

No. 2.

The PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, Auckland, to the UNDER SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, Auckland, 8th April, 1875.

In reference to your letter, dated the 15th February last, I am directed by His Honor the Superintendent to transmit to you herewith the accompanying report by the Warden of the Hauraki South Gold Mining District, for the year ending 31st March, together with a report on the Ohinemuri Gold Field.

I have, &c.,

VINCENT E. RICE,

(*pro* Provincial Secretary).

The Under Secretary, Public Works Office,
(Gold Fields Branch,) Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 2.

General Report on the Southern Portion of the Hauraki Gold Mining District, Province of Auckland, for the Year ending 31st March, 1875.

DURING the past year the event of the greatest importance has been the opening of Ohinemuri for gold mining. After some seven years of negotiations, the consent of the Natives was at length obtained to the opening of the district as a gold field under an agreement. It does not lie within the scope of this report to make any statement respecting the proceedings which led to the opening up of this large and important district, but I may be allowed to say that I consider it a fortunate thing that it has been done with the consent even of those of the Native owners who have most steadfastly resisted throughout. An incursion of the diggers into Ohinemuri against the will of the Native owners would probably have resulted in events which would have caused disturbance and disquietude throughout the colony. With respect to the prospects of Ohinemuri as a gold field, I shall refer to them more particularly in my separate report on that field. The opening up of the district, however, whether payable mines are discovered and worked upon it or not, cannot fail to have an important effect in extending settlement in that portion of the North Island where it has hitherto made but little progress, and so will be of inestimable importance to the whole colony.

In regard to the southern portion of the Hauraki Gold Mining District, I have not this year to notice any very important event, any extraordinary discovery, or any great falling off. It has been thought throughout the year that the confident expectation that the Ohinemuri would soon be opened operated injuriously on this field, and I have no doubt that that was the case. Almost all the prospectors, who are a class by themselves, had made up their minds to give Ohinemuri a trial when it was opened, and so they refrained from engaging in any work on the ranges around Shortland and Grahamstown. The uncertainty as to how the opening of the upper country might affect this place, also affected business people and the owners of property. The conviction is now, however, gaining ground that Ohinemuri will not take away suddenly a large proportion of the mining population, and that those who are in profitable work there will benefit these townships, through which their supplies must be chiefly drawn. I expect that now, when the uncertainty respecting Ohinemuri is past, prospecting will be resumed in this district—not only prospecting by parties of men on the hills, but by mining claims and companies on areas of ground held by them.

I should like to have been able to state that some discovery had been made of importance in consequence of the operations of the Pumping Association. In my last report I stated the details connected with the formation and operations of this Association, and will now only briefly recapitulate. It originally comprised the Golden Crown, the Imperial Crown, the Caledonian, and the Tookey Companies. The Golden Crown has subsequently withdrawn, under an arrangement. The pumping plant was erected on the Imperial Crown Claim, for the purpose, in the first place, of draining the mines of the companies associated and the surrounding country; and secondly, of obtaining access to the lodes at the deep level. The first object has been completely attained, all these mines and others having been adequately drained. But the quality of the lodes on the lower levels has disappointed expectations. The shaft is now being continued, with the view of getting through the comparatively barren ground on which it is now. Drives are being put in, to reach the neighbouring mines at lower levels. In the month of April last the shaft had been sunk a depth of 400 feet, and the Association had expended, up to the 1st of March, 1874, £61,000. Representations were made to the Premier on the occasion of a visit paid by him to the field in the early part of last year, and in the beginning of April an arrangement was made by which the Government agreed to assist by an advance of money, upon certain conditions. It was provided that the money should be repaid, with interest not exceeding six per cent., within seven years from the 1st day of March, 1874. Security was given over the properties of the companies and otherwise, and it was provided that all incomes arising from contributions by adjacent mines for drainage should be applied in reduction of the debt. The amount agreed to be advanced was £50,000, to be expended in sinking the shaft. The agreement was ratified by the Assembly. The position of the works is now as follows:—The shaft is down 500 feet, a depth of 100 feet having been sunk since operations were resumed. The shaft had been sunk with pumps 25 inches in diameter, but, as there was a great amount of labour attached to the attachment and arrangement of the joints of this pump, the company, after fixing a new plunger at the 400-foot level, resolved to try the experiment of sinking farther with a 12-inch pump. To effect this, the water which flowed in above the 400-foot level was turned into the plunger cistern without being allowed to flow into the bottom of the shaft, and the experiment was successful; but after that the inflow of water proved too great, and the larger pumps had to be substituted. A great deal of difficulty was felt in consequence of the carbonic acid gas, which in this and the adjoining mines generates with great rapidity. Owing to its density, considerable difficulty is experienced in dispersing it from the lower levels. The