

ALLUVIAL MINING.

MIDDLE ISLAND.

MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT.

Mahakipawa.

There are still a number of miners employed on this field, although not so many as there were at the time of my previous visit. The creek claims on Crown lands are gradually getting worked out. Most of them will only last for about six months; but there may be one or two of them that the workings may take another twelve months to complete. There has been a good deal of gold obtained from this field, but the drawbacks by floods in the creeks, and in searching for the gutter, together with the deep, wet ground, have caused a large expenditure to be made in the claims. At the time of my visit, at the end of February last, the claims had been flooded for a period of about eight weeks. Although the creek-claims on Crown lands will soon be worked, those on Mr. Cullen's freehold will last for a number of years; indeed, it is hard to say how far down the flat gold may be found that will pay for working.

Alice Fell Claim.—This is the lowest claim on the flat. The company that owns it has been sinking shafts for the last three years trying to find the gutter, and have only recently succeeded in doing so. They had got a few ounces of heavy coarse gold, up to the time of my visit, from a monkey-shaft sunk in a drive, and were making arrangements to sink the main shaft to a depth of 120ft., in order to be able to work the ground. They have two 9in. draw-lift pumps in the shaft, but these are not able to keep down the water when the creek is high. Indeed, it seems to me questionable if they will keep down the water in ordinary weather when the ground is properly opened out. These pumps are worked by an overshot water-wheel, which is not of sufficient power to drive them at their maximum speed. When this claim gets in proper working order, and payable gold found, there is no doubt other claims will be taken up lower down the flat, but they will require larger pumping plants than any that have yet been erected on this field to work them.

Golden Gate Claim.—This claim is situate in the Township of Cullensville. The gutter or lead of gold is running under the road or street, as it may be termed. The company owning this claim were at the time of my visit sinking a shaft 10ft. square, and were down to a depth of 15ft. Poppet heads were erected, and foundations laid down to erect pumping machinery. They expected to sink to a depth of about 100ft. to bottom the gutter, and they intend to use a 10in. draw-lift pump. The pump and winding-gear is to be worked by a small portable steam-engine, having two cylinders 6½in. in diameter, which would be equal to about eight nominal horse-power. This company have arranged to work the British Empire Claim on tribute as soon as they have a drive into the ground.

King Solomon's Mine.—This adjoins the British Empire and Golden Gate. It has been worked for about two years, with payable results, by a company, who have during the last year paid £120 in dividends and placed £400 to the credit of a reserve fund. At the time of my recent visit the mine was flooded, and the company were constructing a new race and flume to get the water at a higher level on the water-wheel they use for working their pumps, so as to make it an over-shot instead of a breast-wheel.

Davis's and Carr's Claim.—This is a claim on the terrace, on the opposite side of the creek from Cullensville. It has been worked since the commencement of the field by tunnelling and sluicing. Some idea of the value of the ground may be gathered from the fact that recently the owners of this claim have let it on tribute, and are said to be receiving 35 per cent. of the gross yield of gold obtained. The terrace where the claim is situate appears to be portion of a slip from the main range; and no doubt other ground higher up the range will be found payable for working by sluicing, but this mode of working the ground cannot be adopted to any large extent until all the creek claims are worked out, and even then it becomes a question whether Mr. Cullen will allow tailings to be sluiced into the creek that passes through his land.

Hibernian Claim.—This claim adjoins King Solomon's Mine, and is situate at the mouth of the gorge of the Mahakipawa Creek. It is owned by a public company, which has been one of the most successful on the field. Although the claim has been held and partially worked since the opening of the field, very little gold had been got until last year. According to the company's balance-sheet for six months ending the 31st December last, the value of the gold obtained was £2,452, and the expenditure during that period was £898, leaving a clear profit of £1,554. At the commencement of the half-year they had a balance of £106 brought forward, and this, together with the profit on the workings, enabled them to pay £1,584 in dividends, and leave a balance in the bank of £74. The quantity of wash-dirt taken out during last six months was, as nearly as can be ascertained, 600 cubic yards, the area worked being 20yds. by 15yds., and the wash-drift was taken out for a depth of 6ft. The value of gold in the material, therefore, was £4 1s. 8d. per cubic yard. The width of the lead on this claim, so far as has been worked, varies from 30ft. to 60ft. They have still about 430ft. of the lead to work, but as the gutter or lead in the next claim above them is only from 6ft. to 8ft. in width, they may come up to this gutter or gorge any day, which will cut off the rich wash-drift. The underground workings in this claim are carried on systematically, and every precaution taken for the safety of the workmen, the ground being carefully timbered and stowed up with stones.

The next claim adjoining the Hibernian is Nelson and Johnston's, who happen to have taken up the gorge portion of the creek. There is no gold on the side of the deep gutter that would pay for working; and as the gorge in this claim is only about from 6ft. to 8ft. in width, with the bottom rising very rapidly, very little gold is left in the gutter, it having been swept through by the force of the