

while Marlborough exported less, during the year 1873, by 783 oz. than in 1872. In further proof of the assertion that this quarter's return of gold exported forms no test of our gold field earnings, I note that the number of ounces exported in the quarter ending March, 1871, was 19,282 oz. less than the following year, while the year's aggregate produce was 284,659 oz. more than in 1872.

During the year ending the 31st of March, 1874, according to the returns obtained from the Customs, the amount of gold exported was 419,862 oz., but from the Wardens' reports and other sources of information, the quantity produced was 432,721 oz. The difference is in the amount of the alluvial gold raised, for it has been ascertained that from quartz 165,377 oz. were obtained, in the following proportions, from the different districts:—Thames, 114,180 oz.; Coromandel, 16,307 oz.; Nelson, 20,098 oz.; Otago, 14,744 oz.; and Marlborough, 48 oz. According to the Wardens' reports, the different provinces have contributed in the matter of alluvial gold as follows:—Marlborough, 980 oz.; Nelson, 71,701 oz.; Westland, 85,942 oz.; and Otago, 118,715 oz. The discrepancy in the figures arises from the difference in the returns showing the produce of alluvial and quartz workings, when compared with the data obtained by exports. When the decrease in the number of the mining population is taken into consideration, the yield of gold will show the stable character of our auriferous resources.

SILVER.

Although the Province of Auckland exported in 1873, 14,559 oz. of gold more than in the preceding year, the silver shipped to Great Britain—the place of export hitherto of all that has been obtained on the Auckland gold fields—was 877 oz. less than in the preceding year; whilst during the quarter ending 31st March, 1874, none whatever has been sent away, although 15,566 oz. of gold has been exported from the province. During four years ending December, 1873, the quantity exported has been 190,646 oz., of the declared value of 5s. 8½d. per oz., or, in the aggregate, £54,275. It is worthy of note, that during the period when the Caledonian Mine contributed so largely to our gold returns, silver realized its highest price.

REVENUE.

The amount of revenue and gold duty for the year 1873 was £94,925 10s. 7d., and for the quarter ending March 31st, 1874, £22,382 5s. 8d., making a total from the two sources of £117,307 16s. 3d., as compared with £143,331 15s. 10d. for the year 1872–73, being a falling off to March, 1874, of £26,023 19s. 7d. The decrease in ordinary revenue in 1873, as compared with 1872, was £11,965 14s. 10d.; and in gold duty, £4,243 16s. 5d. The reduction in ordinary revenue in the quarter ending 31st March, 1874, as compared with the corresponding quarter in 1873, was £144 5s. 6d.; and in gold duty, £9,769 2s. 10d. Reference to Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4, will afford full information on this subject. It should be borne in mind that the reduction in gold duty under "The Gold Duties Act, 1872," which came into operation on the 1st January, 1873, has considerably affected the revenue.

MINING POPULATION.

Although the number of our mining population has considerably decreased during the year 1873, the aggregate earnings have been largely augmented. In the previous year the miners employed on the gold fields of the colony were 22,335, whilst the recent census returns show that the number at present engaged in mining pursuits is 18,142; but notwithstanding this reduction, there has been an increase in the aggregate earnings of 59,967 oz., or in value, of £256,164. Comparing the average earnings of the miners for the year 1872 with those for 1873, a striking difference is manifest; for while in 1872 the average was £77 10s. 3d. per head per annum, in the following year it had increased to £95 8s. 6d., as compared with £101 16s. 5d. per head in 1871.

The more complete returns in my possession have enabled me, this year, to distinguish between the relative quantities of gold produced from alluvial and quartz workings. From quartz 165,377 oz. were extracted; from alluvial workings 254,485 oz. were obtained. The contributions of the various provinces from quartz mining were as follow:—Thames, 114,180 oz.; Coromandel, 16,307 oz.; Nelson, 20,098 oz.; Otago, 14,744 oz.; Marlborough, 48 oz. I have been unable to ascertain the yields from every quartz mine in the colony, but with the data at my command I have approximated as closely as possible. With regard to the Province of Otago, I have obtained information, which, from its incomplete character, could not be incorporated in the tables appended to this report, but may be summarized as follows:—The Cromwell Company, at Bendigo Gully, obtained during the year 3,215 oz. of gold, at a depth of 300 feet, their reef being 4 feet in width; the Young Australian, on the Carrick Range, 964 oz., at a depth of 150 feet, from a reef 4 feet in width; Star of the East, 547 oz., at a depth of 132 feet, from a reef 2 feet in width; Heart of Oak, 473 oz., 100 feet depth, 1 foot in width; the John Bull, 238 oz., 100 feet deep, 1 foot wide; Leader, 109 oz., 50 feet, reef 2 feet wide. For these returns I am indebted to Mr. Chas. Colclough, of Cromwell, who was, however, unable to furnish me with the number of tons from which these yields were obtained, otherwise I could have shown the actual quantity of gold obtained from nearly every ton of quartz crushed in the colony.