

The beach claims, from the Nine-Mile Beach north to Brighton south, have, as usual, been covered up with grey sand during some portions of the year, and at other times have been fairly remunerative. These claims are best adapted to men who have residence areas to employ themselves upon when their claims are unworkable, and notably so on the Nine-Mile Beach, where the privilege of a holding of an acre of land has been taken full advantage of, and the ground neatly fenced in and brought under cultivation.

The Creek claims in this sub-district, of which there are a great number, and in which the owners have inserted tables for catching the finer particles of gold coming down from the terrace workings, are considered good property; but their proprietors have not been remunerated during the past year as well as usual, owing to the very small rainfall, and the small number of claims in work on the terraces above.

During the past year this locality was visited by some thirty Chinese miners from the Inangahua District, who spread themselves over the old workings and did a certain amount of prospecting. A party of them started to prospect the valley of the Four-Mile River, but returned almost immediately to town disheartened, the weather having changed, and heavy rain making it impossible for them to camp out in the bush. Though expressing themselves dissatisfied with the fine gold around Charleston, they intimated their intention of returning at some future time to prospect the Four-Mile Valley, in which gold of a coarse nature has been found in several places, but hitherto not in payable quantities.

The survey of the new road from Brighton to the Seventeen-Mile Beach is drawing rapidly towards completion, and when the road is constructed there is no doubt it will prove of great benefit to the public, as it passes through a tract of country now being occupied under agricultural leases and pastoral licenses. The County Council have also partly completed a prospecting track in the locality leading from the sea-beach to the Paparoa Range, and it is conjectured that ere long this portion of the Charleston Sub-District will be found to be highly auriferous.

Owing to the absence of a constant water-supply at a fair price sufficient for the requirements of the miners, the Charleston Sub-District has undoubtedly declined during the year, both in population and prosperity, the men being compelled to leave the locality to search for employment elsewhere.

With a view to restore the former state of prosperity and to induce miners to visit the district, the townspeople have offered to assist a party of men to go out and prospect the back country, which, in the opinion of many practical miners, will be found to possess not only gold but other minerals.

LYELL SUB-DISTRICT.

During the last twelve months alluvial and quartz-mining matters have not been so flourishing as was anticipated in the last report. There are only two or three parties now working in the Lyell Creek, and another party ground-sluicing on the banks thereof, who average fair wages. On the banks of the Buller River there are about one hundred miners steadily employed ground-sluicing, but their labours have not been very remunerative owing to the scarcity of water, more particularly during the last two months.

The party of men referred to in my last report as having lost their dredge in the Buller River, have now constructed a new one, and are working the same with very favourable results.

On the Matakita there are still about a hundred men employed working the beaches of the river and its tributaries, but the returns for the past twelve months from this quarter have not been up to the usual average.

The construction of the horse-track from Murchison to Glenroy is now complete, and has proved a great boon to the miners and settlers in that locality.

QUARTZ-MINING.

There are fifty gold-mining leases and special claims held in this part of the district. During the past year transactions in mining stock have been very limited, in consequence of some of the mines not realizing according to expectations, although prospecting has been steadily pursued in some of the mines.

The *United Alpine Company* have been reorganized, and have increased their capital from £32,000 to £48,000. They have driven their No. 6 level a distance of 1,466ft., and struck the reef, which they have followed up for a distance of 150ft., the stone from which is now being crushed. To the end of the present week 160 tons have been crushed, yielding 267oz. of amalgam from the plates only, which return is considered highly satisfactory. They have let their No. 5 level to a party on tribute, who have had one crushing, which did not pay more than working expenses. This was owing to the amount of dead work they had to perform before they could arrive at the block of stone from which they will have their future crushing, which, according to present prospects, will be remunerative. This mine is now employing about sixty men.

The *Craesus Company* have now had three crushings from their mine, which were not considered payable, and the directors have decided to let the mine on tribute for twelve months.

The *United Italy Company* is now crushing stone taken from the cross-cut on the south side of the Eight-Mile Creek. The returns so far are poor, and have little more than paid working expenses: they employ about six men.

The *Victor Emanuel Company* during the past twelve months have done a considerable amount of work: they have driven two levels, and have sunk a winze from No. 2 level a distance of 140ft. upon the reef, and have driven from the winze some 50ft. more. They propose driving another level some 650ft. to connect the bottom of the winze, which will make it very convenient for the transit of stone from the mine to a battery which they contemplate erecting. The non-completion of the road has been a great drawback to the progress of the company.