

During the years in which the public works were most actively prosecuted, the miners had a strong temptation to leave poor ground and engage on railway construction at a good steady wage; and it is well known many did so. But now that these works are not to be pushed on so much in the future as in the past, it may be expected that gold-mining will revive, from the simple fact that more men will again turn their attention to it. There is plenty of ground yet to work. The discoveries during the year, and more recently on the West Coast, confirm what was already known of the extensive and wide-spread areas in the colony over which the prospector can find payable gold.

The above figures indicate a small increase in the number of miners during the year. It is possible, however, that the numbers may not be actually greater; but that the apparent increase may be partly due to a difference in the enumeration caused by the change of Wardens. As already mentioned, mining is often combined with other pursuits, and in a classification under such circumstances, depending on estimation, no two men would be likely to enumerate alike. The returns have not been accepted without inquiry, and the results given may be taken as a near approximation. In any case it is satisfactory to find that, notwithstanding the general depression, the number of miners in the colony during the year has not decreased.

ALLUVIAL MINING.

Under this designation is comprehended all mining in which the gold is washed out of the auriferous gravels by sluicing the ground and running it through the boxes, also dredging of river-beds, and beach or other workings, where the object is not to crush the matrix of quartz or cement, but to collect the gold which has already been set free by natural processes. These alluvial workings have always in New Zealand been much the most prolific source in yield of gold. For each of the last two years, two-thirds of the yield have been from alluvial claims, and one-third from quartz- and cement-crushings. This source is likely to maintain its pre-eminence in that respect for some years yet.

In the West Coast, Middle Island, which is the principal alluvial mining district in the colony, there are extensive areas of country where the prospector has either never been or has examined only in the most hurried manner. In its natural state of dense forest, sea-girt bluffs, and numerous rivers, a great portion of this country is practically quite impenetrable until opened up by tracks.

QUARTZ AND CEMENT-MINING

The return from this class of mining for the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1880, are—

				Tons of Quartz Crushed.	Ounces of Gold.
Auckland,—					
Coromandel ...	...	...	...	1,296	5,190
Thames ...	...	...	...	33,017	59,575
West Coast,—					
Reefton ...	...	...	...	28,062	18,090
Greymouth ...	...	...	...	150	Not given.
Marlborough,—					
Havelock ...	...	...	...	320	105
Otago,—					
Clyde ...	...	...	...	6,743	4,197
Arrow ...	...	...	...	4,615	4,317
Skipper's ...	...	...	...	660	220
Hindon (estimated) ...	...	...	...	850	640
				<hr/> 75,713	
Lawrence ...	...	...	...	...	92,344 from quartz. 23,000 estimated from cement.
					<hr/> 115,344 from quartz and cement.

These returns from quartz show a falling off in the total of nearly 6,000 ounces as compared with the previous year. At Reefton there is a falling off of