

each product bears about equal relationship to the vegetable kingdom. The digging for gum may be compared to surface-mining for gold, with the distinction that the nuggets of the former are found of a much larger size and more generally dispersed over particular districts peculiar to the North Island.

The gum-digging industry gives constant employment to a large number of the European as well as the Native population. Since the beginning of the year 1853 there has been dug and taken from land where gigantic kauri-forests originally grew 104,400 tons of gum; but perhaps centuries have passed since the forests were destroyed. The value of the product taken from the gum-fields up to the end of last year amounts to £3,943,152. The exact quantity of gum procured last year cannot easily be ascertained; but the quantity exported, I think, may be taken as a near approximate: this appears as 4,921 tons, representing a value of £257,653. According to last census I find the number of persons engaged in the occupation of gum-digging was 1,283; therefore, taking the value of the product obtained, the average earning for the year of the gum-digger would appear to have been £200 16s. 5d. per individual.

I trust that this report will not prove wearisome if I point out the conclusion I have come to as to the value of the mining industry in respect to the number of persons engaged in its pursuit. In the first place, the value of any industry to a country is the value of its product in proportion to the number of persons employed and the capital invested; but with regard to mining labour is generally the all-important factor, and frequently gold-mining is carried on successfully by individual miners, alone or in company, without any other capital than their labour to commence operations with; it is therefore on that basis I will first show the average earnings separately of those engaged in each branch of mining, and then collectively.

The average number of persons engaged in gold- and silver-mining at the end of March last was 11,782, and at the end of March of the previous year 11,178, which gives an average for last year of 11,480. The value of gold and silver produced for that period was £925,546, or equal to an average of £80 12s. 7d. per man.

The number of persons engaged in coal-mining was 1,605, and the total output of coal was 534,353 tons, representing a value of £267,176, with the value of coke exported £715; which gives an average value per miner of £166 18s. 2d.

As to the number of persons engaged in mining for other minerals than those just enumerated I have no returns to show; but I think I shall be justified in estimating them at fifty; and, as the value of such minerals obtained last year amounted to £5,336, this sum would give an average of £106 13s. 2d. per individual.

The aggregate number of persons engaged in all classes of mining, including gum-diggers, during last year appears to have been 14,468, which is 562 in excess of those shown by the last census-papers; and the total value of all mineral products obtained, including kauri-gum, appears to be £1,485,491, or equal to an average value per man engaged in mining for the year of £102 13s. 6d. This is after all expenses of living, wages, and working expenses have been provided for. It will surely now be recognized that the mining industry, from the results shown, will compare most favourably with any other calling or occupation in the colony; and no individual able and willing to work need ever be in want of employment in New Zealand if ready to turn his attention to mining.

I propose now to draw attention to the important works which have from time to time been undertaken by the colony in our several mining districts in the direction of opening up the country and developing its mineral resources, and at the same time promoting the settlement of people upon the soil. The foremost of such works are roads and tracks. Without such having been formed and made, large areas of country rich in mineral wealth could never have been prospected and inhabited. Those days when gold was easily obtained from the beds of creeks and from shallow ground have gone past; but I believe they will return again as the vast extent of unexplored country in Nelson and Westland Districts becomes better known; meanwhile, however, in order to make the auriferous drifts pay, the workings require to be conducted on an extensive and systematic scale. Large