

by a very large working capital. The protections are subject to tributes being let beyond a few chains of the main shaft.

The Thames Drainage Board still appear to have some difficulty in making an assessment which is considered fair by all the companies within its area. The task of making the assessment is somewhat a difficult one, as so many points have to be considered. As the Board is at present constituted, I think, entirely of persons connected with the various mines within its area, the difficulty is much greater than it would probably be if the assessment were left to some person in no way connected with either of the mines. As far as I have been able to judge from the appeals from time to time brought before me in the Warden's Court, there is a desire on the part of the Board to assist struggling companies as much as possible, but such a system of assessment cannot be satisfactory to companies which are fortunate enough to pay their way. I think the time has come to remodel the regulations under which the Board exercises jurisdiction, in which a more definite method of making the assessment should be laid down, to which the Board should be compelled to adhere. This would very much strengthen the hands of the Board, and do away with the mutual arrangement and give-and-take system which appears to have prevailed during the past. What is required is a scheme by which all the mines affected shall be equally assessed for their fair proportion. There should be no appearance of unfortunate mines being more liberally treated than the fortunate ones, otherwise a mine, through judicious and inexpensive management, which secured something for its shareholders might be assessed to make up the amount which less fortunate mines should have been loaded with, the positions of some of which might have been different if the management had been less expensive and in better hands. It must be borne in mind that the successful mine is paying wages all the time, while the others are either worked by tributers or with as small a number of men as possible. I believe the mining industry would be much more successful here if the management of the mines was in the hands of thoroughly practical and qualified men as managers, instead of in the hands of legal managers in Auckland, some of whom probably never did a day's mining in their lives. There should be no suspicion that a successful mine was being made to suffer for this mismanagement.

I have, &c.,

R. S. BUSH, Warden.

Mr. Warden ROBERTS to the UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES.

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Tauranga, 31st January, 1902.

I have to report that during the year ended the 31st December, 1901, little has been done towards developing the mining industry in the Tauranga portion of the Hauraki Mining District, owing, no doubt, to lack of capital. Two properties only have been continuously prospected—viz., the Te Puke Gold Reefs Company and the Sisters Special Claim.

In the early part of the year an option (which has not yet expired) was taken over the Te Puke Gold Reefs Company's property by a Mr. Thompson, of Auckland. It is understood that negotiations are in a forward state for securing ample capital to develop the mine and erect machinery. The holder of the option has had four men employed opening up and developing the great lode 60 ft. wide, with most encouraging results. The foot-wall of the lode in the top level has been driven on for 125 ft. to the south, giving rich stone. A sample of 5 tons of selected ore was sent to the Thames School of Mines for treatment, 2 tons of which gave a return of £42 9s. 10d. a ton, the other 3 tons giving a return of £29 4s. 6d. a ton—being an average of £34 6s. per ton for the 5 tons. Shortly before Christmas another large lode immediately to the west of the great lode was intersected that proved to be 17 ft. or 18 ft. through, and showing stone of a kindly and promising description. The recent development-works will no doubt enhance the value of the property.

The Sisters Special Claim, situated on Native land, has been continuously prospected, and the works have resulted in the discovery of some very promising reefs, the last one found being a fine body of stone in good country, and a level is now being put in to cut and prove it at a lower level.

I have, &c.,

J. M. ROBERTS, Warden.

The Under-Secretary for Mines, Wellington.

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

SIR,—

Warden's Office, Nelson, 31st March, 1902.

I have the honour to forward herewith goldfields statistics for the districts under my charge, and to report generally on the condition of the mining industry in my district for the period from the 31st March, 1901, to the 31st December, 1901.

Generally there has been progress not by leaps and bounds, but steady development of the mining industry in the district, as will be seen by the returns appended. The industry is more and more being absorbed into companies which pay such fair wages that individual and small party mining is fast becoming a thing of the past. A wages-man can earn from £2 5s. to £3 a week, while he can live well enough in camp for 12s. per week.

DREDGING.

Two or three dredges are in course of erection in the district, and it will be some time yet before any areas will be proved by dredging, but I hope by this time next year there will be good accounts to give of the dredging industry in the district.