

But these instances of shortsightedness and incapacity sink into insignificance besides the last instance of entire want of capacity with which the Nelson Executive have, your memorialists sincerely hope, closed the history of their inaptitude to administer the affairs of a district like this. Without referring to any other of the countless errors of omission and commission which exist, this one is alone sufficient to vindicate your Excellency's memorialists, and it has been received with indignation and alarm, not alone in our own midst, but also in Greymouth and Hokitika, with which places our interests are more or less intimately interwoven.

Your memorialists allude now to recent Provincial *Gazette* notices (April 22nd and 28th, 1872), in reference to certain applications for gold-mining leases in this district.

Your memorialists may premise, what your Excellency doubtless will know, that quartz reefs situate so far from the seaboard must necessarily require a large expenditure before they can be made productive to the country at large. The individual miner, or indeed a company of miners, cannot hope to command sufficient capital to erect the machinery necessary to utilize the reefs already discovered, or those which it is hoped will be developed. Hence they are driven to depend upon the outside capitalist, who naturally looks for some security for his investment by obtaining a greater fixity of tenure than is afforded by miners' rights. For this purpose a large number of applications for leases from time to time have been made. The conditions imposed by the Gold Fields Regulations have been complied with. The proper investigations have been made by the Warden, and in many cases by successive Wardens. The leases have been recommended by those officers. Companies have been formed consequent upon such recommendations, and mining operations proceeded on the faith of them. Interests have changed hands upon the trust, hitherto fulfilled in other places, that the leases would issue. But to the amazement and consternation of the whole community, the Superintendent, arbitrarily, unreasonably, and totally regardless of the obviously ruinous consequences to the district,—has out of twenty applications, curtailed the areas of fifteen leases applied for; and in the cases of eighteen others, in the teeth of the Warden's recommendation, has refused the leases altogether; and this too, after the Superintendent himself had furnished the Warden with certain fixed conditions as to the number of men to be employed, which conditions, although considered extreme ones, were assented to by the applicants upon the hearing of their respective applications before the Warden.

In many of the cases the areas claimed were, and for long periods have been held under miners' rights, and large and expensive preparatory works have been performed and undertaken. The effect of this erratic and unjustifiable action of the Superintendent, if tolerated, would be most illegally to deprive the men of ground they would be entitled to hold under their miners' rights.

Your Excellency will readily conceive how disastrous to the district must be the administration of its affairs in such a manner as this. All certainty—a most essential element in such a district—is utterly destroyed. Confidence in the Government is entirely sapped. The flow of capital, so essentially required, is at once and most effectually stopped. Orders for machinery are countermanded; and men recognize in the present state of things nothing but inevitable stagnation and impending ruin, unless the mal-administration of which they complain is at once and for ever checked.

For all these evils your memorialists see only one remedy, and that is, the separation, at the earliest moment, of the Nelson South-West Gold Fields from the settled districts. Your memorialists are aware that that consummation will require the intervention of the General Assembly. But, in the meantime, relief would be afforded if your Excellency should think fit to exercise the powers conferred upon your Excellency by "The Gold Fields Act, 1866," and at once withdraw all those powers which your Excellency has delegated to the Superintendent of Nelson, and which he and his Executive (the latter altogether *ultra vires*, and with characteristic presumption) have wielded with so little benefit, and so much, and to some extent with such irreparable injury to this important part of the Colony under your Excellency's command.

Your memorialists therefore humbly pray,—

That your Excellency will interpose, and prevent the longer infliction of the wrongs of which they complain:

That your Excellency will be pleased to withdraw from the Superintendent of Nelson those powers which your Excellency has delegated to that official under "The Gold Fields Act, 1866;" your memorialists entertaining every confidence in the sympathy of the General Government, and in its desire and ability to administer our affairs judiciously and satisfactorily until permanent arrangements can be matured:

And that your Excellency would be pleased, at an early date, to cause the Secretary for the Gold Fields, in conjunction with the Warden of the district, to inquire into the premises, and to report thereon, in order that the facts may be verified, and a scheme prepared, having for its effect the early consolidation of the Nelson South-West Gold Fields under such a form of government as will be calculated to secure a careful and efficient administration, and, at the same time, present some guarantee that the interests of the community will be studied and forwarded, and not, as at present, retarded, if not deliberately sacrificed.

And your memorialists will ever pray.

No. 2.

Mr. A. GREENFIELD to Mr. C. E. HAUGHTON.

Sir,—

Superintendent's Office, Nelson, 31st May, 1872.

In compliance with the request made in your telegram of yesterday's date, I have the honor to forward herewith, copies of memorials received by this Government against the granting of gold mining leases in the Inangahua District, and also a copy of the reply given to the memorialists.

I have, &c.,

C. E. Haughton, Esq.,
Under Secretary for Gold Fields.

ALFRED GREENFIELD,
Provincial Secretary.