

The reason for furnishing in a categorical form this information hardly need be given. But I may point out that it at least enables an investor to see at a glance the nature of the claim in which he is asked to risk his money, and to judge whether further testing will be necessary, and what the cost of such testing will probably be. Nos. 3, 4, and 5 form the foundation of the responsibility of directors, who ought not to order any plant and enter on any contracts till the facts have been ascertained and submitted to the shareholders.

A good example of the cost of preliminary investigation made by directors of a dredging claim appears in the reports of Messrs. J. P. Smith and Messrs. Cutten Brothers to the Perritt's Junction Lead Gold-dredging Company (Limited) in February or April last.

There is one more point for consideration. The question of the exclusive jurisdiction of the Warden's Court has been raised in the case of Thomson's Bullock Creek Dredging Company (Limited) and *Hume v. Thomson* and others. His Honour Judge Edwards, in May last, decided that an action charging fraud in relation to a contract referring to a mining privilege was not within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Warden's Court. Possibly the question may be carried to the Court of Appeal. In any case it may be a matter for the consideration of the Government whether the jurisdiction sections of the Mining Act should not be strengthened. Actions for calls in mining companies are frequently brought in the Magistrate's Court. Did the Legislature intend this, or to bring everything connected with mining to the Wardens' Courts?

DISTRICT OF GREYMOUTH COURT.

Barrytown.

Barrytown Flat Gold-mining Company (now Andrew McKay).—This claim is considered one of the most difficult to treat on the West Coast owing to the fineness of the gold and the heavy nature of the wash, which mostly consists of black sand and fine gravel. The spread of tables used by Mr. McKay requires 270 yards square of baize, blanket, and cocoanut-matting, and the design of the tables has, I understand, proved very effective. The construction of the water-race from Fagan's Creek still continues, the timber for the same being milled on the spot. The owner of the claim states that it has given very satisfactory returns during the past year.

Waiwhero Sluicing and Dredging Company (Limited).—Since last report the company has been busy in completing construction-works. The whole of the forty-head race from Canoe Creek is now completed and is seven miles in length. For the last ten weeks the company have been sluicing at one face with about thirteen heads of water, and won 470 oz. of gold in that time. At present they are sluicing two faces, but no returns are to hand, as there will be no wash-up till the expiration of the month's sluicing. The company are considering the proposed erection of a "blow-up" hydraulic elevator to work the flat part of the claim, which they have prospected with that intention. About twenty men will be employed at the faces, and ten men on other work.

Pactolus Sluicing Company.—This company have shut down.

Greymouth Section.

The undermentioned companies have dredges working within this section of my district: Grey River, Dobson No. 2, New River, Maori Queen, and Leviathan. It is premature yet to form any reliable opinion of the value of the properties being worked, as in nearly every instance it has been found necessary to effect mechanical alterations to enable the dredge to work efficiently, but even working under disadvantageous circumstances the average result has been fairly satisfactory, and it is probable that when the necessary alterations have been completed the returns will show a substantial increase. In some cases the ladders are too short to admit of the bottom being cleaned up by the dredge-buckets, and in other instances the machinery is on the light side, the wash having proven heavier than was anticipated. The defects referred to are largely due to the fact that insufficient attention has been paid to the difficulties to be met. These mistakes must be accepted as incidental to a new industry promoted during a period of sanguine excitement, and, although it is probable that people who have gambled on the chances of this branch of gold-mining proving extremely profitable will be disappointed in many instances, I am satisfied that as an industrial factor gold-dredging in this district will prove lasting and beneficial. In addition to the above, the following companies have dredges in course of construction, most of which will be working within the next half-year: Maori King, Marsden No. 1, Marsden No. 3, Foley's, North Beach, and Golconda.

Coal-mining and Timber.

Coal.—Brunner Coal-mine: 1898, 66,694 tons; 1899, 103,085 tons; 1900, 125,403 tons. Blackball Coal-mine: 1898, 52,835 tons; 1899, 65,300 tons; 1900, 82,516 tons. The output of this mine, though in excess of former years, does not come up to expectation owing to the fire in the mine, which delayed operations for fully two months.

Timber.—Quantity exported: 1898, 11,783,292 superficial feet; 1899, 15,116,175 superficial feet; 1900, 14,549,433 superficial feet.

General.

The following is a return of cases disposed of in the Magistrate's and Warden's Courts at Greymouth for the year ending 31st March, 1901: Civil, 143; criminal, 271; Warden's, 36.

The revenue for the year amounted to £5,111 15s. 9d., made up as follows: Warden's department, £4,905 11s. 9d.; Magistrate's department, £152 15s.; licensing fees, £53 9s.

The particulars of revenue collected in the Warden's Court at Greymouth for the year ending 31st March, 1901, are as follows: Miners' rights, £307; water licenses, £2 17s. 6d.; rents and royalties, £2,064 5s. 9d.; fees and fines, £57 14s.; miscellaneous, £2,473 14s. 6d.: total, £4,905 11s. 9d.