

MINING POPULATION AND ITS EARNINGS.

Table 9 gives the number of miners on 31st March, 1879, at 14,297. On 31st March, 1878, the number was 15,559: or a mean for the year ended 31st March, 1879, of 14,928. The value of gold exported for the same period is £1,126,088, or an average of £75 10s. for the year to each miner. The average per man for the preceding twelve months ended 31st March, 1878, was £97 10s.

The number of miners has decreased 1,262—Auckland having 579 less, and Otago 690. On the West Coast the number remains about stationary, and was, on 31st March last, 7,000, or as near as may be, one-half the miners in the colony. The emigration from the West Coast during the year must therefore be due, not to the departure of miners, but of traders and others from the townships. Of the 14,000 miners in the colony, 3,000 are Chinese, of whom about three-fourths are in Otago. The number of Chinese miners decreased 456 during the year. They are the gleaners of the field, almost always working on ground which has been abandoned by the European miner. Notwithstanding such disadvantageous circumstances, their plodding industry, method, and co-operation come in good stead, achieving results often surprisingly successful.

ALLUVIAL MINING.

The statistics of this class of mining are, as regards mining plant and water-supply, very nearly the same as for the previous year. Alluvial mining has always been the most prolific in gold; and this year it gives very nearly two-thirds of the whole yield of the colony. There has been some falling-off from the returns of the previous year, but the greatest deficiency is on the returns from quartz-mining. Alluvial mining is likely to maintain its pre-eminence for some years yet; for in the West Coast and Otago, the two great alluvial districts, there are large areas of proved ground still to operate on, and there is room for fresh discoveries. Although the yield is less for this than for the preceding year, it does not follow that the fields are becoming exhausted or that the falling-off will be progressive. The industry is subject to many vicissitudes, and is essentially fluctuating in its results.

On the West Coast, the continued wetness of last season—unusually so, even for that district—was very favourable to mining, as affording a full supply of water for sluicing. In Otago, on the other hand, the unprecedented floods in the spring made such havoc among the water-races and river-bed claims as to stop all the workings for a considerable time. As bearing also on the yield of gold, may be mentioned the effect of the numerous public works in providing the choice of steady employment at a good wage, as against the risk and precarious gains of the miner.

QUARTZ AND CEMENT MINING.

The returns from this class of mining for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1879, are,—

		Tons of Quartz crushed.	Ounces of Gold.
Auckland—			
Coromandel	2,785	9,071
Thames	41,917	57,206
West Coast—			
Reefton	28,070	26,023
Otago—			
Clyde	3,373	3,814
Arrow (Macetown)	1,610	1,618
Skippers	1,250	320
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		79,005	98,052 from quartz.
Lawrence	20,000 estimated from cement.
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Total	118,052 from quartz and cement.

As already mentioned, the falling-off in gold from quartz-mining has been greater than from alluvial. This has been most marked in the Thames, where the yield is only a little over one-half the preceding year, and not one-half the average of the preceding ten years. At Reefton the yield for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1878, was 36,691 ounces; for the like period ended 31st March, 1879, it is 26,023 ounces. This decline in the yield at Reefton is attributed by Mr. Shaw to the withdrawal of capital, thereby confining active operations to those mines only which had already been opened out and found payable. That also applies to the Thames, the present time being very unfavourable to finding capital to break new ground. The stoppage of the big pump at the Thames during the latter part of the year has also been a serious drawback, the lower levels of the principal mines having thereby become flooded. The resumption of pumping is a question for the interested associated companies and the local authorities to arrange, and has been under negotiation for some time.

The cement crushings at Lawrence have assumed large dimensions, as much as from 700 to 1,000 tons of stuff being put through each day. More batteries are in course of erection, and it is manifest from Mr. Carew's report that this, the first and most permanent gold field in Otago,