

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

During the year detailed geological surveys of the Egmont (Taranaki) and Gisborne subdivisions were begun. Good progress has been made, and it is expected that the field-work in these districts will be finished before the end of the present year. Officers of the Survey have also visited a number of localities in order to make brief geological examinations and to furnish special reports that were required.

In addition to the annual report, Palæontological Bulletin No. 2 was published during the year. Palæontological Bulletin No. 3 and Bulletin No. 17, the latter an exhaustive report on the Westport district, are now ready for publication.

The work of the Geological Survey is proving of great value, and the demands for such survey-work to be undertaken in different parts of the Dominion are numerous. It will be impossible to meet these demands within anything like a reasonable time without increasing the staff, and I propose therefore at a very early date to recommend the Public Service Commissioner to appoint additional geologists.

STONE-QUARRIES.

During the past year 2,024 persons were employed at 179 quarries and works which come under the provisions of the Stone-quarries Act, 1910, which includes every place, not being a mine, in which persons work in quarrying stone by means of explosives, and any part of which has a rock-face more than 20 ft. deep, also any tunnel in the construction of which explosives are used.

About thirty Quarry Inspectors have been appointed to see that the provisions of the Act are duly observed. These appointments have been made from officers of the Public Works and Mines Departments located in the districts, without extra remuneration.

During 1914 only two fatal accidents occurred at such quarries, being in proportion of less than one person killed per 1,000 employed during the year.

MINING ACCIDENTS.

The number of fatalities in connection with operations at our metalliferous mines during 1914 was six, as against ten during 1913; the proportion of fatal accidents per 1,000 persons employed at such mines being 1·34, a low average when compared with that of other countries.

In our coal-mines there were seven fatal accidents, and it is with sincere regret that I have to record that by one of these no less than forty-three lives were lost and several persons were injured. This disaster occurred on the 12th September at Ralph's Colliery, Huntly, the property of the Taupiri Coal-mines (Limited). The cause of the disaster was at once investigated by a Royal Commission, who found that it was due to an ignition of fire-damp by a naked light carried in the old workings of the mine by a miner when proceeding to his work, the ignition of gas causing a concussion which raised a quantity of fine inflammable lignite-dust, by which the explosion was intensified and carried to the top of the upcast shaft, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. The Commission considered the management of the mine was, speaking generally, good, but in certain respects—*e.g.*, the prompt carrying-out of the Inspector's orders, the precautions taken against danger from gas, the ordering of safety-lamps, and the examination of the old workings—it was lax and unsatisfactory.

MINING LEGISLATION.

The past year was somewhat prolific in legislation for the advancement of the mining industry and the safety of the miner.

By the Iron and Steel Industries Act, 1914, provision was made for the payment of bounties at the rate of 12s. per ton on pig-iron and £1 4s. per ton on puddled bar iron and steel respectively, to cover a period of three years, and with a proviso that the total sum payable as bounty shall not exceed £150,000. Regulations have since been gazetted prescribing the minimum quantity, also the standard quality of the bounty goods. With this inducement the extensive iron-ore and ironsand deposits of Parapara and Taranaki should no longer remain unutilized.