

and erected an aerial tramway for the conveyance of the stone from the mine to the battery. Up to the end of March the company crushed 618 tons of stone, yielding from the top-plates alone 453oz. The crushing, which has been completed since March, has yielded 17dwt. per ton, enabling the company to pay off all liabilities and declare a dividend of 6d. per scrip. It is proposed to start sinking a winze immediately from No. 2 level, in order to prove the ground as far as possible. There is six or eight months' work on the present level.

*Inglewood.*—This company have opened during the year a new level, giving 157ft. of backs up to the previous level, from which the present level is being worked from the shaft by a horse and whip. This mode of working is found to be tedious. It is contemplated opening the mine at a lower level by putting in a tunnel at a level with the battery. The tunnel, which will be over 1,000ft. long, will be a costly undertaking; but, as compensation for this the heavy cost of winding, and the frequent handling of quartz in delivering it at the battery, which runs away with so much money, will be avoided. The tunnel will also be of service to other companies in the vicinity in opening their mines at a greater depth.

*Keep It Dark.*—This company has kept up crushing operations throughout the year, the amount of stone put through the battery being 10,075 tons, yielding 6,158oz. of gold, valued at £23,856 2s. 4d., out of which a sum of £14,500 has been disbursed in dividends. In order to prove the mine as far as possible a winze was sunk on the reef to a depth of about 100ft. below the present level. A good width of stone was carried down and left at the foot of the winze. It was then decided to take steps for the opening of a new level, and for that purpose the sinking of the main shaft was continued, and was, at the end of March, carried down 70ft. It is expected that the new level will be in good working order before the present level is exhausted.

*Wealth of Nations.*—The erection of winding-gear is nearing completion. When this work is finished the sinking of the main shaft will be continued. A level will then be opened to work the stone discovered in driving the main tunnel, and which was prospected to some extent. As the company have a splendid battery close at hand, and driven by water-power, the cost of raising and crushing stone should be small. It is therefore quite likely that the mine will during the next twelve months be again made a payable one.

*Nil Desperandum.*—This mine is in close proximity to the Keep It Dark. During the year the company have erected a winding-wheel. This will enable them to raise the stone more expeditiously and cheaply than before. The mine is now being baled out preparatory to working the reef, which has already been proved to be of a payable character. A tramway will be laid from this mine to the Wealth of Nations battery shortly, when crushing operations will be commenced.

*No. 2 South Keep It Dark.*—The line of reef was driven on from the outcrop a distance of 450ft. Stone was cut in 400ft., and the reef was followed some 50ft. or 60ft. An uprise of 30ft. was put in to the surface. A shaft was then sunk for 50ft. The stone, however, being broken, it was decided to sink a winze on the stone where it was struck in the tunnel. This winze has been sunk some 13ft., and good stone is being obtained.

In the Rainy Creek and Devil's Creek Districts the operations for the year have not been attended with the success that such enterprise deserved. The Inkerman Company crushed 11,100 tons of stone during the year, obtaining therefrom 2,775oz. of gold, which, had the company started free of liability, would have enabled them to declare regular dividends. The block of stone from which the crushings have been taken has been worked 360ft. from the surface, and has now run out. Prospecting is now being carried on in the hope of again picking up the stone.

*Globe.*—This company has been very unfortunate. After sinking winzes on stone that was thought at the time to be payable, expensive winding-machinery was erected. A crushing was taken out, and it proved a failure. Prospecting is now being carried on with a hope of picking up better stone.

In the Big River District the Big River Company have opened their mine sufficient, in the opinion of the directors, to warrant the erection of a battery. The company purchased at a low figure the Golden Point battery, which has been taken down and is now being conveyed to the Big River. The company hold a special claim of a large area. The mine is about twenty miles from Reefton, and the workings are the furthest south of Reefton and in a hitherto untried district. Should this company be successful it will open up a large extent of new ground.

The past year, it must be conceded, is one of the worst the district has ever seen. On the other hand, it is the general impression that the prospects of the current year are brighter than they have been for many years. Indeed, it is anticipated that the quantity of stone crushed, the yield, and the dividends, will equal, if not exceed, any previous year in the history of the field.

A number of leases have been cancelled during the year for non-payment of rent, &c., only those being left that are likely to carry on operations. The letting of the old workings of some of the mines to parties of tributers has found much favour. This has been done in the Hopeful, Just in Time, and Fiery Cross claims, and the result has been that the tributers have made good wages, and fair returns have been received by the companies. It is found that small bodies of men can obtain remunerative employment in this manner, and pay a fair percentage of the gold obtained to the company from stone which it would not pay the company to raise.