

SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of accidents in and about coal-mines during 1920, 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 | ... | ... | 1 | 1 |
| Falls of ground | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| Explosives... .. | ... | ... | 2 | 2 |
| Haulage | ... | ... | 11 | 11 |
| Miscellaneous—Underground... | ... | ... | 3 | 3 |
| On surface | ... | ... | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 1 | 1 | 23 | 23 |

During the year only one fatal accident occurred, the proportion per thousand persons employed at coal-mines being 0·24, and per million tons raised 0·54. This is the lowest fatal-accident rate in the Dominion for thirty-four years, and is but one-third of the lowest rate ever attained in the United Kingdom, which country is one of the most immune from colliery accidents in proportion to the number of persons employed.

Details of serious non-fatal accidents are published in the reports of Inspectors of Mines in Annexure A.

The marked reduction in the accident rate may to a certain extent be reasonably attributed to statutory safety provisions of recent years, which to a considerable extent are adopted from those of the United Kingdom.

The following is a brief description of the fatal accident: John Archibald, thirty, a single man and an experienced miner, with two partners, both of whom held firemen-deputies' certificates, and one of whom, William McMillan, held a permit as mine-manager, were working as co-operative miners reopening a dip drive in the old Dunlop's Mine, near Lovell's Flat, which had been closed for some years. The dip was originally driven in the coal-seam narrow and low, averaging 5½ ft. in height and width; very little timber had been used in the old drive, which was about 110 ft. in length, the coal roof being somewhat arched. The drive being too small for horse-haulage, the partners were engaged enlarging it and erecting sets of timber 6 ft. apart to support the roof. Preparatory to commencing work each day the manager, McMillan, made an examination of the drive. On the 21st August the repairing-work had reached a distance of about 51 ft. from the mouth of the drive. At about 1.45 p.m. the partners were squaring the drive preparatory to erecting timber, when a piece of head coal weighing about 6 cwt. or 7 cwt. fell without warning upon deceased from a smooth and previously invisible back or joint, causing a fracture of the base of the skull, leg, and of the spine in the lumbar region, in addition to other injuries. He was forthwith removed by ambulance to the Dunedin Hospital, where he received every attention, but succumbed on the 14th September, his case being considered hopeless from the first.

The Inspector of Mines for the district, Mr. E. R. Green, who inspected the place shortly after the accident, reported that had some props been temporarily erected in the middle of the drive in advance of the last permanent set they might have held the roof up till the place was squared for the permanent set the partners were preparing a place for. The Inspector also stated that co-operative miners, after hiving off from larger mines where they have been under some discipline, might not always be so careful as they should be. The Coroner in his verdict at the inquest held no person blameworthy.

SECTION IV.—WORKING OF THE COAL-MINES ACT.

(a.) VENTILATION.

[Section 40.]

The ventilation of the large collieries continues to be generally good; occasionally, however, I have found dullness, especially in pillaring operations, which it is at times difficult to provide for. In the South Island stoppings of brattice or bords are seldom airtight, and thus much useful air is lost. At certain small collieries where natural ventilation is depended upon or the fans are too small