

thirty years; about 700 to 800 tons a month at present; 9,000 tons for year 1900. Number of men employed: Average of twenty-two. Rate of pay: 9s. a day; no piecework. Prospects: Good; said to be plenty of coal. Condition of mine: Satisfactory.

Walton Park Colliery.—This is an expiring mine, in which the work done is that of robbing the pillars. The mine has been open thirty years, and consists of 67 acres of freehold. There is some trouble with the ventilation, and some black damp. It is said, however, that there are four or five years' work still left, with an output of 10,000 to 12,000 tons a year. Most of the mine is under water, and nearly two-thirds of the coal in the mine has been lost through flooding. The coal is fair-quality brown coal, and fetches, at the railway, from 12s. for household to 6s. for steam. The rate of hewing is 3s. 8d. per ton for round coal; 6d. for engine-coal; 5d. for screenings; and 3d. for dross. Besides water in the mine there are also several fires sealed off. There are fourteen men employed in all.

Jubilee Colliery.—Owners: Messrs. Howarth and Loudon. Tenure: Leased from freeholder, J. Howarth. Area: 138 acres. Output: 10,000 tons per annum. Prices obtained: 4s. for household; 2s. 4d. to 3s. for steam per ton at mine-mouth; 12s. for best in Dunedin. Number of men: Fourteen in all.

MOKAU COAL-MINES.

We visited these mines in April, travelling overland from New Plymouth to the mouth of the Mokau River, and proceeding twenty-two miles up river in a steam-launch. This river, though somewhat narrow, is navigable for vessels drawing from 6 ft. to 8 ft., according to tides and rainfall; but in order to maintain this it is necessary to strictly preserve the natural growth upon the banks. Already in one place where the bank has been cleared of timber depravation has taken place, and a shoal formed. No time should be lost in taking measures to preserve the vegetation on the banks, and thus preserve the banks themselves.

The area of the most importance at present from a coal-mining point of view is the Maungapapa Block B, containing 4,240 acres. It is being worked by Mr. G. A. Stubbs, under an arrangement with Messrs. Robertson and Vickery, of Sydney, who in some way represent the Taranaki Collieries (Limited), a company not at present registered in New Zealand, but possessing, it is stated, a very large share capital.

In company with Mr. Stubbs we inspected the mine-workings, and were struck with the uniformity of the strata and the excellence of the roof and floor. The main drive is driven 22 chains from the entrance, and is carried towards the heart of the hill, and the coal shows evenly in all the working-faces. The roof is particularly good, and requires very little timber; but we are inclined to think that there has not been sufficient care taken in providing the small quantity of timber necessary for safety. Mr. Stubbs recognised this danger, and undertook to provide against it in future.

The present output is about 100 tons per week, and there are seventeen men employed—seven men actually on the face, and the remainder on road- and surface-work. From 20,000 to 30,000 tons have been taken out altogether. The pieceworkers are paid from 2s. 9d. a ton to 3s. 4d., according to the thickness of the band of stone or impure fireclay which lies between the two seams of coal. The pieceworkers average about 10s. a day, and the wages-men are paid 9s. per day.

The coal itself is of very good quality for household purposes, and makes a fair steam-coal where great draught is not required. The under-seam averages 3 ft. 8 in., and the upper seam 3 ft. 5 in. It is carried on the railways as a brown coal, and pays a lower rate than that charged for bituminous coal. The lower coal is said to be best suited for household purposes, and the upper seam for steam. Dr. Robertson, in his report, describes the upper seam as "pitch-black, lustrous, with semi-conchoidal fracture, working in large lumps, and does not fall on exposure to air"; he says it is "a very superior lignite." The lower seam he describes as a "bright bituminous coal of superior quality; both coals ignite easily, give little smoke, a bright flame, and a small amount of white pulverised ash." He ranks it next below Westport coal. So far as we have been able to judge, this appears to us to be a fair and true description. Nothing is certain in coal-mining, but to all appearances there are good indications that the seam is of great extent, and that large quantities of easily worked coal are obtainable from this mine. It is a very noticeable feature that in a drive of 22 chains into the hill no fault has been met with, and the only trace of faulty ground is a downthrow of a few inches. In New Zealand coal-mining this is a remarkable condition of things, and points to solidity and continuity.

With the exception of the disregard for timbering, the workings are in excellent condition. We deemed it our duty to markedly call the attention of the mine-manager and lessee to the want of timber, and especially to a face of undercut coal fully 15 ft. wide which was not supported by any sprag. The miners themselves seemed to consider that they were quite safe in such a good mine; but, as we have before pointed out, such carelessness usually brings about an accident. We believe that the evil will be avoided for the future. The ventilation and roads were all that could be desired, but the pillars have, under former proprietors, been left too small, and care will have to be exercised to prevent danger from this cause; and in any event the coal in these small pillars will be found deteriorated from crushing and the admixture of dirt beneath.

The coal from this mine is taken from the mine-mouth, which lies a very short distance from the river-bank, to a tip, from which it is emptied into vessels lying in the river, and is then taken down the river. Sometimes a small steamer is used, but generally a scow containing 110 tons is filled, and is towed down the river and to sea. The river is infested with snags, which are a constant source of danger, and it is estimated that an expenditure of £1,000 is required to clear these snags away. The bar at Mokau Heads is rather a difficult one to work, and at present only vessels of not more than 8 ft. draught at the most can cross it. As the scows have to be towed over the Mokau bar, and over the bar at Waitara, where most of the coal is sent, it follows that practically it takes both a sailer and a steamer to take a cargo from Mokau to Waitara; but the