

new ground, and mining properties partially developed and then abandoned, have been taken up, with the view of carrying on more extensive operations than formerly. Every encouragement in the matter of extended areas and security of title has been afforded to companies willing to carry on prospecting in a systematic manner; but, at the same time, safeguards have been provided to prevent large areas of mineral lands being held for purely speculation purposes. In past years many mining properties were abandoned, and often unjustly condemned as worthless, when only partially and imperfectly prospected, chiefly through an insufficiency of capital. During the present revival capital to prospect many of these properties, as well as new areas, will doubtless be forthcoming if the owners are fair and reasonable in their demands. With capital for development, and the employment of new processes of treatment, gold-mining is rapidly becoming a permanent industry of great value to the colony; and the constant care of the Government will be to foster its development in every legitimate way.

The quantity of gold entered for exportation through the Customs for the year ending the 31st March last, as shown in Table No. 2 annexed, was 302,690oz., representing a value of £1,196,081; while the quantity exported for the same period of the preceding year was 222,981oz., valued at £889,545. This shows the substantial increase of 79,707oz., not including the gold manufactured into jewellery in the colony during that period. Of the quantity exported, Auckland contributed 117,029oz.; Marlborough, 3,173oz.; Nelson, 3,813oz.; West Coast, 89,721oz.; and Otago, 88,954oz. Auckland shows the largest increase, being 58,998oz., or more than double the quantity produced for the previous year. Of the total quantity of gold entered for exportation last year Auckland contributed 38·67 per cent.; Marlborough, 1·04 per cent.; Nelson, 1·26 per cent.; West Coast, 29·64 per cent.; and Otago, 29·39 per cent.

EARNINGS OF THE GOLD-MINERS.

On account of the difficulty of ascertaining the total cost of the tools, machinery, and appliances used in gold-mining, it is impossible to arrive at more than an approximate estimate of the earnings of the men actually engaged in the industry. However, dividing the gold entered for exportation by the number of miners, taken from the returns forwarded to the department by the Mining Registrars, will afford, as in former years, a rude basis of computation.

The total number of miners employed last year was 13,226, as against 11,412 for the previous year. The increase was principally in the Auckland District, where 1,714 more men were employed than in the preceding year. Dividing the value of gold exported by the number of men employed, we get an average earning of £87 17s. 5d. per man, as against £77 18s. 11d. per man per year for 1894—an increase of £9 18s. 6d. per man. Taking the value of the gold from the different districts, and dividing it by the number of men employed, it is found that the earnings of the miners employed in Auckland District were £122 15s. 9d.; in Marlborough, £52 5s. 8d.; in Nelson, £3 9s. 9d.; on the West Coast, £151 5s. 1d.; and in Otago, £77 10s. 9d. In some places, more especially in Otago, Nelson, and the West Coast, many of the miners do not depend entirely on mining, but employ a part of their time in farming pursuits, &c.

QUARTZ-WORKINGS.

This important branch of the gold-mining industry continues to make very steady and satisfactory progress, the returns of last year showing a very marked increase over those of the preceding year. The bulk of the increase has been from the mines in the North Island. During last year 127,572 tons of quartz and tailings were treated in the Auckland District, yielding 221,289oz. bullion, representing an estimated value of £378,107, as against bullion to the value of £261,746 for the former year, being an increase of £116,361, or 69 per cent. increase for the year. In Nelson the number of tons of quartz and tailings crushed is not given in the battery returns, but the yield of gold for that district from quartz crushed was 225oz., valued at £866. On the West Coast 31,986 tons of quartz and tailings were treated for a return of 17,794oz. of gold, valued at