

below-ground in the thick seam. The places seemed well driven, and lines were used. Reports were duly kept. During last year the output decreased from 13,301 tons to 5,100 tons, or at the rate of more than 60 per cent.

96. *Orepuki Coal-mine, Orepuki*.—During 1885 this new colliery put out a little over 2,000 tons of coal; but the railway was opened only in May. Unfortunately, in June it was the scene of an accident which resulted in the death of the manager, and which is described under the proper heading. When visited the mine seemed in good order, but there was only one outlet. A wrong sort of Special Rule had been distributed. No weekly report on the machinery had been kept. The head-gear is very badly designed, and gives very little play between the top of the rope-cap and the pulley-centre when the cage is up: it was therefore arranged that men should leave the cage at a lower level.

Prospecting.

During the year 1885 the usual amount of prospecting has been carried on.

The operations at Mount Hamilton were referred to last year, and there is nothing new to report.

The coal-field at Kanieri, near Hokitika, which has been known for sixteen years, has again attracted attention; and in November, 1885, I visited the field, having been instructed to do so with the object of advising the Coal-prospecting Association as to the best locality for commencing permanent works. The country in the vicinity of the formerly-known outcrops is exceedingly rough and broken, and I did not see any chance of success just there; so I recommended that an effort should be made to find a permanent seam further to the south, about Koiterangi. This was acted upon; and in April last I revisited the locality and examined some outcrops which had been discovered. The most likely one was a seam 3ft. 6in. in thickness, but containing two bands of soft shale each about 4in. in thickness, and occurring at a height of about 1,300ft. above the flat. As this seam dips at 5° to the south-east it may be found nearer the level ground; and, at my suggestion, the efforts of the prospectors will be directed to the solution of this problem.

Accidents.

During 1885 there has fortunately been a decrease in the number of accidents. The list comprises seventeen persons injured, as against twenty-two in the previous year, or a reduction of 22·7 per cent. Unfortunately, there has been no reduction in the number of lives lost, which remains at the same figure—namely, three. It is gratifying to notice that there have been no explosions of gas, though an unusual number of sufferers (three) from explosions of powder.

The following particulars are given as being of interest. The numbers refer to the list:—

1. Fatal accident to George Carr. This was fully reported on last year.
2. This accident occurred through the giving-way of a jig-prop. These should always be very securely fastened in, though usually only of a temporary nature, as a good deal depends on them.
5. This fatal accident was just mentioned in last year's report. I was not at the inquest, but subsequently examined the principal witness and the depositions, from which I gathered that immediately prior to the occurrence a piece of coal fell and knocked out a sprag, which had been set, not because the coal was loose, but merely as a proper precautionary measure. In order to reset this sprag it was necessary to remove the fallen coal, and whilst Sheard was so doing the accident occurred.

6. On the 11th June, 1885, Mr. G. G. Lockhart, manager of the Orepuki Coal-mine, was so seriously injured that he died on the 14th. There was a certain amount of mystery connected with the cause of the accident which I was unable to elucidate. The inquest was adjourned, for my attendance, to the 22nd, and on the 18th I examined the shaft and made inquiries on the ground. Briefly described, the accident was as follows: Shortly after 8 o'clock on the morning of the 11th the deceased went below, having ordered John Shanks, who was acting as banksman, to attend to some matters on the pit-bank. The regular banksman (Beard) was at the pit-bottom by order of the deceased. Eventually Lockhart commenced to ascend, and is described by Beard as having left the pit-bottom in his ordinary health and spirits. The acting-banksman, instead of listening at the pit-top while anybody was in the shaft, as provided for in Special Rule 56, was a short distance away, at the wagons; and, although I am not prepared to say that this had anything to do either with the accident or its unfortunate termination, yet it would have been better had this rule been strictly observed. The engine is very small, and is geared four to one, so the cage must have been moving very slowly when it approached the top: indeed, the engine-man gave evidence that he was proceeding with more than ordinary caution, as some men were working about the bottom of the shaft, on the other side. When about 15in. of the cage was visible above the pit-top something was felt to catch, and immediately the engine was stopped. Lockhart was then found lying across the bottom of the cage in a state of insensibility. The injuries appeared, on medical examination, to be slight; but subsequently it was found that there were serious internal injuries, which eventually caused death. The inquest resulted in a verdict of "Accidental death."

8. Accidents by explosions of powder have been unusually prevalent, no less than three