

have the authority or the protection of the law for this operation and rights over all Crown lands within the Colony, and not merely within portions proclaimed and set apart as gold fields."

With regard to those other Acts now in force which deal with what may be designated specialities of mining interests, I have a few remarks to make.

"The Gold Mining Claims Drainage Act, 1868," which is in force only I believe in the Ross District, Westland, is, I am informed, capable of considerable amendment; and it has been intimated to me that the present Board, through their Chairman, intend to address the Government upon the question. It would be advisable, I think to incorporate this Act, with such alteration as may upon consideration be deemed advisable, with the Mining Statute, should such a measure be introduced; and the same course should be taken with "The Gold Mines Drainage Act, 1871," which has special reference to quartz workings. The constitution and management of Mining Companies upon the principle of limited liability, is now provided for under the Act of 1865, and Amendments Acts, 1868, 1869, 1870, and 1871. As the present law is universally acknowledged to be in a very unsatisfactory condition, it being found almost next to impossible to wind up companies or bring shareholders to account, I would very strongly recommend that advantage be taken of recent legislation in Victoria. "The Act for the Incorporation and Winding-up of Mining Companies," passed by the Victorian Assembly, 23rd November, 1871, practically repeals all those former Statutes upon which our existing law is based; and I believe nothing could be done better in the matter than to adopt this Act, with such alterations as the condition of our Statute Book renders necessary.

In concluding this portion of my Report, I would desire to observe that, in the suggestions I have ventured to offer upon the amendments desirable in the laws affecting the gold fields, I have kept steadfastly in view the principles upon which I consider that all mining legislation should be based. First, that the unalienated lands of the Crown, and the precious metals within alienated lands, are the property of the entire community, and should be dealt with in furtherance of the general prosperity, and by no means for the exclusive or special benefit of any particular class. And secondly, that the laws relating to auriferous deposits should be so framed as to attract population to our gold fields, where the miners should find inducements for permanent settlement.

PROSPECTS OF THE GOLD FIELDS.

The Resolution of the House of Representatives requires that I should say a few words as to the future prospects of the gold fields. I believe that in every mining district, without exception, these are of the brightest character. The returns from the alluvial workings in Otago and Westland have been steadily on the increase for the last three years; new ground is being constantly opened, and the mining population are, as a community, prosperous, and fast becoming settled upon the soil. Large areas of ground known to be auriferous, only require water for successful working; and agricultural settlement is limited solely by the land disposable for the purpose. The West Coast, from Bruce Bay to far above the Buller, is one gigantic gold field, payable everywhere with water; and in Otago, I believe, the mines have yet to be developed, and that the millions of gold extracted up to this time have been chiefly from mere surface deposits.

In quartz mining, the marvellous yields upon the Thames gold field are now matters of history. From the character of the gold bearing strata, their infinite variety lay in formation and depth from the surface, form an epoch in the history of gold mining. The richest crushing, I believe, recorded, is that of ninety-seven ounces to the ton, from eighty tons of stone in the Caledonian mine, in the second quarter of 1871; but there are, unfortunately, no means of arriving at a general average of the yield from the quartz raised since the opening of the field; it may, however, be approximately estimated at from two to three ounces to the ton. The latest accounts are most encouraging; new mines are constantly being developed, auriferous veins struck at great depths, and, what is the most tangible argument of success, there is a considerable increase in the number of dividend paying companies. From the Coromandel sub-district the returns of gold have increased nearly threefold. In the June quarter of 1871, the total yield was only 2,754 ounces, but in the quarter ending 31st March, 1872, it was 6,825 ounces. Several successful crushings have lately taken place, and seem thoroughly to justify Mr. Warden Keddell's remarks that "the prospects of Coromandel at the present justify sanguine hopes of the future." Upon the general subject of the Thames Gold Fields I would refer to the very exhaustive and valuable Reports by the Mining Inspectors appointed under "The Gold Mining Districts Act, 1871," forwarded by His Honor the Superintendent of Auckland to the Government, which are in the Printer's hands, and will be presented as a Further Return to the Resolution of 1869.

In the Inangahua, Province of Nelson, the reefs may now be considered as proved. The two crushings from the Prospectors claim and the Westland Company having resulted in nearly two ounces to the ton upon over 1000 tons of stone. The gold is of a very fine quality, being worth £3 15s. an ounce, whilst at the Thames £2 15s. is about the average value. The Report of Mr. Warden Charles Broad, appended hereto, affords all the information possible at present with regard to this newly opened district, which presents without doubt, a field for mining enterprise, unequalled probably in the history of the world. The reefs extend and have been traced for miles, and it may fairly be assumed that they are auriferous throughout; whilst coal is ready to hand, and water (for the tables) in most localities easily obtainable. The difficulties of communication with the ports of Greymouth and Westport have, up to this time, rendered the necessities of life exceptionally high, but roads at present in a fair way of completion will afford easy access to Reefton, both by the Buller and the Grey, within a few weeks at the latest, should the weather prove at all favourable.

In Otago auriferous reefs have been developed in several parts of the Province within the last few years, and have been worked with varying success. The difficulty and expense of bringing machinery upon the ground and the broken character of the lodes necessitating large outlays of capital, have swamped many promising enterprises, and caused the abandonment from time to time of mines notably auriferous, and yielding quartz containing a very high per centage of gold to the ton. This has been the case at