

2. Frederick Covert was killed on the 26th February while excavating rock overhead in a new chamber in the Homeward Bound Quartz-mine, at Boatman's. Covert and another man were making room in the roof of the chamber for the shaft pulley-wheels, and had nearly finished the work when a wedge-shaped piece of rock slipped out of the roof striking Covert, who then fell to the bottom of the chamber. This accident might not have happened had Covert been more careful in sounding the rock with his pick or hammer at short intervals. I may mention that I did not know of the accident in time to be at the inquest.

I have, &c.,
J. Gow,

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

Inspector of Mines.

WESTLAND GOLDFIELDS.

No. 11.

Mr. Warden KEDDELL to the UNDER-SECRETARY of MINES.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Greymouth, 8th May, 1888.

I have the honour to report on the general condition of the mining district under my supervision, and the principal mining events of the past year. During the month of March I assumed charge of the northern portion of the Hokitika Division, relieving Dr. Giles, and at the same time Mr. Warden Bird relieved me of the Ahaura County and sub-district. In the Greymouth portion of the district no discoveries of any note have been reported, and the mining progress in the several localities usually referred to call for very brief remark.

Barrytown and North Beach.—The sluicing-claims are still working, and the number of miners employed has been the same as last year.

Paroa and South Beach.—These localities have received a little notice. During the latter part of the year 1887, the report that Mr. Brooke Smith, and others afterwards, had taken up a large tract of the foreshore south of Okarito, and subsequently all along northward to the Teramakau, induced others residing in this district to mark out the beach in claims of various areas, extending from the Teramakau to Barrytown.

All these claims are to be worked by the ball or the Wellman dredges. Up to the present there is only one of the machines in position and at work, and it is said that the appliance used in connection with it are not of the best. These machines have been ably described in former departmental reports, and so do not require to be more than referred to here. The one at the Arahura cannot be taken to give a satisfactory or conclusive test as to their efficiency. A larger machine is now in course of erection, under the immediate superintendence of Mr. Brooke Smith, at the Five-mile, south of Okarito. This work is attended with great difficulty, as the machine cannot be shipped to the spot, and has to be conveyed along the coast a long distance. The owners of these special claims await with much interest and anxiety the result of the working of this machine. It can hardly be expected that, even if these dredges fulfil all the predictions made by their introducers, all these beach-claims will pay. There are many places where, many years ago, miners found rich leads of gold that they were compelled most reluctantly to abandon on account of the water, which they could not keep down by the ordinary means,—Californian pumps,—even with the assistance of steam-engines. These localities are well known, and I have little doubt that dredges placed there will amply repay their large cost and recoup their owners handsomely. The prices charged for these machines, stated to be about £1,500, seems to be very large; but, as they are both patented, it may be assumed this price will be reduced in time. At Paroa the first special claim of this class met with strong opposition from the miners in the neighbourhood, but the lengthy investigation that took place, I think, convinced the objectors that a long strip of land on the foreshore of a sluicing-district being granted to a party of miners would be no impediment to present and future sluicing, nor cut off the means of disposal of tailings, &c., but that the rights of present holders of that class of claim, and any that might be taken up in the future, were preserved and provided for by the regulations for special claims and the special conditions attached to the grants. After the hearing of this and another special claim in the same neighbourhood no further opposition to these special claims was made. Owing partly to the manufacturing of these machines being in the hands of a few, and partly perhaps to a desire of seeing a fair test of those working that are now in position, I do not expect to see any of these claims at work much within the twelve months of their grant, though, to encourage speedy work, an abatement of the first year's rent is offered. Some of these claims, I make no doubt, are speculative; and, as the outlay is heavy, in no instance will the claims be worked by individual labour and capital. If the machines fulfil their promise I have no doubt that four of the claims taken up on the beach between Teramakau and Barrytown will prove a successful venture. The rest of the beach has all proved auriferous, but I cannot find reliable evidence of the existence of deep-leads of gold, though that desultory kind of mining known as "beach-combing" has been carried on for years on all parts of the shore below high-water mark.

Paroa.—At the investigation of the objections to a large and special claim between Saltwater and the New River, mention was made of an old lead of gold which had been abandoned owing to some difficulty in getting sufficient fall to work it. This lead is supposed to traverse the land between these two streams, parallel to the beach, and a large special claim has been applied for to take it up and work it on a large scale of hydraulic sluicing.

Marsden.—The claims in this neighbourhood have made no advance, and the hopes entertained of the deep ground at Irishman's have not been realised.