

ALLUVIAL MINING.

MIDDLE ISLAND.

MAHAKIPAWA.

A considerable quantity of gold has been taken from this field out of a very small area; but, as the principal workings have been confined to the bed of the creek, there have been many difficulties to encounter owing to the floods which have occurred from time to time. The shallow workings near the head creek have to be carried on with an open face, and open workings are still carried on when the depth of the ground does not exceed 20ft. These open workings are liable to be filled up with every flood, causing a deal of dead-work to be done before any returns can again be obtained. The creek above the Prospectors' Claim has all been worked, so that the miners are now confined to about two miles of the creek-bed and a small portion of the flat near the township, on Mr. Cullen's freehold. Several of the claims in the actual creek-bed are termed terrace claims, and have been granted by the Warden as such; but it would be difficult now for a stranger in the present state of the workings to distinguish the creek from these terrace claims. This causes discontent amongst the miners who originally took up the creek claims with the expectation that they would be entitled not only to the actual shingle-bed of the creek, but also to the deep ground close alongside, where the creek had originally been.

The creek passes through a very narrow gorge, and the actual shingle-bed in some places is not more than 15ft. in width, but alongside this shingle there are low, flat places from 20ft. to 30ft. in width, which were at the time the creek was rushed covered with small bushy timber and vegetation. All the flat places were held by the Warden to be on the terrace, and granted as terrace claims. These have since in most instances proved to have been the original bed of the creek, being the deepest ground with the same class of water-worn rounded boulder and wash-drift. The creek claims were held by the Warden to only include the shingle-bed, and every claim granted on any place on either side of the shingle-bed was termed a terrace claim. Some of these terrace claims have paid very well, whilst the creek claims alongside are usually very poor.

The prospectors of the field, Messrs. Jackson and Paterson, were granted a considerable distance along the creek-bed as a prospectors' claim, but, beyond a small portion of the lower end, this claim has not paid anything like wages. At the time of my visit the owners informed me that they were only making from 10s. to 15s. a week per man. The adjoining claim lower down the creek, held by Greig and party, which is now worked out, paid extremely well for working. The Venture Claim has turned out very well, but it is not paying so much now. The shareholders informed me that they obtained 21oz. of gold from the last paddock taken out. Adjoining this claim is the Golden Hope, where there are seven men employed and making good wages. The Eureka Claim has also paid very well, but adjoining this is the Boys' Own, which was a good claim at one time, but is now very poor. The best claims at the time of my visit to the creek were considered to be the Wairarapa, Te Ore Ore, Venture, Hibernian, and King Solomon's Mine.

The Hibernian Company's Claim, which is at the bottom end of the gorge, where the ground opens out into a flat, is the last claim on Crown lands, adjoining Mr. Cullen's freehold. At first the ground was tried to be worked by paddocking, but, it being about 50ft. deep, this mode of working had to be abandoned, as every flood in the creek filled up the workings to such an extent that much dead-work had to be done before paddocking was commenced again. A shaft was sunk and a new water-wheel erected last year for pumping. The pump is 8in. in diameter, with a 5ft. stroke, which has to be kept working at the rate of fourteen strokes per minute to keep the water down. The return of gold for a period of six weeks prior to my visit was 50oz., but the shareholders have never got any returns yet on account of the capital expended.

The King Solomon's Mine adjoins the Hibernian Company's ground. It is situate at the upper end of the township, on Mr. Cullen's freehold. A shaft has been sunk to a depth of 80ft., and a drive put in for 22ft., the wash-drift consisting of about 2ft. of conglomerate and 4ft. of reef and ordinary water-worn-boulder drift. The gold is through the conglomerate, and, as this is of a hard, cemented character, it will be difficult to recover it without crushing. The conglomerate has in any case to be broken up before the gold can be liberated. The width of the lead in this claim is not yet known, but it is not expected to be great, and so far very little gold has been got on the shallow ground on each side of the gutter; thereby implying that the gold will principally be found in a narrow lead or gutter, which had at one time formed the creek-bed. The ground is very wet, the men having to work in oilskins. The water is lifted by an ordinary pump 9in. in diameter, with an 8ft. stroke, making nine strokes per minute, this speed being just sufficient to keep the water down; but when the workings are extended it is questionable whether the increase in the influx of water will not be too great for their pumping appliances. The pump is worked by a water-wheel 22ft. in diameter, three-quarter breast. The manager showed me a sample of the gold they were getting, which corresponds with that got higher up the creek, only it is more water-worn, the sharp edges being all rounded off. It is a class of gold which can be easily saved, as it is principally of a coarse character, in flat flakes about the diameter of peas. For three weeks' work previous to my visit the claim yielded 90oz. of gold. This claim extends from the boundary of the Hibernian ground for a distance of 900ft. down the flat; but there is a claim termed the British Empire running parallel with it, and it is yet questionable whether the deep ground will not pass out of King Solomon's into the Empire ground. Judging from the formation of the country at the mouth of the gorge there is a probability of the deep ground going through in front of Oliver's Hotel, and if this be the case the gutter will pass out of the King Solomon's ground.