

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT.

BY THE HON. A. J. CADMAN, MINISTER OF MINES.

Mr. SPEAKER,—

In placing before you the Statement showing the condition of the mining industry it is my pleasing duty to announce that the progress consequent on the impetus given to gold-mining during the year 1895–96 still continues. The demand for a field for investment has resulted in a large number of claims being occupied, and in many cases mining properties have been acquired by agents representing well-known English and Continental investors. A great addition to the number of mining companies has been made, and on their behalf extensive mining operations are carried on to open up the older, as well as the newer mines, by the sinking of shafts, driving long tunnels or adits, and the construction of water-races for the development both of quartz-mines and alluvial workings. In the prosecution of these works new and improved machinery—some being on a very large scale—has been introduced for winding, pumping, milling, ventilation, &c., in quartz-mines; also for dredging, elevating, cement-crushing, and hydraulic sluicing in alluvial drift and river-bed workings. The expenditure upon works of this kind had hitherto been beyond the resources of many of the New Zealand mining companies, and it is only since the investment of outside capital has been directed to the colony that these necessary works could be undertaken. Prospecting work in search of reefs containing gold and silver has been vigorously carried on throughout the Auckland District, especially in the dense and hitherto unexplored and almost inaccessible bush localities. Numerous new lines of reefs have been discovered, and hundreds of men are already engaged in exploration works to open up the lodes. Samples of quartz tests, which in many instances have given very encouraging results, tend to show that many of these newly-discovered reefs are valuable.

In the Middle Island goldfields prospecting for reefs is pursued with favourable results. The alluvial drifts containing gold are being further tested, and river claims have been taken up in localities that were not previously deemed suitable for working by means of dredges.

Although the tables and returns attached to the Statement have, as usual, been compiled to the 31st of March last, I have, however, owing to the late period of the ordinary meeting of Parliament this year, endeavoured as far as possible to furnish the latest information procurable as to the position of the mining industry at the present time. It will accordingly be found that the results to be obtained from the returns are in some instances supplemented by more recent information in the Statement itself.

MINERAL PRODUCTION.

The quantity of gold, silver, coal, and other minerals, including kauri-gum, produced for the year ending the 31st December last will be found in Table I., annexed. The total production of gold and silver was 358,001 oz., representing a value of £1,052,017, compared with a value of £1,172,843 for the preceding year. This shows a decrease of £120,826.