

for farming—that is the swamp land commonly called “pakihi,” which is found on flat terrace land, the soil consisting of a mass of vegetable fibres closely matted together. Such soil, I doubt not, will make excellent “turf,” but to make it grow anything, grass even, it will require many years of sweetening. Now, the pakihi or swamps in the special settlement block are not of that description; the soil, good loam, in some cases eight and ten feet deep, and the question of utilizing these is merely a question of drainage; and considering the number of deep burns or creeks traversing the land between the rivers Waitototo, Okura, and Haast, I have little doubt but the facilities will be found to be great for bringing all these low-lying portions of the block under cultivation. But irrespective of all this, there is a very large extent of superior land which does not depend upon such contingencies at all—land which is ready for the plough as soon as cleared. The work of clearing itself varies very much, according to height of timber, undergrowth, &c.; but, on the whole, what has been said in regard to the land south of the Arawata holds good here. The high timber about the Okura River is of the best I have seen on this coast; belts of it are skirting the river banks, and, as in the case of the land between the Arawata and Waitototo, “streaks” of high timber (principally pine) are running northerly towards the Haast, and southerly towards the Waitototo. In low bush, red birch and pukaka are predominant; the high timber bush consists of the usual pines (black, red, and white), rata, or iron wood; black birch, totara, silver pine, kawhaka, and generally the timbers found in the north part of the province. Extensive totara forests are found near the banks of the Waitototo, and of less extent, I am informed, on the banks of the Arawata, a few miles from the sea coast.

Without making more careful examination of the special settlement block, an estimate of the timber land for saw-mill purposes can only be approximate; however, I think that at least 15,000 acres, or one-fourth part of the total area set apart, will be found to be the proportion.

The four large rivers, the Haast, Okura, Waitototo, and Arawata, as also Jackson's Bay, will, I am given to understand, be more particularly reported upon by the Chief Harbour Master as to suitability for shipping ports, &c., and I shall therefore not touch upon that question here.

In regard to the geological formation of the country between Jackson's Bay and the Haast River, I prefer giving a few short extracts from Dr. James Hector's Geological Survey of New Zealand during 1866 and 1867. They are as follows:—

“From Jackson's Bay to Arnott Point (north of Haast), a distance of thirty miles, there are no secondary ranges of hills, the mountains rising abruptly from a level plain about five miles in width, composed by the alluvial gravels and silts brought down by the Rivers Waita, Haast, Okura, Waitototo, and Arawata. The lower ranges are only represented by several isolated wooded cones, such as the Mosquito Hill north of the Haast, and Mount Rayer (Mount McLean) north of the Arawata.”

“The shingle in all these rivers is almost wholly of clay or mica schist, with quartz derived from the veins which intersect these rocks. The isolated hills are, however, composed of granite, according to Dr. Haast, who explored the district in 1863. . . . It (the flat country) grows excellent timber, such as rimu, yellow pine, white pine, rata, and birch, and the undergrowth is light and very easily cleared. The soil is light loam two to six feet deep, resting on shingle, and is not so ferruginous as the soil further south, nor so tenacious as the subsoil in the neighbourhood of Hokitika. . . . Gold is got along the beach in greater or less quantity right from Jackson's Bay northward to the Waita River to the north of Haast River, being associated with gray quartz sand, but to the south with black iron sand. From the sea the outline of high terraces can be discerned along the spurs of the back ranges, especially at the northern extremity of the flat, where the coast ranges again commence, so that it is possible that heavier gold may yet be found in this district; that which has as yet been obtained being of the finest grain.”

Since the above was written several “rushes” of importance to that part of Westland have taken place, and gold workings of considerable extent were carried on both to the north and south of the Haast River. Two distinct leads of gold have been worked between the Haast and Okura Rivers, and several others on the north side of the Haast, where only lately a party of miners completed a water-race of four miles in length, carrying forty Government heads of water. Judging from the experience at other beaches, where four, five, and more leads have invariably been found and worked, it is but reasonable to expect that a like result will at some future time reward prospecting for other leads between Haast and Jackson's Bay. There is moreover the work of “beach combing,” which has been most successfully carried on (especially between the Okura and Waitototo Rivers) by a number of miners, and which, together with the working of regular leads, forms a matter of the very greatest importance in the settlement of that part of Westland. Whenever black gold-bearing sand is covering the beaches, the settler may leave off cultivating his ground for a few days and take to beach combing—one of the easiest and withal most remunerative descriptions of gold working, and so earn a few pounds in a very short time. Moreover, what Dr. Hector looked upon as possible, viz. “that heavier gold would yet be found in that district,” has become a fact.

Heavy nuggety gold has been found in various parts, most of it impregnated with quartz, which is an almost infallible sign of quartz reefs in the district, most probably up one or more of the rivers. Under any circumstances, whether the settlers will ever engage in mining pursuits themselves, or strictly attend to their farms, they have the prospect of remunerative work, and of a market for their produce at their very doors. As it is absolutely certain that the opening up of quartz reefs or new gold-workings will at once attract a large population to the district to the south of the settlement, as well as to the north of it, gold has been found on every beach and in almost every watercourse, and a number of diggers are at present in full work at Stafford River, about five miles south of Jackson's Bay.

The principal drawback, up to the present, in connection with the opening up of the southern portion of the province, has been the great difficulty of getting supplies of provisions, and many an exploring and prospecting party had to abandon their task on that very account; and, remembering the beautiful samples of coarse gold which from time to time during these last seven years have been brought to Hokitika from the south, the expectation that the special settlement will prove to be the means of hastening the development of our gold fields in the southern district is perfectly legitimate. Besides the presence of gold fields in and near the proposed settlement, there are a number of other