

1886.

NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT

BY THE MINISTER OF MINES, THE HON. W. J. M. LARNACH, C.M.G.

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY, 6TH JULY, 1886.

MR. SPEAKER,—

SIR,—In the Mines Statement which I had the honour of making last session I informed the House that I had determined to make myself acquainted with the practical details of the mining industry; and, having made a personal inspection of all the mining centres of New Zealand, I on that occasion thought it necessary to make the Statement somewhat of a descriptive character, following the events during the course of my first journeying through the mines of the colony; and in adopting that plan I had in view the feelings of my friends the miners on the subject. No Mines Statement having been delivered previous to last year, I felt sure that the miners in every portion of the colony desired to have a description, however imperfect, of my visits to the many mining localities it was my duty and my privilege to inspect.

I now, Sir, propose to direct the attention of honourable gentlemen particularly to the great and increasing importance of the mining resources of New Zealand; and the more urgently do I do so at this period of time, while the colony, like other parts of the world, is suffering from that atmosphere of depression which has overshadowed it so long. But I ask, how much more severe would this straightened period have been, and how much more keenly would the monetary pressure have been felt from one extremity of our Islands to the other, had it not been for the soundness of our mining industry, and the steady and regular yield of our numerous rich mines, embracing not only gold, silver, copper, iron, zinc, tin, lead, antimony, and nickel, but coal such as cannot be surpassed in quality in any part of the world, besides a large collection of other valuable minerals.

By an order of this House made on the 3rd day of August, 1869, on the motion of the late Mr. W. H. Harrison, I have found that it was ordered that certain statistical returns should be furnished to Parliament annually; and hitherto it has been the custom merely to comply strictly with the meaning of the order: but it has become apparent year by year that more special attention would have to be directed towards mining in the colony if it is desired by Parliament that operations in connection with it should be conducted on a practical and systematic, as well as upon a sound commercial basis.

MINERAL PRODUCTION.

Up to the present period the reports and statistics in relation to mining have referred almost exclusively to gold and coal: I now feel it a pleasant duty to direct the attention of honourable gentlemen to the enormous value of the several other mineral products found in this colony and exported from it, the value of which, it will be seen from the tables annexed, amounted on the 31st December last to no less a sum than four millions of money, and, in addition to this, the value of New Zealand coal consumed within the colony to the same date may be reckoned at three and one-half millions sterling. These figures, I apprehend, are surely of great importance to the present well-being and future progress of New Zealand, and I venture to hope may have some influence upon the minds of