

which promises to be rich. At a depth of, say, 30 feet from the surface, it is 2 feet thick, a decomposed or rotten quartz. The stone showed to me as taken out at this depth was very rich. This discovery has caused a good deal of prospecting, and also speculation, and two other auriferous reefs have been reported. There have been 34 leases applied for up to the present time. Of course it is premature to venture an opinion on what the field will turn out, but I do not anticipate it will be very extensive, though doubtless there will be some very rich claims; 8 leases only have yet been heard, and, with the exception of the prospector's, have been granted on the following terms—viz., for each 1,000 feet along the line of reef, 4 men to be employed the first 6 months, afterwards not less than 10 men, or 1 man for each 100 feet. I was there during the last month, and shall proceed there again next week, as I hope by that time that the majority of the leases will be surveyed.

I have, &c.,

JOHN NUGENT WOOD,
Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

WEST WANGANUI GOLD FIELD.

No. 17.

Mr. Warden MACKAY to the UNDER SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Native Reserves Office, Nelson, 2nd August, 1878.

I have the honor to forward, more for your information than for publication, a general report upon the West Wanganui Gold Field. This field comprises a block of land estimated to contain about 105,000 acres, and was excepted from sale by the Native owners at the final cession of their claims to the surrounding territory to the Government in 1856.

The boundaries of the district commence at West Wanganui Inlet and terminate at Kauranga Point, the Wakamarama Range forming the eastern boundary. Gold was first discovered on the land in the summer of 1862, and mining operations have been carried on since that period with more or less success.

An arrangement was made with the Native owners to permit mining on the property, conditionally that all persons mining thereon should pay an annual license fee of £1.

At one time a large population were occupied there in mining pursuits, but, owing to the want of available tracks, combined with the difficulty of obtaining provisions, the field was gradually abandoned, although the majority of individuals who had worked there were confident that, if greater facilities were afforded for developing the country, the apparent auriferous character of the district warranted the impression that much better results could be obtained.

For several years after the discovery of gold at West Wanganui mining operations were carried on under the arrangement with the Native owners, but on the discovery of gold-bearing reefs it became necessary to have the land proclaimed a gold field under clause 3 of "The Gold Fields Act Amendment Act, 1868," to provide the necessary machinery for administering gold-mining questions, as well as to facilitate the issue of mineral leases as an encouragement to embark in schemes requiring the outlay of large capital. The field was accordingly proclaimed under the aforesaid Act in October, 1873, *vide New Zealand Gazette*, No. 61, of that year.

I enclose a plan of the Golden Bay Gold Fields, showing the position of the Native land at West Wanganui, by which it will be seen that the major part of the territory is included within the boundary of that field. But this position of affairs did not assist matters, as far as regards the administration of mining business on the Native land, as the property in question had not been ceded to the Crown, and the action of the Superintendent in including it within the adjacent gold field was *ultra vires*. Moreover, supposing that this obstacle had not existed, the land in question, being the property of the Natives, was in the same position as private lands under similar circumstances; and, although clause 94 of "The Gold Fields Act, 1866," empowered the Warden of any field within which private lands were situated to hear and determine cases of dispute amongst persons mining on such property with the consent of the owner, there was no provision in the Act for the issue of either miners' rights or mineral leases to meet the special requirements of the case in point, which could only be done by bringing the land under the operations of "The Golds Fields Act Amendment Act, 1868."

There is only one party, the Golden Ridge Quartz-mining Company, at work at present on the field; for, although there is plenty of scope for others in the vicinity of the company's leasehold, with a like prospect of success, the expense of getting machinery on the ground, combined with other difficulties that have to be contended with, has deterred other persons from embarking capital to test the value of the adjacent claims.

The Golden Ridge Company has been at work about three years, and during that time has obtained about £8,000 worth of gold out of their leasehold, chiefly from the outcrop, the bulk of their claim being still untouched, and all the indications tend to show that the portion yet remaining is likely to prove richer than that which has been disturbed.

The machinery in use on the claim is a 5-stamper battery, driven by water-power, and the company had it in contemplation at their last meeting to add five additional stampers; but the expense of getting the necessary appliances delivered on the ground has deterred them from carrying out the intention at present.

The number of tons of cement crushed by the company during the six months ended 31st December, 1877, was 1,700, and the yield of gold produced was 479 oz. 13 dwt., giving an average of 5½ dwt. to the ton.