

Mr. Wright's Report.

SIR,—

Mining Survey Office, Queenstown, 1st April, 1865.

I have the honor herewith to furnish Returns of the population of the Wakatipa Gold Field, together with an estimate of the amount and value of machinery and mining plant, and submit for your information the following Report :

Population.—By comparing the accompanying Table with that of December, 1864, it will be seen that this district has sustained a decrease in the following proportions, viz. :—

	December, 1864.	March, 1865.	Decrease.
Number engaged in Mining	2,145	1,229	916
„ „ other Pursuits	1,203	820	383
Total	3,348	2,049	1,299

The prospects of this district during the early part of the preceding quarter were of the most promising character, and were effecting a steady increase in the number of the mining population ; works of all kinds were assuming a most substantial and permanent shape, and the miners had evidently made it their object to develop the resources of their various claims in the most systematic and steady manner. The effects of the late rush had ceased to be felt, and matters of mining and business interest had assumed an appearance of permanence and stability. I regret, however, to state that this smooth course of events has been most suddenly and seriously interrupted.

The West Coast Rush.—The existence of a West Coast Gold Field, in spite of repeated failures in making so important a discovery, has for the last two years been recognized as a fact by a great number of the mining population of this place, so that it can scarcely be wondered at that these men who had seen the Shotover and Arrow when gold in abundance was to be had for the mere picking it up, should be attracted by the glowing private accounts that a few weeks since reached this. Although a few had left for the Grey some two months since, the rush from this place did not fairly set in till the latter part of February, and was caused through private information received in the first instance by some workers on Moke Creek, who, though holding a valuable claim, left precipitately ; the news speedily spread, and at the commencement of March the rush had become general, and apprehensions were felt that the district would speedily be depopulated. With the exception of the Upper Shotover Division, which has lost two-thirds of its population, I cannot name one portion of the field that has suffered more from the effects of the rush than another ; it has been a complete stampede, and during thirteen years of gold fields experience, I have never seen the excitement of a rush so general. Had the class that are leaving been working unprofitably, such wild excitement would scarcely be wondered at ; but I am acquainted with very many instances in which handsome returns have been left, and good and costly mining property and plant abandoned or sold for a mere trifle to enable the owners to “go to the Grey.” There are few claims that have not lost some of their shareholders, and the evil and depressing effects have, in consequence, been generally felt ; many long-protracted preliminary works have been left shorthanded, and have, in consequence, been abandoned. In many places wages as high as £5 and £6 per week have been offered, but men are not found to accept them ; and in several cases the closing or removal of up-country stores have, through the difficulty experienced in procuring provisions, compelled the broken companies to abandon valuable works well nigh completion. I have found, however, in collecting information for these Returns, that several miners have arrived on this field from the lower diggings, having been attracted to ground which was abandoned but known to be highly auriferous ; this is especially the case in deserted terrace workings, as at Moke Creek and the Twelve-mile, Arrow. At Bracken's Gully the holders of a claim informed me that they had taken up an abandoned claim which was yielding them £12 per man per week ; and I could mention many other similar cases. There are a great many instances of shares and almost entire claims being represented by wages men, showing evidently an intention on the part of the shareholders of returning in the event of the new field not meeting their expectations ; and many who are holding wages shares have been obliged to do so from the fact of having exhausted their means in unsuccessful attempts to turn the river, but who are still determined, with the improvements lately made in the mode of working, to again persevere when they have the means at command.

River Workings.—Many of the claims upon the Shotover and Arrow, have, during the last three months, been most successfully wrought, and they exhibit a marked improvement both in the methods adopted for diverting the water, and in the mechanical appliances for draining the ground. By far the most systematic and economic way is that in use by the Criterion Company, who hold ground upon the Shotover below the junction of Long Gully ; it will be understood by the accompanying diagram, See Diagram C. in which the arrows indicate the flow of the stream. The great drawback to the success of many of the undertakings upon the Shotover has been the constant recurrence of floods, which overtopping the crates, flow over the claim, filling in tail races, and washing away wheels and other gear. This latter difficulty, as I mentioned in a former Report, has in many cases been obviated by the erection of a frame-work fixed over the wheel, to which, by means of block and tackle, the whole is attached and suspended clear of the water in time of flood ; but in the works of the Criterion Company a twenty-four feet overshot wheel has been substituted, standing clear of the flood-line, which (with the assistance of a smaller wheel attached to the drum axle, and which receives the water after passing the big wheel) effectually drains the ground. This Company, the shareholders of which applied for a mining lease of seven acres of the river, commenced operations immediately on the survey being made. The