

*Resident Magistrate's and Warden's Courts.*—There has been a falling off in the business of the Resident Magistrate's and Warden's Courts, most noticeable in the latter; but in a straggling district a diminution of ordinary business does not imply a corresponding diminution of work, or of machinery for doing it. When a Court has to be held at a distant place, it matters little whether the actual sitting occupies an hour less or more. The only difference I have found is, that I am able occasionally to intermit one of my weekly visits to Charleston, if any reason exists for so doing.

*Old Digging Localities.*—These comprise the terraces north of the Buller, Addison's Flat, and the Shamrock Lead, besides the diggings at Charleston, Brighton, and their neighbourhood. These are, upon the whole, very much in the same state as they were this time last year, and might be described in almost the same words as I used in my last report. It will be seen by a reference to the appended tables that the amount of gold obtained in the district, which we can only estimate by the quantity exported from Westport, shows no very large diminution when compared with the return of last year. This fact, combined with the absence of any striking reduction of population (even allowing for some error in my last year's estimate), shows that the substantial prosperity of the district has been pretty stable, the principal declension being neither in the yield of gold nor in the number of the population.

*Water.*—There can be little doubt but that the yield of gold would have been larger, both for the past and the preceding year, had it not been for the unusual dryness of the last two summers, which have presented a striking contrast in this respect to the four preceding ones, and have caused much payable ground to remain totally unworked for long periods. This state of things has been more felt in the Charleston district than elsewhere, and public attention has been strongly drawn to a scheme for bringing in water from the Four-mile River, so as to insure a permanent supply to ground which is now entirely dependent on the frequency of rain. There is no doubt but that the execution of this scheme would do much to retain a steady and permanent population at Charleston. A Company has already been formed to carry out the undertaking. Mr. Greenwood has made a careful survey of the line, and reports upon it favourably; application has been made to the Public Works Department for a loan in aid, and great hopes are entertained of a successful result.

*To Addison's Flat.*—Another scheme has been set on foot for bringing a supply of water to Addison's and the adjacent Pakihis from the Totara River. I think it almost certain that a great deal of ground in this extensive area which is now of little use, would be steadily worked if water were supplied. Some preliminary steps have already been taken towards the formation of a company for this purpose, but I cannot yet say with what prospects of success.

*Beach Claims.*—A large number of beach claims are held near Charleston, but the working of them is uncertain and intermittent. They sometimes become covered up with grey sand, and then will not pay to work. These claims are very well adapted to men who have something else to employ themselves with in the intervals thus caused. They are sure after a time to become again payable, and then they give very fair wages. They are very useful to the holders of residence areas in their vicinity, who are thus able to cultivate a little ground when they cannot work their claims.

*Quartz.*—I can only speak of quartz workings in this district by way of anticipation. In my last report I mentioned the Mokihinui reefs as affording good promise for the future. I can say little more on the subject now than I said then, but I see no reason for diminished confidence in the value of the reefs. A Company, "The Halcyon," has now been formed to work the prospecting claim, and the other claims will doubtless wait the result of their operations. The directors are sanguine as to the value of their property. I believe about 150 tons of stone have been taken out, and that the quality of this is such as to promise good results on crushing. Steps are also being taken to get machinery to the ground, but this is no easy undertaking. Between the river and land transit is merely a choice of difficulties. Of the two I believe the river is the worst, and a little expenditure upon the land track would be of great assistance in opening up what will probably become an important quartz-reefing district. The quartz reef mentioned in my last report as having been found a few miles up the Buller (Cascade Creek), is still considered by its prospectors to justify good hopes for the future, but beyond reporting that it is not abandoned, I have nothing special to say about it.

*Town of Westport.*—The Town of Westport is now becoming pretty well established in the new site to which the river and sea encroachments have driven it. There can, however, be no sense of security until the protective works are carried out. There seems every reason to believe that these will shortly be in active progress, and it is to be trusted that the inhabitants of this town will be at length relieved from the harassing fear of ruinous loss to which they have so long been subjected. The allotment of sections in lieu of those destroyed by the floods has been very beneficial, but the present somewhat unintelligible condition of the colliery reserve, upon which almost all the town residences and business sites are placed, is not quite satisfactory, and I think there would be a greater sense of stability, and a consequent improvement in the value of property, if the tenure were better understood.

*General Condition of District.*—If the prosperity of the district be judged from the amount of revenue derived from the ordinary official sources, it must be pronounced to have undergone a decline. But this is not always a safe guide. No doubt a great deal of litigation in the Warden's Court shows that there is, or is believed to be, property worth contending for; but when the diggings have been long established, the value of the ground pretty well known, and the mining rules and their interpretation in relation to the most ordinary rights generally understood, litigation may be expected to diminish.

A considerable reduction in the revenue is also due to the cessation of business licenses in the town of Westport, owing to the alteration of the tenure, and this certainly can be no evidence of declining prosperity. Lastly, the falling off in the important item of gold duty is due chiefly to the reduction of the duty itself, since, as we have seen, the diminution in the quantity of gold is less than might have been expected.

But it is scarcely possible to doubt that a very great change for the better is awaiting this part of the coast. The railway is already undertaken, and the coal only waits to be brought into the market. When this is done, the port of Buller will doubtless begin to assume the position of importance for which it is fitted. It is also to be expected that the development of quartz reefs will be