

Number of mining applications during the year, 268.

Greymouth and Surroundings.—This portion of my district includes Coal Creek, Cobden and its surroundings as far as Barrytown, on the north; and the Arnold, Dunganville, Marsden, Welshman's, Cameron's, Rutherglen, and the South Beach as far as the Teremakau, on the south of the Grey River. Alluvial mining during the past year has produced nothing worthy of note; neither has the weather experienced, in so far as it bears upon the mining industry, been in any way exceptional.

There have been no fresh discoveries of any importance, and, it would appear, no material alteration either for the better or worse in the prospects of the district. The older portions, although still sustaining fair populations, appear to become poorer year by year, and, indeed, throughout the district, the great majority of those engaged in mining simply make a living, or very small wages. Many have their little gardens and other such domestic conveniences, by which means they are enabled to make ends meet.

On the South Beach the only claim reputed to be paying well is the Leviathan. On the deep lead, near Paroa, there are several parties at work on private land. They pay £5 per acre for the right to do so, and are said to be making from £2 10s. to £4 per week. These apparently are the exceptions.

In the early part of the year there was a slight demand for ground on the cement lead at Rutherglen, it being thought that a satisfactory and profitable method of treating the cement had been discovered in what is known as "The Cassel process," which was then being introduced into the Reefton district.

I am unable to say whether it was because of the unsatisfactory nature of experiments at Reefton or not, but the excitement here did not last long; and of three licensed holdings applied for and granted one only was taken up; and, although two rival companies were floated to work a special claim in the same locality, and litigation as a consequence appeared imminent, nothing ensued, neither company having proceeded with the working of the claim. At the Teremakau the Montagues are working on their own property by means of elevators, the motive-power being steam. Marsden, Cameron's, and Welshman's, between them, give support to a number of European and Chinese miners, who, however, only make small wages. There has been no diminution in the number of miners employed during the year at Dunganville, and a certain amount of prospecting has been done. Hopes are entertained of a terrace known as Fleming's, which has been set into, turning out well, but it has not yet been proved. The mining population of this portion of my district consists of about a hundred and seventy Europeans and sixty or seventy Chinese.

In the Maori Gully district, which has a scattered population, there has been no change. Those who have water-rights make a fair living, the others barely a living.

Coal Creek.—There are about ten men sluicing and driving.

Cobden and Barrytown.—About a hundred Europeans and three or four Chinese engaged in mining, making small wages.

Taylor's dredge has been working spasmodically, but its operations have not been successful.

COAL-MINING.

Brunnerton.—During the year ended December last 134,105 tons of coal were exported, as against 178,000 tons the previous year. Hands have been reduced in the mine, which gave signs of being worked out, and, as a consequence, the population of the borough has suffered considerably. It would appear that the Grey Valley Coal Company does not intend to incur further expense in prospecting the property, as it is proposed to give it up at the end of the year. A seam on the hill is now being worked, the Government having granted a subsidy to the company to enable them to construct a tramway to open it up.

Blackball.—The Blackball Company's mine is situate on the Blackball Creek, and is connected with the Midland Railway Company's line at Ngahere by an aerial tramway, three miles in length, and capable of delivering 50 tons per hour. This company only commenced to export coal last October, and up to the present time has been engaged in endeavouring to work up a trade; consequently, there is as yet no regular output. The average at present is, however, about 500 tons per week.

Coal Creek.—It is understood that an English company has been formed to work the coal measures in this portion of the district, and Mr. Gillies, C.E., has been engaged to survey a line of railway. He informs me that he is at work on this survey, and has portions ready for contract.

Timber.—During the year ended December, 1893, 3,355,933ft. of timber were exported, in cutting which eight sawmills were engaged, as well as parties of hand-sawyers. During the quarter ended March, 1894, 1,406,500ft. were exported, so it would seem that the trade is increasing. Red-pine, for building purposes, and silver-pine sleepers are sent to the different New Zealand ports, principally Lyttelton. Several cargoes of white-pine have gone to Melbourne.

General.—During the year under review 756 miners' rights have been issued, and 212 ordinary applications received in the Warden's Office. In the Magistrate's Court 377 complaints have been entered, and 199 criminal cases disposed of, the latter being principally petty offences—chiefly police cases for breaches of by-laws, &c.—the district being remarkably free from serious crime.

Moonlight.—Mining matters have been very quiet in this locality during the past twelve months. The rush to Stewart's Hill has not turned out as was anticipated at the time when it first took place. The whole of the tunnels driven in were at too high a level, consequently abortive to test the ground. Within this last month three parties of miners have taken up the ground again. One of these sank a shaft in an old tunnel, and obtained 9dwt. off the bottom, and is now driving in at about 8ft. deeper. There has also been a find of new ground at Garden Gully, which is thought to be a continuation of the gold from Stewart's Hill. Miners generally in this locality make satisfactory returns for their labour.