

Mr. JAMES FLETCHER, Manager of the Seddonville State Coal-mine, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Mines Department, Wellington.

SIR,—

Seddonville, 1st June, 1908.

I have the honour to submit my annual report on the working of the Seddonville State Coal-mine for the year ending the 31st March last.

OUTPUT.

The quantity of coal won from this colliery during the year was 48,788 tons 14 cwt., an increase of 5,500 tons over the preceding year.

It is pleasing to remark that since the establishment of the briquette-works at Westport, which commenced in earnest six months ago, the fine small coal hitherto run to waste has all been utilised for the manufacture of briquettes and eggettes. There is no doubt that when these become better known as a household fuel, all the fine coal resulting from the screenings, together with coal from "soft areas," will be made marketable.

DAYS WORKED.

The mine for the year worked 255½ days, being twenty-five days below the possible. The loss of these days was in no way attributable to the want of trade, but solely to bad weather disorganising the shipping arrangements.

The average days worked per fortnight was nine days six hours, the miners' daily average wage 14s. 8d., showing one day five hours per fortnight, and 7d. per day respectively, better than the preceding period.

The total number of men and boys employed in and about the mine was ninety-two.

There were no accidents of any serious character to report during the year.

UNDERGROUND WORKINGS.

The greater proportion of the output was won chiefly from what is known as Dove's section, and the balance from the west and south-east districts, north of Chasm Creek.

In December last coal-winning operations had to be temporarily suspended in Dove's section through roof troubles, although the output from it was diminishing. The area of coal has not proved to be so extensive as at first anticipated, the workings being circumscribed by faults and granite intrusions, which reduced the working-area to about 3½ acres. Of course, there is 30,000 tons of excellent and hard coal standing in pillars yet, which will be extracted as soon as the roof troubles cease.

In the south district, and on the east side of the main tunnel, where the working-places have approached the "pinch out," a commencement has been made to bring back the standing pillars of coal to a line (shown on Plan). When these places were driven in the solid the coal was of exceptional quality, and therefore the extracting of these pillars will yield a similar quality.

UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENTS.

There is an area of ground—approximately 35 acres in extent—shown on plan as "New Area," with several outcrops of coal outcropping on the north bank of Chasm Creek. On one of these outcrops a short prospecting drive was put in, and excellent coal, with a height of 15 ft., was proved.

To open and develop this area it was necessary to construct an outside horse-tramway—7 chains in length, from the terminus of an existing level in the south workings, which holed to the daylight. This tramway was completed in January last, and the main winning heading has advanced into the field 35 yards.

It is a matter of impossibility to estimate the extent of hard coal in the area; this can only be obtained by the future developments; but from the appearance of the operations already undertaken, there is a good prospect of a considerable area of excellent coal, superior to any that has been worked in this colliery previously.

EXPLORATION.

The operations referred to in the previous annual report dealing with the boring of the field in advance of the workings south of Chasm Creek have been completed, and proved that portion of the field to be non-coal bearing. Six bore-holes in all were put down, the first, as reported before, only proving 7½ ft. of coal mixed with fireclay bands; the remaining five all struck the granite formation, and at a greater depth than the level of the coal-seam worked adjacent thereto.

To further test the coalfield, attention was directed to the "Upper Flat Area," containing about 200 acres, lying immediately to the south-west of the bins, and which had been approached in a north-easterly direction by workings of the late Cardiff Colliery Company. Three sites for boring were selected, one in close proximity to the bins, the other two westward of the outside portion of the main haulage incline, and distant from one another 30 chains. These three bore-holes, after going a depth of 133 ft., 201 ft., and 276 ft. respectively, proved the area barren of coal, in each instance the granite formation being struck.

These boring-results prove that the field is in a broken and disjointed state, and that coal, wherever found, is only in patches of restricted areas, thus causing greater expense to open and develop, also giving no chance for systematic working, as is in the case with the coal-seam of a regular continuity.

To test the quality of the coal in an area to the east of the main tunnel a small prospecting-drive was commenced at a point near the ventilating-shaft. After driving fully 90 yards, the coal was very thin, soft, and much faulted, and, in view of the prospects not being encouraging enough, the prosecution of this drive was discontinued.