

steamer can carry perhaps 40 tons of coal or general cargo to that extent, and perchance some passengers. The cost of taking coal from the mine to Waitara is reckoned at 8s. per ton, *plus* 1s. a ton wharfage at Waitara. The coal is sold at Waitara at £1 a ton on the railway-trucks for unscreened, and £1 2s. 6d. for screened. The cost of the coal at the tiphead is reckoned at 8s. 6d. per ton, and this is high, considering the simplicity with which the coal is taken out. The small output at Mokau, and the primitive appliances in use, of course add to the cost per ton of the coal. If a trade is developed and suitable vessels are provided, no doubt the coal can be produced at a very much reduced cost. Mr. Stubbs says that a steamer specially designed for the river and bar is being built, and will be sent into the trade.

A few chains above this mine is situated a coal-mine which is locally known as the Upper or Fernside Mine, but which at present is not being worked. We inspected all the working-places therein, and again noticed the favourable indications as to quantity and solidity. With means of transit the value of the Mokau Mines must be very great, but to what extent it would be advisable to incur large expense on river and harbour works depends in some measure upon how the supply from other sources in this colony keeps up, and the state of the coal-market.

The Taranaki Collieries Company (Limited) have acquired in all three areas—viz., the Mungoira Block, 2,984 acres; Mangapapa Block A, 8,174 acres; Mangapapa Block B, 4,240 acres: in all, 15,398 acres, occupying a frontage to the northern bank of the Mokau River of forty miles. They appear to have acquired the right to a lease from the Native owners for a term of sixty years on very favourable conditions, but we are not able to speak with certainty as to their tenure. There is generally a good deal of obscurity over leases from Native owners.

There appears to be little doubt as to there being on both sides of the Mokau River coal-measures of considerable extent, which will be of great value when the need for their development arises. We were not able to visit various places mentioned to us as those in which outcrops and indications of coal exist. The country is almost uninhabited; there are no roads; and until recently it was practically an untrodden land. It is a country possessing peculiarly interesting features and beauties, and were it not for the eminently practical subject of our Commission we might venture to make some observations thereon.

The mines now in the possession of the Taranaki Collieries Company will no doubt be now worked on a better and more extensive system than hitherto. They will probably supply the market of Taranaki, and probably as far south as Wanganui; but, although there has not been much apparent need so far for frequent inspection, we are of opinion that regular visits should be made not only by the Coal-mines Inspector, but by those officers whose duty it is to see that the forests are not destroyed by fire, or rivers rendered unnavigable by the careless or ignorant destruction of their banks.

The Hon. W. T. Jennings, M.L.C., gave us information regarding other known seams of coal on the Mokau River. On a block known as No. 1 Manga-awakino, fifteen miles up the river from the heads, and below the Mangapapa and Mungoira Blocks, there are reported to be numerous seams of large size. The property which has attained such wide advertisement through the action of Mr Joshua Jones and others is situated on the river, but we were unable to visit it, and could have gained no information of value in this inquiry had we done so. Mr. Jennings stated that the retail price of Mokau coal at New Plymouth was £1 14s. a ton.

Reports from Mr. W. Blanch Brain, mining engineer, who examined the area No. 1 Block Manga-awakino in 1897, were put before us. They speak most highly of the quantity of coal, the absence of physical difficulties, and the conformity of the strata. Messrs. A. G. French, M.E., and Mr. George Wilson, late Inspecting Engineer for the New Zealand Government Mining Department, report most favourably of the quantity and quality of the coal, and the absence of engineering difficulties in working. The means of transit is the chief problem. It must be some, and possibly many, years before a railway can approach it, and the water-carriage has the difficulties and dangers we have described.

#### PUPONGA AND PAKAWAU.

We visited these coalfields in May, and first directed our attention to Puponga, and especially to the leases taken up in the names of Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Annie Taylor. Puponga lies on the eastern shore of Cape Farewell, about fourteen miles from Collingwood, and is protected by the long sand-spit which runs almost due east from the point of Cape Farewell. There is no navigable river or inlet, but the shore is so well protected that vessels can approach in safety, and a wharf could be erected at which vessels might load. The flimsy structure now existing is evidence of the safety of the place from heavy seas. About a mile and a half to two miles by the nearest approach, the leaseholds of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor are situated. They comprise 100 acres in the name of Mr. Taylor, 100 acres in Mrs. Taylor's name, and 200 acres applied for by Mr. Taylor, which last has been recommended by the Warden, but not yet issued.

A company has been formed in England, with a nominal capital of £70,000, and arrangements made for the immediate raising of £12,000 for the purpose of opening the mine. The evidence of Mr. Taylor discloses the financial arrangements made between himself and the company, and we deem it unnecessary to comment on them. The Taylors will convey all their interest in the leaseholds to the company, and will receive an equivalent in shares and some cash. There has been some prospecting done on the property, but very little actual mining; a wooden tramway three miles long has been laid down to the foreshore, and it is explained that this was a cheap temporary means of getting some coals out to market, and carrying the necessary timber and material for opening the mine, and its place is to be at once supplied by a good iron tramway, on which a small locomotive can work. Two small sailing-vessels or scows have been obtained, but so far, owing to the difficulty of getting the coal from the mine on board a vessel, it has been shipped at a loss. The price at Nelson has been from £1 4s. to £1 10s. per ton, and £1 8s. at Collingwood. It has been sold at Puponga at 16s. f.o.b., and as much as 6s. a ton freight from Puponga to Nelson