

*Departmental.*—At the time of writing my last report I had only just taken charge of the district; and in the method of working it I found that some little change was necessary, which the Government, on my suggestion, promptly carried out. One improvement has been effected by the appointment of a Warden's Court at Hokitika. The Court at Kanieri has always been the only one held between Ross on the one side and the Waimea on the other; and in the busy days of the diggings this was a convenient arrangement, because the Kanieri was the most central spot for the greater number of the miners. But since the business has, to a great extent, fallen off, the Kanieri office has only been opened for business once a week, and consequently the opening of an office and Court at Hokitika, and appointment of Mr. M. F. South as clerk, has proved a great convenience to miners, who by coming into Hokitika now find an office open daily.

*Okarito.*—Another change has been the appointment of Mr. F. Bird as Warden at Okarito. Mr. Bird previously held the office of Resident Magistrate there, and the advantage of authorizing him to deal with mining matters also was therefore obvious. Mr. Bird's appointment has rendered it unnecessary for me to visit Okarito except once in the year, to hold an Assessment Court and to hear cases in the extended jurisdiction in the Resident Magistrate's Court. The condition of mining matters in the Okarito District will therefore be reported by Mr. Bird; but I may say that, having lately been down there and visited the new diggings near Lake Mapourika, I am satisfied that those diggings only want water to be brought to them to become important and valuable.

*Totara.*—The future prospects of the diggings in the neighbourhood of Ross are undoubtedly intimately connected with the execution of two important works—the Mikonui Water-race and the deep drainage of the flat near the Town of Ross. The former of these projects requires no remark from me, as the work has already been undertaken by the Government; of the latter, I can only say that, unless the common estimate formed of the richness of the deep ground through which the drain is required is a greatly exaggerated one, the work must be regarded as one which is well worthy of attention and of Government aid. The ordinary mining industry in this part of the district has been much interrupted from time to time by stoppages caused by the occasional and apparently capricious raising of the price of water by the Totara and Jones's Creek Water-race Company, which has for a portion of the diggings a virtual monopoly of the supply. It is to be hoped that it may be found that prohibitive prices for water—whatever may be the object of imposing them—will not answer any one's purpose, and that the working of the claims will not in future be thus interrupted. Some new ground has been opened lately at Black's Creek, a few miles from Ross, and I am informed that the prospects are good, and that some thirty miners are now employed there. In the management of the Totara District I must acknowledge the great help I get from Mr. Blane, the clerk of the Ross Court, whose intimate knowledge of the district, thorough acquaintance with mining matters, and clear and excellent arrangement of all office business, have remarkably simplified and facilitated my duties.

*Waimea.*—There is nothing new to mention in this part of the district. I think there has lately been rather a tendency to an increase of population and business, and I see no signs of this locality becoming abandoned. The principal feature in connection with these diggings is the extreme complexity of the questions that now offer themselves for decision, arising partly from the multiplication and accumulation of registered rights of all kinds for many years, but still more from the gradual filling-up of all the creeks and watercourses with tailings, whereby the level of the beds is raised, the conditions of working are entirely altered, and private rights are perpetually coming into collision with public interests in a manner that renders it very difficult to make practical arrangements for the accommodation of all parties. A great desire is expressed by the residents in Staffordtown and its neighbourhood that a deep-drainage tunnel should be brought up to Kelly's Terrace, where, it is said, there is good evidence of the existence of gold in sufficient quantity to warrant the execution of the work. I think there is reason to believe that, if the tunnel were brought up, whether by the Government or any other agency, good interest on the outlay would be obtained by the tribute paid by the claims making use of the drainage; but this would demand a little more particular inquiry. The Government Water-race must be regarded as the mainstay, to a great extent, of the workings in this locality. The necessity of a new Courthouse at Stafford has already been brought under the notice of the Government. It will be absolutely necessary to close the present one at no distant date.

*Hokitika and Kanieri.*—There has been no new ground opened, so far as I know, in this part of the district. Prospecting is, however, going on under the auspices of the Hokitika District Prospecting Association, and it may be hoped that some one or more of the parties lately organized by them may be successful in their search. The fact that the ground between Hokitika and Ross, limited as it is by the sea on one side and a good main road on the other, is still for the greater part of its area waiting to be explored, is suggestive of the exceedingly small amount of ground that has yet been prospected during the sixteen years that the West Coast diggings have been in operation.

The return of gold shipped at Hokitika for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1880, on which duty has been paid at this port is as follows: Gold, 53,339 oz. 17 dwt. 12 gr.; duty, £5,339.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

J. GILES.

## No. 10.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Okarito, 2nd April, 1880.

In compliance with your circular of 13th March, I enclose herewith the forms, filled in with the particulars required, for the Okarito District. Mining matters are at present at a very low ebb; but it is the general belief that there will be a change for the better at an early date. There have been reports of several new finds. One near the head-waters of the Waiho River caused a little excitement at the time, as some splendid samples of gold were obtained in that locality; but the almost inaccessible nature of the country, and the great danger of the road, debarred many from prospecting in that