

414. And during that time, I understand, you have been a practical miner?—Yes.

415. You have been engaged in business in Reefton as a storekeeper?—I have.

416. You have been legal manager of a number of companies?—I have.

417. And you are and have been a Justice of the Peace for many years?—Yes.

418. You will be able to tell us the difference in the cost of conveying machinery and goods from Greymouth to Reefton now and the cost immediately before the railway opened?—To the best of my belief, the cost of machinery before the railway opened ranged from £10 to £12 per ton.

419. What is the railway freight, do you know, now?—I think about 16s. a ton, and 2s. 6d. per ton in addition for delivery in town.

420. Can you say to what extent the cost of living in Reefton and the districts surrounding it has been cheapened by the railway?—Well, I should say from 30 to 40 per cent.

421. Now, taking the mining industry first, do you see any reason for expecting a large increase or development in the mining industry in and around Reefton in the future?—Yes, I do. I think we may look for considerable improvement in the opening-up and development of the mines.

422. Are there many places in the field where you see a prospect of gold-mining being profitably carried on?—Yes, undoubtedly. There is an immense tract of auriferous country, you may say, traversing in a broken chain from Golden Bay in the north to Mount Cook in the south.

423. At any rate, there is a very large area of auriferous country about Reefton at present which is not being worked?—Certainly, a very large amount. It is owing, of course, to the absence of capital just now.

424. Do you think the presence of the railway will promote in the future a more extensive and thorough exploration of the mining country?—I have no doubt it will be a very large factor in assisting the development of the resources in consequence of the cheapening of freights.

425. Now, can you say anything with regard to the prospects which the cyanide process offers?—The cyanide process or treatment of golden ores has given new life to the district entirely.

426. Has it been thoroughly tried and applied yet, or is it in its infancy?—It is in its infancy at present. It is only used in some four or five instances at the outside—hardly that, in fact. I think there are only three mines at the present time where the process is being used.

427. Do you know whether it is being used successfully in any of them?—In one or two of the three it has been used successfully. In the third they are not yet proficient in its use. They are experimenting.

428. Can you give us the names of these mines?—The Consolidated Goldfields of New Zealand, the Keep-it-Dark Gold-mining Company, and the New Scotia Gold-mining Company.

429. In all of these you say it is a success?—Yes.

430. In the third it is in an experimental stage only?—Yes.

431. What one is that?—The Consolidated Goldfields of New Zealand.

432. And we know that the Government have had the cyanide rights now for about three years?—Yes.

433. Do you know anything of the dredging about the Reefton district?—Yes; at the present time dredging in the Reefton district is just about commencing. There is an immense scope of country available for dredging purposes.

434. Do you think it promises fair returns?—I think so.

435. Looking at the fields as you, as an old resident and expert miner, will do, and looking at the condition at which the cyanide process stands in Reefton, and the dredging fields available, can you say with a fair degree of accuracy what extension of gold-mining generally may be expected in your district?—Well, with the advent of capital, which I have every reason to believe will come in consequence of the success of the Consolidated Goldfields Company, which, as far as the Progress Mines Company is concerned, has been paying 15 per cent. steadily, I think there is every probability of capital being induced to invest in that district.

436. And with the other agencies you have mentioned—cyanide and dredging—can you see any real reason for expecting the mining industry to be doubled?—Oh, yes; of necessity it would be a very large increase. Probably it might be trebled, as far as that goes.

437. Within, say, ten years?—Quite so. The cyanide, as I said just now, will work an entire revolution. That is to say, low-grade ores which we know at the present time are unpayable under the old process, with cyanide immediately become reproductive.

438. You have an instance of that now?—Yes.

439. What company is that?—The Keep-it-Dark Company.

440. We were told that the whole of the real profit made by that company was due to cyanide?—Yes.

441. Well, I may leave this head with what I understand is your view—that the gold-mining industry up there may reasonably be expected to be very largely increased within the next few years?—Yes.

442. Probably trebled?—Quite so.

443. And that would mean increased traffic on the railway of machinery, goods, and so on?—Exactly; and, of course, a very large increase in the population.

444. Now I pass on to coal: I understand the question of whether coal can be profitably mined in your district has been under consideration by a Commission lately?—Just so.

445. And the matter has been pretty thoroughly investigated?—Yes; I took part before that Commission myself in collecting evidence and bringing it forward.

446. Will you tell us shortly what you think of the prospects of getting coal from this district?—Well, of my own knowledge, I am aware that coal exists in large quantities for a distance of thirty miles in length throughout the district north and south.