

REPORT ON THE GOLD FIELDS OF NEW ZEALAND.

Mr. HAUGHTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Wellington, July 16, 1872.

I have the honor, in accordance with your instructions, to forward a General Report upon the state and prospects of the Gold Fields, with Appendix containing Reports by the Wardens upon the Districts under their charge, and Statistical Tables.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

C. E. HAUGHTON.

REPORT.

In presenting the first General Report upon the Gold Fields of New Zealand, I must in the first place acknowledge that it is by no means of so satisfactory and exhaustive a character as the importance of the interest demands. The geographical and physical circumstances of the Colony, the scattered localities of the gold workings, the diversity of administration under the several Provincial Governments, all tend, in their degree, to render the collection of reliable statistics exceedingly difficult, and, in default of special machinery, in many instances impossible.

The mineral statistics of Victoria, published annually, owe a great deal of their value to the information freely afforded in that Colony to the Department of Mines, by the Banks, Mine Owners and Mining Managers; who, feeling assured that the figures furnished will only be used for public purposes and massed in general returns, give the fullest and most complete details of all their transactions, and thus enable most trustworthy conclusions to be drawn as to the relative importance of the various classes of mining; their respective benefit to the state by the profits of the yield over the cost of raising, and the present pecuniary status and future prospects of the mining community.

From the time at my disposal I have only been enabled to avail myself to a very limited extent of similar information. So far as regards the issuing of circulars, that has been done, and copies are hereto appended; I fear, however, that in the case of Mine Owners and Managers these are thrown aside or disregarded in the absence of the conviction—which cannot at once be forced upon their minds—that it is for the general good that the real position of our gold fields should be established by such data as can only be afforded by the confidential communication of what, must be admitted, are the secrets of their business. This is a matter of education, and I have no doubt that the example of Victoria, now specially pointed out, will induce in future such consideration for the interests of the Colony as may result in the furnishing of periodical returns affording a basis for statistics as complete, as in the nature of so special an industry, they can possibly be, and which will do much to establish the eminent position of New Zealand as a field for successful Colonization.

Having said so much as to what has not been done, and premised the defects which from the necessities of the case will be found in the statistics accompanying this Report, I would now state that in endeavouring to fulfil the wishes of Parliament and the instructions of Ministers, I have availed myself of such sources of official information as were open to me; having obtained returns from the Treasury and Customs Departments of the gold fields revenue and exports of precious metals; together with reports from the Wardens as to the several Mining Districts; which collectively afford a most comprehensive summary of the state of the gold fields. These reports in most cases are very ably written and will well repay attentive perusal. Within the last twelve months, dating from 31st March, 1872, I have personally visited every district with the exception of Switzer's, in Otago, and Okarito, in Westland, and I am therefore enabled from my own knowledge of the localities, to verify the expressed opinion of the Wardens, as to the present condition and future prospects of the respective portions of the gold fields under their charge. The reports are printed in full in the Appendix hereto, and obviate the necessity of my entering into detailed descriptions of the districts which the Officers resident in and familiar with, have, I am satisfied, been more competent to supply.

GOLD.

Whilst it is impossible to state with accuracy, the total quantity of Gold produced in any one year, the following figures afford data upon which estimates may be founded.

Exported according to returns furnished by the Treasury and Customs Departments—1870, 544,880 ounces; 1871, 730,029 ounces; Quarter ending 31st March, 1872, 154,997 ounces. Distinguishing approximately the produce from quartz and alluvium, we find in 1870—Quartz, 87,534 ounces; alluvium, 457,346 ounces. 1871—quartz, 365,600 ounces; alluvium, 364,429 ounces. Quarter ending 31st March, 1872—quartz, 119,382 ounces; alluvium, 35,615 ounces. It is impossible to furnish this information accurately, in default of returns from the Banks and gold buyers, which they are not, it appears, at present in a position to furnish. This return probably does not represent the whole amount of gold raised within each particular period, as it may fairly be conjectured that a considerable