

These cover a very large extent of country, being about sixty miles in length, with an average width of ten miles. The wooded and in many cases broken character of this district renders it difficult of access, and retards the work of prospecting; but in my opinion there are inexhaustible mines of wealth in it, which only await development.

The Ahaura District comes next in order. Within this are included the diggings at Noble's and Duffer's Creek, Orwell Creek, Ahaura River and branches, and Nelson Creek. The population at Noble's and Duffer's Creeks has decreased very much, and only a few claims are now worked in that neighbourhood. Orwell Creek maintains its reputation as a remunerative diggings. The Napoleon Hill Company's ground is now yielding handsome returns, and there are several other claims paying either good or moderate wages.

There are a few miners working on the tributaries of the River Ahaura with tolerable success. The large extent of country lying between the Kopura branch of that river and Lake Hochstetter, and also to the eastward of the Kopura Stream and lakes, is proved to be of a payable auriferous character; but it is at present almost inaccessible for want of roads. There is a bridle-track for pack-horses for some distance up the Kopura; after which there are a few bush-tracks, known only to the straggling miners who are working in that neighbourhood.

Nelson Creek supports a large mining population, who would not be able to work their claims to advantage but for the Government Water-race. The yield of gold is above the average. Actions at law have been brought in this district by holders of agricultural leases, to recover damages for injuries sustained from mining operations.

There were lodged in the Warden's Office at Ahaura, during the year ended 31st March, 1880, 308 applications for mining easements and privileges: of these 235 were granted, and 73 were refused, withdrawn, or lapsed.

The Notown division includes Red Jack's and Kangaroo Creeks, Deadman's Creek, and Maori Creek (Notown). A good many of the claims in these neighbourhoods have been worked out; but there are several payable holdings still occupied. Considerable population is scattered about among the numerous gullies and ranges. They, however, appear, on the whole, to be tolerably well satisfied with their earnings. I believe there is a large field for prospecting in the back country; but want of proper roads or tracks impedes progress in that direction. A hundred and forty-nine applications for mining privileges and easements were lodged in the Warden's Office at Notown during the year ended 31st March last: of these 122 were granted, and 27 were refused or withdrawn.

The Chinese miners are, in my opinion, increasing in number within the Grey District. Their favourite resorts are Greenstone, Dunganville, Maori Gully (Arnold), Notown, Moonlight, and Blackwater. They are patient, plodding workers in the beds of streams or rivers, or in shallow and abandoned ground; but they appear to be averse to tunnelling or driving operations. As a rule, they are inoffensive and law-abiding. I would here beg to point out, that there being no thoroughly competent or reliable Chinese interpreter on the whole of the West Coast renders the arrangement of disputes between Chinese miners, or between Chinese and European miners, very difficult to settle. Where Chinese alone are concerned, the plaintiff acts as a check on the defendant, and *vice versa*; but where the question at issue is between a Chinese and a person of European race, a good interpreter is an absolute necessity. If means are not taken to secure the services of some duly-qualified interpreter, I fear there will be some cases arise in which there will be a serious miscarriage of justice. On the question of interpretation of foreign languages, I hope it will not be deemed presumptuous on my part to state that I have a tolerable knowledge of the Maori language; and that during my official experience as a Resident Magistrate in the North Island, I have, on several occasions, sat on the magisterial bench perfectly astounded at the misrepresentations, omissions, and mistakes made by sworn interpreters of the Maori language. They could put my questions from English into Maori (a tongue which many of them understand better than the language of their European parents); but, when it came to the rendering of the Maori into English, they were altogether at sea, in consequence of their imperfect knowledge of the latter-mentioned language.

In conclusion, I would beg to state that, after an absence of twenty years from the west coast of the Middle Island, which I left a howling wilderness, unpeopled by Europeans except a small mining settlement at Westport, I am astonished at the progress which has been made in the development of the mineral and other resources of this extensive territory; and, when it is considered that the population who have effected these great changes have been but few in number in comparison with the size of the country occupied by them, it may reasonably be assumed that prospecting or searching for gold cannot have been thoroughly prosecuted over the entire area, but that there are yet unknown and untried districts which are probably as rich in mineral wealth as any places which have heretofore been discovered and worked.

The miner on the west coast of the Middle Island has hardships to endure which do not fall to the lot of any other section of the community in this colony. The densely-wooded and rough nature of the country, the unbridged rivers, the trackless forests, the wet climate, and the difficulty of transporting provisions render his vocation arduous in the extreme, and his lines cannot be said to have been cast in pleasant places. I therefore think that he is deserving of every consideration at the hands of his fellow-colonists, and that special votes should be made for gold-fields roads, tracks, and prospecting, with a view to seconding the efforts of these forerunners and pioneers of settlement. It must be borne in mind that the local authorities do all that they possibly can to assist mining enterprise, but they are unable to accomplish all that is required from them with the limited funds at their disposal.

Although not a matter strictly within my province, I have much pleasure in stating that the export of coal from the port of Greymouth is gradually but steadily increasing; and if the harbour works were completed so as to admit the loading of vessels of greater tonnage and draught, this district, with its gold, coal, and timber, would be enabled to take a leading position in this colony.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MACKAY,

Warden,

The Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.