

The Pomahaka District as a Goldfield.

The following communication has been addressed to the Minister of Mines by Mr F. W Mackenzie:—

To W. J. M. Larnach, C.M.G., Minister of Mines, Wellington

Sir,—I take the liberty of addressing you for the information of Government on the subject of the proclamation of a goldfield in this district.

Having seen in the papers a report that Government intend to proclaim a goldfield along the Pomahaka River, and feeling that such a step would greatly injure those who are permanently settled here and who are already heavily burdened by rates, taxes, and the low value of their produce, I deem it my duty as the oldest settler in the district, and as one who has had opportunities beyond any other man in the Colony of truly ascertaining the extent of its auriferous deposits, to inform you, so far as I know, what these may be expected to prove if further explored. For nearly 25 years this district has been intermittently prospected; many hundreds of experienced miners have been here and most of them have communicated with me, so that I have had a good opportunity of ascertaining the result of their labours.

The invariable report has been that the ground was too poor to pay; and that as to deep sinking, the underflow of water was too great to allow of bottoming.

Nearly all the land is freehold, and many of the settlers are old experienced miners who, were there payable gold, would doubtless ere now have discovered it and worked it.

To proclaim this land a goldfield at the present time would, in my opinion, prove simply a trap to mislead men who may be looking for new ground. The reports published in the papers of finds at various times heretofore are untrue or greatly exaggerated; and if a goldfield should be proclaimed, the endorsement of these reports by Government will certainly lead to disappointment and loss of money. And an influx of disappointed people must cause great loss and inconvenience to the settlers and land-owners.

Further, I desire to inform you that during the time I have been here (since 1856) I have never known of any person being hindered from trying my ground; neither do I think other landowners would object, provided security were given for the repair of damage done. On the contrary, I think most would prefer that gold should be discovered on their land, in order that they might have it "resumed" and receive its price. With regard to the Pomahaka River and its banks, there is nothing there to justify a goldfield. As the banks in many places are reserved and constitute the only road giving access to adjoining sections, I can't see how they could be worked, even did they contain payable gold, which they do not. Moreover, from their nature, it would be impossible in most places to break them without causing the river to destroy the adjoining lands, thus doing great injury to the very best land in the country.

Altogether, I cannot help concluding that this agitation has been got up by persons who care little for the consequences; but that those who have started it have any reason whatever, or are in a position to prove that a payable goldfield exists here, is most remote from the truth, and I am greatly astonished that, without any reliable information, and in the face of adverse reports by all the competent men who have examined it (the last being Professor Ulrich's), Government should contemplate proclaiming a goldfield here.—I have, &c.,

F. W. MACKENZIE.

February 12, 1886.

During the voyage of the ship Opawa from London, a boy named H. Hoger fell from the cross-jack yard into the sea. There was a heavy gale at the time, and though a boat was lowered, and every effort made to save him, he was drowned.