

Mr. Warden FitzGerald, writing from Westland on the same subject, remarks: "The construction of the Waimea Water Race is anxiously looked forward to, and would doubtless draw a much larger population to the district, which it would be well able to maintain." And again: "With regard to water supply, my opinion, and indeed the opinion of every one at all acquainted with the subject, is, that were a race constructed (to carry say from sixty to eighty sluice heads) from the Kanieri Lake to Blue Spur, Big Paddock, and the various terraces such a race would command, the yield of gold in the district would be enormously increased."

The same want of a good water supply seems to be felt in Otago, judging from the following extracts taken from the Warden's reports:—

Mr. Warden Simpson, Dunstan, Otago, in his report, remarks on certain races which are in course of construction in his district as follows:—"All these races will open up new ground of proved auriferous character to the extent of some hundreds of acres."

It will be seen from these extracts the absolute necessity which is felt by the officers in charge of mining districts for a large extension of the present system of water supply.

MACHINERY.

The number of engines employed upon 31st March, 1873, in quartz mining was as follows:—83 steam engines of 1,816 horse-power. In alluvial mining, the number of steam engines employed was eleven, and the aggregate horse-power 259. Nine dredging machines were employed during the year in working the beds of the Shotover and Molyneux Rivers. For the fullest obtainable information respecting the number and description of machinery, see Tables Nos. 14 and 15.

MINING LEASES AND HOLDINGS.

There were in occupation upon the 31st March, 1873, 495 mining leases, covering a total area of 3,255 acres 1 rood 23 perches. In the number are included 75 licensed holdings, covering an area of 499 acres 39 perches. These are all upon the Thames Gold Field, being taken up under "The Gold Mining Districts Act, 1871." Tables Nos. 17 and 21 give in detail the number and extent of mining leases and holdings in the several districts.

AGRICULTURAL LEASES.

Twelve hundred and forty-nine leases, comprising an area of 47,395 acres 9 roods 20 perches, were in occupation on the 31st March, 1873. These leases are almost entirely within the Province of Otago, and the falling off in numbers is accounted for by many of the lessees during the last year having taken advantage of the purchasing clause, and made their leases freehold. Table No. 18 gives the number and extent of agricultural leases within the several mining districts.

MINING COMPANIES.

From the official returns it appears there are 342 companies registered under "The Mining Companies Limited Liability Act, 1865," and amended Acts, having a nominal capital of £4,510,026, and thirty-two under the Joint Stock Act, with a nominal capital of £557,625; three under "The Mining Companies Act, 1872," having a nominal capital of £15,160. (See Table No. 19.)

RATE OF WAGES AND PRICES OF PROVISIONS.

The current rate of wages and average prices of provisions in the several mining districts will be found in Tables 9 and 11. Wages were exceedingly high in Otago and on the West Coast. In many places, although the means of communication with the ports is greatly improved, yet the price of provisions remains about the same as in my last year's report. The high price of wages in Westland has gone a long way to check mining enterprise, and in some cases to put a stop to the enterprise of companies who were engaged in deep sinking, and who were large employers of labour. Any attempt made to reduce the wages led to a strike on the part of the miners, so that in the end the companies had to cease working, as the miners would hear of no reduction, and the ground was not sufficiently rich to justify the necessary expenditure.

WATER SUPPLY ON THE GOLD FIELDS.

During the last year the construction of two large water races undertaken by the Government under the terms of "The Public Works and Immigration Act, 1871," has been commenced, and two are in course of survey. The following return shows the amount of liability and expenditure up to 30th June, 1873, upon these works, and also the advances to water race companies by way of subsidy under the Acts of 1871 and 1872.

As the construction of the Waimea Race in the County of Westland has been undertaken by the Government since my last report was submitted to Parliament, I may remark that I have every confidence that it will be a work of great public utility. The race will be about sixteen miles long, heading from the Kawhaka Creek, which has a constant supply of water, and it is to be constructed to carry forty sluice heads. The extent of known auriferous country which will be rendered available for mining purposes by this supply will probably not be less than the whole Waimea district, and will give remunerative employment to several hundred men.