

No. 11.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Kumara, 24th April, 1882.

I have the honor to forward herewith statistics for the Kumara portion of my district, and to make the following general report:—

Mode of Working—The mode of working the ground has undergone a considerable change since my last report, ground-slucing having, to a great extent, taken the place of tunnelling. It has been proved that the drift from the surface down to a depth of, in some instances, 60 feet, is gold-bearing, and it is expected that the ground will pay well for slucing on a large scale. The Teremakau River—which bounds the Kumara District on the north—provides a natural outlet for tailings, and each flood in the river carries away the tailings so discharged along its banks. The height from high-water mark to the bottom of auriferous drift is about 60 feet, which allows a considerable fall for the discharge of tailings.

Government Sludge Channel.—This channel is now completed and will prove a great boon to those miners who hold claims a long distance from the Teremakau River. By the construction of this important work some two hundred acres of land are made available for slucing process, and claims are rapidly being taken up. A large number of tail-races have already been cut into the channel, and others are in course of construction. The length of the channel is about 80 chains, and it has been proved to work in a most satisfactory manner. Precaution should, in my opinion, be taken to guard against riparian rights being acquired along the banks of the Teremakau River, and especially below the mouth of the sludge-channel for some distance, so as to prevent the likelihood of claims for compensation in the future for any injury done by the discharge of tailings from the sludge-channel.

Government Dam, Kapitea Creek.—Owing to the breaking away of this dam in March, 1881, the supply of water has been rather limited, and in consequence of which less slucing has been done in the district; and, of course, the return of gold is not so large as it would otherwise have been. It has now been repaired, and in wet weather gives a fair supply of water. When all the claims are opened out and in full working order it is expected that twice the quantity of water to that now available will be required. The miners, from experience, have learned that, by using large quantities of water and employing the best hydraulic appliances, poor ground can be made to pay fairly. The price charged in this district for a Government sluice-head of water is £3 per week, and the miners consider this a fair price.

The construction of a second dam in the Kapitea Creek is anxiously looked forward to, and this will, when completed, provide an ample supply of water for the present requirements of the district. Some of the slucing claims now in full work are paying as high as £9 a week per man, but the average returns from these claims, after paying expenses, is about £3 a week per man. The average returns all round, including the claims worked by driving process, is more than half an ounce of gold per week for each man. There is at present a temporary depression in the district, which is caused by miners changing the mode of working their claims from driving to slucing. In preparing a claim for slucing a large amount of capital and labour is required; this makes the strain on business people very heavy, as on an average it takes as long as six months, and in some cases more, before any returns are to hand. There are seven extended claims represented by 36 men, and 95 double-area claims, employing 384 men in this district, and the number of miners (exclusive of Chinese) is estimated at about 650. There are only 11 Chinese miners in the district. The total population is estimated at 2,300.

In conclusion, I may state that the district is in a sound condition, and I think it a significant fact that there are no idle hands in the place. Hopes are entertained that the ensuing year will be marked with greater success and a larger output of gold than has been the case since the opening of the field, and I trust that these hopes will be fully realized.

I have, &c.,

H. A. STRATFORD,
Warden.

The Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

No. 12.

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

SIR,—

Hokitika, 21st April, 1882.

I am rather later than I intended in sending you my annual report of the gold-mining district under my charge, and I now write it on the eve of a temporary absence rendered necessary by my health. I have been prevented by illness in the first place from doing anything at all, and since that from attending fully—whilst expecting to be relieved—to all the matters requiring to be dealt with. Mr. Bird having now relieved me of my duties, I am able to send a short statement respecting the leading features in the condition and progress of the district during the past year, but without so much detail as I might in different circumstances have been able to supply.

The most prominent instance of progress is the new ground lately opened at Woodstock, on the main road to Ross, within two miles of the Kanieri Bridge. It is remarkable that this ground, close to a main road, and within a few miles from Hokitika, should only now, after so many years, have been discovered to contain, at a depth of 50 or 60 feet, a bottom with payable wash dirt. The circumstance is strongly suggestive of the vast extent of ground that may yet prove auriferous, without going into the more inaccessible parts of the country to look for it. At the beginning of the rush to Woodstock, and as soon as business people began to take up sites there, I visited the ground for the purpose of ascertaining whether it was necessary to lay off ground for business purposes. I came to the conclusion that it would be premature to do anything by way of fixing a site for a township, as it appeared quite uncertain where the true centre would ultimately be. I therefore requested the chief surveyor to show the road boundary on each side by pegs, so that persons marking out business sites might know their frontage line. There are now a good many buildings being erected, and there may be about five hundred people on the ground. So far as my information goes there are about twenty claims that have bottomed and found gold, whilst the number of those that have been unsuccessful is,