

About 44 tons of antimony was exported last year from the Endeavour Inlet Mine, representing a value of £761, but there does not appear to be sufficient inducement to carry on extensive operations. It is only where rich ore is found that mines can at present be worked at a profit, as the price of antimony is very low.

At Ohaeawai an English syndicate has spent a considerable amount of money in prospecting for cinnabar, and some fairly rich ore has been found, but the large emissions of gas which is seen bubbling and hissing out of the surface of the ground in the vicinity of the workings, together with hot springs, will render the working of any lode in this locality a difficult and hazardous undertaking. In digging up the surface, beds of shaly or peaty formation containing petroleum are met with. On the top of this deposit, and, in some places intermixed with it, small globules of quicksilver are found, which have been distilled from the ore by the heat of the earth. No doubt a considerable quantity of quicksilver exists in this locality, but it seems questionable whether it can be profitably worked without plenty of capital.

KAURI-GUM.

The production of this article of commerce seems to increase every year. There was 8,338 tons exported last year as against 8,317 tons for the year previously, but the average value of the product last year was considerably less than for the former year, as the total value was only £404,567, whereas for the year 1893 it was £510,775, showing a falling-off in the value to the extent of £106,208. The average value last year was only £48 10s. 5d. per ton, whereas for the previous year the average value was £61 18s. 3d. per ton.

The number of people engaged in this industry cannot well be ascertained, but it is known to be the means of providing a livelihood for a large population of both Europeans and Maoris. At the same time, their average earnings must be very small. The best class of gum is naturally becoming scarcer every year, or, at least, it requires more work to find it; but, although the kauri-gum must in the course of time become exhausted, many years will yet elapse before this takes place.

ROADS AND TRACKS.

The great necessity for the construction of roads and tracks becomes plainer every year. Fresh discoveries are constantly being made, requiring means of transit of tools, provisions, and machinery. The broken character of the country in which mining, in a great many places, is carried on almost requires a road constructed up every valley or ravine to get supplies brought to mining claims. The more discoveries that are made, the greater the want of roads will be. A considerable sum has already been expended, and still very little is yet done to open out the back country.

The estimated cost of roads and tracks authorised to be constructed last year was £21,595, and the actual expenditure was £15,160 by direct grants, and £2,295 by subsidies; and the liability on works of this character on the 31st March last was £20,687. During the last thirteen years that the votes for this purpose have been under the control of the Mines Department the expenditure by Government has amounted to £155,188 in direct grants, and £77,309 by subsidies to local bodies.

WATER-RACES.

As I have already remarked, a large supply of water is essential to the successful working of the alluvial drifts. Although there are very large areas covered with a great depth of these drifts, it is only in very few localities that the auriferous layers will yield remunerative returns, considering the cost of driving and timbering. Large quantities of material require to be operated on at a minimum cost, and this can only be done with a good water-supply. This necessitates either the construction of large water-races or extensive reservoirs, and in many instances both of these have to be constructed so as to insure a constant supply of water. The whole of the streams in the immediate locality