

altogether a special claim, comprising an area of 160 acres. They also hold the Dismal Swamp, a large flat at the upper end of the Gorge of the Teviot River, as a site for a reservoir, and intended to build a masonry or concrete dam in the mouth of the gorge to raise the water when full to a height of 17ft. This height of water is said would cover an area of 640 acres to an average depth of 9ft., which would be equal to 250,905,600 cubic feet of water. Deducting 40 per cent. for evaporation in dry, hot weather, it would leave 100,362,240 cubic feet available for sluicing purposes, which is equal to a supply of about twenty sluice-heads of water flowing continuously for two months. This, together with the quantity of water coming into the reservoir, and the water being stored on Sundays, would insure almost a constant supply, unless in an exceptionally long, dry season. The scheme has not been carried out, the wall forming the dam has only been raised to a height of 8ft., and consequently the supply last year was inadequate to work the ground to advantage. It is estimated that a masonry or concrete wall can be built now to a height of 20ft. at a cost of about £1,500, and no doubt this work will soon be undertaken. The hydraulic elevating operations commenced at the end of December last, and from the quantity of material operated on the results have been satisfactory. The ground, it is said, improves as it gets back from the side of the river.

Several private parties hold claims higher up the river on the same flat as the Roxburgh Amalgamated Company, which give high yields of gold when water is available, but as none of these parties have a supply of water at a sufficient elevation to work a hydraulic elevator in the deep ground, their workings are in a great measure limited. They either have to pump the water and lift the material by hand-labour, or merely sluice off the ground to such a depth as the level of the water in the river and fall for their boxes will permit.

Commissioner's-Flat Company.—This company has commenced sluicing operations on a flat on the same side but about four miles further up the river than the flat last referred to; they are sluicing off the top portion of the wash-drift to such a level as the water in the river will permit, before commencing to elevate the material below this depth. So far they have not obtained much gold; but this was expected, as it is in the lower wash-drift where most of the gold is got in this place. As soon as a sufficient area of the top drift is washed off a commencement will be made to elevate the material. The water-supply is taken from Coal Creek, on the west side of the Molyneux River, and brought in an open conduit for about five miles in length, which discharges into a reservoir constructed on tolerably flat ground on the range. From there the water is conveyed in pipes of 128 chains in length, varying in diameter, the first 20 chains being 18in., 15 chains 17in., and the remainder 16in. in diameter. The pipes are carried across the Molyneux River to the claim. There is a length of 120ft. of sluice-boxes 3ft. 6in. wide laid down, with a fall of 3in. to 12ft., and stripping is being carried on. The company has expended about £8,000 on their plant and claim.

OPHIR.

Owing to the dry season, a number of miners have been enabled to utilise the tail-race constructed many years ago, and work the ground, which is generally very wet, on the flat above the township. The ground last year was comparatively dry, and men are said to have been making fair wages. At Ida Valley, the Deep Lead Company, which expended £3,000 in prospecting the ground, has been wound up, and all operations have ceased. The Green Reef Company is also wound up, and their cyclone crusher, which cost about £500, was sold for £4 10s. The whole of the plant belonging to the Quartz Company, purchased by them for £1,750, including water-race, dams, and fluming, is said to have been sold for about £188. This shows that mining property is of very little value in this locality. At Blackstone Hill very little mining is carried on. The Garibaldi Company, which was expected to turn out a good mining venture, has been proved, it is said, a complete failure, there being no means of getting a good supply of water on to the ground. Indeed, the dry season last year has completely paralysed mining where the operations depended on a steady supply of water.

TINKERS.

This is one of the richest places in the colony; it is so far limited in extent, but the gold obtained by those who are working the ground will average more per man employed than on any other diggings. The scarcity of water last year has, however, been a great drawback. Several of the claims could not be worked continuously, and the yield of gold for the last year must have been considerably less than in former years. Last season was one of the driest experienced for years. In my last report reference was made to the value of mining property. A small water-race at a low elevation, two miles in length, having the first right of seven sluice-heads of water from Thomson's Creek, was sold by auction, and was purchased by the Undaunted Company for £10,800. This is the highest price ever paid for a similar water-supply in the colony. This company have been able to work more regularly than most of the other claims, and anticipate having 1,500oz. of gold for the season's work, which would represent a value of about, in round numbers, £5,925, showing that the value of this water-supply was not overestimated. The ground in this company's claim is from 70ft. to 80ft. deep of gravelly wash-drift, containing a little gold all through it, but the best of the wash is the layer next the bottom.

Matakinui Company.—This company's ground, which is 25 acres in extent, adjoins the Undaunted ground, and is of similar character, but does not contain nearly so much gold. They have a head-race from the Lauder Creek, and have had a very fair supply of water during last year. The ground they have been working for several years has been what is termed rather poor for this locality, but last year they got into better ground, obtaining 600oz. of gold between the months of September and April. Since washing up a seventh share in the company's property has been sold for £1,500. This company deserves to meet with success. They have gone to a very great expense in bringing in a water-supply and placing a hydraulic plant on the ground. Their tail-race is not deep enough to admit of their sluicing the whole of the ground in the ordinary manner, a portion of it has therefore to be lifted by a hydraulic elevator.