

The quarrying industry of the Dominion is rapidly increasing in importance, more especially with regard to the output of limestone for agriculture, cement-manufacture, and building-stone. At those quarries which come under the operations of the Act about fifteen hundred persons were employed during the year, the output being nearly 1,000,000 tons.

PERSONS ENGAGED IN MINING.

The following table shows the number of miners in each inspection district, and the branch of mining in which they were engaged:—

Classification.	Inspection District.			Totals.		
	Northern.	West Coast.	Southern.	1918.	1917.	Increase or Decrease.
Gold, silver, and tungsten ore	1,264	760	542	2,566	2,996	<i>Decrease</i> 430
Coal	904	2,041	1,049	3,994	3,983	<i>Increase</i> 11
Cinnabar and asbestos ..	13	3	..	16	16	..
Totals	2,181	2,804	1,591	6,576	6,995	<i>Decrease</i> 419

During the period of the war there has been a decline of 740 in the number of persons working at or about coal-mines, amounting to 16 per cent. of the total number employed during 1914. The greater number of these men were voluntarily on active service abroad, but a considerable number have left the mines for other employment.

Regarding the occupation of coal-mining there exists a general but erroneous impression that it is dismal, unhealthy, and extremely arduous. In this Dominion this assumption is incorrect. The thickness of the coal-seams generally obviates the necessity of working in cramped positions, and likewise permits of adequate ventilation, superior generally to that in factories. The proportion of deaths from fatal accidents during the past three years has been less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ per annum per 1,000 persons employed, comparing favourably with that in any other country. The facility by which coal may be mined in New Zealand is proved by the official statistics regarding output. During 1917 the output per person employed underground was 715 tons, as against 306 tons for the United Kingdom during the same period. The average earnings of coal-miners are probably as high as those prevailing in any other country, and during the period of the war such wages have increased to a greater extent than have food-prices. At the principal collieries the average net daily earnings per fortnightly pay, taken over a period of several months, were approximately—for coal-hewers, 17s. to £1 4s.; truckers, 18s.; boys, 13s.; and deputies, £4 to £4 10s. per week.

Under the Coal-mines Act a day's work is limited to eight hours from the time of entering the mine to the time of departure therefrom; thus the travelling-time, also that taken for a meal, is included in the daily shift. In addition to the above-mentioned favourable conditions obtained by the coal-miner, he may obtain a home at low rental, or if he so desires he may build for himself by the aid of a loan from the Government; by such means many pleasant miners' homes have been established, those at Runanga, Huntly, Granity, and Kaitangata being especially so. Gardening is specialized in by coal-miners generally throughout the Empire, and some of the miners' gardens at these places are very attractive. For two successive years a Kaitangata colliery trucker has from his quarter-acre section produced roses which gained the champion prize in open competition at the Dunedin Flower Show, one of the principal shows in the Dominion.

At all colliery townships coal is supplied to the miners at a purely nominal charge, at the State collieries such charge being 3s. 4d. per ton. It will thus be seen that the coal-miners' life has many attractions, and admits of a person of