

One of the most important portions of the Act will not be in force until the special rules are in thorough working order at all coal mines: this was the case at only one mine amongst those mentioned in this report, and in this instance the men had been charged 1s. each for the copies. Apart from the question of the owners making 400 per cent. profit upon rules which the Government have taken so much trouble to have established as cheaply as possible, I do not consider the action legal, and have informed some of the owners, and the manager, as also the men who complained, of my opinion.

I have endeavoured, throughout the whole of the collieries which I have visited in New Zealand—and this includes all of any importance—to impress upon the owners and managers the advisability of observing “The Regulation of Mines Act, 1874,” not only for the safety of those employed by them, but also in their own interest; and I hope that the average death-rate, which is probably the highest that has ever been recorded in any country, may in future be as low as is possible in such an occupation as mining.\* Already, for the present year, one death has occurred for less than fifteen men employed (above and below ground), while in Great Britain the corresponding rate for 1877 was 1 in 409.

As remarked in my last report, I have in almost every case met with encouragement and assistance from owners and managers in carrying out my duties, and a general disposition has been manifested to comply with the Act of Parliament, so that it has been unnecessary to employ compulsory methods. Should, however, the present system not prove effectual, I shall be obliged to make use of the less pleasant means put into my hands by the law.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE J. BINNS,  
Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary for Mines, Wellington.

### No. 5.

#### ANNUAL REPORT UPON INSPECTION OF COAL MINES, SOUTH ISLAND.

Mr. Inspector BINNS to the UNDER-SECRETARY FOR MINES.

SIR,—

Wellington, 12th June, 1880.

In accordance with your instructions, dated 30th January, 1880, I have the honor to make the following report on the condition of the coal mines in the South Island. To facilitate reference, the numbers in the report are the same as those in the accompanying statistical table.

1. *Wallsend Colliery, Collingwood*, has been worked very little during the past year, and has not been visited. Mr. Marshall has sent me the output and number of men.

2. *Westport Colliery Company's Fisher Mine* has also done very little, and when last visited the underground works were at a standstill. The Act, however, is observed. The number of men (27) is an average of the number employed about the mine during the past year. Mr. Denniston informed me by letter, dated 14th May, that about 60 tons of coal had been sent down the incline. The rest is mostly stacked, either in or outside the mine.

3. *Wellington Coal Company's Waimangaroa Mine* is practically at a standstill, only one man being employed, in addition to the manager and overman. General Rules were not hung up or distributed; no daily record of the barometer is made; and no chalk-mark is made in the morning, although the mine is examined before the workman enters. [Since writing the above, I have seen Mr. Ferguson, who informs me that General Rules have been promulgated as required.]

4. *Energetic Coal Mine, Reefton*, has not been inspected before the date given in the table. The air and timber are good. Very little coal is sold.

5. *Golden Treasure Coal Mine, Reefton*, is worked solely for the purpose of supplying the quartz-crushing machine. The same two men that are employed at the Energetic have also the contract for working this mine. Another drive has been commenced a few yards to the northward; but has been temporarily abandoned, owing to a dispute as to the lease. A large amount of coal has been taken from this ground—many times the total output given.

6. *Lankey's Gully Coal Mine, Crushington*, is driven far too wide for safety; but timber is unsparingly used.

7. *Queline's Coal Mine, Reefton*, has not yet commenced work, the old mine having been abandoned owing to an underground fire, caused, possibly, by spontaneous combustion, or, more probably, by a light carelessly left in the mine.

8. *Newcastle Coal Mine, Reefton*, is well worked and ventilated. The 300 tons given as output for last year is not absolutely the correct quantity, but will probably represent the amount, as it is for eleven months from July, 1879, at which date Mr. Breen commenced to work.

9. *Dudley Coal Mine, Reefton*.—A new drive has been put in, and has met with a fault. The 186 tons given as total output is a very small fraction of what has been raised from the ground; but in this, as in very many other cases, it is utterly impossible to arrive at even an approximation to the whole amount, owing to the frequent changes of ownership which are, unfortunately, customary.

10. *Golden Fleece Extended Coal Mine* is practically abandoned, a little coal being taken from the pillars. A new mine will shortly be commenced.

11 and 12. *Dugan's Coal Mine* and *Burke's Coal Mine* are both worked by two men, the coal being packed on horses down a very bad road.

13 and 14. *Union Company's and Graham and Company's Coal Mines* are both worked exclusively for the supply of the boilers, and have not been visited.

The Reefton coal mines (Nos. 4 to 14 inclusive) have, with the exception of the two last, been visited and put in the way of observing the Act, which was of course unknown before. They are, as may be seen on reference to the statistical table, of very small size as regards output and number of men, still the coal is of excellent quality, and their local value cannot be overrated. So far as I could find out, explosive gas has not been found in any of them, but if the workings become larger it is not unlikely to be present. The system of working, which is noted as “bord and pillar,” by no means as a rule deserves the name, most of the mines being worked on any or no principle, the main

\* This average includes the accident at Kaitangata, which occurred before the Act was brought into force.—O.W.