

ACCIDENTS.

During the year 1883 the accidents in the coal mines of this Island numbered sixteen, or exactly twice as many as during the previous year; but, of these, only two were fatal, and of the remaining fourteen three were very trifling, and one is merely included because the man happened to be on mining premises at the time.

The following necessary particulars are given (the numbers refer to the list given later):—

2. The fatal accident to McNally was referred to last year, and reported on by Mr. Cox, whose remarks are in the possession of the department.

3. On the 8th May, 1883, William Espie broke his leg in the Kaitangata Mine by falling over a rail; the limb had been previously injured.

4. On the 1st June, 1883, J. R. Jones, owner of the Cambrian's Openwork Lignite Mine, had just fired a shot, when by some means about 10lb. of powder contained in a keg close to him exploded; as the explosion blinded him, he had great difficulty in avoiding the shot, which went off almost immediately. He was blind for a fortnight.

5. On the 9th June, at Kaitangata (No. 1) Mine, Wm. White, banksman, was standing behind a tub of slack, which was being drawn up a short incline on the surface, when the chain broke, causing the tub to run back on him. This accident was due to the want of a drag. Two ribs were fractured.

6. On the 5th July, 1883, at the Brunner Mine, Colin Williamson was so seriously injured by a fall of coal that he was not expected to recover. I therefore went over at once and made inquiry, but could not find that blame was attributable to any one. Williamson is getting better, I am glad to say.

7. On the 16th July, 1883, at the Wallsend (Greymouth) sinking-pit, a man slipped on a piece of frosty wood and broke his leg. It speaks highly for Mr. Harrison's conduct of the very hazardous operations carried on at this mine that no other accident occurred.

9. On the 3rd August, 1883, at the Smithfield Colliery, Henry Ball, lessee, had his leg broken by a piece of coal, which he said flew off; fortunately he was standing at the time, and escaped with slight injuries.

14. On the 27th November, 1883, Andrew McIvor was killed by a fall of coal in the Brunner Mine. The inquest was adjourned for my attendance, and the following are the particulars: The bord was 8ft. 3in. in height, but reduced to 7ft. by a heap of slack, and 18ft. 7½in. in width. The roof exceptionally good, except just above the place whence the coal fell; but this does not seem to have caused the accident. Thomas McIvor, a younger brother, was endeavouring to get a piece of coal down, when deceased—who, though only twenty years of age, was a first-class miner, and usually very careful—said he would get it for him; unfortunately he stood at the low side, and when the coal fell he was unable to get clear, and was crushed against the side. This was one of those lamentable occasions when a moment's injudicious action costs a valuable life. Deceased was unmarried. The verdict was "Accidental death," with the following rider: "The jurors desire to have it recorded that no blame can be attached to the management of the mine for the accident; and, further, that a local inspector of mines should be appointed to act as deputy to the Inspector when it is not convenient for him to attend after accidents." In consequence of this, Mr. Gow was appointed, under section 38.

15. On the 30th November, 1883, at the Picton Colliery, Peter Marbella, having applied a light to a shot, in a heading at a short distance from the pit bottom, commenced to ascend the shaft in a bucket. When about 8ft. from the bottom the bucket capsized, and Marbella was thrown out and slightly injured. Mr. Hutcheson, the manager, described the accident as "trivial;" but, in my opinion, there must have been something very faulty in the bucket or tackle. I was unable to investigate the accident. Mr. Hutcheson wrote subsequently that a ladder was placed in the shaft and men prohibited from riding in the bucket.

16. On the 19th December, 1883, T. Samuels was injured by a fall of stone at Shag Point. He said it was his own fault. The only injury was a broken jaw.

CLASSIFICATION OF ACCIDENTS DURING 1883.

Below, 11; above, 4; shaft, 1: total, 16. Falls of roof and sides, 9; miscellaneous in shaft, 1; trucks above, 1; trucks below, 1; powder, 1; miscellaneous above, 2; below, 1: total, 16.

In addition to the ordinary mining accidents, there are generally some occurring about mines which, though not included in the list, or death-rate, are worthy of notice. The following is of this class: "On the 15th August, 1883, a boy named Daniel Wouldes, aged ten, was sent down from the top of the Westport incline by a storekeeper, and (to quote Mr. Elliott's report) came to the bottom of the incline on his way to the top of the hill. The man who is in charge at the bottom told him he must not ride in the wagon. The boy insisted, and got in the empty all right, until the wagon stopped on the long trestlework, a considerable time; . . . from this no one knows or can tell how he got to the next trestlework, but he was found under it, just above McDonald's Hill: this was the last wagon at night. About 6 o'clock the parents of the boy missed him and went in search all along the incline, and could not find him until 12 o'clock at night, under the second trestlework, with one leg cut off, quite dead." It is not a pleasant picture, and I insert it to call attention to the incline-man (T. Sherlock), who stated that a child of ten "insisted" on riding on a wagon, when he was forbidden. It is quite possible that, even if he had not ridden, he would have been killed; as the probability is in favour of his having been overtaken (while walking) by the wagon.