

EARNINGS OF THE MINERS.

GOLD MINERS.

The returns furnished by the Wardens of the respective mining districts are comprised in Table 10 annexed, which show the average number of miners employed last year to be 12,724, as against 13,032 for the year previous, thus showing a decrease in the number employed to the extent of 308. This decrease is principally in Otago, where the returns show 256 less last year than in the former one. Taking the value of gold exported last year—namely, £1,107,117, and deducting the value of the gold held back by the banks for the quarter ending March, 1891—namely, £80,972—it leaves the actual value of last year's produce as £1,026,145, which is equal to £80 12s. a man per annum, while for the previous year the value of the gold exported and that held back by the banks was £766,293, being an average of £56 16s. a man per annum. The average earnings of the miners last year was therefore £21 16s. 11d. per annum more than for the former year, and also more than for any year since 1881.

COAL MINERS.

The average number of persons engaged in connection with coal mines last year was 1,693, as against 1,846 for the previous year. Of the number so employed last year 1,277 were employed underground, and 416 on the surface, the output of coal being 668,794 tons, and taking the cost of raising this at 6s. per ton, gives a value of £200,638, which would make the average earnings of the miners to be £118 10s. 2d. a man per annum, while for the former year, on the same basis, it was £103 11s. 8d.; thus showing that, notwithstanding the number of inexperienced miners that are said to be employed in some of the mines, their average earnings last year was £14 18s. 6d. more than for the former year.

Taking the population actually engaged in gold- and coal-mining last year—namely, 14,417, and the value of the produce, it gives an average wage to each man so employed of £85 1s. 11d per annum. In comparing this with the agricultural labourers' earnings last year it shows a favourable result. The total value of the agricultural produce for the last season is given in the Registrar-General's statistics as £4,887,351, and, deducting 10 per cent. from this amount for seed, it leaves the net value of £4,398,616; and according to the last census there were 59,058 persons employed in this industry, which gives the average earnings of those engaged in agricultural pursuits as £74 9s. 7d. for each person employed per annum, or £8 11s. 4d. less per annum than those engaged in mining.

OTHER MINERAL ORES.

It is well known that there are a variety of ores in this colony, but hitherto very little has been done in any metalliferous mining other than for gold and silver; ores containing copper, lead, antimony, manganese, chrome, zinc, and quicksilver are abundant in different places; and also scheelite, sulphur, arsenic, and other minerals will be sought after and worked, and made remunerative mining ventures. There is also lithographic-stone found in the Northern districts which, when the quarries are properly opened up, is likely to compare favourably with the article imported from Germany. Indeed, very little has yet been done to develop the riches which lie buried in the bowels of the earth, and the want of roads in many districts prohibits mining from being carried on for many of these ores and minerals, which require a cheap means of transit to a market to make their working a profitable undertaking.

ANTIMONY.

Very little antimony-ore was obtained last year. The English company who were carrying on mining operations for this metal went into liquidation, and the whole of their valuable plant and property was purchased by a syndicate of Wellington gentlemen for £600, who have commenced to work the mine again, and it is now expected that the venture will prove a remunerative investment. Antimony lodes are found at Waipori and Barewood, in Otago, but no extensive operations are being carried on at either of these localities. The quantity of antimony-ore exported last year was 413 tons, valued at £4,950.

COPPER.

Notwithstanding the large deposits of copper there are in various portions of the colony, none of the mines that have been opened have proved remunerative for working. Recently a very large quantity of copper-ore—chalcopyrite—has been discovered in the northern portion of the Auckland District, and some of the ore, which was said to be an average sample of the