

The number of holidays at both mines during the period was 125, of pay-Saturdays 235, and of days lost through cavils $11\frac{1}{2}$, totalling $371\frac{1}{2}$ days.

The number of days worked each year by the mines is as follows :—

TABLE 29.						Point Elizabeth.	Liverpool.
Year.							
1913-14 (31st March)	..	..	..	..	..	216	..
1914-15 ..	..	..	..	..	..	246	..
1915-16 ..	..	..	..	..	..	237	222
1916-17 ..	..	..	..	..	..	256	$262\frac{1}{2}$
1917-18 ..	..	..	..	..	..	219	$197\frac{1}{2}$
Annual average ..	..	..	..	..	..	235	227
Half-year to 30th September, 1918 ..	..	..	..	..	..	117	$98\frac{1}{2}$

The Board obtained particulars of the number of days annually worked by several important mines from 1908 inclusive. Some mines have been open for work for 10 per cent. more time per year over the war period than for the six years preceding 1914, and others have had a shorter working-year than before the war. There has been an increase on the whole, but it would not average more than 5 per cent. for the Dominion.

(iv.) CHANGES AND CAUSES.

The proportion of full working-time (excluding holidays, pay-Saturdays, and days the mine is idle) worked by the average miner may be estimated at a little over 90 per cent. for the earlier part of the period. During the period it has decreased at some mines and increased at others, the net result being a slight decrease in the average attendance. At one large mine the number of shifts worked per week per miner is the same in 1918 as in 1914; at another neighbouring large mine it has increased by one-eighth. In the case of two other large mines, each on different fields, it has also increased by half a shift and by three-eighths of a shift, even though in both cases the number of shifts annually worked by the mines has also increased. In the case of five other large mines the average weekly attendance has fallen off by one-tenth, one-sixth, one-quarter, one-third, and one-half a shift. If we take into account the relative numbers of men employed, and the change in the number of days worked in the year at each colliery, the decrease in the average time worked by miners during the year over the whole Dominion cannot have been considerable between 1913 and 1918.

The explanation of any reduction that exists is to be found in the increase in the average earnings of the miner, and in the greater force exerted during the period by those causes which bring about any absence from work at all. An increase in money earnings tends of itself to make the miner shorten his working-time, until he may be forced to realize that the increased earnings are offset by a rise in his expenditure. The nature of a miner's work is such that he sets a higher value on leisure than the ordinary worker, and, after a certain point is reached in his income, he is prepared to forgo further earnings in return for an addition to its enjoyment, which implies a considerable rise in his standard of comfort. The use he will make of this additional leisure, and its ethical value to the community as a whole, will depend upon his temperament, education, and the general environment society has provided for him. The late Lord Rhondda, writing in 1903 on "The Growth and Direction of our Foreign Trade in Coal," generalizes thus from his own research: "There is a very human disposition on the part of the collier, not unknown among those in other walks of life, to take life easier as income improves." He then proceeds to quote statistics showing how, as the value of the coal rose, the annual output per person employed overground and underground fell, and conversely. (*Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1903, pp. 482-83). In New Zealand the output per person employed underground, as calculated by the Mines Department, varied to the following extent for the period under review :—

TABLE 32.						Tons.	Increase or Decrease per Cent. on Preceding Year.
1913	..	..	..	..	..	590	..
1914	..	..	..	..	..	639	8.3 increase.
1915	..	..	..	..	..	711	11.3 „
1916	..	..	..	..	..	750	5.2 „
1917	..	..	..	..	..	715	4.7 decrease.
1918	..	..	..	..	..	703	1.7 „

Comparing 1917 and 1918 with 1913 there is an increase of 21.2 per cent. and 19.2 per cent. respectively in the output per man employed underground. For reasons stated in detail in Chapter V, statistics of output cannot be accepted as a measure of the percentage of possible time worked by the miner, but where increase in output accompanies a decrease in such percentage it cannot be justly argued that the latter in itself is an evil. The following comparison of output per miner per shift is calculated from returns furnished by companies :—