

MINING LAWS.

“The Gold Mining Districts Act, 1871,” which has only been put in force in the Province of Auckland, seems after more than a year’s trial to give general satisfaction, to judge from the reports of Wardens Keddell and Fraser.

The following is from the report of Mr. Warden Keddell :—“One decided effect of this Act is to lessen the amount of litigation, the chief incentive to actions for breach of regulations under the Gold Fields Acts being the forfeiture of defendant’s interests in favour of the plaintiff.”

Mr. Warden Fraser writes on the same subject : “In my last report I stated that I hesitated to give a decided opinion, but that I thought it would work satisfactorily. Twelve months’ further experience of the working of the measure enables me to state that it is well adapted for the requirements of this field. Under the Gold Fields Act, every dispute or proceeding could only be dealt with by a suit in the Warden’s Court, causing enormous expense for litigation. Under the Gold Mining Districts Act, it is made the business of the Warden, the Inspector, and the other officials to afford such assistance to all engaged in mining enterprises as shall enable them to avoid litigation.”

Mr. Warden Fraser further expresses his opinion that the Act is eminently suited for such a gold field as the Thames, where the ground is worked almost exclusively by companies, but does not think it would be suitable for alluvial diggings.

PROSPECTS OF THE GOLD FIELDS.

Whilst the results for the year ending 31st March, 1873, have not been so satisfactory as for the previous year, yet in looking through the Warden’s reports good and sound reasons will be found for this depression, and good prospects for the future are held out.

Mr. Warden Keddell (Coromandel) writes as follows on the subject :—“The period of depression has, however, terminated, and for the last two months a decided improvement is noticeable. The yield of gold for the last month was far in excess of any during the past half-year, although the yield for the year is inconsiderably less than that shown in my last report. A great deal of steady work has been done—dead work that will tell in future yields; and several claims are now coming forward with steady returns. The old Kapanga ground, to which I referred in my last report, has within the last few months been occupied by a London Company, called the ‘New Zealand Kapanga Gold Mining Company,’ with a capital of £100,000, with 20,000 shares, all held in England. Machinery and stores of the value of £16,000 have recently arrived from England, and placed on the ground, and work commenced.”

The same Warden attributes the great depression in the year 1872 to over speculation, which was brought on by the reported wealth of the Green Harp Company’s reef—a Company whose proceedings are too well known to require particularizing.

Mr. Warden Fraser reports on the Thames Gold Fields as follows :—“There has been a very prevalent depression in mining affairs during the greater portion of the past year, principally caused by the falling off in the extraordinary yields from the Caledonian Mine. The Cure Company in September crushed one small parcel of two tons of stone which produced 966 oz. of gold. In the same month a crushing of 370 tons yielded 600 oz., and the total yield from the mine, from September, 1872, to January, 1873, amounts to 6,415 oz. of gold from 1,522 tons of quartz.” He goes on to state : “Altogether I may say that notwithstanding the temporary depression which at present prevails, the operations progressing, and the enterprising spirit shown by mine owners in the development of their properties, coupled with the rich prospects of the reefs, convince me that the future of the field will be as prosperous as the past.”

The Pumping Association at the Thames have lately got to work, and the result has been the means of draining a number of quartz claims in the neighbourhood, amongst which are comprised the most celebrated upon the field. The following is from the report of the Warden on this Company’s plant :—“The engine, which has been erected on a massive stone foundation, works directly over the shaft. The nominal power of the engine is 350 horsepower. The cylinder of this massive machinery is 82 inches in diameter, and the whole is capable of raising fully 10 tons of water per minute.” The cost of shaft and machinery has been £40,000 up to the present time.

In the Inangahua, Province of Nelson, the reefs have not turned out as well as was expected when I furnished my last report. At the same time I see no reason to doubt that, in the course of time, when these reefs are thoroughly opened up and proved, they will be found very remunerative; and in this I am borne out by the expression of opinion by the Warden in his report.

In the alluvial mines of the Middle Island there seems to have been a falling off for the last year, but with a very decided improvement in the returns for the three months ending 31st March, 1873. This falling off, as I gather from the Wardens’ reports, is attributable to the great dryness of the season. Mr. Warden Revell reports that “the remarkable dryness of the weather during the past five months has tended considerably towards this depression.” Mr. Warden Robinson (Mount Ida) reports :—“The year has on the whole not been a favourable one for mining. It has been unusually dry in all seasons, and the consequence has been a remarkable scarcity of water for sluicing purposes. This has seriously cramped the energies of the miners.” Mr. Warden Carew (Black’s) reports : “A scarcity of water has prevailed to an unprecedented extent.”