

GOLD- AND SILVER-MINING.

The returns of gold obtained in the colony show a considerable falling-off last year, principally from the alluvial mining districts, no doubt owing a great deal to the dry season and to the shortness of water, also to the large amount of dead-work done (especially in the Otago District) in connection with mining, such as the construction of large hydraulic plants and dredges to work the ground on a more extensive scale. With regard to silver-mining, it is difficult to ascertain the correct quantity of silver obtained, as some of it is shipped in bullion, but the quantity is not great; however, silver-mining is attracting more attention every year, and plants are being constructed to deal with silver ores. The only places at which these ores are worked as yet are Puhipuhi, where the bullion is mostly all silver, and Waihi and Karangahake, where there is a combination of gold and silver in the ore. The first plant in the Puhipuhi has been only recently erected, and consequently only test samples of ore have as yet been made.

The quartz-mining in general is looking better than it has done for several years, and the North Island districts show an increased return of gold last year, while the Reefon District on the West Coast shows only but a slight falling-off. The following is a comparative statement of the returns of the quantity and value of gold for the two years ending the 31st March last:—

Name of District.	Year ending 31st March, 1891.		Year ending 31st March, 1890.		Increase (shown thus +) or Decrease (shown thus -).
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	
	Oz.	£	Oz.	£	Oz.
Auckland	38,630	153,678	31,948	125,326	+6,682
Marlborough	2,333	9,332	7,152	28,282	-4,819
Nelson	1,610	6,406	3,593	13,593	-1,983
West Coast	86,792	347,161	94,066	375,955	-7,274
Otago	41,715	168,744	65,001	260,018	-23,286
Totals	171,080	685,321	201,760	803,174	-30,680

This shows a falling-off in yield to the extent of 30,680oz., the greater portion of which is in the Otago District; but in the Auckland District there has been an increased yield of 6,692oz. There is no getting away from the fact that there is a gradual falling-off in the yield of gold from the alluvial workings every year, indicating that the early-worked auriferous drifts are getting less in extent, and that labour-saving appliances must, as a matter of necessity, be adopted to make this branch of the gold-mining industry give fair returns for both capital invested and labour employed. The quartz-mines are the only permanent gold- and silver-mines in the colony, and the permanency of these depends on the distance the lodes can be traced so as to be payable for working.

QUARTZ WORKINGS.

NORTH ISLAND.

AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

Puhipuhi.

There are a large number of licensed holdings taken up on this field, but with the exception of the Prospectors' there has been very little work done since the field was first opened. This, no doubt, can be partially ascribed to the fact that this part of the country is without either roads or tracks. There are numerous quartz lodes on the field containing silver, and some of them a little gold; but no one can say in its present state of development whether the field will become a large mining district or not. There is far more work done in the Prospectors' Mine than in any other, but even in it the lodes have not been prospected to any great depth; at the same time, many of them are clearly defined, and of good width, showing every indication of going down; but, still, that is no criterion that they will contain sufficient silver to pay for working. It is a field where many of the lodes near the surface are likely to yield fair returns for working with a plant capable of treating the ore economically, and extracting a fair percentage of the silver.

During my recent visit to this field the only mine visited was the Prospectors'. The No. 3 lode is about 4ft. in thickness, and contains some very good ore. A considerable quantity of it is stacked at the mouth of the level, ready to send to the battery, which ought to give good returns. There are numerous lodes in the ground held by the owners of this claim which contain silver, and from which rich assays have been made; but these are, in many instances, deceiving when the ore is treated in bulk. On my former visit to the field, in December last, there were forty-nine men employed in the different claims—namely,—

Name of Holding.	Number of Men employed.	Name of Holding.	Number of Men employed.
Prospectors'	17	Luminary	2
Young Colonial	2	Caberfeigh	2
Tuiona	2	Silver Star	2
Broadbent and Hogan	2	Gibson's	2
Kamo	2	Lone Hand	2
Silver Fleece	2	Nelson	2
Caledonian	2	Ruby	2
No. 3 Company	2		
Caledonian	2	Total	49