

considerably altered, and resembles ambrite so closely that it is said the latter mineral has been collected and sold as kauri gum. During last year there was 7,438 tons exported, having a value of £378,563; whilst for the year previous there was 7,519 tons, of a value of £329,590. This shows that the value of the gum exported last year was £7 more per ton than for the previous one. The kauri gum industry is one requiring no expensive outfit, a haversack, steel prod, spade, and knife, are all that is used by the digger to enable him to produce the gum in a marketable condition; therefore, its value represents the cost of labour or the wages of those employed in procuring it. It is an industry which affords employment to a number of small settlers who have taken up land in the northern district, and it is also the means of affording a livelihood to a large Native population. Taking the value of gum exported last year, and the value of the gold and silver produced in the Auckland District, it amounts to £510,485, which must form a great factor in producing prosperity in this portion of the colony. The total quantity of gum exported since 1853 has been 134,630 tons, representing a value of £5,394,687.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINING INDUSTRY.

There are three things especially necessary for furthering the development of the mining industry—namely, roads and tracks, water-supplies, and prospecting. Works of this character are essential to mining, and require a certain amount of Government aid to bring them to a successful issue.

ROADS AND TRACKS.

The most necessary works for assisting to develop our mineral lodes and encourage the growth of the mining industry are the construction of roads and tracks, without these mining cannot be carried on to any extent. There are many places in the colony comparatively unexplored, especially on the West Coast of the Middle Island, the southern portions of Otago, and also the northern portion of the Auckland District. Owing to the broken and hilly character of the country where mining is generally carried on, being in many places covered with a dense forest, the construction of roads and tracks is indispensable to the development of the mineral wealth. The expenditure under this head for the year ending the 31st March last amounted to £13,146, and the liabilities on works in progress at the end of the year to £10,649. Of this expenditure, £10,894 was on roads and tracks constructed wholly by Government, and £2,252 was on roads and tracks constructed by local bodies on plans and specifications of work being approved by the department and subsidies granted to the extent of £1 for £1. The expenditure on works of this nature during the last eight years has been £99,146 on roads constructed wholly by the department, and £64,782 as subsidies to local bodies, making a total expenditure of £163,928 on roads and tracks.

WATER SUPPLY.

One of the greatest accessories to mining is a good water supply. Without this the large areas of our auriferous drifts cannot be successfully worked. In certain cases the Government was induced to undertake the construction of large works for supplying water to goldfields. Experience has however proved that such works are better left to private enterprise, as the persons immediately interested have the best information as to the nature and extent of auriferous ground that any water supply would command. It is accordingly proposed to ask the House for a vote to aid in the construction of works of this character.

PROSPECTING.

In the early days of the goldfields gold was found in such large quantities and in places so easy of access that the gold-digger was always eager to explore the country with the view of finding gold in some quiet spot where he would be likely to carry on his workings for some time unmolested. This led to prospecting parties being formed by those who were in good claims which enabled them to find the means of providing for the prospectors. Another inducement to prospecting was that the area of the ordinary mining claims being at that time small and quickly worked out, if the prospectors were fortunate enough to make any new discoveries they were certain of getting larger claims.

The second stage of prospecting was by the storekeepers who found that as the shallow ground became exhausted the miners began to leave the field. This made them alive to the fact that, unless new discoveries were made, they would have to give up business, and accordingly found it to their interests to assist the miners in sending out prospecting parties.