

ordered to be closed, in order to insure the safety of some forty men working in places more or less affected by the system adopted in this part of the mine.

Mr. Binns reports that safety lamps are now used in the rise workings of the Brunner mine, where he saw a small blower of gas in October last, and that one place in the Kaitangata (No. 1) mine—formerly known as “Shore’s”—is always worked with locked safety lamps whenever there is any sign of gas, which is said to have been observed there occasionally. It will also be seen that the adjoining mine, in which the explosion of 1878 occurred, continues to be worked carefully and successfully.

In order to satisfy the Inspector of the accuracy or otherwise of the mine plans, Mr. Gordon, the Inspecting Engineer in the Mines Department, has made special check surveys of the Coalpit-heath, Brunner, and Westport Company’s (Banbury) mines, and he will continue to make such surveys when required.

Quartz Mines.—The inspection of the West Coast quartz mines at Reefton, Boatman’s, and Lyell, which was at first regarded by the managers as a species of Court of Inquisition, has been successfully continued by Mr. Binns, who spent several days at Reefton in conference with a committee appointed by a meeting of managers, and afterwards with the whole of the managers, which resulted in matters being amicably and satisfactorily arranged, and the establishment of special rules, under section 31 of the Act, the greater number of which will be found published in the *New Zealand Gazette* of the 25th of May, 1883. The report of the inspections of these mines, showing that much has been effected since the mines were brought under the Act, will be found in the appendix with the other reports. As Mr. Binns represented that the time occupied in inspecting these mines (which are increasing in number and importance) would interfere with the due performance of his duties with respect to the coal mines, he has been relieved of the inspection of the quartz mines, the duty now devolving upon Mr. Gordon, who has been appointed an Inspector of Mines under the Act for the Westport District, in order that he may undertake the inspection of these mines in the course of his other duties as Inspecting Engineer. I regret, with Mr. Binns, the necessity for his giving up this work, as his reports will show that he has given close attention to and exercised wise judgment in the matter; but I have no doubt that Mr. Gordon, with his special experience of gold fields, will thoroughly well continue the work which Mr. Binns has so ably begun. While upon this subject I should repeat—in order to make the matter clear—my statement of last year, that these are the only gold mines which have been brought under the Regulation of Mines Act, the auriferous quartz mines at the Thames and Coromandel being inspected by Mr. McLaren under “The Gold Mining Districts Act, 1873,” and those at the new Te Aroha field by Mr. Wilson, the reports upon these mines being contained in the Appendix of the annual report upon the gold fields.

STATISTICS, ETC.

In a rising colony like ours, in which the development of its mineral resources, concurrently with the growth of trade, becomes every year of more importance, this section of the report must be one of special interest, and it is therefore gratifying to observe that during the past year enterprise in the direction of prospecting and increasing the producing power of the coal mines, and in reducing the difficulties of transit to and from the mines, has been such as to effect substantial results, and to justify the belief that during the present year much greater strides will be made in the progressive development of this industry.

The number of coal mines has again undergone official adjustment. Some of the smaller ones in the Middle Island, being worked out or abandoned, have been struck off the list, and others have been added, the number in the Middle Island now standing at ninety-one, or eight less than last year, and in the North Island five, the same as last year. As usual, those which have been struck off the list were chiefly prospecting drives or mines of no importance, and their deduction does not affect the general question of development, as the larger mines appear to have absorbed more than the labour scattered over these small mines, the total number of men ordinarily employed during the past year showing an