

Slatey Creek.—There are about twelve Chinese and the same number of Europeans, the earnings being nearly the same as at Moonlight.

Nelson Creek.—The water-supply has considerably increased during the past twelve months, and consequently ground sluicing is now being carried on to a large extent. The return of gold from this locality is steadily increasing. Several new claims of large area have recently been granted, and I therefore anticipate a larger return of gold during the ensuing year than has hitherto been obtained.

Blackball Creek.—The European population is about twelve, while the Chinese, including those at Ford's Creek, number about thirty. Owing to the great difficulties of carriage, the prices of provisions are much higher than in other parts of the district. The workings are principally in creek-beds, and also on terraces where water is available. The quartz reefs in this locality are being steadily prospected, but the huge seams of coal that meet the eye continually as the track is followed up remain untouched.

Noble's Creek.—The population is thirty, all European. Nearly all the residents have been settled there many years, and have made comfortable homes: most of them appear to be satisfied with the result of their labours.

Granville.—The population is about sixty Europeans. Work is being carried on by sluicing and tunnelling. The average rate of wages is about £3 a week per man.

During the past year there have been 286 civil and 299 criminal cases heard in the Resident Magistrate's Court, and in the Warden's Court 100 cases on complaints, 104 mining disputes on objections, and 882 applications. The total amount of revenue, exclusive of gold duty, has been £3,755 11s. 4d. This does not include revenue paid to borough or county accounts.

I have, &c.,

H. A. STRATFORD,

The Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, Wellington.

Warden.

No. 10.

Mr. Warden GILES to the UNDER-SECRETARY for GOLD FIELDS.

SIR,—

Hokitika, 22nd April, 1884.

I send herewith the usual statistical forms for my district. In addition to the information contained in them, the following general remarks may be offered:—

Kumara.—There is nothing specially requiring notice in the condition of this part of the district during the past year, except the difficulties which have occurred in connection with the main tail-race, commonly but, as I conceive, erroneously called "sludge-channel." These difficulties and their history are so well known to the Government, and have so recently formed the subject of a report by myself in another capacity, that it cannot be necessary to discuss the matter at any length on the present occasion. But, for the purpose of preserving some continuity in the yearly reports on the state of the district, the general state of the question may be briefly sketched. It was very soon found that the sludge-channel was not capable of accommodating the number of claims which had been permitted to open into it. The wooden blocks wore out so rapidly that the work of repairing was almost constant, and the stoppages, owing to this cause as well as to the frequent choking of the channel, caused much hindrance to work and much dissatisfaction amongst the miners. In consequence of the rapid wear of the wooden blocks, stone paving was afterwards tried, and this, whilst it proved more lasting, at the same time was found to cause more friction, and thus to some extent still further to diminish the carrying power of the channel. An inquiry was held with reference to the management and working of the sludge-channel in January last by Mr. Gordon and myself, a report of which was made to the Government in due course. Some time prior to this a new set of conditions for the use of the sludge-channel was put forth by the Government, but its operation was suspended until further inquiries could be made, inasmuch as the miners considered some of the conditions unnecessarily restrictive, and were also rather taken by surprise by the proposed mode of dealing with the question between the earlier and later right-holders. A fresh code of conditions has since been framed, and application has been made by the manager of the channel to myself for approval, in compliance with the mining regulations relating to main tail-races. This matter is not yet dealt with, a certain time having been given for claim-holders connected with the channel to make objections to any clauses which they may think unfair, but it is probable that this part of the business will very shortly be disposed of. It will be seen from the above outline that the state of things connected with the sludge-channel is not so satisfactory as could be wished, and that the difficulties are to a large degree of a physical character, and not likely to be wholly surmounted. Nevertheless the channel is the means of enabling a good deal of work to be done, and it may be hoped that, when once general principles and legal questions have been definitely settled, things will go more smoothly, and difficulties be reduced to the minimum that the nature of the case permits. A good deal of fairly satisfactory work may yet be expected if the discharge of tailings is not hindered by the blocking of the river-bed. Grave fears of this contingency have been felt and expressed, and it seems very desirable that some skilled opinion should be obtained upon this subject, with the view of determining whether any reasonable outlay upon any part of the river bank would have the effect of preserving the tailing site. There are of course many claims on the Kumara diggings not connected with the sludge-channel, but taking water from the Government race, and others are supplied by Mr. Holmes's race. To all those which are supplied with Government water the increase in the supply by the enlargement of the race, and by the formation of a new dam, will prove a valuable acquisition, since it is considered that a month's supply will now be available, and it is not often that rain falls for a longer period than that.