

Railway.—The line now in course of construction by the General Government to the valuable coal deposits is now rapidly approaching completion. A branch line joining the main line from the Wellington Company's coal lease has been already constructed by that company, which will eventually serve also for the Koranui coal. The Albion Company are also putting themselves in communication with the main line of railway; and in the meantime the protective works in the river are being proceeded with, the wharves are in course of formation, and, before my next annual report, Westport will be known as a large coal-exporting place, for which its excellent harbour and the unusually good quality of the coal render it pre-eminently adapted.

Sea-beach Workings.—I cannot conclude without mentioning the sea-beach claims. Every high tide deposits large quantities of auriferous black sand: these deposits extend for many miles, and for many years have formed a remunerative as well as permanent occupation for several hundred miners. As these claims can only be worked at low water, the miners are enabled to devote their spare time to agriculture, both pursuits thus going hand in hand.

Noticeably I would mention a large party of Shetlanders between Westport and Charleston, which, although some years ago it only numbered six, has now increased to some hundred by the addition their fellow-countrymen, with wives and families, specially sent home for.

In conclusion, I have to express, after over ten years' observation of the district, my perfect confidence in its eventually becoming (and that at no distant period) an important centre of population.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES BROAD,

Warden.

The Under Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

No. 13.

Mr. Warden SHAW to the UNDER SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Reefton, 7th May, 1877.

I have the honor, in transmitting to you the statistical returns for the districts under my charge for the year ending March 31st, 1877, to report as follows:—

Inangahua District.

Resident Magistrate's and Warden's Courts are held for the most part twice in each week at Reefton, and more frequently if occasion requires. There is a very noticeable absence of serious crime. Out of a total of 105 criminal charges entered, 102 were dealt with summarily; and of three persons committed for trial, two were acquitted and one was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. No more peaceable or law-abiding community could be found than in this mining district; and I believe the good example set by the sobriety and thriftiness of the Cornish miners has contributed much to the result. On the civil side 674 cases have been adjudicated upon—more than double the number of last year. The amount sued for was £8,036 8s. 11d., of which £1,805 9s. 1d. have been paid into Court. Fines and fees have amounted to £702. In the Warden's Court, 33 cases and 150 applications, including nine for cancellation of gold mining leases, have been disposed of. It would, in my opinion, be desirable if some fee were charged upon the issue of an application and notice papers, rather than, as at present, upon the subsequent registration. Numberless applications are entered in the books, and notice papers supplied, which are never brought to a hearing, and the time of the Court and its officers is not unfrequently taken up for hours in receiving evidence upon an application for the grant or cancellation of a gold mining lease, upon which no hearing fee is chargeable. The revenue for the year has been £3,427 14s. 5d., exclusive of rent paid upon agricultural leases held under the Nelson Waste Lands Act, which is forwarded through this office to Nelson.

The Reefs.—A review of the operations upon the principal lines of reefs during the past year shows that twenty claims have been more or less actively worked. Of these, those in the Boatman's District have shown by far the most marked advance; where four claims have yielded 9,574 oz. of retorted gold from 4,508 tons of stone crushed, giving an average of 2 oz. 2½ dwts. of gold per ton, represented by dividends of £21,787 10s. From the synopsis of the total yield of gold with amount of stone crushed throughout the Inangahua District for the past year, as appended, it will be observed that 33,969 tons have been crushed, with a yield of 30,628 oz., and dividends of £50,612 10s. have been declared. Last year, from about the same amount of stone, 24,278 oz. of gold were obtained, paying £27,513 in dividends. During the year ending March 31st, 1875, the dividends declared amounted to the sum of £13,000. The rate of increase averages therefore nearly 100 per cent., and, as no surer test of the prosperity of the district could be afforded than by a comparison of the divisible profits of successive years, this fact is one full of encouragement to all interested in the working and development of the Inangahua reefs. From an examination of Victorian statistics, I observe that the average output of gold for each quartz-miner is 43 oz. 2 dwts. per annum. Here, where labour-saving appliances are much more primitive and limited, the average per man is 54 oz. 16 dwts. This difference is no doubt attributable to a great extent to the fact that here only the richer reefs are considered payable—no company having been able to declare a dividend from stone having less than 10 dwts. per ton, whereas in Victoria one-third of that amount is made highly profitable; but this explanation augurs well for the future of this enormous field when worked more extensively and economically. Notwithstanding all that has been said and done, I have still to deplore a want of proper communication with the coast. After a few hours' rain all traffic is suspended, and ruinous rates for carriage are consequently charged. The small population of this town and vicinity, in all some 1,500 souls, is paying a sur-tax of some £20,000 per annum for freight over and above the cost of goods supplied. A 20-head stamper battery with engine boiler, sold in Melbourne for £2,000, would cost erected upon (say) Potter's line of reef £4,000. It is not astonishing therefore to find the development of this district to be but gradual and slow.