

not been worked, and there are also several small coal-mines which are not at present working, and which we could not visit. There is a considerable demand for this coal in the neighbourhood, and a thoroughly efficient mine would be of great public utility.

SPRINGFIELD COAL-MINE.

This is the property of Mr. Horsley, and we visited it in April. The mine is said to be nearly exhausted, and no coal is sold, but the quantity raised is utilised in Mr. Horsley's pottery-works. It is a poor quality of coal, and has not yet been found in a payable seam. There is a great scarcity of coal in this neighbourhood, although there are many indications that there is an extensive area of coal-bearing land. Mr. Cloudesley, the hotelkeeper at Springfield, has put in a small drive at a point some 15 chains from his house, but so far without finding anything payable. Mr. Cloudesley told us of a 14 ft. seam of semi-bituminous coal at Broken River, one mile and a half from the Midland Railway-line, and said that he and two others hold a coal-mining lease, on which they have paid rent for twelve years, and on which they have done some boring and have prospected the outcrops. He speaks hopefully of this coal, but it must await the coming of the railway.

OREPUKI.

The coal and oil-shale works here form part of the property held by the New Zealand Coal and Oil Company (Limited). The coal is not likely at present to be more than sufficient to supply the company's own requirements for the oil-works. A very complete and expensive plant has been erected for the purpose of extracting burning- and lubricating-oils and paraffine-wax from the shale. The manager (Mr. Dunlop) has succeeded in putting in position the extensive machinery, which appears to be complete in every detail. At the time of our visit the works were very nearly in working-order, and we believe that by the time this report reaches your Excellency, operations will be in full work. The coal-mine is under the charge of Mr. Straw, who appears to take all necessary care in preparing a somewhat difficult mine for work. A very large number of hands were employed in March last, but when the erection of the machinery is finished this number will be decreased. This mine should receive considerable attention from the Inspector, because of the difficulties of the ground. The management appear to be careful and provident. The expenditure on machinery and surface-works is said to exceed £80,000.

Reference to the return of mines working in the Southland District will show that coal is distributed over a large area, and there are a considerable number of pits or small mines open in which not more than five hands are employed. It is a serious question generally, whether great waste of coal does not occur from having a number of small mines at work. The temptation to obtain immediate results at the expense of the mine, as a whole, is frequently too great to be resisted, and the result is that from premature withdrawal of pillars, and superficial working generally, much coal will ultimately be lost.

NIGHTCAPS.

The mine we visited at this locality is the property of the Nightcaps Coal Company (Limited), which has a capital of £24,000, all paid up in cash. The area consists of 500 acres of freehold owned by the company, and a lease of 14 or 15 acres from the Crown. The company commenced operations about the year 1880, and has put out between 250,000 and 300,000 tons of coal. It has not been a very remunerative investment, the shareholders only receiving three dividends of 6 per cent. each in twenty years. The company has a reserve fund of about £500. The coal is a brown pitch-coal, very similar to Kaitangata, Shag Point, and Allendale coal. The mine is close to a railway, and the coal is sold on the trucks at the tip for about 10s. 6d. a ton. The contract with the Railway Department was at 7s. 1d. a ton. The railway-haulage to Invercargill, forty-five miles distant, is 4s. 11d. a ton, and the retail price in Invercargill is £1 0s. 6d. to £1 1s. a ton. The nuts are sold at the pit's mouth at 6s. 6d., and the screenings are thrown away. The output averages from 25,000 to 30,000 tons a year, and between fifty and sixty men are employed. The price paid for hewing has been 3s. 6½d. to 3s. 10½d. a ton, according to the place worked in; but the question of rates of pay was coming before the Conciliation Board at the time of our visit. The men in the mine on shift-work are paid 9s. 6d. a day, and the surface-men 7s. 6d. a day. About £500 a month is distributed in wages. The mine itself appears to be well managed, though there has been at times a deficiency in ventilation. Efforts have been made to improve this defect, but do not appear to have been as successful as they ought to be in such a mine. A strict supervision should be maintained in this respect. The men themselves appear to be well satisfied now with the condition of the mine, and are content to let the question of pay come before the Conciliation Board. The prospects of the mine appear to be good, and a large quantity of coal is in view, which will last, it is estimated, for a good many years.

ABBOTSFORD MINES.

We visited a group of small mines in this locality, and submit the following particulars concerning them:—

Mosgiel Mine.—Owners: Messrs. Nicol and Sneddon. Tenure: Leased from freeholder, A. Macgregor. Area: 400 acres. Output: 20 tons a day. Prices obtained: 5s. for steam; 10s. 6d. for round; 7s. for second-class round or household. Number of men employed: Ten. Rates of pay: 3s. to 4s. per ton for hewing; 9s. a day. Prospects: About five years' work at present output on coal in view; then prospecting must be done to find further supply. State of mine: Satisfactory.

Freeman's Colliery.—Owners: The Messrs. Green and the Messrs. Freeman. Tenure: Freehold, belonging to Mr. J. Freeman. Area: 1,000 acres. Output: About 245,000 tons in last