

GOLD- AND SILVER-MINING.

The returns of the results of gold-mining operations for the last year show a considerable increase in the yield of gold over that produced for the previous year. This increased yield has taken place on every goldfield in the colony. It may be, in some measure, due to two causes in the Middle Island—first, the wet season last year which gave a plentiful supply of water, and, secondly, owing to the anticipation of the abolition of the duty, a good deal of gold was held by the banks during the quarter ending the 31st of March, 1891, instead of being entered for duty for exportation. This second reason is very patent in the case of the quantity entered for duty in Otago for that quarter. According to the Customs returns there were only 64oz. gold of a value of £250 exported; while for the quarter ending the 30th June there were 47,302oz., valued at £189,207, entered for export. The average quantity entered for duty from Otago for four quarters previous to the March one referred to was 15,852oz. per quarter. In regard to the yield from the West Coast, the average quantity entered for duty for export for four quarters prior to the 1st of January, 1891, was 22,574oz. per quarter. Taking, therefore, the average returns for the four quarters referred to from all the districts in the Middle Island, where the duty was abolished after the 1st April, 1891—namely, 15,852oz. from Otago, deducting 64oz. entered for exportation, it leaves 15,788oz. held by the banks for this quarter; and in the case of the West Coast, the average being 22,574oz. per quarter, there was 20,092oz. entered for exportation, leaving 2,482oz. kept back, which would show that about 18,270oz. of gold had been held by the banks that should not be fairly credited to last year's produce. If this quantity be added to the yield for 1890–91 it would make the produce for that year 189,350oz. instead of 171,080oz., the total quantity entered for export last year being 276,535oz. The 18,270oz. would have to be deducted from this, which would leave the actual yield last year to be 258,265oz. This shows that the yield from the mines last year was 68,915oz., representing a value of £275,660 more than for the year previous.

The following is a comparative statement of the quantity and value of gold entered for export for the last two years ending the 31st March last :—

Name of District.	Year ending 31st March, 1892.		Year ending 31st March, 1891.		Increase for 1892.
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	
	Oz.	£	Oz.	£	Oz.
Auckland	40,525	162,760	38,630	153,678	1,894
Marlborough .. .	7,020	23,026	2,333	9,332	4,687
Nelson	5,301	20,192	1,610	6,406	3,691
West Coast .. .	118,158	472,672	86,792	347,161	31,366
Otago	105,531	423,527	41,715	168,744	63,816
Totals	276,535	1,107,177	171,080	685,321	105,454

The Otago District shows the greatest increase last year, but this district for the previous year showed a falling-off in the yield of gold to the extent of 30,680oz. from the return for 1889–90. It is extremely gratifying to find that the produce of gold from the mines of the colony last year is more than it has been since the year 1886–87, and, notwithstanding the depression in mining properties in the Thames District, the returns last year show an increased yield, taking the County and Borough of Thames conjointly, of 781oz.

The returns of silver are not clearly shown, as a large portion is exported in bullion. The actual returns of silver exported only include what the banks forwarded from the silver alloy in the gold purchased in the colony. There is, however, a considerable quantity of silver exported by the Waihi Company, from Auckland. Their returns for the month of May last showed that bullion to the value of £5,000 was exported, of which more than one half in weight was silver. This was ascertained from the bank, where one of the directors of this company showed the month's bullion to the Hon. the Minister of Mines and myself, when we were officially informed as to its value.

QUARTZ WORKINGS.

NORTH ISLAND.

AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

Puhipuhi.

The result of mining operations on this field last year has been very disappointing. Great expectations were formed as to the richness of the field, but, as these expectations were not realised when the ore came to be tested in bulk, those in charge of the crushing-plant had to bear the blame. It seems that the outcrops of the lodes were richer in silver than they proved to be at lower depths; some of the assays of the ore from the prospectors' claim, and also from tests of parcels varying from 3,700lb. downwards, made at the Thames School of Mines, showed the ore to be payable for working. Notwithstanding the disappointments met with, Puhipuhi is a field deserving of being better prospected. There are a number of large lodes traversing the country where rich deposits of argentiferous ore are likely to be met with. In some of the mines there is a little gold in the lodes; but, as far as prospecting operations have been carried on, it has been found that silver is the predominant metal. The time at my disposal would not admit of my visiting this field last year; but from the report of Mr. Wilson it will be seen that Mr. Hartmann is still engaged in carrying on experiments in the extraction of the silver from the ore by the