

There is little change to note in this portion of the district since my report in May last. The dryness of the season has retarded mining operations; but I think, on the whole, the workers have done as well as in the preceding year. There is a disposition to go in for agricultural pursuits; and as the Provincial Government have arranged to throw open 2,000 acres for agricultural leases on the Waikaia River near a large bush, and the land being very suitable for agricultural purposes, I expect it will be taken up quickly.

Since my last report, the district has been added to on the west side of the Mataura River from its sources to the Eyre Creek, being the watershed of the Eyre Mountains; but it will not give much facility to mining, as it is situate in the late Province of Southland, and the mouths of the gullies have been purchased under free selection, provided for in the Southland Land Act, and the proprietors naturally object to miners running tailings on their land.

I have, &c.,

JOHN NUGENT WOOD, Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

No. 22.

Mr. Warden Wood to the UNDER SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Switzers, 21st April, 1873.

I have the honor to enclose herewith statistical returns for the mining² district placed under my charge in December last, and situate in the late Province of Southland.

Ripuka, situate on "Tai Wea Wea" Bay and east of the mouth of the Waiau River, was opened in 1865 or 1866 as beach workings, which have now extended back into the bush, and are worked by ground sluicing. The place has proved a good field for miners' enterprise, though the miners have had great difficulties to contend against for want of fall for the tailings, and the difficulty of bringing in water for sluicing purposes through a dense bush. During the last two months three water races have been completed, representing about ten heads of water; and a sludge channel to carry off the tailings being nearly finished, I expect that next spring will make a marked difference in the quantity of gold obtained. The population is a settled one, there being over 50 women and 90 children, which is a large proportion to the male population. The land is fertile, and crops of all descriptions do well. The great drawback of the place is the difficulty of getting goods to it, there being no available road even for pack-horses, all goods having to be conveyed in open or half-decked boats from Riverton, when an easterly wind and smooth water admit of the passage being made. I believe that the miners as a body are doing well; but all the available water is taken up, and therefore no great increase can be expected to the population, unless capital is brought into the field for the purpose of bringing water from the other side of the ranges. I expect, however, that the east side of the Longwood Ranges will prove remunerative next season, as a few parties are prospecting there, and the bush is being opened up by applicants for sites for saw-mills. A few years ago some very heavy gold was obtained—indeed, the largest nugget I have seen in New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

JOHN NUGENT WOOD, Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.