

Mr. Warden CRUICKSHANKS, Lawrence, to the UNDER-SECRETARY FOR MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Lawrence, 13th April, 1905.

I have the honour to forward to you herewith the statistical returns for the year ended the 31st December, 1904, and to submit the following report on the several mining districts under my charge for the same period:—

WETHERSTONE'S, BLUE SPUR, AND TUAPEKA FLAT.

The Blue Spur and Gabriel's Gully Consolidated Gold Company (Limited) have been carrying on operations during the year, and the manager, Mr. J. Howard Jackson, has kindly supplied me with the following details in connection with the mine: Average number of men employed, 28; amount of cement treated, 203,135 cubic yards; amount of gold won, 1,525 oz., worth £6,062 6s. 2d.; cost of winning the gold, £2 19s. 9½d. per ounce, or 75 per cent. of its value; amount paid in wages, £3,001 1s. 2d.; amount paid for explosives, £426 4s. 8d.; total colonial expenditure, £4,558 10s. 1d. The accidents in the mine during the year were only trivial. The difficulty in working the cement increases from various causes, but the cost of unwatering the mine has been reduced from 7 per cent. of the water-supply to about 3 per cent. by improvements in the pumping appliances. The end of the year produced a good water-supply.

The Golden Crescent Sluicing Company (Limited) at Wetherstone's have carried on operations during the year, and the manager has supplied me with the following figures: Average number of men employed, 7; amount of material treated, 187,300 cubic yards; amount of gold won, 714 oz., worth £2,760; cost of winning the gold, £1,100; amount paid in wages, £860. The ground consisted of about equal parts of old tailings treated more than once under the old system and ground that had been tunnelled out so completely that scarcely a yard of solid ground was left. Mining operations were considerably interfered with in August and September owing to the water-race being blocked with snow and ice.

At Wetherstone's the claims belonging to Messrs. Smyth, Adams, and Donlan and the Local Industry Mining Company (Limited) have been constantly at work, with fairly good results.

At Munro's Gully mining operations are still being carried on in the following sluicing claims: J. Kitto and party, P. P. Thomas and party, Edward Browne and party.

TUAPEKA FLAT AND TERRACES.

Undoubtedly this field would be greatly benefited by an adequate water-supply. I am of opinion that hundreds of acres of payably auriferous ground would be worked if a good water-supply were available. Experts are of opinion that the ground that has already been dredged would pay a fair wage if worked by hydraulic elevating, provided water was procurable at a reasonable figure.

The following dredges are working at Tuapeka Flat: the Gabriel Gold-dredging Company, J. Harris and party, the Taniwha Gold-dredging Company.

WAITAHUNA.

Three privately owned dredges are still working in this locality and three principal sluicing claims—viz., Messrs. Thompson and party, J. Ferris and party, and the Sailor's Gully Gold-mining Company (Limited)—have been in active operation during the year, with fair success.

Messrs. William Adams and party—known as the Lower German Flat Company—have just completed the construction of an extension of their water-race to Waitahuna Gully, a distance of about four miles. The total expenditure on construction of race and fluming, purchase of pipes, and opening up the claim will be about £1,500 or £1,600; and the intention is to work by hydraulic elevating the claim formerly held by the Waitahuna Gully Gold-dredging Company.

TABLE HILL.

Messrs. Thomas Park and party have been working a quartz claim at Canada Reef during the last twelve months with, I understand, very fair success. They lately acquired a stamper-battery, and are working away steadily.

MANUKA CREEK.

A company has been formed in Lawrence during the year, called the Manuka Mining Company (Limited) to work a claim in the locality of what is known as Comb's old claim. The method of working is ground-sluicing, and I understand the claim is giving payable returns.

GORE, WAIKAKA, WAIMUMU, AND CHARLTON.

Nothing of importance has transpired during the year; but, speaking generally, over the whole of the above districts, I am pleased to report that the dredging industry is in a fairly satisfactory state. During the year very little land was taken up for dredging purposes, but at the same time there were but few of the existing claims surrendered. At the end of the year there were twenty-five dredges working in the Waikaka Valley. Five at Charlton, one on the Mataura River near Gore, and four at Waimumu, making a total of thirty-five and representing a capital value of about £122,500.

With reference to the dredging of agricultural land, I am pleased to report that the Messrs. McGeorge Bros. (dredge-owners) at Waikaka have constructed and are now working a contrivance on their dredges by which, in the dredging operations, the top soil after passing through an extra shoot is re-deposited on top of the dredged gravel in sufficient thickness to make the land available for agricultural purposes almost immediately, or, at any rate, as soon as it has settled down.