

COAL MINING.

The demand for coal continued to increase during the past year, consequently the output from the mines was greater than that of the year 1897.

The Kaitangata and Castle Hill collieries are now the property of an English company, and it is intended to increase the output by extending the workings and the introduction of coal-cutting machinery. This company, which is known as the Kaitangata Collieries Shale and Oil Syndicate, has also acquired a right to the Orepuki shale-deposits, and intends to open up the mine and erect the necessary machinery for the extraction of oil.

The collieries in Grey and Westport districts are in a position to largely increase their output, if necessary. As an indication of the expansion of the export of coal from Westport, there were 32,519 tons 14 cwt. of coal shipped during the month of May, this being 4,167 tons above the monthly average for last year. Of the above quantity 29,023½ tons was from the Westport Coal Company, and 3,496 tons 4 cwt. from the Westport Cardiff Company. There were 900 tons shipped for Samoa, and 403 tons for the Caroline Islands.

In the Auckland District the consolidation of the different colliery companies in the Waikato should lead to a more energetic, economical, and profitable manner of working their mines. The extension of the railway to the Thames promises to afford another important market for the coals.

Notwithstanding the exhaustion of coal in the Kawakawa District, the increase in the general output of semi-bituminous coal was maintained from Kiripaka and Hikurangi Districts.

ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

The total number of persons employed in the different classes of mining, and the number of fatal accidents that occurred in each division, was as follows :—

Class of Mining.	Number of Persons Employed.	Fatal Accidents.	Rate per 1,000.
Coal	2,003	1	0·5
Quartz	4,721	9	1·9
Alluvial, hydraulic, sluicing, and dredging	8,951	12	1·34
	15,675	22	1·6

Other accidents occurred, in which twenty-four men were injured, a few more or less seriously, in the North Island. On the West Coast, one in quartz and three in alluvial mining, none of which were of a serious character. In Otago a few accidents were reported, all being of a slight nature. Full inquiries were made into the cause of all the accidents, and in each case the officials in charge of the mine were exonerated from blame.

TARANAKI IRONSAND.

A number of experiments have from time to time been made by different people for the production of steel from the sand found along the seashore at the Taranaki District.

In May, 1898, a parcel of 20 tons was forwarded to the Agent-General by the s.s. "Gothic," at the request of the Esteve Steel Company. The sand duly arrived in London, and on the 12th July last the Agent-General notified the Government that it had been received and handed over to the company, who paid all costs for packing and shipment.

From a report since received from the Agent-General it appears that the company are able to produce high-class tool-steel in the crucible. It is also stated that by experimenting further the sand could be agglomerated and made into pig-iron available for making steel in a Siemen-Martin furnace, as well as making steel of all qualities direct from the sand in such a furnace.