

The gold fields revenue for the year amounted to £3,182—higher than it has been for some years past. This, however, arose from the Kumara rush, as until a separate establishment was formed there, in November, the whole of the revenue was collected at Goldsborough.

The yield of gold, from what I can ascertain, has kept up, and has been about 14,000 oz. Mining business, so far as registrations are concerned, is greater in this district than in any of the others. There have been no less than 1,550 certificates issued during the past year, and although mostly for insignificant works, in the shape of small head-races, dams, &c., yet it shows that mining is energetically carried on.

Of the Waimea District, I may say it contains a population of settled miners, not likely to diminish in numbers, who are making homes for themselves under the provisions of the residence-area regulations, which enable them to take up half-acres of land; and although there are no rich claims, yet I may say all are making good average wages, and relying for their future prospects on the auriferous ground which the Government race now gives an opportunity of opening up.

Kumara District.

Of this gold field—the latest diggings discovered in New Zealand—I may at once say they are not of that rich nature they have been represented to be, but may be termed workings yielding generally average good wages, and possessing a large area of auriferous country.

The prospecting, if I may so term it, began so long ago as 1872 on a practical basis, when a party of three miners obtained from me a grant of an extended head-race for ten sluice-heads of water, and a mining lease of three acres. They continued mining for some years undisturbed, earning during the time no less than £10 each per week. They did not make the matter known till the evidence in a case in the Warden's Court at Goldsborough, tried about June last year, elicited information which caused the locality to be further and more thoroughly prospected; and I may here state that the three miners above alluded to have since sold their entire interest for £2,200.

The first absolute rush to these diggings took place last August, and gradually went on increasing to Christmas, when the population exceeded 6,000; but in consequence of the workings being of a heavy nature, a number of labourers and others, entirely unaccustomed to mining, who came from Canterbury, Otago, and other provinces of New Zealand, left almost immediately after their arrival, as they were afraid to commence working ground which required three or four months' preparation before any returns whatever could be expected. The result was that it gradually decreased, and has been ever since fluctuating between four and five thousand, by arrivals and departures. It now numbers 4,860, of whom 2,800 are actually mining.

The various diggings are as follow:—Commencing on a terrace immediately outside the town of Kumara up to Dillmantown, a distance of more than half a mile, the entire workings are carried on by means of tunnels. Travelling thence on to Larrikins, a distance of three-quarters of a mile, the ground is for the most part worked by shafts and ordinary washing—i.e., boxes and forking. Dunedin Flat comes next in order, the ground being worked by shafts and tunnels, averaging in depth 50 feet. This portion of the diggings merges into what is now known as Shamrock Lead, which extends for a distance of about half a mile towards the Greenstone road. The entire of this portion is worked by sinking; depth about 50 feet.

Shallow Lead commences from the west end of Dunedin Flat up to near Tui Street, Kumara. It is worked by shafts and windlasses, depth 20 feet; wash-dirt, heavy gravel, 4 to 5 feet thick.

A new lead is now being opened up from Dillmantown to Blake's saw-mills, which will be exclusively worked by means of tunnels running in a south-easterly direction. The average depth of sinking is from 50 to 100 feet throughout the field, with wash-dirt varying in thickness from 6 to 8 feet, and in one locality (Dunedin Flat) it has been found as thick as 30 feet. The position of the ground is such that, when sluicing commences on a large scale, great impetus must be given to present mining operations, as the major portion of it is 300 feet above the level of the Teremakau River. The reason this mode has not been hitherto adopted is want of means on the part of the miners, as most of them have been living on credit, and consequently obliged to work in the most economical manner; but when they have recovered from their present difficulties they will be in a position to purchase water largely, and work on a more extensive scale by hydraulic power.

The Government race now in process of construction, and which is already affording a supply of water, has been of great benefit, as this gold field is peculiarly destitute of sources from which small races can be made available. The price charged for water is £1 for eight hours' use.

Another large race is now in course of construction by the Okuku Company, and when finished will afford a good supply of water, but not in excess of what will be readily absorbed by the miners.

As to the system of working carried on throughout the field, I may state that about two-thirds are by means of tunnels and ordinary washing, and the remainder by windlasses and shafts. The wash-dirt consists of heavy gravel; there is no defined bottom, but occasionally river sediment is discovered, as if caused by a deposit from still water.

The approximate yield of gold up to 31st March last is estimated at about 10,000 oz., but I am glad to say it is steadily on the increase.

A small rush lately set in on the north bank of the Teremakau River, which principally consists of tunnel claims. The gold, however, is found to be patchy, and of a different description from that at Kumara, it being of a heavier nature. The locality has, however, not turned out so well as was at first expected. There are about 200 miners working there.

The township of Kumara is of considerable extent, and embraces every branch of business, with five banks. The buildings are of a substantial nature, sections commanding a high price. There is a courthouse, commodious police barracks, and a large building is in course of erection for post and telegraph offices. On the whole the place has made great progress since its first rush.

A diggings township is springing up at Dillman's about a mile from Kumara, which is gradually increasing in size.

There is one peculiar feature connected with this gold field of which I know no other instance—