

1892.
NEW ZEALAND.

COAL-MINES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORTS ON, BY INSPECTORS OF MINES).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

M. H. A. GORDON, F.G.S., Inspector of Mines, to the UNDER-SECRETARY of MINES.

SIR,—

Mines Department, Wellington, 31st March, 1892.

I have the honour, in compliance with section 67 of "The Coal Mines Act, 1891," to transmit, for the information of the Hon. the Minister of Mines, my annual report on the coal-mines during the year ending the 31st December, 1891.

OUTPUT FROM THE MINES IN THE COLONY.

During last year the total output from all the mines in the colony was 666,276 tons. Of this quantity 104,064 tons is from mines in the North Island and 558,212 tons from mines in the Middle Island; but there is included in the table annexed 6,518 tons which was omitted from the previous year's statement through the mine owners having failed to forward the returns in time for publication; therefore the table shows the output for this year as 668,794 tons, or an increase over the former year's output of 31,397 tons; but had all the returns for 1890 come to hand, the output for that year should have been 643,915 tons instead of 637,397, as was shown for that year. Therefore the actual increased output last year was only 22,361 tons over the output for the former year.

ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

There were no accidents last year in the North Island mines, but there were seventeen in the coal-mines in the Middle Island. Nine of these occurred in the Coalbrookdale Mine—namely, five accidents below ground and four above ground; two in the Brunner Mine, two in the Kaitangata Mine, and one each in the Waimangaroa, Shag Point, Coal Creek, and Coal-pit Heath Mines, which resulted in four of them being fatal. Three of these were in the West Coast mines—namely, Brunner, Coalbrookdale, and Coal-pit Heath, and one at Coal Creek in Otago. Three men got their legs broke and one man got his arm broke. The rest of the accidents were not of a serious character. No blame can be attached to any one in connection with these accidents, with the exception of the one occurring to Thomas Kennedy. A great deal of carelessness is displayed by the workmen themselves, and in some instances they are foolhardy, running into danger when a little forethought would have prevented it. The large number of accidents at the Coalbrookdale Mine is most likely due to inexperienced men being about the mines, who, in many instances, will not carry out the instructions given them with regard to carrying on the mining operations with safety; and unless the miners themselves strictly adhere to the rules for the working of the mines it is impossible for the Inspectors to guard against an immunity of accidents.

The following are the mines personally inspected by me:—

MOKAU.

The system of working the coal in the Mokau Mine is greatly improved since my previous visit of inspection. The main heading is carried through the solid coal, and the ventilation is good. The Act is not strictly complied with in every respect in regard to having plans of the workings at the mine, but a survey of the workings has been made, and a plan is in course of preparation. The coal is getting much harder and of better quality as the workings get further underneath the hill. On my previous visit there was a band of shale in the centre of the seam from 2ft. to 2ft. 6in. in thickness, but this is gradually getting thinner, and is likely to cut out altogether as the workings go under the hill. The average number of men employed in and about the mine for the past year has been about nine, and the output of coal has been 2,773 tons. On examining the company's books at their office at New Plymouth I find that 1,072 tons of coal have been sold from the mine between the 1st October, 1891, and the 31st March, 1892, but the company had not paid any contribution