

MARLBOROUGH GOLD FIELDS.

No. 4.

Mr. Warden ALLEN to the UNDER-SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Picton, 19th July, 1880.

I have the honor to forward you the annual report of the Marlborough Gold Fields for the year ended 30th June, 1880.

During the past year there has been nothing of any very great importance to bring under the notice of the Government. The amount of revenue collected, as shown by the statistical returns already forwarded to you, will be about the same as collected during preceding year. I briefly report as follows concerning the different districts at present under my charge:—

Pelorus Mining District.—The yield of gold from this district will compare favourably with preceding year, and I do not think the number of miners has decreased. Many of them are making good wages; some who have not been fortunate in working their claims have supplemented their income by taking small contracts for repairing and forming roads. There seems to be no disposition on the part of miners in this district to desert the place: on the contrary, although a small amount of excitement has been created during the year by reported finds of gold in the Wairau Valley Mining District, I do not think that many of the miners have permanently left the Pelorus for the new gold field. This district cannot be described as a "poor man's diggings." It has always been my opinion—I think borne out by facts—that solitary miners or weak-handed parties of miners will never do much more than earn a living. Machinery is required to work the ground properly. During the past year there has been an evident desire on the part of miners to try the effect of introducing machinery, and also of working the ground by properly-organized companies. One company, to whom ten acres of ground has been leased, is making preparations for working a portion of the terrace-ground by sluicing. This is not altogether new ground: for some time past good gold has been found on these terraces, and this company, with judicious management, will have a fair prospect of success. Another company of six or eight men has been formed for working river-claims by means of atmospheric cylinders. To the present time they have been labouring under great disadvantages in transporting their machinery to their claim. They expect to have the machinery erected ready for work in about a week. Neither of these companies is yet in a position to justify any one in giving any decided opinion as to the probability of their success: there is good gold to be obtained; it remains to be proved if the apparatus proposed to be used will be found sufficiently well adapted to the purpose to enable the companies to collect the gold in sufficient quantity to make it a payable speculation. Other—smaller—parties, working their claims by manual labour, are doing well. If the introduction of machinery should prove a success a large quantity of ground will be taken up; and I hope next year to have to report a marked improvement in this district. Mr. Moore has been employed for some time in prospecting the ranges for quartz reefs. A large prospecting claim has been granted to him on the assurance that he has discovered a gold-bearing reef of sufficient dimensions and of such a quality as will justify him in trying to float a company to work it. It is a well-known fact that quartz reefs are to be found on both the Wakamarina and the Wairau Valley sides of the dividing range—some of them of considerable dimensions: it remains to be proved if they are sufficiently rich in mineral to work them profitably. The expense of getting machinery on to the ground would be very great. The Wakamarina Valley is for the most part overgrown with dense bush. I would suggest that after a time a favourable opportunity should be taken by Government to sell the timber—to be removed off the ground for mill purposes—if this can be done so as not to interfere with mining operations. I have heard that it is proposed by some few of the miners to petition Government to allow them to take up homesteads. The valley is of such very limited extent that I could not recommend that any such proposal should be entertained: the revenue derived from these holdings would be very small, and the land thus taken up might at any time be required for mining purposes.

Wairau Valley Mining District.—During the past year a little excitement has been caused by the discovery of payable gold in the Arm-chair Creek. The find was rather late in the season, winter was approaching, and the miners attracted to the spot have not had a chance of fairly testing the ground. Many have determined to stay through the winter, with the hopes of doing well next summer. The workings at present are confined principally to Top Valley Stream and its branches, although lately good coarse gold has been found in the lower terraces. This ground cannot fairly be styled a "new diggings." It is a fact that has been well known for many years that gold could be found in the different creeks and valleys on the north bank of the Wairau, from Onamalutu Valley to Mount Patriarch. I am inclined to think that, if the country above named is properly tested, this will prove to be a good gold field. At the present time there are only about seventy or eighty men at work on this ground; but, if the level and terrace lands on the north bank of the Wairau prove to be payable ground, there will be room for a large number of miners. There is nothing to warrant a rush at present, for only a very limited extent of ground has been worked, and, although miners are making good wages, there has at the present time been no extraordinarily good find. The quality of the gold on the terraces appears to be very much like the Wakamarina gold—coarse, nuggetty gold; but higher up the creeks, nearer the ranges, I have seen samples of evidently reef gold that has not travelled very far. I am inclined to think that payable reefs may be found. In sinking on the terraces probably a difficulty may be found by having to contend with a too plentiful supply of water; but, if rich gold is discovered, a good pumping apparatus will soon overcome this difficulty.

Some time ago a lease was granted to a new company for an abandoned quartz claim known as the Sutherland Claim, situated on one of the spurs some distance up Bartlett's Valley. The new company, known as the Picton and Havelock Company, have during the past year driven about 270 feet, as follows: About 215 feet cross-drive to meet lode, and about 50 feet on the lode. The reef is about 4 feet wide, and about 270 feet from top of the hill, running north-west by south-east. They have taken out about 120 tons of stone ready for crushing. The trial-crushing of this stone did not prove very