

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.	1917.	1916.	Increase or Decrease.
Gold, silver, and tungsten ore	1,416	925	655	2,996	3,703	<i>Decrease</i> 707
Coal	843	2,186	954	3,983	3,988	.. 5
Cinnabar	16	16	10	<i>Increase</i> 6
Totals	2,275	3,111	1,609	6,995	7,701	Decrease 706

During the period of the present war the number of metal-miners has declined by 1,468, and coal-miners by 471. To the 26th April, 1917, no fewer than 1,616 miners of all classes had voluntarily enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces, miners being exempt from compulsory service. The stoppage of many small alluvial gold-mining claims and some gold-dredges owing to increased prices of materials used is also a contributing cause of the decline in the number of miners employed.

MINING ACCIDENTS.

In or about coal-mines during 1917 the proportion of deaths was exactly 1 per 1,000 persons employed, and 1.93 per 1,000,000 tons raised. On two occasions only during the history of coal-mining in New Zealand has the annual proportion been less. The figures also compare favourably with those obtaining in Great Britain, which generally stands ahead of all other countries as regards the low proportion of fatal colliery accidents. In the North Island collieries no fatal accident occurred during the year, and in the collieries of Canterbury, Otago, and Southland only one has occurred for over five years—a remarkable record, proving the wisdom of the safety provisions included in our mining statutes.

In metal-mines the proportion of fatal accidents per 1,000 persons employed was 2.03, being 0.39 less than during the previous year.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

Officers of the Geological Survey staff visited a large number of localities in order to make examinations of coal, limestone, and other mineral deposits. A detailed survey of the Mokau and north Taranaki coalfield was begun, and it is expected that the survey of the area selected for examination will be completed during the next field season.

Three palæontological bulletins were published during the year. One of these dealt with the Cretaceous faunas of Marlborough and northern Canterbury, and was the work of Mr. Henry Woods, of Cambridge University. Another, which had as its subject the Older Mesozoic floras of New Zealand, was written by Dr. E. A. Newell Arber, also of Cambridge University. The work done by these eminent specialists will be of service in promoting geological research in New Zealand. The other publications issued during the year include bulletins on the geology of the Tuapeka and Oamaru districts, one by Dr. P. Marshall and the other by Professor J. Park, and a list of Tertiary Mollusca. The report on the limestone and phosphate deposits of the Dominion mentioned in my last statement has been prepared, and is now in the Printer's hands.

STATE COLLIERIES.

The output from the State collieries during the late financial year was 246,273 tons, of which the Liverpool Colliery produced 128,196 tons, as against 133,013 tons during the previous year, and Point Elizabeth Colliery 118,077 tons, as against 132,769 tons during the previous year. The business resulted in a profit of £24,467, as compared with £18,521 during the previous year. The State Coal-mines Account