

That our rivers and creeks on the West Coast are as suitable for dredging—as far as engineering difficulties apply—as are the Otago rivers and creeks, goes without saying, and although our dredging ventures on the Coast, with the exception of the Buller dredges, have been failures, the little work that was done by our abortive attempts with the suction-dredges went to prove the highly payable nature of the ground they tried to deal with.

Taking into consideration the highly-auriferous character of the country through which our rivers and creeks flow; the immense deposits of auriferous gravels filling our valleys, creek-beds, and beaches, that cannot be worked except by dredges; keeping in mind the value of gold already won on the West Coast—approximately, £17,098,605; also keeping in view the application of electric power—the power of the future—the facilities for the generation of which are everywhere convenient and comparatively inexpensive: therefore, looking at all the surroundings, and with an intimate knowledge of the dredging areas available, I look forward with perfect confidence to the success of the dredging industry on the Coast. Nevertheless, no large expenditure of capital should be incurred without first carefully testing the area to be operated on; but, with ordinary precaution, success will surely follow.

I have, &c.

D. MACFARLANE, Warden.

The Under-Secretary Mines Department, Wellington.

No. 9.

Mr. Warden HAWKINS to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Lawrence, 9th May, 1899.

I have the honour to forward herewith the annual statistics of the mining industry for the year ended 31st March, 1899, together with the annual report on mining matters in the district under my charge.

The mining enterprise throughout the district has shown considerable activity for the greater part of the year. Lately, 600 acres of the Waiholo Lake have been pegged out, and prospecting licenses are being applied for with the intention of testing the areas for dredging purposes.

LAWRENCE.

Five dredges have been working throughout the year on Tuapeka Flat and River below the Lawrence Township. They are as follows:—

William Murray and party, known as the Record Reign Dredge, have worked nearly all the available ground round about the Chinese camp: part of the time, I understand, getting fair returns. Next comes J. Harris and party. They have been at work steadily for the last nine months, with fair average returns.

The Evans Flat Dredging Company has done very well, obtaining 437 oz., and paying dividends amounting to £350.

The Tuapeka Dredging Company has also done well for the past twelve months, having won 329 oz. of gold, and the prospects for the future appear bright.

Lower down the river is the Balclutha Dredging Company, which, I am informed, has been getting only fair returns.

The following is a short summary of the work done at the Lawrence Court for the year: Applications lodged, 290; complaints entered, 32; complaints heard, 28. Revenue collected: Miners' rights, £257 15s.; rents, £1,373 4s. 6d.; registrations and miscellaneous, £187 10s.: total, £1,818 9s. 6d.

WETHERSTONE'S.

Messrs. Smyth, Adams, and Donlan, purchased the claim and dredge on Wetherstone's Flat from Mr. J. W. Robertson. They have named the dredge "The Golden Rise," and have had it overhauled and almost entirely rebuilt, at a cost of about £1,200, and it is now working again. The same party also hold a hydraulic sluicing claim in the same locality, the claim being known as the Golden Rise Claim. The races and dams in connection with it have been improved during the year. Work has been steadily carried on, and the results have been highly satisfactory. The party employs thirteen men on dredge and claim regularly, and at times more.

Mr. W. F. Smyth took up the old cement claim at Wetherstone's, and formed a company called the Golden Crescent Gold-mining Company, and the company has taken over the claim, and also the right to a water-race, to bring in water from Deep Creek, Waipori. The length of the water-race will be about seventeen miles. The water will be carried in a siphon of 20-in. pipes. The total cost of the race will be about £4,000. The whole length has been levelled, and about nine miles have been constructed. At the present time about twenty-five men are employed on the works.

BLUE SPUR.

The Blue Spur and Gabriel's Gully Consolidated Gold Company (Limited), still under the management of Mr. J. H. Jackson, has been working steadily for the year. The water-supply being exceedingly good for nearly the whole of the time has enabled the company to work about a thousand hours longer than they did the year before. The yield of gold was 3,032 oz., valued at £11,826.

The Local Industry Gold-mining Company (Limited) has been working in Gabriel's Gully, near Rocky Point. The returns have varied, but have not been satisfactory.

Messrs. J. Kitto and party have been working steadily during the year, and the returns are, I understand, very satisfactory.