

MATAKANUI.

Mr. J. Ewing's Claim at the hillside is in much the same condition as it was at the end of December of last year. Very little sluicing, apparently, could have been done since my visit at that time. Since then, however, there must have been a very great addition to the land-slip from the hill, which has greatly filled the open paddock close up to where the head of the sluice-boxes were. To remove this slip was too big a job even for Mr. Ewing to tackle, so he has removed the boxes, nozzles, and pipes instead to another claim a short distance to the eastward, in which direction he has diverted his main pipe-line, and is doing good work when there is water to do it. The great want here is water.

Greenbank's Sluicing Claim.—When at this claim last year, a very large landslip had come in from the hill. Since then the hill-side has broken at a considerable elevation immediately above the first slip, which is now carried forward into the head of the tail-race, which is very deep at this spot. To sluice away this enormous body of stuff would probably occupy two years or more, and very little gold could be expected from it. I did not see Mr. Greenbank about the claim. I saw that his sluice-boxes were lifted clean down his tail-race, and the latter looked as if it had not been used for some time.

The Matakanui Sluicing Claim.—This claim is much shallower than its neighbours, and much more stony. The clay stripping, from 10ft. to 12ft., is run off direct to the flat from that level, and the wash, from 10ft. to 12ft. thick, is lifted about that height to the sluice-boxes by a hydraulic jet. The large quantity of stones from the wash is trucked up an incline-plane by a horse, and tipped at a convenient distance back on the worked-out ground. Although the usual water-supply was not to be had at the end of this year, this and two other claims were doing some sluicing at the time of my visit.

The Undaunted Company's Sluicing Claim.—I think this company must have the best water-right in the Matakanui. In the driest time of the year there appears to be enough water to keep the plant and men at work. A fair-sized block, 60ft. deep, has been sluiced away since my visit twelve months ago. The gold-bearing wash is confined to a few feet lying on a false bottom, so that the stripping may be classed as heavy, and, I may add, hard. Half the depth of the face is sluiced off through a tail-race at that level, and the other half, 30ft., is put through the pipes by the hydraulic jet. Notwithstanding this big and hard stripping, the claim is said to be paying remarkably well.

The Sugar-pot Sluicing Claim.—Nothing has been done on the southern side of this claim since the wash-up at the end of 1893. I think the result of the year's washing was not quite up to expectations. It is also evident that the bottom of the paddock is at as low a level as can be worked by the tail-race as it now stands. This part of the claim would pay handsomely if worked by a hydraulic plant and a good supply of water at a serviceable height. Some sluicing is now being done on the northern side of the claim, and it is said to be paying well.

Mr. J. Ewing's Claim, Welshman's Gully.—This claim was opened during the past twelve months, and is immediately opposite Beattie's Hotel, on the other side of the Gully, where a considerable opening has been made. The depth varies from a few feet in the flat to about 30ft. on the terrace side. The height of head-race is not great—no greater is required yet—but the pipes from the race are the largest, and therefore the best, in Central Otago. They are a size—23in. I think—that should be a pattern to other sluicing companies in the district.

Mr. Ewing's Claim, Vinegar Hill.—Since my previous visit the white wash has been followed to the north and north-east, where it is increasing in body, and dipping rapidly. It is also dipping to the north-west, in which direction some of the surface has lately been stripped off. On the same side, and beyond the stripping, a new set of pipes is being laid, forming a junction with the old and main pipe-line from the race. The new pipes are a decided improvement on the old, and will no doubt lead to the replacement of other old lines with new of a still larger size than any yet in use in the district. Much larger pipes must be got when approaching deeper levels, and the time is near at hand. In all hydraulic-mining improvements in this district Mr. Ewing is the leader, and no other ten men have done so much as he to develop this system of working in Central Otago.

Mr. Ewing's St. Bathans Claim.—The hydraulic plant has lately been altered into one lift of 92 perpendicular feet, which, I understand, did the work admirably till a fall of earth came down from the east side of the high face and filled in round the bottom pipes to a height of 12ft. In order to get to the bottom again, a fresh jet had to be inserted at 80ft.—the top of the filling—at which level it was working at the time of my visit. The dimensions of plant at the 92ft. level are as follows: Jet, 3½in.; throttle, 6in.; supply- and upcast-pipes, 15in. each. There are 18in. pipes from the head-race to the landing near the paddock. The total pressure, or head, from the race to the bottom of paddock is said to be about 500ft. I am very much pleased to hear that there are prospects and indications ahead that promise some handsome washings in the near future.

Blue Spur Gold-mining Company.—The three working-faces, one 160ft., one 150ft., and one something less in height, are making a noticeable alteration in the great body of gravel ahead. The jets are being kept well up to the work, in order to do the most work possible at the least expense in labour. This plan is not generally followed in other claims in Otago I regret to say. Although the jets and sluice-boxes are being kept well up to the working-faces, the work is, I believe, being done with every care for the safety of the workmen. It is always a pleasure to me to visit this claim, and admire the systematic method with which all the work is carried out, so as to save time and money. Every detail is thought out in order to make it a success, and, if it does not in the end prove a success, it will not be for the want of good management. I believe some valuable time was lost this year through the failure of the water-supply. The claim and plant is in splendid order, and it is reported that the gold returns are much better this year.

I have, &c.,

J. Gow,

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

Inspector of Mines.