

1885.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## AURIFEROUS WORKINGS SOUTH OF MATAURA RIVER

(REPORT ON EXTENT OF).

*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by leave.*

Mr. W. TOLCHER to the Hon. W. J. M. LARNACH.

SIR,—

In accordance with the request conveyed in your communication of the 15th April, that I would visit and report upon the auriferous nature and extent of ground being worked south of Mataura, I now have the honour to report that I have visited the various places indicated by the miners, and forward particulars of my inspection for your information.

I find that gold has been found on portions of the beach extending from the Tokomairiro River to the Orepuki, and some very good results have been obtained. At Bushy Point, for instance, some 3,000oz. to 4,000oz. of gold was obtained, but that was a good many years since. Orepuki has been very good, but it is now very poor, and miners cannot make a living. At Waikari, quite recently, good wages could be made. There are a few men at work at present, but the yield is very poor.

The general opinion of miners with regard to these workings is that the beach should have rest for a number of years after being worked, so as to allow the gold to re-gather. The sea, in a most extraordinary manner, after heavy gales, throws up vast deposits of sand and gravel (in some cases 10ft. or 12ft. deep) for a distance of fifteen or twenty miles. A high tide, or a wind from an opposite direction, takes this sand and gravel away, leaving patches of black sand. It is in this black sand that the gold is found. This work of nature going on for a considerable period the gold accumulates and some good yields are obtained. A place was shown me at Wiltshire Bay where 50oz. were obtained from a very small patch of sand. Such patches are rare, and at the present time miners, with good appliances, cannot make more than from 15s. to £1 per week.

At Orepuki a few men are at work, but the yield is very poor. At Round Hill there are a good many Chinamen at work. Gold is distributed throughout a large quantity of gravel, which would pay well could water be brought to bear. This appears to be impracticable at present. There are a few parties working for gold between Orepuki and the Bluff, a small beach between Steep Head and Barracouta Point, that has given good returns from time to time, but there is no one working there now. At Bushy Point there are some four or five men at work, but very little gold can be obtained. At this place a windmill was erected at a cost of some £200, for the purpose of raising water by means of a pump, to wash the sand, but unfortunately it did not answer. The pump and framework of the mill are still standing, a memento of unfortunate enterprise, about two miles and a half from Bushy Point in the direction of the Mataura. The party who bought this plant from the original proprietors informed me that the gold was not there in sufficient quantity to pay, otherwise it would be working now. It has been lying idle for several years.

I made a particular inspection of this part of the coast, walking out some fifteen miles, as I could not procure a horse. I interviewed all the men working, one of whom has a race cut in lignite running parallel to the sea. All agree that it is very difficult to make a living there now, and that, when they can get any other employment at 15s. a week, they gladly avail themselves of the opportunity. The settler who resides on the Quarantine Reserve, over which he holds a license, informed me that he worked on this beach many years ago, getting a lot of gold, and that, if there was anything to be done now by the expenditure of capital, he and others would soon undertake it, but the prospect is too poor to warrant the outlay of money. An opinion prevails that, should the canal be cut through from Fortrose to Awarua Bay, auriferous ground will be discovered in the neighbourhood of the Mataura, but that this should be a matter for private enterprise.

On the Waikara Beach a number of men appear to do very well. It, however, soon becomes exhausted, when the miners leave for some other employment and return to the gold-workings when they think the sea has re-made the beach.

At Port Molyneux a company of Dunedin speculators have a party of men prospecting on the beach, with the intention that, if they get gold in sufficient quantity, they will use an Asbury pump. A considerable quantity of gold has been obtained at this place, and some tunnelling has been done in some of the older terraces, with fair results. The gold is exceedingly fine, and requires skillful treatment.

The Maori Reserve at Wiltshire Bay, over which I was taken, I believe to be highly auriferous. A water-race was constructed over this land some years since, but it has been abandoned for a long time. Since my visit the Maoris have advertised this land to be let on lease for mining purposes.

With regard to other parts of the coast there is very little to report. A miner informed me that he had made good wages for a short time as far north as Croomb Bay, near the Tokomairiro River, and that there are many patches to be obtained if miners are quick in gathering up the sand when deposited by the sea.

I trust, Sir, that I have been sufficiently explicit in my report, so that you may be enabled to form a correct estimate of the value of these workings.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Mines, Wellington.

WILLIAM TOLCHER.

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