1903.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT.

BY THE HON. JAMES McGOWAN, MINISTER OF MINES.

Mr. Speaker,—

In presenting my annual Statement to Parliament it gives me much pleasure to be able to point to the continued growth of the mining industry of this colony, as evidenced by the returns of output and value. These show a decided increase—notably so in the case of the production of coal and of the precious metals. In comparison with the year 1901 the returns for last year show an advance in gross value of considerably over a quarter of a million pounds sterling.

It may be interesting at the outset to briefly review the progress of mining in New Zealand. In 1857 gold to the value of £40,422 was entered for exportation; in 1860 the value similarly entered was only £17,585. In 1861 an impetus was given to the industry by the discovery of alluvial gold in Otago, and gold to the value of £751,873 was obtained, the output being doubled in the following year. During 1863 the gold-export was £2,431,723, and for the following eight years the production was very large, the maximum being obtained in the year 1871, when it reached no less a sum than £2,787,520. From that time there was a general decline until 1890, when the value of gold entered for exportation was only £773,438, this being the lowest amount since 1861.

The year 1891 showed a decided advance, and for a further period of seven years the annual returns oscillated backwards and forwards, the approximate average production being of a value of about £900,000 per annum.

During the year 1899 an increase was experienced, the amount being returned at £1,513,173. This was followed by a falling-off in 1900 to the extent of £73,571 (a circumstance largely due to temporary suspensions for alterations in methods of treatment), but in 1901 a marked advance became again noticeable, the gold-production being returned at a value of £1,753,783. For last year (1902) a further increase is reported, and the value of gold produced was £1,951,433. An increase in the amount of silver produced has also taken place, and the total value of gold and silver produced for the year 1902 amounts to £2,023,408.

The production of coal and lignite may be reviewed for a period extending over a quarter of a century. In 1878 the tonnage returned was 162,218, and a gradual increase took place each year until the end of 1888, the returns for that year being 613,895 tons. In 1889 the output decreased to 586,445 tons, but during 1890 an increased output was produced, the returns showing 637,397 tons. Since that date the production has steadily increased, and in the year 1900 the returns showed that for the first time in the history of the colony the output had reached over a million tons. The production for last year (1902) was 1,365,040 tons.