

at a higher level than the present workings, but the source from which they come has yet to be discovered; and it is confidently anticipated that a third and richer gold-bearing strata will shortly be found. There are also indications of quartz reefs in the vicinity. The claims are all worked by tunnels and drives, and the ground, with ordinary care in timbering, is of a safe description for mining operations.

As regards the value of this country, I may state that I have personally seen prospects taken from the face of the drives and washed out, varying from 2 dwt. to 4 dwt. to the dish, and on one occasion, 1 oz. 7 dwt. to the dish. The wash-dirt is not deep, but narrow and rich; but in this instance, as in others where heavy, rough gold is found, the yield per load varies considerably. Recently four men obtained by sixteen days' labour 248 oz. 2 dwt. 4 gr. out of a space about 6 feet square.

From the wooded nature of the country the task of prospecting it is necessarily very slow; and, although I have every confidence in the future of this promising field, I would at present deprecate the introduction of any population from places outside the West Coast, as it might lead to considerable disappointment. There are a number of miners in the districts under my charge who are working claims which are poor in character, and others which scarcely pay wages. If any important discovery was made these men would immediately proceed to the spot and mark out claims, and persons coming from distant places would, on their arrival here, find all the available ground taken possession of.

In the flat before described there are lines of former beaches from which the sea has gradually receded. The ground dividing these is swampy in nature. The present outer beach, below high-water mark, having yielded large quantities of gold, it is assumed, and probably with good reason, that these ancient lines of coast will also prove of a similar auriferous character. In order to test this question a Prospecting Association was formed, consisting of merchants and others, at Greymouth, who each guaranteed subscriptions to a fixed amount; with them were joined twelve working miners of respectability and great experience. The scheme which has been commenced is to construct a tail-race from half-tide mark, at the lowest possible level, through the flat to the base of the hills, so as to intersect these lines of beach. Considerable progress has been made. A few chains in from the present high-water mark the first beach was reached, and gold in fairly payable quantities was found in it. Thence the ground became swampy with sandy substratum, and the work is now fast approaching the second line of beach. Beyond that another swamp intervenes, and the third beach can be traced, and there is a fourth near the foot of the range. The general direction of these is north and south, parallel with the present coast-line and the lead of gold in the claims. If all these old lines of beach prove to be auriferous, and they extend the whole length of the flat (ten miles), which it is believed they do, the Seventeen-mile Beach District will support a very large population. The gold in the claims now occupied is of a very heavy description in the outcrop of the lead at the edge of the terrace, and it is naturally supposed that some of it has been washed down into the flat. There are also numerous streams which have cut through the terraces; and, as the auriferous deposit is found in the same level on both sides of them, and no gold has been discovered in the beds of these watercourses in the line of the lead, it may fairly be assumed that it has been carried into the alluvial flat below.

With reference to the conveyance of stores and provisions to the Seventeen-mile Beach population, in fine weather it would occasionally be possible to land cargo from vessels in the offing by means of surf-boats. Land-carriage is, however, the means of transit which will principally have to be depended on, and there are some difficulties in the way of satisfactorily carrying it out. From Cobden to the Nine-mile Bluff, *via* Coal Creek, a dray-road could be constructed at a moderate cost. The remaining eight miles would be very expensive to make, on account of the rocky and broken nature of the country.

Until lately all mining cases and applications for the Cobden and Seventeen-mile divisions have been heard at Greymouth. The number of applications made during the year ended 31st March last was 241: 171 were granted, and 70 were refused or withdrawn. The Seventeen-mile Beach is now visited by me once every four weeks, and Mr. Elmer, clerk to this department, goes there between my trips. If the district continues to grow in importance, it will probably be necessary to station a clerk permanently there.

Having described the nature of the country and the particulars of mining operations on the western side of the Paparoa Range, it next becomes necessary to show the extent and relative position of the claims and workings on the eastern side of that chain of mountains as compared with those to the westward of it. The first arrived at are at Langdon's Creek. These are not alluvial claims, but quartz mines. There are thirteen holdings here, and in one case crushing machinery has been erected. One hundred tons of quartz were crushed; but the manager declined to give me any return of the yield of gold. Mining operations in this locality are not being vigorously proceeded with at present. The alluvial claims are not numerous, but yield heavy gold. Langdon's Creek is immediately opposite to the Seven-mile Bluff on the western side of the range. Blackball Creek is an alluvial diggings, and finds remunerative employment for a few parties of miners; its relative position with places on the west side of the range is nearly opposite to the Nine-mile Bluff. The source of the creek is at Blackball Peak, immediately behind the Seventeen-mile Beach.

Moonlight Creek is a promising locality, and very heavy gold is procured there, similar to that obtained at the Seventeen-mile Beach. There are about thirty miners (sixteen English and fourteen Chinese) now working in this part of the district. Moonlight Creek is one of the largest streams flowing from the Paparoa Range to the Grey River. The source of the left-hand branch of this stream is near Blackball Peak, and that of the right-hand is opposite to the source of Canoe Creek, which flows to the West Coast about four miles north of the Seventeen-mile Bluff.

As the gold obtained from the claims on both the eastern and western sides of the Paparoa Range is similar in quality and description, an opinion is gaining ground among the miners that the gold-bearing stratum runs right through it. Although the country north of Razorback, and that in the neighbourhood of Brighton and Charleston, is not in my district, I would draw attention to the fact that the workings in that neighbourhood are also situated on the continuation of the range; thus proving the auriferous nature of the whole of the Paparoa Mountains.