

way. The travelling-road for the men in case of accident was almost impassable, but immediate improvement was promised. There has been considerable friction between the owners and the men employed. The owners appear to have been somewhat harsh in one or two instances, and the men to have been unwise in their resentment. But an improved condition of matters appears to be now the case, and we are of opinion that no good purpose would be served by entering into bygone disputes, which, arising apparently over trifles, developed into graver troubles, and which are now, we hope, things of the past. We think that, prior to Mr. Green's appointment a Inspector and Mr. Broome's appointment as manager, both inspection and management were somewhat lax, and we cite this mine as an illustration of the necessity for the appointment of a Chief Inspector, with full power to investigate and take prompt action when requisite. We wish to draw attention to the report furnished by Mr. E. R. Green, Inspector of Mines, of his inspection on the 1st November, 1899. He says therein that "a shift of men are at work making ready to drive a pair of levels, to meet another pair being driven from the Castle Hill Mine for a new return airway and a second outlet." These levels, he then reports, are "being pushed on with all possible speed night and day at each end, and having 24 chains to go. Mr. Shore (the then manager) expects that it will be some time in April, 1900, before communication is established. The present return airway, which is also the travelling-way and second outlet, shows signs of deterioration, and it is not so passable as might reasonably be expected in a colliery employing two hundred men underground. The furnace is also showing signs of wear, so the completion of the new air-course and the utilisation of the splendid furnace and air-shaft in the Castle Hill Mine will be of material advantage to this colliery." At the time of our visit, more than a year after the date of Mr. Green's report, the connection was not established, nor was the air-shaft which the management stated they preferred to substitute for it even begun. The ventilation in the mine is consequently deficient, and, as there is a good deal of gas at times in some places therein, laxity in this respect is especially dangerous.

There appears to have been a good deal of laxity in giving out safety-lamps to men when gas has been found in their working-places. In the case of C. Penman and others they were allowed to carry naked lights up to a certain point in the mine, and no official was stationed there to prohibit them from going further. No attempt appears to have been made to prevent these and other workmen from carrying matches and pipes where safety-lamps were used; and the fact that out of the six lamps used by Penman and his mates four were found in an unfit state for use shows either carelessness or incompetence on the part of the officer in charge. The practice of allowing naked lights to be used in the working-places adjoining those where gas has been discovered is, in our opinion, a source of danger that should, if possible, be averted. In every instance where such danger exists no naked lights ought to be used, and great caution exercised to prevent the men from carrying pipes or matches into such working-places.

In our opinion, greater care should have been exercised in properly fencing off the drive known as Duncan's heading, where gas was found during our inspection.

The present manager is to be commended for the way he is working the new parts of the mine in small sections, driving the headings quickly and working out the bords and pillars and sealing off, so as to prevent destruction to marketable coal.

In our opinion, the new air-shaft should be proceeded with at once, as it is next to impossible to put the present return airway into a thoroughly satisfactory condition.

The coal obtained is a brown coal of good quality for household purposes, but of not much value for steam. The price at Stirling Railway-station, which taps the company's private line, is 11s. to 14s. per ton for good household; nuts, 7s. 9d.; peas, 2s. 6d.; the dust is wasted. The bulk of this coal is sold at 12s. 6d. a ton. The price paid for hewing is in accordance with an award—viz., 3s. 6d. per ton, which includes the trucking of the coal. The wages-men are paid 10s. per diem.

We are of opinion that on the whole case made for the miners, who were ably represented by their secretary, Mr. Donaldson, they established these facts: (1.) That there are several fires now existing within the mine, one of which is alongside the main haulage-road, and, though bricked off, is evidently still of considerable power, and would, if not continuously and effectively watched, be a source of danger. (2.) That there is in the mine an amount of fire damp and black damp which, in the absence of better ventilation than exists at present, is a source of danger. (3.) That the means of escape in case of disaster have been insufficient for safety. These were the main charges made against the management, and they were, in our opinion, established; and, remembering the terrible explosion which occurred in this mine some twenty-two years ago, in which a large number of lives were lost, we think the Miners' Union were thoroughly justified in bringing them forward. The minor matters—as to arbitrary dismissal of men and boys, and the want of generous treatment in such matters as the miners' annual picnic—we have touched upon, but, for the reasons given, have not gone fully into.

The Castle Hill portion of the Kaitangata Mine we also thoroughly examined, and are able to report much more favourably on. The work has been well laid off, the ventilation and roads are good, the surface-works in excellent order. The conditions of labour and the quality of coal are the same as at Kaitangata Mine. The same danger exists here as in the latter mine from fires. At the time of our visit a fire was burning fiercely on the outcrop on the farther side of the hill in which the workings lie. From all indications the prospects of many years' work on the coal now in view are very good. There are a good many faults, but they are not of the nature to indicate a sudden loss of the seam altogether. The brown-coal measures in the South Island generally may be said to present more promise of quantity than the more valuable bituminous coal.

ALLENDALE.

The property known as the Allendale Mine is situated at Shag Point, some miles from Palmerton South, and is owned by the Allendale Coal Company (Limited), which has a nominal capital of £4,000, divided into 4,000 shares of £1 each. As far as we could learn, the company is practically