

No. 10.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Naseby, 3rd June, 1899.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual statistics of the mining industry for the Mount Ida District for the past year, and in doing so I have to inform you that little or no alteration has taken place in the general aspect or condition of mining during the year. No new ground of any consequence has been opened up, but a number of prospecting licenses have been granted, principally in respect of dredging-ground, the result of which is still to be ascertained. The number of miners in the district remains satisfactory. The water-supply has been better than for a good many seasons, and the returns have been correspondingly good. The water-conservation works at Eweburn are progressing satisfactorily. The bank of the reservoir has now been carried to a height of about 30 ft., and the supply of water obtained is, I believe, greater than the most sanguine expectations of the engineer. The Government race has already been benefiting from this source, and will do so to a greater extent as the work on the reservoir proceeds.

Dredging, I regret to say, has hardly yet attained a paying position in this district; the prospects obtained in most instances were sufficiently good to insure success, but the actual results so far have not come up to expectations. Of course, it must be taken into consideration that this is a new system of treating the auriferous drifts, and naturally many difficulties are being met with, which I trust will be overcome by the engineering skill now being devoted to the subject, and a prosperous future developed for that system of working.

NASEBY.

In this locality there is no alteration of any importance to be noted. The Naseby Dredging Company's operations, although hampered a good deal by frequent breakages in the machinery, have been fairly successful. With a view of securing better results the company has dispensed with the screen on the dredge and erected boxes instead.

The Enterprise Gully Dredging Company has not yet commenced operations, but their dredge is being put together on the ground, and will shortly be at work. Hydraulic sluicing and elevating are the ordinary methods of mining employed in this locality, and it may be said that the supply of water has been ample for all purposes since last winter. There has not, however, been the same number of miners employed as during the previous year, but this is to be accounted for by the construction of the Eweburn reservoir, at which the men are now employed.

Kyeburn Diggings.—At Little Kyeburn about the same number of men are employed as during the previous year, and there is very little to report as the result of the past year's operations. The small dredge which was removed from the Fillyburn and placed on the Little Kyeburn was not a success, owing to its want of capacity and the extremely large boulders to be contended with, which prevented its being conveniently moved about, there being insufficient water for the dredge to float over them. There is, however, a noticeable improvement on the Kyeburn Diggings, where a party of Chinese, who purchased Mr. Forgie's property, have a large face opened out, and work night and day when the water permits. Mr. McLellan and his sons have opened a new claim on the Pass Hill, and are building a large dam and making other provision for the systematic working of the claim. Messrs. Beer have increased their plant and taken up the old Mountain Stream water-race, intending to put the same in thorough repair and utilise it for the purpose of obtaining a higher pressure. Mr. Blanchard's low-race, after years of idleness, has been put into thorough repair, and has been working steadily. A company—the Naumai Gold-dredging Company—has been formed, with a capital of £7,000, to work a terrace, and Mr. McLellan has sold his lower race to it. Plans for the dredge are now being made. Two other claims have been taken upon the same kind of ground, and negotiations are, I understand, proceeding for the placing of a dredge on one of them. Messrs. Parker are concentrating all their water on one claim, considering it advantageous to do so because of the very coarse nature of their wash material. Messrs. Brown Brothers, Kyeburn Peninsula, are still elevating in the mining reserve, and have also taken up a claim on School Flat on the same run of gold as the Naumai Dredge will start on. They have eleven men at work.

The Kyeburn Gold-dredging Company, which started operations on the Kyeburn River in January, 1898, is still working steadily, and, considering the dredge being old and small, is doing good work, the most serious drawback being the shallowness of the ground, which is often not more than 3 ft. deep.

The Mount Ida Gold-dredging Company, which started work with a new dredge in September last, has not up to the present been very successful, the ground so far proving much shallower than was anticipated. After being idle for some months, during which the dredge was fitted with an elevator, work is again being resumed, with, it is to be hoped, better results than heretofore.

At Hamilton's and Sowburn mining has been carried on in the same quiet manner as hitherto, and there is nothing fresh to report.

At Serpentine there has been some stir latterly, owing to the infusion of new blood into the district. Messrs. Diamond and party are erecting an elevating plant, and it is reported that others are going to bring water-races on to ground in this locality from the Taieri River; while Mr. J. Cogan is engaged in opening up a quartz-reef he has discovered, and which he estimates will go from 10 dwt. to 15 dwt. per ton.

MACRAE'S, NENTHORN, ETC.

Alluvial- and quartz-mining has fallen off during the past twelve months, so far as the gold-yield is concerned. The Macrae's Flat Dredging Company commenced operations in March last,