

and great depths of auriferous drifts as there are in some of the terraces on the Arrow and Shotover and other rivers, with streams carrying large volumes of water that could be lifted and conveyed along the side of the ranges, it must be admitted that the colony has valuable assets in these drifts. The time will come when more attention will be given to the conservation of water, and this will afford greater employment for the labouring classes. There are plenty of men who would rather work on a mere pittance on the goldfields, and be their own masters, with the chance of finding payable claims, than work for others. There is no class of men in the colony with more independent spirit and more intelligence than the gold-miner.

WILSON'S RIVER.

The number of men employed about Wilson's River is considerably less than last year, but gold is being discovered in other places in this locality, which keeps a fair mining population in the district. Last year there was a new discovery at Crayfish Island, and some rich deposits of gold-bearing drifts were found. This is a new district, very little explored, and one where there is a probability of good yields being yet obtained. On the mainland, very few persons have travelled through the country between Wilson's and the Waiau Rivers, where there is likely-looking country for gold to be found, but at present this locality may be termed *terra incognita*, as there is no road or track, and there are large and deep rivers to cross, which greatly militate against the district being prospected.

COAL-MINING.

I will now call the attention of honourable members to the progress of the coal-mining industry. Comparatively few years ago there were only three mines where bituminous coal was raised—viz., the Brunner, Coal-pit Heath, and the Coalbrookdale; but more recently a mine has been opened up at Blackball, and two mines at Mokihinui—the Cardiff and Mokihinui Mines; while large works are also now in progress to open mines at Granity Creek, near Ngakawau, in the Westport district, and at Coal Creek, in the Grey district. A mine has been in existence at Collingwood for a number of years, but the limited extent of the field, and the difficulty of getting the coal to a market, will always make the output from this mine very small.

The total number of coal-mines on the list last year was 153, but a large number of these are merely pits, or open cuttings, where lignite is worked in a face to supply local demands. Both lignite and brown coal are suitable only for local consumption, or within such a radius of the place where it is raised as will admit of its being sold at a cheap rate. So far as is yet known, the whole of the bituminous coal in the colony is confined to the west coast of the Middle Island, and, as this is the only class of coal we have suitable for ocean-going steamers, it is from the mines in this locality that we may in future look for a largely-increased output.

So far the coal-mining industry has progressed only in proportion to the growth of commerce and the number of new industries which have been established; and the output from the mines newly opened up and in progress will depend entirely on the trade that can be established with other countries. Foreign markets will have to be found before the coal-mining industry assumes large proportions. A great deal also depends on the further improvement of the harbours of the West Coast.

These works will have to be more advanced before we are able to send away large cargoes of coal to compete with coal from other countries in foreign markets, and even when the harbour-works are completed it will take a considerable time before a large trade can be established with other countries. As regards the price per ton, we cannot compete with the coal proprietors in China and Japan. It is only from the superiority of our coal that we can hope to succeed. Hence it is gratifying to find that at the tests made with different coal at the Woolwich Dockyard, the evaporative power of the Westport coal was placed higher even than that of the coal from the Welsh mines.

During the last year the output from all the mines in the colony was 691,548 tons, as against 673,315 for the year previous, showing an increased output for the year of 18,233 tons. The total quantity imported was—from Victoria, 1,383 tons; from New South Wales, 113,122 tons; and from Queensland, 2,939 tons; making a total of 117,444 tons. This makes the total quantity raised and imported 808,992 tons; but of this, 24,288 tons were exported to other countries, and 50,838 tons were used in coaling direct steamers for Europe. However, this may be taken as consumption within the colony, as it is owing to the