

Hercules.—The operations during the year have consisted of prospecting. Attention was chiefly confined to No. 7 level, south end. A crosscut was driven to the east on this level near the southern boundary, to prove if the rich block formerly worked near this part by the No. 2 Dark Company could be located, but no success was met with. Work was then suspended for a short time, but has again been resumed in the north end of this level. It is now proposed to carry out some crosscutting, with the view of cutting the reef originally worked above in No. 6 level.

Wealth of Nations Group.—This comprises the Wealth of Nations, Energetic, and portions of the Gladstone, Beaconsfield, and Undaunted. During the year 811 ft. of driving and crosscutting has been completed, and was undertaken with a view of opening up new ore-bodies and endeavouring to locate what is known as the "Energetic" body of stone at the 350 ft. and 500 ft. levels. The new shaft has recently been baled out, and the excavating for the chamber for No. 6 level is now proceeding. In addition to sinking the incline-shaft a little deeper, so as to give sump room, the bottom of the new shaft has been connected with an old winze, which will help the ventilation. Chambers have been formed at both the 200 ft. and 300 ft. levels for the incline-shaft. Winding is at present done by the old water-wheel, but new gear has been ordered, which will be operated by water under great pressure. Seventeen men were employed on the 31st ultimo.

MURRAY CREEK.

Golden Fleece Group.—This is one of the properties of the Consolidated Goldfields of New Zealand. It comprises the Golden Fleece, Low-level Tunnel, and adjoining claims. During the early part of the year operations were confined to the No. 6 level in the Golden Fleece, driving along north and south and following a good track until they holed through the old workings of the old Ajax : 623 ft. of driving was done on this level, and a crosscut west 62 ft. In the Low-level Tunnel a considerable amount of driving and crosscutting has been done with rock-borers, viz., 557 ft. of driving and 226 ft. of crosscutting. Thirty-five men are employed.

BOATMAN'S.

Welcome Company.—The principal work done here has been on the Welcome No. 5 tunnel, where they have driven 253 ft. on the line of reef, crosscut 246 ft., raised 149 ft., and sunk a winze 100 ft. Nos. 2 and 4 levels have been retimbered 173 ft. At the present time they are opening out No. 6 level and catching up the water to prevent it getting back through the Fiery Cross Mine into the Just-in-Time, the shaft in which is shortly to be overhauled and reworked. The Specimen Hill low-level tunnel has been repaired and retimbered for 1,600 ft., and after putting in new air-boxes the driving of this tunnel south will be started again. The number of men employed is fifteen.

LARRY'S.

Caledonian Group (Consolidated Goldfields of New Zealand).—The Argyle tunnel was worked until the air became too poor. During the summer months a fair amount of surface-prospecting was done.

VICTORIA RANGE.

Kirwan's Reward.—Work on the several properties known by this name has been carried on by the Anglo-Continental Syndicate. During the year a considerable amount of prospecting has been done without finding any payable lode. On the Lord Brassey the total feet of short adits driven is about 2,500 ft. In the No. 4 level, now being driven under the line of surface stone, two small reefs, running north and south, and about 6 in. and 9 in. respectively, were cut through, but did not carry gold; the structure and general appearance is very similar, but totally different to the stone found on the surface. Much surface prospecting has lately been done on the Lord Brassey, and some patches of very good stone have been found on the eastern side of the eastern ridge near the mouth of No. 4 level. This work is still being prosecuted along an east and west line about 18 chains in length, on which good stone in quantity is to be seen on the surface, with a view of tracing it to the lodes, and, if possible, to estimate approximately the quantity of stone that could be collected by skimming the surface and mining it out where it has been discovered at a considerable depth. Up to the present nothing has been found on the surface to indicate where the solid lode is likely to be found. It is understood No. 4 level will be continued straight ahead to No. 3 shaft, in the vicinity of which there is a considerable body of fairly good stone that could conveniently be passed through No. 4 level, and from thence to the most convenient site in the locality for a small battery. The cleavage of the country-rock is generally very good for shooting, and the adit-works are therefore done at less cost per foot than in any other place in the district. It is quite dry overhead, and generally underfoot also. Notwithstanding the safe nature of the rocks, the level is being timbered as the work proceeds. The lode in the Earl Brassey is being bared on the north side of the ridge, and the stone tested for gold, but so far nothing payable has been found. A short tunnel was driven on the lode on the same side of the ridge some time ago, without, however, finding anything payable, but as the outcrop was promising this tunnel will be extended a few feet further.

Boatman's Exploration Company.—This company's property, consisting of four licensed holdings of 30 acres each, is east of and adjoining the Lord Brassey. During the past summer six men were employed. A lot of trenching was done, and boulders of quartz containing gold were frequently found. The surface of the country is very much broken. Five shafts of an average depth of 40 ft. were sunk, but failed to reach solid country. The total expenditure in prospecting is over £700. Work for the present is suspended, but next summer probably a low-level tunnel will be driven, which should thoroughly prospect the ground.