

will do it once too often." On Sunday the deceased went down about 9 a.m., having been lowered by his brother, John Statham, in a sling on the rope. Whether he first lowered a candle or not is uncertain, but if so it must have fallen off the rope. To quote the evidence of John Statham: "On arrival at the bottom he stayed there about a minute and called out to me to pull up again. I pulled away as hard as I could until I got him about half-way up the shaft when he fell off the rope. I felt a sort of kick in the rope, and on looking down the shaft saw deceased falling. He seemed to be going head first down. He then lay at the bottom of the shaft about a minute before I could get him up by singing out to him. He then got up and staggered on to his feet and leaned against the side of the shaft for about half a second. After I had attracted his attention by shaking the rope against him he seemed to take hold of the rope in his hand and called out 'Up,' but very slowly. I then pulled him up about 2ft., when he let go the rope again. After repeated calling on my part he paid no attention." After the survivor had run for assistance the body was pulled up by the rope. Scrub was pulled up and down the shaft for the purpose of removing the bad air, but to no purpose. Nobody seems to have thought of pouring water down, though there is a large race flowing within a yard of the pit-top. Possibly it would have been useless, as the foul air came to within 4ft. of the pit-mouth. There is no doubt, in my mind, but that foul air came from an incipient underground fire in the old workings. These were full of water until about six weeks before the accident; then gradually the water was drawn off until three days before the accident, when it rose suddenly in the shaft about 6ft. This was drawn off, and there would be free passage for the products of the slow combustion, which doubtless found their way into the shaft. John Statham described the foul air as smelling like a gob-fire, and John Bailey said it resembled the smell of burning gum-boots. The verdict was accidental death, no blame whatever being attributed to Buckley or the surviving Statham.

While the above inquest was proceeding a man named Thomas Jacob Buckingham was smothered by a fall of dirt in a tunnel near Glentunnel, in Canterbury. The accident was at once reported by telegraph, but I was travelling at the time and did not hear of it until the following day, about 2 o'clock, when I immediately telegraphed to the Coroner respecting the adjournment of the inquest. My message appears to have arrived too late, as the Coroner (Mr. Caleb Whiteford, R.M.) replied that the inquest was over. This without any previous notice or adjournment, and in direct contravention of "The Coal-mines Act, 1886." I arrived at Glentunnel on the morning of the 27th, and made such inquiries as were practicable under the circumstances. The workings consisted solely of an old tunnel, through a small hill on the south side of the Selwyn River, near South Malvern. The drive commenced at a bearing of W. (magnetic) for about 59-yards, having been driven apparently with the intention of cross-cutting the measures. As the dip of these is S. 70° E., the tunnel was at this point bearing 20° too much to the south. Apparently to rectify this the direction was changed to N. 55° W., which brought it nearly as much out in the other direction. Fifteen yards inbye from the bend a fall had occurred, which was the cause of the accident. At the fall the measures appeared to be faulted, and to dip N. 60° E. at 47°, the ordinary dip being only about 20°. This brought the line of the tunnel within 23° of the strike of the measures, and caused the fall.

At about 11.45 a.m. on the 23rd March John Bayles and Buckingham were working at about 74 yards from the entrance, and the latter was pushing in a lath when a fall came and imprisoned him. Bayles attempted to get him out, when another fall occurred, imprisoning both, and had not help been at hand two lives would have been lost, but Bayles was dragged out, and Buckingham covered so thoroughly that it was about 8 p.m. before his body was recovered. The timber was not longitudinally stayed, and when once set free it knocked the rest down like a house of cards. Some props which have been below ground since 1875 were perfectly hard and sound. I am not aware what timber it is, but it is round 6in. or 7in. stuff. I had no idea any one was working on the ground, no notice having been sent.

PROSPECTING.

I am not aware of any important prospecting-works. Last year Mr. Tweedie was working among the jurassic rocks near Fortrose without any commercially-valuable result.

SAFETY-LAMPS.

Most of the mines are now provided with approved lamps of various patterns.

In my supplementary report, dated the 15th April, 1887, an unfortunate error occurs. The conclusion of the report, in referring to safety-lamps, states, "These, therefore, are at present the only lamps which I shall approve. Should any owner or agent desire to use any other type of lamp, with the exception of the tin-can Davy, he can do so by proving to my satisfaction that it is safe." This would intimate that under no circumstances could the tin-can Davy be approved. The words "with the exception of the tin-can Davy" were, as you will observe on reference to the manuscript, sent up as an addendum, with a request that they might be added after "lamps" in line 24; unfortunately they were inserted after "lamp" in line 26, exactly reversing my meaning. If the interpolation be placed after "lamps" the sense is at once apparent, as follows: "These, therefore, are the only lamps, with the exception of the tin-can Davy, which I shall approve." As a matter of fact, the Davy, when properly protected, is one of the safest lamps known.

OUTPUT OF COAL.

The output of coal for the Middle Island during 1887 was 459,910 tons, as compared with 430,160 tons for 1886, being an increase of 29,750 tons, or 1,130 tons less than the increase for the previous year. The principal alterations in the outputs of collieries are as follows:—

Increases.—Wallsend-Greymouth, 51,808 tons; Coalbrookdale, 40,333 tons; Mosgiel, 3,304 tons; Fernhill, 3,119 tons; and St. Helens No. 2, 1,830 tons.

Decreases.—Koranui (closed), 44,170 tons; Coal-pit Heath, 10,259 tons; Brunner, 8,558 tons; Shag Point, 4,250 tons; St. Helens No. 1 (closed), 3,531 tons; Brockfield, 2,551 tons; Saddle Hill, 1,748 tons; Springfield, 1,537 tons; and Walton Park, 1,480 tons.

Increases.—Greymouth Coalfield, 31,684 tons; and Green Island Coalfield, 3,784 tons.

Decreases.—Westport Coalfield, 3,837 tons; and Malvern Coalfields, 3,601 tons.