenson had his hip dislocated by a piece of proud coal. When I saw him he seemed perfectly recovered.

No. 18. This occurred to a boy named David Sneddon, who was working alone at the Mosgiel Colliery in a heading towards the outcrop, where the coal is very soft and traversed by vertical joints. A piece of coal fell from one of these. In my opinion, a boy should not be allowed to work alone below ground. Indeed, General Rule 39 of "The Coal-mines Regulation Act, 1887," of Great Britain enacts that "No person not now employed as a coal- or ironstone-getter shall be allowed to work alone as a coal- or ironstone-getter in the face of the workings until he has had

* The explosion in the Wallsend Mine, which is considered to have been due to coal-dust and gas, is included.