

*Wealth of Nations.*—The workings have been carried on in this mine for many years, it may be said, in the “hand-to-mouth” style. The gold until recently would not pay for the expense of carrying on operations; and had it not been for the large quantity of tailings which was stacked and operated on by a plant of berdans, which yielded a considerable quantity of gold, the company would, in all probability, have abandoned the mine long ago. It is astonishing the amount of prospecting that has been done in this mine, and so little return been got from it. The main shaft is at the end of the main adit-level, which is 800ft. in length from the face of the range. This shaft is 200ft. in depth. A level is constructed in a northerly direction from the bottom of this shaft for 700ft., where a monkey- or auxiliary-shaft is sunk to a depth of 300ft. A level was constructed from this shaft at 150ft., and this cut a block of stone containing a little gold. A winze was sunk down on this block to a depth of 115ft., and on crushing the stone from the first 30ft. it only yielded 5dwt. of gold per ton. From the next 30ft. the stone yielded 6dwt. of gold per ton, and what has been taken from the bottom of the winze has averaged over half an ounce of gold per ton, where the lode is about 7ft. in thickness.

Mr. Watson, the manager, states that on the upper workings the strike of the lode was northerly, and the stone here averaged about 10dwt. per ton; but on following the lode down in recent years the strike has been in a southerly direction. On the present block of stone that he has found, the strike is again northerly, and the stone is of much better quality than he has got for many years. A new level from the bottom of the monkey-shaft was in course of construction at the time of my visit, and was in some 30ft. During the year ending 31st March last the annual returns show that 3,379 tons of quartz has been crushed, which yielded 954oz. gold, representing a value of £3,816.

*Keep It Dark.*—Prospecting operations have been energetically carried on in this mine during last year. The subsidiary- or monkey-shaft in No. 3 level has been sunk to a depth of 375ft., which makes it about 850ft. below the top of the main shaft, or about 1,100ft. below the surface of the ground at that place. After prospecting for some time on No. 5 level no payable stone was found, but on following down a small leader from No. 5 level, a new make of stone was discovered. The leader that was followed down cut out, and in putting in a cross-cut for a short distance northwards the new lode was found. A winze was then sunk on the new lode, and it was found to contain payable ore all the way down. At the same time this winze was being put down, the No. 6 level from near the bottom of the monkey-shaft was being constructed, and recently it has cut the new lode, which is about 12ft. in thickness, and said to yield from 12dwt. to 15dwt. per ton. The new level will give about 100ft. of backs up to the place where the new lode was cut; but it is not known what height of stone there is above this point, neither is there any idea as to what the length of the new block will be.

This is now the deepest mine in relation to sea-level there is in the Reefton district, or, it may be said, in the Middle Island, it being about 200ft. below high-water mark on the ocean-beach. It is highly gratifying to find that, although the lodes occurring near the surface cut out and get broken up, there are other lodes found again at a greater depth. It points to the same circumstances noted in connection with auriferous quartz-lodes in the Australian Colonies. The gold in the reefs or lodes is found everywhere in shoots or ledges—that is, at certain levels the ore will prove far richer than at others, and there are certain blanks to go through, in which there is no payable ore. The discovery of a new payable lode at the deep levels, after the surface lodes had cut out, has given great hopes to the people in the Reefton district that they may again see as prosperous times as when the place was first opened. This has been the means at least of putting a new life into the place, and, instead of the gloomy aspect which prevailed in the district on my former visits, the people appear to be more contented, and look forward to brighter days in store for the place.

According to the last balance of the Keep It Dark Company for the year ending December last, it shows that 114,847 tons of quartz has been crushed from this mine since operations commenced, which yielded 60,801oz. 17dwt. 6gr., representing a value of £235,882 17s. 9d., and that the amount received for public crushings was £9,218 6s. 3d., making a total of £245,101 4s.; while the expenditure in connection with working the mine and battery amounted to £134,967 3s. 11d., exclusive of the cost of the plant and property at date of registration, which is set down at £21,767 5s. 11d. Taking the battery returns for the year ending the 31st March last, there was 936 tons of quartz crushed, which yielded 334oz. gold, representing a value of £1,336, and for the same period calls to the amount of £1,083 6s. 8d. have been made.

*Keep It Dark (No. 2).*—The operations carried on in this mine during the last year have been principally of a prospecting character. The level which was being driven from the end of the cross-cut leading from the bottom of the shaft is now in a distance of 400ft, but no payable stone was found, although some small blocks of quartz were met with. It is considered by many of the mining men here that the run or lode formerly giving payable returns in this mine is the same as that now being worked in the Hercules, and, judging from the character of the stone and apparent displacement that has taken place, there is good reasons to suppose this to be the case. The work in the mine has been suspended for a time, but it is intended to continue prospecting operations as soon as the finances of the company will admit. During the year 50 tons of quartz were crushed, which yielded 12oz. gold, having a value of £47.

*Hercules.*—This mine adjoins the Keep It Dark. It was formerly known as the Nil Desperandum, and for many years the workings were carried on at a loss. Recently, however, they have found a new make of stone that promises to give good returns. The main shaft has been sunk to a depth of 560ft. below the winding or No. 3 level. From the bottom of the shaft a cross-cut has been driven for about 50ft., and the course of the lode followed for 600ft. In this distance two blocks or shoots of gold-bearing stone was found, one about 70ft. in length and another 120ft. in length. This is now stoped up for about 70ft. in height, leaving about 68ft. still to stope to the next level. A winze was at the time of my visit being put down from the lower level, and the lode