

## SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of coal-mining accidents during 1919, with their causes:—

|                                      | Fatal Accidents.                    |                   | Serious Non-fatal Accidents.            |   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|
|                                      | Number of Separate Fatal Accidents. | Number of Deaths. | Number of Separate Non-fatal Accidents. | Number of Persons injured, including those injured by Accidents which proved Fatal to their Companions. |
| Explosions of fire-damp or coal-dust | ...                                 | ...               | ...                                     | ...   |
| Falls of ground ... ..               | 7                                   | 7                 | 3                                       | 3   |
| Explosives ... ..                    | ...                                 | ...               | 1                                       | 1   |
| Haulage ... ..                       | 3                                   | 3                 | 6                                       | 6   |
| Miscellaneous—Underground...         | ...                                 | ...               | 6                                       | 6   |
| On surface ... ..                    | ...                                 | ...               | 1                                       | 1   |
| Totals ... ..                        | 10                                  | 10                | 17                                      | 17  |

The death-rate from accidents was 2·53 per thousand persons employed, or 5·41 per million tons of coal produced, as compared with 5·86 per million tons for the coal-mines of the United Kingdom during 1918, the latest year of the published statistics. It is gratifying to state that since 17th November, 1919, there has been no fatal colliery accident to this date, 30th June, 1920.

The proportion of fatal accidents in the Dominion during 1919, although lower than in America or South Africa, shows an increase which is to be regretted, as there had been since 1914 a gradual decrease. As during previous years, the most prolific cause of accidents was falls of ground. A full description of the foregoing fatal accidents is given on the following page. Particulars regarding the serious non-fatal accidents referred to in the above table are contained in the reports of Inspectors of Mines, which appear in Annexure A hereto. The accidents classed as serious with non-fatal results include those which cause any fracture of the head or of any limb, or of any dislocation of a limb, or any other serious personal injury.

As regards the seven fatal accidents from falls, four of these—viz., those which happened to A. E. Hawkins, T. Blight, R. Grundy, and J. Shearer—appear from the evidence to be of that class for which the judgment of the sufferer was chiefly responsible—such accidents as are inseparable from mining. The accidents by falls to W. Kirk, R. W. Smith, and J. Penman were due to neglect in permitting the deceased to work in dangerous places, but the two first-named were contributory to such neglect. In the case of the two last-named the mine-managers respectively were convicted and fined.

In connection with the three fatalities due to haulage, that which caused the death of J. A. Weir was due to his illegally riding on a coal-truck without permission, in a low underground roadway, but for subsequent breaches of the law in connection with this case the acting-manager was convicted and substantially fined. The haulage fatalities to W. Muncaster and P. J. Rutledge were due to misadventure for which no person appeared to be blameworthy.

The following is a description of fatal accidents at or about coal-mines during 1918:—

| Date.                           | Name and Situation of Colliery.       | Name, Age, and Occupation of Person killed. | Description of Accident, and Remarks.  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 8 July, 1918; died 8 May, 1919. | Kaitangata No. 1 Colliery, Kaitangata | Alfred Ernest Hawkins (37), miner           | A deputy on his morning round of inspection prior to the commencement of work detected on a trucking-road in No. 6 dip section several sets of broken props. Owing to a shortage of shift-men for effecting repairs it was arranged that four miners, including deceased, instead of proceeding to their working-places, should repair the timbering by erecting other props under the bars alongside the broken props. These four miners proceeded to this work and were engaged preparing props prior to erection when, without warning, a large fall of coal and timber occurred. Two of the party were partly buried, but not seriously injured, but deceased sustained a compound fracture of the right tibia, together with severe body-bruises and a wound of the scalp. On the 11th December his leg was amputated, but he died on the 8th May, 1919, of blood-poisoning. The Coroner held no person to blame. Regarding this accident it may be stated that repairing timber is a necessary but often a dangerous operation; also that timber on trucking-roads should not be allowed to become so broken as to collapse without giving warning. The admitted shortage of shift-men may have some bearing on this accident. |