

QUARTZ WORKINGS.

As the auriferous quartz-lodes may be said to be the most prominent branch of gold-mining, it may be interesting to honourable members for me to show the progress made in this particular branch during last year. Previous to this year there was no regular record kept of the quantity of stone crushed and the yield of gold obtained; but by the provisions of "The Mining Act, 1891," requiring the registration of quartz-crushing machinery, and returns to be furnished, a comparison can be made in future year by year. According to the returns forwarded to the department, details of which will be found on pages 74–89 of the report of the Inspecting Engineer, it is shown that in the Auckland District there were 95,931 tons of quartz, and 23,719 tons of tailings crushed, which yielded 47,189oz. gold, representing a value of £123,872, and 44,189oz. bullion, having a value of £63,300; also, ore was sold to the value of £2,222, making the total value of the product £189,394. In the Marlborough District 950 tons of quartz was crushed, yielding 112oz. gold, representing a value of £448. In the Nelson District 5,547 tons of quartz was crushed, which yielded 1,097oz. gold, representing a value of £4,388. In the West Coast District, 49,036 tons of quartz and tailings was crushed, which yielded 27,019oz., representing a value of about £105,000. And in the Otago District there was 10,637 tons of quartz and tailings crushed, which yielded 5,263oz., having a value of £21,052: representing a total of 184,820 tons of ore crushed and tailings treated, the whole yielding 80,680oz. gold and 44,189oz. bullion; which, together with the value of ore sold—namely, £2,222—had a gross value of £320,282. Taking, therefore, the value of the gold and bullion exported last year, the returns show that 66 per cent. of it was obtained from the alluvial drifts, and 34 per cent. from our auriferous lodes. I will now refer to the different fields where quartz-mining operations are being carried on.

PUHIPUHI.

This district, where great excitement once prevailed on the discovery of lodes carrying silver, is now in a stagnant state as regards working the mines. The only men employed on the field last year were merely prospecting. Whether this field will yet be made to support a mining population is a question which time will solve. But it must be admitted that the original prospectors, by erecting obsolete and unsuitable machinery, committed a serious error of judgment, and one which has militated against these mines being properly tested. It was not only a great loss for those directly interested in the plant erected for the treatment of the ore, but it disheartened any one who had any interest in the field, and stopped capital from being invested in the development of the mines. Some of the holders have allowed ground on which a considerable amount of work was done to be forfeited; and when once a field has the reputation of being what is termed a "duffer," it takes a long time before confidence can again be restored, even should the field be a really good one. The original prospectors at Puhipuhi have still hope of being able to float their property into a company, so as to provide sufficient capital to work the ground and to erect a suitable plant to treat the ore.

COROMANDEL.

The yield of gold from Coromandel proper—that is, including the Tokatea Range and Kapanga, fell off considerably during last year. The Kapanga Company has hitherto been the mainstay of this district; but last year the gold returns from both these mines—the Kapanga and Coromandel—shows a falling-off as compared with the previous year. There was also a considerable decrease in the yield from the claims in the Tokatea Range last year. Taking the whole of the mines in the Coromandel County, exclusive of those on the Kuaotunu field, the yield of gold last year amounted to 3,447oz., as against 3,395oz. for the previous year. The increased yield last year was chiefly owing to the Oweria Company, who obtained 1,921oz. gold from the Kauri Syndicate property. The English company who hold the Kapanga and Coromandel Mines deserve better success than they have experienced, as they have expended about £60,716 in the colony alone, exclusive of the purchase of machinery in England and the expenses of the London office. They have worked nearly all the known lodes in their ground down to a depth of about 420ft., and they have recently sunk their shaft to a total depth of 600ft., without coming on any stone carrying sufficient gold to pay for working. During last year one of the oldest mining companies in the Coromandel County—the Tokatea—sold their property, including the crushing-plant, for a merely nominal sum, as it was found that a considerable amount would have to be expended on the mine before it would be likely to become a profitable investment.