

tion on this occasion was 23,400 cubic feet per minute, and next day 26,100. The workings were in good order, and reports kept. Plan (by Mr. N. D. Cochrane) up to 6th December.

NEW MINES.

Steel's Coal-mine, Gibbston.—Situated 2,200ft. above the Gibbston Flat. A large, highly inclined seam of apparently good pitch coal, worked opencast. Inspected, 14th March, 1887.

Saddle Hill Coal-mine (Christie's), No. 2, Saddle Hill.—A new drive to the west of the old workings. Due notice was sent of its commencement. Visited, 3rd March, 1887.

ACCIDENTS.

During 1887 four accidents have been reported, one, which injured Hermann Erkhöld, in the Greymouth Wallsend Mine, being of a very serious nature. As was mentioned, the accidents on the West Coast have been inquired into by Mr. Gow, whose appointment I may be allowed to hail with great satisfaction. The distance from Dunedin to the West Coast has always been a serious obstacle to investigation of these unfortunate occurrences, and must, no doubt, have militated against the efficiency of the department. This difficulty is now removed, and in future the ground can be visited with promptitude, and witnesses examined.

SAFETY-HOOKS.

During the month of September, 1886, I received from the Mines Department two of Humble's patent detaching hooks for distribution among collieries with shafts.

The larger of the two (a ten-ton hook) was, unfortunately, too large for any mine in this Island, and is still in my possession. The Kaitangata Colliery manager gave the seven-ton hook a trial, but, having found it too heavy, has arranged to substitute a lighter hook of local manufacture.

SAFETY-CAGES.

There are thirteen mines in this Island from which the output is raised by shafts; of these, three do not use cages, and three are exempt owing to the existence of other means of exit. This leaves seven mines where men are raised and lowered in cages—viz., (1) Coal-pit Heath, (2) Wallsend, Greymouth, (3) Springfield, (4) Shag Point, (5) Glenochiel, (6) Kaitangata (No. 1), and (7) Orepuki. Of these, Glenochiel has ladders (which are vertical), and will soon have an adit; Kaitangata (No. 1) is not at work; and Orepuki is not getting coal. So four mines remain at which safety-cages are necessary to protect life. Of these, Springfield appears to be the only one at present having such appliances, but, as this colliery has not been inspected for some months, I cannot say whether they are satisfactory.

SPECIAL RULES.

No Special Rules have, so far, been actually established under the Act. In December, 1886, a meeting was held at Greymouth, at which Mr. Waters (representing the Coalbrookdale Mine), Mr. Bishop, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Elliott, Mr. Kilgour, and myself were present. At this meeting a set of Special Rules was, without any dissension, arranged for the West Coast collieries. Mr. Jemison was not present, but, as the Koranui Mine is now closed, that does not matter. The rules were subsequently printed and exhibited, upon which two rules were objected to by the secretary of the Grey Valley Coal-miners' Association, on behalf of the men. These two rules have always formed part of the Special Rules, but may, I think, be advantageously altered.

PLANS.

"The Coal Mines Act, 1886," requires, in mines employing more than seven men, that the plan shall be made every three months. I have had many applications for permission to extend this time to six months, as there are very few mines in the colony whose workings are carried on so rapidly as to require such frequent surveys.

SECTION 18.

This section requires that a notice of the name and address of the manager of every mine shall be notified in writing to the Inspector and also to the Minister. In the beginning of February, though not required by law to do so, I sent a circular to each mine, calling the attention of the owner or agent to this section. Up to the present time, however, there are still thirty-three mines which have not sent in the required notice. I must bring this matter under your especial notice, with a view to a rigid enforcement of the law.

SAFETY-LAMPS.

General Rule 44 of "The Coal Mines Act, 1886," enacts that—"Whenever safety-lamps are required by this Act or by the Special Rules made in pursuance of this Act to be used, such lamps shall be supplied by the owner, agent, or manager, of a pattern to be approved by the Inspector." The onus of approving lamps having thus been placed upon me, it is only natural that I should decline to approve anything but the best. Fortunately, the Royal Commission on Accidents in Mines have recently concluded, in Great Britain, their seven years' investigation, and have recommended four lamps as being as near an approach to safety as is at present known. These are: (1) Gray's, (2) Marsaut's, (3) Evan Thomas's No 7, and (4) bonneted Muesler. These, therefore, are at present the only lamps which I shall approve. Should any owner or agent desire to use any other type of lamp, with the exception of the tin-can Davy, he can do so by proving to my satisfaction that it is safe.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE J. BINNS,
Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary of Mines, Wellington.