

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

Classification.	Inspection District.			
	Northern.	West Coast.	Southern.	Total.
Gold and silver .. .. .	2,681	1,097	1,384	5,162
Coal .. .. .	852	2,499	977	4,328
Other minerals .. .. .	..	9	68	77
Totals .. .. .	3,533	3,605	2,429	9,567

#### MINING ACCIDENTS.

The number of fatalities recorded in connection with all mining operations during 1912 is fourteen, and the number of men reported as seriously injured twenty-seven. The fatalities which occurred in and about the coal-mines total nine, or five less than during the previous year—a most satisfactory decrease. The number of serious but non-fatal colliery accidents was eighteen, as against twenty in 1911. At metalliferous mines the fatalities during the year numbered five, being the same number as during 1911. The number of serious non-fatal accidents at such mines was nine, as against nineteen during 1911. The fatalities per thousand persons employed in metal-mines were 0·95, and in coal-mines 2·08, or an average of 1·46 per thousand for metalliferous and coal-mines combined.

#### STATE COLLIERIES.

The two old collieries—neither of which was a new mine when acquired by the Government—are approaching exhaustion. The opening of the new Point Elizabeth (Liverpool) Colliery will not only enable the Department to fully maintain its trade, but will admit of a reasonable degree of expansion.

In the latter part of last session I laid upon the table a report by the Under-Secretary of Mines recommending considerable further writing-off for depreciation, on account of some of the assets of the State Coal-mines Account not being worth their book value (Parliamentary Paper C.—3A).

He also advised that 10 per cent. instead of 5 per cent. be annually written off for depreciation in future in respect of both the old collieries and the briquette-works, and that such amounts be computed on the gross total capital expenditure in each case, and not merely on the balance not written off as hitherto; the present rate for depreciation (5 per cent. per annum) to be maintained as regards the depots, and to be put in force as regards the new colliery as soon as it reaches the output stage.

In the balance-sheet now submitted all these recommendations have been given effect to, except the last one, and the time for that had not arrived up to the 31st March last.

This will explain the large amounts appearing in the balance-sheet as “Special depreciation,” which are in every case in addition to the amounts allowed for annual depreciation.

Changing the rate for annual depreciation from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent., though doubtless a very desirable change indeed, has had the effect of making this year's balance-sheet show a loss of no less than £9,989. If the amount for depreciation had been retained at last year's rate, and had been computed in the same manner, this year's balance-sheet would have shown as good a working result as last year's.