

the river, it is clear that unless a comprehensive scheme of protection-works is undertaken, there is a great probability of the whole of the low-lying land in the valley—a considerable area of which is improved and cultivated—being destroyed and replaced by a great river-bed waste; but it is questionable whether the cost of such protection-works would not exceed the value of the land.

Mining is the paramount industry in this district, and the agricultural settlers are to a degree dependent upon the mining community for the disposal of their produce, so that a discontinuance of mining operations would result in a very material depreciation in the value of agricultural properties. The settlers in their evidence admit this, and are naturally not averse to the proclamation of the river, as it would afford them the opportunity of obtaining compensation for land that will, unless protected against river-encroachment, inevitably be rendered useless, whether such proclamation be issued or not. Some of the land is too low-lying for cultivation in cereals or root-crops, as it is liable to be covered with water at every flood, and it is therefore only suitable for grazing purposes.

In regard to the auriferous value of the washdrift in the river-bed, the evidence tendered to your Commissioners goes to show that with modern appliances the ground could be worked remuneratively; indeed, it was stated by several of the settlers that men can make small wages by washing the drift in a small sluice or cradle, and some of the former have taken up dredging claims in the river-bed opposite their holdings, with the view of disposing of them to companies with the necessary capital to work them.

Apart from the auriferous character of the washdrift in the river-bed, it is necessary, in the interests of existing mining industries, that the river should be proclaimed. Evidence was given that at the present time 10,000 tons of quartz-tailings are being discharged into the river above Reefton every month, and that another large crushing-battery is about to be erected higher up the river-side by the Inkerman Company, which will send down an additional 4,000 tons of tailings monthly.

Claims for compensation have been made by a number of people who have sections and buildings in the township of Reefton. To prevent encroachment and the flooding of the portion of the township contiguous to the river, the Inangahua County Council, aided by Government grant, has carried out protective works for some distance along the river where it passes through the town, and these works have proved effective so far as they have gone. The necessity for extension of these works so as to render the whole of the town properties immune from river encroachment and flood is unquestionable. Indeed, the works may be said to be of so pressing a nature as to make it imperative that they be entered upon without delay. Should no action be taken in the direction indicated it will be necessary, if the river be proclaimed, to pay a fairly large amount of compensation on account of these town properties in cases where the owners have preferred claims, and your Commissioners are of opinion that instead of making individual payments it would be preferable to insure the safety of the properties, by carrying out further protective works towards which a Government subsidy might be granted.

Seeing that this river has been used for the last thirty years as an outlet for waste products from quartz-batteries, and that it is required to admit of large mining operations being carried out in the future, your Commissioners recommend that the Inangahua River, with its branches and tributaries, be proclaimed watercourses into which tailings and waste water produced by or resulting from mining operations may be discharged, with the exception of Pattinson's Creek opposite Reefton, and Phillip's Creek near Inangahua Junction, and those tributaries which have already been proclaimed.

Your Commissioners have to state that no claimant has riparian rights.

Your Commissioners have carefully examined the whole of the properties on account of which claims have been made—with the exception of an outlying one of small extent up the Inangahua River in the interior, but regarding which reliable information was obtained by them—and submit awards of compensation for prospective damages, representing a total amount of £5,196.

Should protective works on the river-side in the Town of Reefton be carried out in the manner suggested, then certain of the claimants would not, in the opinion of your Commissioners, be entitled to any compensation whatever, as the properties in such case would be liable to no injury as a result of the proclamation of the river.

Some of the claimants have taken up dredging or mining claims on the river, and, in the opinion of your Commissioners, it appears questionable whether they are entitled to compensation, as they would be contributing to any damage the properties may sustain.

PATTINSON'S CREEK.

This creek, a tributary of the Inangahua River, may be described as a gut on the face of an almost perpendicular hill. It carries very little water, and at the bottom of the hill discharges into a race constructed by the Reefton Electric Lighting Company, which objects to the proclamation of the creek, on the ground that its land, acquired for water-race purposes, as well as the water-race itself, would be damaged by the operation of the proclamation.

At the foot of the hill lies a farm which is dependent on the water from the creek for domestic purposes. There is no doubt that, were mining carried on along the creek, the property would be considerably damaged.

It is said that auriferous gravel-drift exists on the table-land at the head of the creek, and that it could be made payable for working by hydraulic sluicing, but there is very little water available unless it be brought from a considerable distance.

Seeing that the outlet of this creek is nearly opposite the Township of Reefton, your Commissioners are of opinion that if water were brought on to the table-land, and Pattinson's Creek used as a tail-race from hydraulic-sluicing claims, the tailings would be liable to raise the bed of the river to such an extent as to endanger a large portion of the properties in the township.