

The details are shown in the following table :—

District.	Year ending 31st December, 1909.		Year ending 31st December, 1908.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
	Oz.	£	Oz.	£
Auckland	288,614	1,142,098	296,971	1,171,375
Wellington	...	...	...	...
Marlborough	39	155	297	1,145
Nelson	2,572	10,286	3,196	12,783
West Coast	95,014	369,930	86,052	335,722
Canterbury	...	...	...	...
Otago and Southland	120,121	484,385	119,907	483,900
Unknown	11	46	...	...
Totals	506,371	2,006,900	506,423	2,004,925

ALLUVIAL MINING.

During the past year there has been considerable activity and increased prosperity in alluvial mining operations. A few years ago this branch of our mining industry was generally believed to be gradually declining; it is therefore satisfactory to note that the last two years have shown a marked improvement in some branches of alluvial mining, and, while gold-dredging has declined during the year, other methods of alluvial mining, such as hydraulic sluicing, elevating, and driving, have improved considerably. This is to some extent due to the moderate assistance given by the State to this class of mining by way of assisting prospecting in difficult and expensive localities, and also by the assistance granted towards carrying out expensive operations in developing large mining enterprises.

There are at present 111 alluvial gold-dredgers, employing 893 men, in active operation. The gold produced during the year by these dredgers was valued at £327,676, being a decrease of £46,142 on the yield of the previous year. The number of working dredgers has decreased by twelve, and the average earnings by £87 per dredger during the year.

While there is a decrease in the number of men employed on our alluvial goldfields, the yields of gold produced by various processes other than dredging show a decided improvement, which may be accounted for by the improved methods of hydraulic sluicing and elevating now coming into more general use. A careful perusal of the reports of the Wardens and Inspectors of Mines, and my own personal observations while visiting many of our goldfields during the year, warrants me in assuring honourable members that there is a strong feeling of confidence in the future prospects of most of our alluvial goldfields. In Central Otago I found this feeling very pronounced amongst both miners and business men, and with a well-devised and carefully prepared scheme of water-conservation and the great possibilities of hydro-electric energy, I feel satisfied that this confidence in their future prospects is fully justified.

Alluvial mining generally in Otago and Southland has improved during the year, and several important development operations were in course of construction which, when completed, should in the immediate future add considerably to the returns from these goldfields.

The Muddy Terrace Sluicing Company, near Waikaia, Southland, have sufficiently advanced their development-works during the year to permit of both sluicing and elevating operations being started, I am informed, with very satisfactory results, and their future operations may be expected to add to the returns from our alluvial goldfields.

Throughout the West Coast alluvial goldfields steady progress with improved returns was noticeable as compared with those of the previous year.

The Ross Goldfields (Limited) have been engaged installing a hydro-electric pumping and winding plant. This work is now finished, and the once famous Ross Flat may be expected to make a substantial contribution annually to the gold-production of the West Coast.