

Mr. Wright's Report
on the Climate of
Wakatipu.

106. Mr. Mining-Surveyor Wright says:—

"Nothing could surpass the salubrity of the climate for the first three months after my arrival on this gold-field (Wakatipu), namely, during April, May, and a great part of June. The weather, with the exception of an occasional shower, was exceedingly fine; the sky being for the most part almost cloudless, the days warm and bright, and the nights clear, cold, and frequently frosty. During the latter month, heavy hoar frosts would, at morning, cover the ground. The rains, however, which fell about once a fortnight, although seldom lasting more than a day, were very heavy, frequently swelling the various rivers to a great height. Little snow was seen, except at the summits of the highest ranges."

VII.—AGRICULTURE.

Neglect of agricul-
tural pursuits.

107. One of the greatest drawbacks to the welfare of the Gold-fields has resulted from the neglect of agricultural pursuits. This has resulted from two causes;—the first being the indisposition of the miners to withdraw from the more attractive pursuit of gold-seeking. The other, and more powerfully operative cause may be found in the state of the law. The entire country being leased for pastoral purposes, the Provincial Government were unable to throw open all the lands for settlement within the boundaries of the Gold-fields. Even when the rights of the pastoral tenant had been extinguished, by the cancellation of his lease, and the payment of compensation, there was no provision in the Gold-fields Act of 1858, for the sale of land either in townships or for agriculture. This has been partially obviated by the Gold-fields Act of 1862. Still it is rendered necessary to withdraw lands that have been resumed by the State, from the operation of that Act before any portion of them can be sold; and thus another injurious effect is produced, for by such withdrawal the land is locked up from gold mining. It is proposed to remedy this defect by a Bill which has been prepared for the better management of the Gold-fields, and to permit the sale of land to take place without interfering with mining operations.

Every holder of Min-
er's Right entitled to
occupy half an acre
for residence and cul-
tivation.

108. Much however has been done by the Provincial Government to alleviate this state of affairs. By the provisions of the Gold-fields Regulations every holder of a miner's right is entitled to occupy for residence and cultivation half an acre of ground, on payment of a single fee of five shillings. He is protected in his occupancy against all comers except in the actual event of the ground so occupied being proved to be auriferous; in which case compensation for actual damage and loss must be paid to the occupier by the persons who may be desirous of mining thereon, before they are allowed to take possession. I am glad to be able to report that under this regulation gardens are now rapidly springing up in all parts of the Gold-fields.

Agricultural leases.

109. Another salutary provision has been made by granting agricultural leases of ten acres of land subject to a yearly rental of five shillings per acre. At present this regulation only applies to the Tuapeka Gold-field; but it is in contemplation to take up lands in other districts for the same purpose. Several leases have been granted at Gabriel's and Waitahuna, and a number of blocks have been fenced in and cultivated on the Dunstan and Wakatipu fields, in anticipation of the resumption of the land by the State. Vegetable food—the want of which has been severely felt—will therefore soon be supplied to the mining community, and large profits will no doubt be reaped by the pioneers of this necessary industry.

Character and extent
of agricultural land.

110. The character and extent of available agricultural land within the boundaries of the Gold-fields is thus stated by the Mining Surveyor:—

Mr. Wright reports:—

"Wakatipu.—The mountainous character of this district precludes the probability of its ever becoming to any great extent an agricultural country, but there are nevertheless rich tracts of alluvial land about it capable of producing in abundance any English crop that may be placed upon them. In addition to the Frankton and Arrow Flats, there are others of smaller areas around the borders of the Lake, amounting in all to fifty thousand acres or thereabouts. The land on the ranges is in many places both rich and the soil of considerable depth, but so situated, as not to be of any use except for grazing purposes."

Mr. Coates reports:—

"Dunstan.—The subject of the adaptability of the soil and climate of this district to agricultural purposes is one which must (considering the exorbitant price and limited supply of agricultural produce) be one amply remunerative to such speculations, and of vital importance to the future settlement of such gold-fields as those under my supervision. My residence in this district has extended over that portion of the year in which every peculiarity of temperature or climate is experienced; which experience, combined with information as to the agricultural capabilities of the soil, deduced from the successful cultivation of small gardens within its boundary, enables me to state that the area of land eminently adapted, both from fertility of soil and mildness of climate, to the growth of root and grain crops, is fully 10,000 (ten thousand) acres, in which area I only include such soil as consists of a rich clay loam, and which I locate as follows:—Kawarau, 2,000 acres; Manuherikia Valley, 1,500 acres; Keri Keri and Wai Puna Valleys, 500 acres; Obelisk Basin, 1,500 acres; and the Mount Benger Gold-field, 4,500 acres.