

No. 6.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Westport, 30th April, 1880.

I have the honor, in transmitting the usual statistical returns of the Buller District for the year ending the 31st March ultimo, to make the following report:—

Under instructions from the Government, the late Mr. Warden Broad and I were required to exchange districts; and in June, 1879, I was transferred from Greymouth to Westport, and took over charge of this district, extending from the River Heaphy along the sea-board to Razorback, and thence inland along the northern boundaries of the Grey Valley and Inangahua Districts to the dividing ranges, and thence to the River Hope; including the mining centres known as the Lyell, Hampden, Brighton, Charleston, Addison's Flat, the Northern Terraces, Waimangaroa, Mokihinui, and Karamea. I have also had temporary charge of the Inangahua District during Mr. Warden Price's absence on sick-leave, and have continued in charge to the present time, pending final arrangements in contemplation by the Government for the readjustment of the Wardens' districts on the Coast. In consequence of the additional duties attached to the Inangahua District, and the great distance to be travelled over between the several Courts, averaging 300 miles per month, my time has been so fully occupied with the Courts, and travelling thereto, that I have not been able to visit any of the outlying portions of this district, or hold any sittings of the Courts at Hampden; but the Receiver of Gold Revenue at the Lyell has visited that part of the district once a month to issue summonses and notices of application to the miners.

The Westport Mining District includes the mining centres of Addison's Flat, Waimangaroa, Mokihinui, and Karamea. The number of miners' rights issued during the past year shows a slight increase in the mining population as compared with last year; but, taking the Customs return of gold exported, there is a large falling-off in the yield of gold. No new discoveries have been reported, and mining operations—for the most part alluvial—have been quiet, and scattered over the district in isolated parties outside the mining centres named—principally ground-sluicing where water is available, whilst others are employed washing the black sand along the sea-beach, making fair wages. Addison's Flat is the principal mining centre in the district, and gives good returns, as the miners are able to command a large supply of water from the Totara River, Mountain Creek, Blackball and Waimea Creeks, and also have extensive dams and reservoirs constructed on the flat and Waite's Pakihis to collect the drainage and flood-water. Mining operations at Mokihinui and Karamea are very quiet. There are a few parties of miners working on the beaches and up the river-beds on the low flats; but, as I have never visited that part of the district, I am unable to furnish any reliable information.

The Charleston Mining District extends from Addison's Flat to Razorback, and includes Brighton and Six-mile. The general mode of working throughout this district is by ground-sluicing. There are also several machines, with large water-wheels attached, in active operation crushing gold-bearing cement. The tailings from these workings are deposited in the various creeks, and the extraction of gold from these tailings as they pass down the creeks gives employment to a considerable number of men who have laid down tables in the bed of the creek for the tailings to pass over. Considerable labour and capital has been expended in perfecting these tables, so as more effectually to extract the fine gold; and many of these claims are very valuable, yielding from £4 to £7 per week with little or no labour. The locality which was worked in 1878, and now known as Croninville, has been successfully opened up during this year, and promises well, being new ground, and a portion of it having been found payable. The country is very broken. The wash is black sand and fine gravel, overlaid to a considerable depth with loose gravel and boulders. Two large water-races, capable of carrying twenty-four heads of water each, have been brought on the ground from the Totara River at a large outlay. The supply being thought inadequate, another party contemplate bringing in a third large water-race, taking its supply from the same source—the Totara River—but higher up the ranges. There are about forty men now employed at Croninville, the ground being held as extended claims under the regulations; and the miners have joined to construct a main tail-race, about two miles in length, from the head of the Croninville Gorge to the Totara River. The Four-mile, Six-mile, and Brighton workings remain in about the same condition as last year; no new discoveries have been made. The black-sand claims on the Nine-mile Beach and beaches south of Charleston have not been very remunerative during the past year, the beaches being covered up with a heavy layer of grey sand; but, after stiff gales of wind, this layer of sand is combed down, laying bare a rich deposit of gold-bearing black sand. These claims are very valuable, and, when covered up with sand, are carefully protected by registration. One claim, 200 feet by 100 feet, brought £200 at auction, and even higher prices have been obtained. In consequence of the unworkable condition of these beaches, and miners who in previous years were employed working poor ground being employed during the past year opening up new ground at Croninville, the yield of gold is considerably less than that of the previous year. The great drawback to the advancement of mining in this part of the district is the want of a permanent supply of water. The Government water-race is not sufficient to meet the demand; but, if carried to a higher elevation, with the proposed supply of water to be brought in from the Four-mile River, would give a plentiful and steady supply, and throw open acres of auriferous ground at present lying idle and unproductive. The general condition is on the whole satisfactory. All parties are earning a livelihood, and it seems only to require a permanent water-supply to make this part of the district one of the most prosperous on the Coast.

Regular sittings of the Resident Magistrate's and Warden's Courts have been held fortnightly at Charleston; and it will be seen by the return appended that the number of applications and the certificates issued are very numerous, the latter exceeding an average of a hundred per month, involving a considerable amount of clerical work.

The Lyell Mining District includes Hampden and Upper Buller, and extends westerly to the old diggings on the Westport Road at Burley's Hill, taking in the Inangahua Junction to Brant's Ferry at the landing. Two new gold-bearing reefs have been discovered during the past year. The stone taken from that at New Creek is considered very rich; but it will be some time before the ground can