

DEPARTMENTAL.

Until the last few months there has been no recognized Gold Fields Department beyond the office of an Under Secretary, which was held (in conjunction with other offices) chiefly for the purpose of preparing and presenting an annual report upon the condition of the gold fields, and ordinary correspondence connected with gold fields matters was conducted at one time from the Public Works Department, and more recently from the Crown Lands Department. The advent of "The Mines Act, 1877," and consequent increased correspondence and business at Wellington, however, rendered necessary the establishment of a separate Chief Office, which has now under its control all the officers upon the gold fields, including Wardens, Receivers of Gold Revenue, Mining Registrars, and others, and the maintenance of constructed Government water-races; and all correspondence affecting the administration of the gold fields is now carried on from this office as a distinct department. The Ministerial head is the Minister of Lands, the Wardens, in their judicial capacity only, corresponding with the Minister of Justice, as before. It is to this Chief Office and the departmental Under Secretary, Mr. Wakefield, that I am indebted for the collection and compilation of the appendix of Wardens' reports and statistical tables accompanying this report; and, at the same time, the readiness with which the Secretary to the Treasury, and the Secretary of Customs, Messrs. Batkin and Seed, supplied their very complete tables, is acknowledged.

JAMES MCKERROW.