

population the discovery of gold brought to our shores—giving the *bonâ fide* agriculturist a local market for his produce—would in all probability still be in its natural state; either covered with bush and fern, or devoted only to the pasturage of a few sheep and cattle.

Gold-mining, like all other industries, is rapidly being brought to a science. The happy-go-lucky method of working hitherto pursued, by sinking here, there, and everywhere without a defined plan, is fast dying away. Men are getting a better knowledge of mineral and metalliferous ores, and the formations in which to look for them. The improvements in machinery and appliances admit of ground being worked far more cheaply than formerly; but, notwithstanding this, gold-mining is becoming more difficult as year after year passes by.

The auriferous lodes, where rich patches of gold were found in the past, are getting worked out on the upper levels, and deep-sinking in many places, with a large influx of water to contend with, has to be undertaken in order to follow the lodes down. This, together with requiring men of skill and ability to carry on the operations to a successful issue, adds considerably to the cost of working.

In alluvial mining the greatest labour-saving appliance that can be used is a large supply of water at a high elevation above the ground proposed to be worked; but this requires a considerable outlay in the construction of water-races, tail-races, and hydraulic plant. The working miner of to-day is very differently situated from the miner of former years. He now requires not only to give a large amount of labour, but he must have a considerable sum of money at command, to enable him to go into the undertaking. The wages of the miner are much less than formerly, and now many of them having large families to support cannot afford to lay by sufficient money to enable them to undertake operations on a large scale. To bring a mining venture to a payable stage, capital and labour require to go hand in hand, and every encouragement and facility should be afforded the miner to get our mineral wealth developed. The field for gold-mining operations to be carried on should be extended to the utmost possible limit, as this industry will afford employment to the working-classes, and have a much greater tendency towards solving the question of the "unemployed" than any other. Even on the old-established goldfields men can always earn a livelihood, though they may not be able to make the ordinary rates of wages. It is intended to give better facilities by granting a good tenure to land on goldfields, so that the miners can build comfortable homes and have a sufficient area on which they can grow their own vegetables and keep a cow or two, thus enabling them to maintain their families and reduce the cost of living to a minimum.

The yield of gold for the year ending the 31st March last (Table No. 2) shows an increase over the previous year of 12,043oz., representing a value of £52,753. The total yield last year, according to the Customs returns of the quantity entered for exportation—not including the gold manufactured into jewellery, &c., in the colony—was 247,702oz., representing a value of £970,220; while the yield for the former year amounted to 228,659oz., having a value of £917,467. The increased yield last year came from the Auckland and Otago districts, being 11,374oz. and 4,781oz. respectively; while the Marlborough district showed a decrease in the yield over the former year of 793oz., Nelson 613oz., and the West Coast 2,706oz., making the total increase in the North Island and Otago 16,155oz., and the total decrease in the other districts, 4,112oz. Of the gold produced last year, the Auckland district contributed 52,426oz., or 21.78 per cent of the total yield; Marlborough and Nelson, 4,441oz., or 1.84 per cent.; the West Coast, 98,930oz., or 41.10 per cent.; and Otago, 84,905oz., or 35.28 per cent.

EARNINGS OF THE GOLD-MINERS.

The only way this can be arrived at is by taking the returns furnished to the Department by the various Wardens of gold-mining districts, of the number of miners actually employed in claims on the goldfields, and the quantity of gold entered for exportation, according to the Customs returns. This does not, however, represent the whole of the gold, as there is a certain quantity manufactured in the colony each year, and parcels, are, no doubt, taken away by Chinese and others leaving the colony which do not go through the Customs. On the other hand, there are a number of men employed by the miners in getting blocks and sawn-timber for mining, who are not included in the return of miners employed in claims. These may, I think, be fairly taken into account, as against the extra amount of gold obtained over the quantity shown for exportation in the Customs returns.

The total number of miners employed last year was 11,553, as against 12,197 for the previous year, showing a decrease in the number last year of 544. This decrease is principally