

Taupiri Extended.—This company's mine has been steadily worked during the year, and although the output has not been as large as the previous year, yet the manager is sanguine that the year 1899 will be more prosperous, and is vigorously pushing on prospecting-works in the shape of boring on the property to the north of No. 2 shaft, and also extending a cross-cut drive at the low level for the purpose of opening up a section of coal to the north of the present workings, which has been proved by boring to contain a large quantity of coal that will pay to work. Operations on the coal are proceeding as usual. The level and headings are taken in about 7 ft. high, and the bords from 16 ft. to 24 ft. in height, and, as the seam is from 20 ft. to 50 ft. in thickness, there is ample coal left in on the roof to keep the mine secure. Bore-holes are also put up every 5 yards in the roof of the workings to ascertain if not less than 9 ft. of coal is left in on the roof. The ventilation in the mine is good, and on our last visit everything in connection with the mine was in good order, and safe. The output of coal for the year ending 1898 was 28,721 tons, being a decrease of 5,192 tons compared with the previous year. There were seven accidents in the mine, none of which may be considered of a serious nature. There were seventy-seven men employed in and about the mine the first six months of the year, but this number has been reduced to ten men above ground and twenty-eight men below.

The Taupiri Reserve.—The operations in this company's mine are directed in opening up the low level from the bottom of the incline shaft. The main level is being driven in a south-westerly direction under Lake Kimihia. The seam continues about its average thickness, and from 8 ft. to 16 ft. in height is being taken out in the level and bords. The coal is softer in some of the bords than could be desired. Still, I am informed the seam at this level is opening up even better than was at first anticipated. The manager has been making considerable improvements on the screens on the bank-head for screening the coal, which will be the means of effecting a great saving in labour, and by working the mine with economy he is sanguine of making the mine pay during the year that has been entered upon, if nothing unforeseen happens. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 15,874 tons, a slight decrease compared with the previous year. The ventilation in the mine was good, and the mine safe. Eleven men were employed above ground and twenty-nine below. There were seven accidents happened in this company's mine in the early part of the year, but none of a serious character.

Ralph's Taupiri Coal-mine.—This company resumed operations in their mine in the month of May last, and commenced to put coal on the market about the end of the following month, and for the six months ending the 31st December, 1898, succeeded in disposing of 12,725 tons of coal. The operations in the mine are confined to working the coal in that portion of the company's property under the bed of the Waikato River. The shaft is only 190 ft. in depth, but as the seam is 65 ft. thick, and from 7 ft. to 20 ft. of the coal from the bottom of the seam only is taken out, it leaves a great thickness of coal overhead, apart from the covering on the top of the coal; and the manager has been instructed to use every precaution, by putting bore-holes 9 ft. up into the roof every 5 yards in the headings and bords, to ascertain if the seam is thinning out, and also to prevent, if possible, not less than 9 ft. of coal being left overhead whilst working under the bed of the river. The coal, of the kind, is of an excellent quality, and the prospects of the company are encouraging. The ventilation was good and the mine safe when last inspected. Ten men were employed above ground and forty men in the mine. A miner named James Evans met with a slight accident, getting his hand jarred.

Mokau Mine.—This mine was worked in the early part of the year by a syndicate or company, but as it did not prove a payable concern, and as there was some difficulty about money to carry on with, work in the mine was stopped for three months, and at the end of that time another syndicate made arrangements to work the mine, who, I am informed, are so far more successful in making it pay. The s.s. "Douglas" is running direct to the mine, making from four to six trips a month, and carrying from 70 to 90 tons of coal each trip. When the mine was inspected on the 17th November ten men were employed in and about the mine. This mine has not been worked as well as could be desired. The pillars are too small, more especially as the seam of stone (or fireclay) in the centre of it, which varies from a few inches to 1 ft. in thickness, fritters away when exposed to the air. The ventilation also was not as good as required, but William Tattley, jun. (the new manager) promised to have those matters rectified with as little delay as possible. The output of coal for the year 1898 was 3,395 tons, being an increase of 247 tons compared with the previous year.

Fernside Mine, Mokau.—This is a new mine that has been started during the year, and is situated about half a mile up the river from the Mokau Coal-mine. A level has been driven in from the side of the hill on the coal for a distance of 400 ft., and the seam has varied from 3 ft. to 5 ft. 6 in. in thickness. Very little timber is required, as the roof is good. The manager has now commenced to drive a back heading on the coal to procure ventilation, which he expects to complete in the course of a few weeks. There are only three men employed yet, but they are sending away now about 150 tons of coal a month. The output of coal last year was 657½ tons.

Bombay Mine.—There has been very little work done in this mine during the year, only 6½ tons of coal being obtained in the early part of the year, and operations ceased in the month of April last. The output of coal for the year being 6½ tons, was a decrease of 18½ tons compared with the previous year.

ACCIDENTS IN COAL-MINES.

5th January.—Taupiri Reserve: A miner named Herbert Tribe cut his foot with an adze.

21st February.—Taupiri Extended: Thomas McQuillam received an injury to his leg by a piece of coal.

22nd February.—Taupiri Reserve: Robert Muir had his eye injured by a piece of coal that flew from the pick.

8th March.—Taupiri Reserve: Jonathan Columbine had his side injured by falling on a truck.