

The provisions of section 10 of the Act, requiring that a second outlet to the surface shall be made under certain conditions, have now been complied with in all coal mines to which this section applies.

As stated in last year's report, in accordance with the decision of the Government, the inspection of mines under "The Regulation of Mines Act, 1874," has not been extended to mines other than coal, the gold mines at the Thames and adjoining districts being inspected by Mr Inspector McLaren under "The Gold Mining Districts Act, 1873", and his report upon these mines is included in the annual report upon the gold fields.

The question of providing for certificated managers of coal mines (which is not included in the present Act), referred to in my report of last year, and by Mr. Masters, M.H.R., during last session, is further referred to in Mr Binns's report. If the holding of certificates of competency by managers were made compulsory, I certainly think that managers competent to pass the necessary examinations should be enabled to obtain certificates in the colony, in order that they may be upon an equal footing in this respect with managers holding Home certificates.

STATISTICS, ETC.

There is a further increase in the number of coal mines recorded, the total number accounted for this year being 6 in the North and 101 in the South Island, but, as stated last year, many of those in the South Island are upon a very small scale, being either open-work or prospecting mines, and some of them being temporarily abandoned, and the additional number placed upon the list this year are at present of the same unimportant character

The usual tabular statement of the particulars of the coal mines, giving also the total output from the various mines for the year 1880, and the approximate total output from the coal mines in the colony to the end of 1880, is contained in Return No. 1 to the appendix. From the appended statement of the Secretary of Customs (Return No. 2) of coal imports and exports for the year 1880, it will be observed that 123,298 tons of coal were imported during the year, being 34,778 tons less than the quantity imported in 1879. Then by adding the total output (299,923 tons) for the colony during 1880 to the quantity imported (123,298 tons), and deducting the export (7,021 tons) during the same period—assuming, as I have done in former reports, that the remainder has been consumed here—the total consumption in the colony during 1880 would be 416,200 tons, or an increase over the consumption of 1879 of 34,101 tons, the increase of coal won from mines in the colony during 1880 being 68,705 tons over the quantity raised in 1879, or an increase of 137,705 tons over the produce of the mines in 1878, the total production for each of the past three years, and the relative quantity imported, being as follows:—

	Raised in the Colony.	Imported.
1878	162,218 tons	174,148 tons
1879	231,218 tons	158,076 tons
1880	299,923 tons	123,298 tons,

which shews that there has been a steady increase in the quantity raised and consumed in the colony, and a correspondingly steady decrease in the quantity imported. With this evidence under present circumstances before us, it may safely be assumed that, with increased facilities in the way of transit from the mines, their development and the consumption of our own coal will soon be so far extended that importation will no longer be necessary; and, although the export of coal is at present very small, we may hope that as soon as more is produced than is required in the colony, a market will be found to take the surplus, and increase the export trade.

ACCIDENTS.

Return No. 3, following the appendix, contains a table of accidents in coal mines, and shows that twenty persons were more or less injured (the majority very slightly), and that there were two fatal accidents during the year. These casualties all occurred in the South Island, and they are reported by Mr. Inspector Binns, who points out that the two fatal accidents represent a rate of one death