

NUMBER OF MEN.

Curiously enough, notwithstanding the increase of coal, there is a large decrease in the number of men employed, the returns giving 1,171, as compared with 1,311 in 1886. I do not know how to account for this, but on analysing the figures we see that in the Westport field the staff was decreased by 121, at Greymouth and in the Malvern district by eleven each, and in the Kaitangata field by twenty-two. Of course, if a greater quantity of coal can be raised by fewer men it is so much better for the miners and, in a certain degree, for the proprietors. The output per man for 1887 is 393 tons (nearly), as against 328 tons in 1886 and 326 in 1885.

DEATH-RATE.

The death-rate in the Middle Island for last year is abnormally large. The output being 459,910 tons, the number of men employed 1,171, and the deaths 4, the number of tons raised and the men employed per life lost are naturally 114,977 and 293 respectively, or 3.41 per thousand persons employed. In 1886, as there were no fatalities there could be no death-rate, but in 1885 the figures were (for this Island) 133,093 tons per life, and 2.45 lives lost per 1,000 persons; and in 1884, 125,609 tons, and 2.95 lives lost. Since the commencement of inspection in the colony to the end of 1886 the figures were (for the two Islands) 228,191 tons raised per life lost, and 1.413 life per 1,000 persons.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE J. BINNS,

Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary of Mines, Wellington.

No. 4.

Mr. Inspector Gow to the UNDER-SECRETARY of MINES.

Accidents on the Westland and Nelson Coalfields.

SIR,—

Nelson Creek, 24th March, 1888.

I have the honour to make the following report on the several accidents which have occurred and have been inquired into by me during the year ending the 31st December, 1887:—

1. *Brunner Mine*.—On the 10th January Thomas Hope, coalhewer, got his collar-bone broken by a fall of coal through carelessness in not using a sprag.

2. *Wallsend Mine*.—On the 19th February Henry Eckhold was so seriously injured by a fall of coal from his working-face that he died on the 24th March. I visited the mine late at night of the same day, and inspected the spot where the accident occurred. Joseph Carter (Eckhold's mate) pointed out to me where he was standing on a ladder, preparing for a shot near the roof, when the coal fell on Eckhold, who was at the time standing on a plank, cutting in the opposite side of the working-face. Had there been sprags used the accident could not have occurred. There were sprags of various lengths ready for use lying near that working-face. On the day of the accident Eckhold told me that "it was an accident pure and simple." I attended the inquest at the Greymouth Hospital on the 26th March. The jury gave their verdict, "Died from injuries received in Wallsend Mine on the 19th February, and no blame to mine manager or viewers."

3. *Coal-pit Heath*.—On the 7th March Jame Duke was injured by a fall of coal-headings while he was in the act of taking it down. The coal came down quicker than he expected, and injured his chest.

4. *Wallsend Mine*.—On the 25th April James Dunn, William Walker, and Joseph Elliott were more or less burnt by an explosion caused by a blown-out shot. It is only necessary for me to state here that the Governor appointed a Commissioner to inquire into this case, which was done, and fully reported, bearing date the 13th June, 1887.

7. *Coal-pit Heath*.—On the 26th August James Hays got his arm broken while taking down some headings; much more coal came down than he expected, and he did not get out of its way in time.

8. *Brunner Mine*.—George Newton, on the 29th August, when hastily stepping back from his working-face, fell and injured his ankle.

9. *Brunner Mine*.—James Arbuckle, on the 26th October, while taking out pillar-coal, ventured on the wrong side of the standing-props, and was injured by a fall of stone.

10. *Brunner Mine*.—On the 27th October Frank Goodrich, when travelling hastily along the engine-plane from his work, lost his light, and, in order to prevent being run over by the passing trucks while he relit his lamp, placed himself in front of one of the full trucks, resting his back lightly against it, and allowing it to push him along. He had travelled only a short distance in this dangerous position when his feet were caught by something (supposed to have been one of the rollers), causing him to fall, when the trucks immediately passed over him, breaking his leg and crushing him internally. Although the telegraph-wires were within his reach, by which he could have stopped the trucks till he relit his lamp, he did not use them. He is still in the hospital mending slowly.

11. *Coal-pit Heath*.—On the 1st September T. Kirkwood, when descending the pit, carelessly put his elbow through the side of the cage, when it came in contact with some of the framing and was broken.

12. *Coal-pit Heath*.—John Bremner, on the 3rd October, while filling some loose coal, got his arm broken between two tubs.

12. *Wallsend Mine*.—On the 14th October George Rankine, a deputy, got injured by being crushed between a full tub and the wall-side on the second jig. The accident was occasioned by Rankine stepping to the full instead of to the empty side of the way as the tub approached.

13. *Wallsend Mine*.—On the 17th October William Mason, while working in his place, got his foot badly crushed by a fall of coal from the side of a pillar. He had previously tried the place, and thought it quite safe.

14. *Coalbrookdale, Westport*.—On the 15th November Edward Jones was killed very simply while cutting coal to take out bottoms. While working in the cutting a wedge-shaped piece of coal of considerable weight slipped in from the side, crushing his body above the waist, and killed him