

the restrictions caused by plague, the coal supplies of this colony have been drawn upon to some increased extent, and the consequently enhanced price, coupled with the difficulty of obtaining adequate supplies of coal of suitable quality in certain parts of New Zealand, may yet render it necessary for the Government to consider the advisability of opening a mine to provide for its own requirements.

ACCIDENTS IN MINES.

The following statement shows the fatal accidents which have occurred in connection with the various classes of mining for the year covered by the reports of the Inspectors of Mines :—

Class of Mining.	Number of Persons Employed.	Fatal Accidents.	Rate per 1,000.
Quartz-mines	4,663	5	1·07
Alluvial and hydraulic mines and dredging	8,628	16*	1·85
Coal-mines	2,153	3	1·39
	15,444	24	1·5

* Includes four fatalities in connection with dredges.

Of the fatal accidents reported, investigation showed that, with one exception, no blame was attributable to the management. In this case it was clearly proved that safety provisions had been neglected, and a prosecution followed, at which a conviction was obtained. The majority of fatalities in connection with alluvial mining have occurred to men working their own claims.

Non-fatal accidents have, for the greater portion, been of a slight character, and such as are incidental to mining work, but in a few instances somewhat serious injuries have been sustained.

IRON-ORE.

There are, as yet, no further developments with regard either to our iron-deposits in the Middle Island or to the immense quantities of ironsand on the Taranaki coast; but the present high price of iron, combined with the growing demand for that metal, should lead to the attention of capitalists being directed to this colony as a suitable field for the establishment of smelting-works on a large scale.

With a view to encouraging the introduction of sufficient capital for the erection of such works, the Government are prepared to consider favourably a proposal based on the following lines: That a company shall be formed with a capital of not less than £200,000; that of this £200,000 £100,000 shall be expended in acquiring lands, erecting buildings, and the necessary plant and appliances. This having been done, that the Government shall grant a bonus of £1 per ton on the first 20,000 tons of marketable iron or steel produced; that the iron and steel required for the colony shall be taken from the company at a margin above the market rates ruling beyond the colony, allowing freights.

SULPHUR.

1,227 tons of sulphur were exported from the neighbourhood of Rotorua during the year 1899, this being a decrease of 538 tons in comparison with the returns for 1898.

KAURI-GUM.

The export for the year was 11,116 tons, valued at £607,919, this being an increase of 1,211 tons, valued at £21,152, as compared with the preceding year. The total quantity exported since 1853 has been 211,592 tons, valued at £9,707,538. A considerable number of Natives and Europeans find employment on the gumfields.