

take heed, lest the prosperity at present obtaining in the dredging world leads to a number of claims of the "wild cat" order being let loose upon the community as beasts of prey upon the unwary and the simple. And this leads me to a consideration of the one great need of those dredging in deep, swift-running rivers, such as the Clutha, the Kawarau, and the Molyneux. At present the only known method of prospecting these rivers is by the construction of a dredge, the cost of which may involve an expenditure of well nigh £15,000. If the river-beds and banks prove barred, the dredge may have to be shifted to another part of the river, or even dismantled altogether and removed to a different district. Either operation involves great expense and loss of time. What is wanted, then, is for some mechanical genius to design a dredging prospecting plant for use in rivers such as those named, which should be at once comparatively speaking inexpensive, strong, and easily portable. If such a plant were procurable, not only could the river-beds be tested without the great expense incident to the construction of a dredge, but those designing dredges would be able to ascertain, with some approximation to accuracy, the character of the ground proposed to be treated, and shape their designs accordingly. For it must be borne in mind that each reach of these rivers has characteristics peculiar to itself, which necessitate appropriate modifications in the machinery of the dredge intended to work it.

SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS IN THE MINING LAW.

As the law now stands, the weight of authority seems to lie in the direction of the doctrine of lateral support being applicable to mining claims. The object of that doctrine is to preserve intact the surface of the land; an object which, it will be seen, is altogether inapplicable to every method of mining except those which necessitate the sinking of shafts and the driving of tunnels. In these latter cases it is all-important that lateral support should be preserved, otherwise the shafts and tunnels might collapse, and there would ensue, not only waste of capital, but possibly great loss of life. But, in sluicing and dredging, the very object of procuring a license is to enable the licensee to win the gold, even if that should involve the subsidence and washing away of the surface. The doctrine of lateral support is, therefore, quite inapplicable to these systems. No doubt the licensee does not wish the auriferous dirt naturally standing within the limits of his claim to fall into that of an adjoining licensee; but to conserve to the former the lateral support of the adjoining claim when the respective terms of the several licenses authorise the washing away of the land affected by both is to perpetuate an absurdity. What is needed is a statutory rule amply protecting the rights of adjoining licensees. When a claim is worked by means of drives and tunnels there should be reserved between that and any other claim ample barriers, such as are provided for in the case of coal-mines; but in the case of adjoining dredging or sluicing claims the rights of the licensees would be amply protected by a provision that, where the ground for a distance of one chain on either side of the boundary is worked and the proceeds divided in manner directed by the Warden, after application made by either of the parties, the licensee so working should not be liable to any action for damages in respect of mining operations on any part of the claim so worked. I mention this matter because adjoining claims are becoming exceedingly common, and boundary-disputes are sure to crop up, and much money will be wasted in litigation, and this waste might be saved by timely legislation.

REVENUE.

The goldfields revenue during the year just closed has been well maintained. The figures are as follows: For Clyde, Alexandra, and Roxburgh, £3,044 12s. 2d.; Cromwell, £1,125 17s.; Queens-town, £1,120; Arrowtown, £380; total, £5,670 9s. 2d.

There is at present every indication, notwithstanding the great reduction effected by "The Mining Act, 1898," in mining rents, that during the current year these sums will show no shrinkage.

COAL-MINING.

As was to be expected, the steady development of the dredging industry and the increase of population consequent thereon has given a stimulus to prospecting for coal, with the result that there has been a marked increase not only in the output, but in the number of miners employed.

PASTORAL AND AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS.

The frequent falls of rain during the period under review have not been without their effect on these industries. The sheep and cattle are healthier, the wool heavier, and the crops more abundant than has been the case for many years past.

I have, &c.,

S. E. MCCARTHY, Warden.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

No. 12.

MR. WARDEN CAREW to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES, Wellington.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Dunedin, 8th June, 1899.

I have the honour to forward herewith statistical returns respecting the Hindon Goldfield for the year 1898–99.

The number of miners working there is now under fifty, and nothing of special importance has occurred during the year. The principal alluvial workings are those of the Deep Stream Amalgamated Hydraulic Sluicing Company, which company has paid regular monthly dividends to