

COAL-MINING.

This industry continues to expand in proportion to local and foreign demands. The further development of gold-mining will also increase the demand for the supply of coal.

The total output from the mines last year was 840,713 tons, as against 792,851 tons for the former year, showing the increased output last year to be 47,862 tons. The coal imported from other countries last year was 110,907 tons, while for the former year there were 101,756 tons, showing an increase in the importation last year of 9,151 tons. The imports were 1,500 tons from the United Kingdom, 109,403 tons from New South Wales, and 4 tons from Victoria. The total export of coal was 82,396 tons; of which 76,073 tons was colonial produce, and 6,323 tons imported coal from other countries. Of the quantity of coal exported, 55,757 tons was for coaling direct steamers trading between the colony and the United Kingdom, and will therefore be treated as in former Statements as coal consumed within the colony, as these steamers are wholly employed in trade between New Zealand and Great Britain. Taking, therefore, the output from our mines and the coal imported, we have a total of 951,620 tons, of which 26,639 tons was exported, leaving the consumption within the colony last year to be 921,097 tons, as against 866,633 tons for the previous year, being an increased consumption last year of 54,464 tons. Taking the output of the different classes of coal from the mines in the colony, there were 504,764 tons of bituminous coal, 34,969 tons of pitch-coal, 268,020 tons of brown coal, and 32,960 tons of lignite; which shows an increased production last year of 31,127 tons of bituminous coal, and a decrease of 75,578 tons of pitch-coal, 88,276 tons of brown coal, and 4,037 tons from the lignite-pits.

The mines in the Kawakawa and Hikurangi Districts show a decrease last year of 3,958 tons, but the Waikato and Mokau mines show an increase of 5,431 tons: giving a net increase on the total output for the North Island of 1,473 tons.

The Westport District mines show an increase of 35,855 tons; also the Nelson mines an increase of 404 tons; but there was a falling off in the districts of Reefton and Greymouth of 10,144 tons: making the net total increase for the West Coast District of 26,115 tons.

The mines in the Canterbury District show an increase of 1,893 tons.

There were also large increases from the mines in the Otago District: North Otago showing an increase of 2,176 tons; South Otago District, 10,769 tons; and the Central Otago District 5,533 tons: making a total net increase for the Otago District of 18,478 tons.

The Southland District shows a decrease last year of 97 tons.

The mines in which there has been the largest output are: The Coalbrookdale, 184,376 tons; Kaitangata, 92,914 tons; Brunner, 85,592 tons; Millerton, Granity Creek, 59,240 tons; Westport-Cardiff, 54,280 tons; Blackball, 43,084 tons; Taupiri Extended, 33,913 tons; Hikurangi, 30,663 tons; Shag Point, 23,334 tons; Nightcaps, 22,762 tons; Taupiri Reserve, 18,870 tons; Kiripaka, 16,248 tons; Waikato, 13,317 tons; Allandale, 11,635 tons; Walton Park, 11,554 tons; New Bay of Islands, 11,134 tons: the output from any of the other mines being under 10,000 tons.

ACCIDENTS IN COAL-MINES.

Four fatal accidents occurred in the coal-mines during the year 1897: one in the Auckland District and three in the Otago District. The usual inquiries revealed that no blame could be attributed to any one. The total number of coal-miners employed throughout the colony was 1,912; therefore the percentage of fatal accidents is 0.209, or 2.09 per thousand.

METALLIFEROUS MINES.

Attention is again being directed to search for lodes containing copper, antimony, and other metals; but, with the exception of small shipments of manganese and sulphur from the North Island, chiefly to Australia, the quanti-