

SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of coal-mining accidents during 1912, with their causes :—

	Fatal Accidents.		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 firedamp ...	...	...	1	1
Falls in mine ...	4	4	5	5
Miscellaneous—Underground...	5	5	11	11
On surface ...	...	...	1	1
Totals ...	9	9*	18	18

* Being in the proportion of 2·08 deaths per 1,000 persons employed.

There has been a satisfactory decline in the number of fatal accidents, but still the proportion is higher than that recorded in some other countries. The management and inspection of New Zealand collieries have become during recent years much more vigilant; and the only reason I can advance for the frequency of accidents is that owing to the difficulty in getting experienced coal-miners, of whom there is a constantly increasing shortage, men are sent into the pits to work without sufficient knowledge of the measures necessary for the safety of themselves and others. A brief description of the fatal accidents at our collieries during 1912 is appended. It will be seen that, as on previous occasions, the most prolific causes of accident are falls in the mine, and tubs descending incline jigs. From the first-named cause four men were killed and five seriously injured; and from the latter three were killed and six seriously injured. A careful perusal of the evidence given at the inquests in connection with the deaths by falls indicates that most, if not all, of the accidents were due to circumstances of which the sufferer himself was in the best position to judge the risk and take precautions accordingly for his own safety. All but one of the accidents on jigs were preventable if the attendants at the jig-tops had exercised proper care. Jig and incline ropes and chains should be frequently tested and most carefully examined, and steel ropes should be kept well greased externally, and lubricated inside. Three lives have been lost at the coal and metal mines of the Dominion within the past few months by the breakage of decayed steel ropes on inclines.

During 1912 at our coal-mines one life was lost for every 355 persons employed and for every 242 000 tons of coal raised.

The following is a brief description of the fatal accidents at New Zealand collieries during 1912 :—

Name of Sufferer.	Colliery.	Nature of Accident.
George Bain ..	Taupiri ..	Deceased, a trucker, when spragging a tub just landed at the bottom of a jig, was crushed by an empty set which descended the incline when unattached to the haulage-rope. The Coroner's jury rightly recommended that a "trailer" should be used on jigs, with which I entirely concur. This had previously been recommended in the report of the Royal Mines Commission, 1911.
J. L. Mount ..	" ..	A hewer; killed by a fall of coal from the side of a faulted pillar, no timber being used; the place was unduly high for necessary observation. This was a preventable accident.
D. Parry ..	Stockton ..	Killed by a fall of top coal and roof. The Coroner's jury, while holding no one blameworthy, recommended that in future, where coal is left upon the roof, places shall be started on sets of timber, instead of single props as in this case.
P. Finlay ..	Point Elizabeth No. 1 ..	Deceased was struck by a falling prop, knocked out by coal being pulled down by his mate, at the face. The prop was erected by these two miners.
A. Syme ..	Denniston ..	Killed by a fall of stone from roof. The place was apparently safely timbered.
H. M. Bell ..	Point Elizabeth No. 1 ..	The attendant at a jig-top let a full tub descend when unattached to the rope; the stop-block was not used: this tub struck deceased, a trucker, with fatal results.
W. H. Ellis ..	Paparoa ..	By the breaking of a jig-rope a runaway tub struck deceased, a trucker, with fatal results. As the rope had been illegally repaired before the Inspector of Mines made his official examination of the place where the accident happened, it is impossible to state if the breakage occurred under fair working-conditions. The deceased was somewhat deaf. Two men were similarly killed by an incline-rope breaking at the Talisman Gold-mine during 1913.
S. Weatherall ..	Perseverance ..	The head of deceased was injured by striking the roof while he was riding on a tub being hauled up a dip by winch. It is doubtful if deceased was riding by official permission; if not, he committed a breach of the regulations.
W. McAllister ..	Kaitangata ..	Deceased struck his head against an iron crowbar erected to support the roof. Primarily a minor accident, rendered fatal by blood-poisoning supervening.