

No. 9.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Reefton, 23rd May, 1883.

I have the honour to submit my report upon the Inangahua Mining District, and to furnish the usual statistical returns for the year ending 31st March last.

Since the date of my last report the mining industry has undergone considerable development, and marked progress has been made. At that time the whole colony, I might almost say, was disturbed by the Reefton mining fever, which was then prevalent. Many people were unfortunately led somewhat astray while the excitement lasted, and as a consequence new ventures or speculations which should not have received much attention at any time commanded high prices, and shares in mining claims rose above their legitimate value; and yet perhaps it may be premature to pronounce shares high or low, as the intrinsic value might require years to prove. The collapse which was inevitable subsequently took place in the stock-market, and the prices of shares fell to a very low figure. Notwithstanding this the prospects of the field were never brighter or sounder than at the present time.

As far as alluvial mining is concerned I have but little to say, as there are at present no workings of any magnitude. There are about 150 European and 438 Chinese alluvial miners. The yield of alluvial gold for the past year was, as far as could be ascertained, 7,171 oz. It is the intention, I believe, of certain persons to form a company to work ground at Merrygigs, and a special claim of 100 acres has been applied for. To work this ground, which is situated on the top of a high hill, a water-race from Big River will have to be cut. The race will be about five miles in length, and will cost about £6,000. The wash is 80 feet in depth and 10 feet wide at the narrowest point, and splendid prospects have already been obtained from the ground, the value of which must indeed be great if all is true that is claimed for it. I trust I shall, when forwarding you my next report, be able to chronicle the fact of the undertaking being brought to a successful issue and the ground yielding a golden harvest.

Up to the time of my last report quartz-mining had been confined to Murray, Boatmans, Larry's, and Devil's Creeks; but during the "spurt" about eighteen to twenty miles south of Reefton was prospected, with apparently good results. The almost inaccessible nature of the country in this direction, however, will render the development of discoveries a matter of time. The Big River is about sixteen miles from Reefton, and the Big River Claim, situate in that locality, has expended a considerable amount of capital in prospecting the mine. Golden quartz was found on the surface, and the lode was followed some distance down. Subsequently the company started a tunnel to strike the reef at a lower level, which was successfully accomplished. Work in the mine has been discontinued, pending the construction of a road which has been undertaken by the County Council. Some distance further south, in the Snowy River District, very good prospects were obtained, and a good number of leases have been applied for. I mention the new discoveries in this direction with the view of bringing under notice the vast extent of auriferous country in this district, which can justly be computed at forty miles in length. During the year important discoveries were made nearer Reefton, notably in the Globe lode, which averages from 10 to 15 feet in width. The company applied for and obtained a special claim of some fifty-two acres. On the discovery of the reef on the surface active operations were commenced. A shaft was sunk on the stone for a distance of 100 feet, and was found to carry, as is generally believed, payable stone. A tunnel some 300 feet in length has been driven to the reef, which has been struck some little distance from the foot of the shaft. The mine is situated in Devil's Creek, and will be connected with the battery now in course of erection on the banks of the Inangahua, nearly opposite to Crushington, by an aerial tramway over three-quarters of a mile in length. There will be telephone communication between the mine and battery. The battery will consist of twenty head of stampers, driven by a turbine. The machinery, race, and aerial tramway will cost about £6,000. This company's operations are and will be watched with a great amount of interest, as, should they be successful, it will give great impetus to mining in the locality.

Adjoining the Globe is the Oriental Company's claim. This company has been engaged for a long time past in constructing an adit over 1,000 feet in length. This tunnel has intersected two lines of reef which run through the ground. A few crushings have been had, and with payable results. It is expected that in a very short time constant crushings will be maintained. Unfortunately the company does not possess a very extensive crushing plant, having but ten head of stampers; but these are amongst the heaviest in the field. Doubtless additional machinery will ere long be erected, which, from present appearances, should place this mine amongst the foremost in the district.

The Golden Point Company, nearer again to Reefton, have completed the erection of a battery, &c., at a cost of some £3,000. Water has been found exceedingly scarce during the last few months, thereby retarding the crushing operations of this company. Since the end of March the company have crushed 180 tons of stone, which yielded a little over 1 oz. per ton.

In the Murray Creek District the Golden Treasure Company have erected powerful winding gear over the main shaft, which is to be sunk to a depth of 300 feet. A depth of 250 feet has, I believe, already been attained, and when the full distance has been sunk the mine will be so opened up that the company will be enabled to keep the battery supplied for some years to come.