

and pure to pay for its exploration, and is about three feet thick. The coal is pure, except a layer of one and a half inches of bluish sandstone. It is bituminous, and burns readily, with abundance of flame, somewhat like kennel coal. It is compact, though less so than the best Pittsburg and Liverpool, and is of fair quality, although sometimes impregnated with clay, which causes it to leave a large quantity of ashes.

Pyrites is occasionally disseminated in masses through it. Coal abounds throughout the valley of the Hunter, appearing at the surface in many places.

The average quantity of coal produced is sixty tons a day, which is piled up near the mouth of the pit, and thence sent to the pier on a railway, where it is shipped to Sydney, Van Diemen's Land, and even to the Cape of Good Hope.

The new shaft in the valley is only sixty feet deep, the difference of the two being in the height of the hill.

Dr. Brook was formerly superintendent of this station, and gave a droll account of the summary manner in which marriages were concluded with the female convicts. If he saw a man who had just come in from the country with a clean shirt on, he was sure he had come for a wife, and the event always justified his surmise. The man usually intimated his wish with a modest sheepish grin. The fair frail candidates for matrimony were paraded for his inspection, and if he found one whose looks pleased him, he put the plain question at once, "Will you have me?" He was seldom answered in the negative, for marriage liberates the lady from the restraint she was under. The banns were then announced by the parson for three Sundays, when the lucky swain returned to claim his bride.

From the known licentious and unruly character of the female convicts, it is not to be supposed that these marriages can be very fruitful of happiness; but as both parties had been felons, they are probably as well matched as could be expected.

The greatest difficulty the superintendent of a station has to contend with, is the management of the female convicts.

Captain Furlong, commandant of the garrison, was kind enough to show the convict stockade; it encloses a prison for the convicts, and a guard-house for the soldiers. The convicts all belong to the iron-gang, composed here, as at Sydney, of those who have been guilty of some crime in the colony. They were kept constantly in irons, and are employed on the public works. They eat and sleep in the same apartments, and their bed is a blanket on the floor; to guard two hundred convicts, there are seventy soldiers stationed here.