

WESTLAND GOLD FIELDS.

(Including part of Nelson South-West Mining District.)

No. 9.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Greymouth, 1st May, 1884.

I have the honour to forward herewith the statistical returns of the mining districts under my charge, and to add a general report for the year ending the 31st March, 1884.

Barrytown.—The mining population between Cobden and Barrytown is gradually decreasing, the present findings having been pretty well exhausted. The total number of miners between Cobden and Razorback is about 120. Most of them are ground-sluicing. The average earnings are from £3 to £4 a week per man. There are a few miners working on the beach, but their earnings are not more than £2 10s. to £3 a week. There is sufficient ground to maintain the present population for several years, but unless new ground is discovered I do not think the number is likely to increase. A contract has been let for the construction of a bridge over the Grey River, which when completed will be a great boon to the residents between Cobden, Barrytown, and Greymouth, also to the farmers of Coal Creek.

Brunnerton and Langdon's.—There are still a few miners scattered about between Brunnerton and Langdon's. Their earnings during the past year have been rather small.

South Beach.—Between Greymouth and Teremakau Rivers there are about sixty miners employed, engaged in sluicing operations. A large portion of old ground is being worked again by means of tail-races carried into the sea, and is paying very well.

Cameron's Terrace.—Most of the miners have abandoned their claims in this locality owing to the poor nature of the ground and the difficulties of working. At present there are not more than twenty employed.

Rutherglen.—Manuka Flat and Rutherglen find employment for about eighty Europeans and sixty Chinese. The return of gold from this locality has been larger than usual during the past twelve months, in consequence of the great rainfall. The difficulty of bringing water on to the ground prevents a large portion of it being worked, the principal water rights being held by a few parties. Those who have a constant supply are doing very well.

Welshman's.—The population of this locality is about the same as last year. The scarcity of water is much felt: there is a large area of ground which would pay well for sluicing if a permanent supply of water could be brought on to it.

Marsden.—No change worthy of note has taken place in this portion of the district since the date of my last report. I think the number of Chinese has slightly increased during the past year. Chinese often work ground left by Europeans, they being quite satisfied as long as they can earn as much as £2 a week, but Europeans do not care to work for anything under £3 a week per man.

Greenstone.—The mining population is about two hundred, nearly half this number being Chinese. Most of the Chinese are working in the bed of the Greenstone Creek, and, judging from the expensive wing-dams and tail-races they have constructed, I think they will have constant work for many years. The Erin-go-Bragh Water-race Company have extended their race from Hayes' Terrace to Payne's Gully, and it is probable that some parties may set in to work in that locality, as gold was found there several years ago, and some few miners have been working recently and obtaining fair wages. Hitherto the want of water has been a great drawback, but since the extension of the Erin-go-Bragh Race they will have a constant supply. Generally miners are doing fairly well in this locality. The parties working in the bed of the Greenstone Creek have great difficulties to contend with in wet weather: the creek very often rises to such a height as to flood their claims out, and the holders are thereby put to considerable trouble and expense to get them into working order again; but, with all these obstacles, they appear to be satisfied with their earnings.

No-town.—No new find of any magnitude has taken place during the past twelve months. The population remains about the same as it was at the date of my last report. The old claims are yielding average returns. The miners are earning from £2 to £3 a week per man. The population is very much scattered.

Dunganville.—I have nothing of importance to report about this portion of the district. All the miners in the locality appear to be well employed. Some of the claims are paying very well, yielding from £8 to £12 a week per man.

Arnold.—The population has slightly decreased during the past twelve months, many of the old claims being worked out. There is one matter worthy of note, viz.: A company have applied for a lease of ten acres of land in the bed of Maori Gully Creek, which they intend to work by a method in which a tail-race is not required. The creek referred to runs into a narrow gorge of sandstone reef. This gorge was originally about forty-five feet deep, but has become almost filled up with tailings by miners sluicing into it, and the object of the company is to lift these tailings by means of dredges, and sluice them over again. Should the venture prove a success it will cause quite a stir in mining matters in this and other parts of the district, as there are numerous creeks that have been filled up in the same manner, and remain unworked in consequence of there not being sufficient fall for tailings if worked in the ordinary way. The creek-bed deposits are said to be highly auriferous.

Ahaura.—At Moonlight, including Baxter and Caledonian Creeks, the European population is about twenty-six, and about forty Chinese. The average wages of the former are about £2 10s. a week: those of the latter I have not ascertained; they display a remarkable reticence respecting the amount of their earnings. All work is carried on by sluicing.