

New dredges have been completed at Glenore, Tuapeka, Waipori, and on the Molyneux River, about Alexandra, Clyde and Cromwell, also on the Kawarau River, and at Nevis.

Taken as a whole, the dredging industry has been very successful. The number of dredging ventures which have proved absolute failures could, so far as Otago and Southland are concerned, be practically counted on the fingers of one hand. Perhaps the most conspicuous among these is the Kawarau dredge, which was built, and commenced work near Victoria Bridge, and was afterwards moved to the mouth of the Nevis. This is a modern, up-to-date dredge, but failed to get gold, and is now laid up. So far as I am aware, this is the only dredge in this district owned at Home, and its non-success will not cause British capitalists to be greatly enamoured with what is really one of our very best paying industries. As a matter of fact, snug fortunes have been made in a very short time by owners of dredges, and it is very questionable if any other class of mining property in the colony is so genuinely reliable as dredging.

That the industry will extend to other parts of the district there is no doubt. Last year I expressed my opinion as to the possibility of Cardrona being a field for dredging. Since then claims have been taken up for the purpose, and prospecting operations are now in hand.

In my last report a copy of the regulations which I had prepared in the interests of safety to persons employed on dredges was given. These were issued to all dredges, and, I am pleased to say, met with the approval of many dredge-owners and managers, whilst many expressions of thanks have been tendered me by the men employed, who have practically realised their importance and value. These regulations are now adopted as special rules under "The Mining Act, 1898."

I have visited most of the dredges at work during the year, and have noted with pleasure that greater care is exercised, and better provisions made for safety than was the case previously. Under the head of "Accidents," it will be noticed that they have been very few in comparison with previous years, notwithstanding the fact that the number of dredges has increased.

ACCIDENTS AT GOLD-MINES.

Fatal.

A fatal accident occurred at the Beaumont Co-operative Company's hydraulic claim on the 10th June, 1898, to a young man named William Thomas Moyle, who was in charge of the work of removing an elevator. I inspected the claim, and attended the adjourned inquest. From the evidence it appeared that two trenches had been cut to allow of the framing-timbers being got into position, and, as barely enough ground had been taken out, deceased was undermining a short piece, in order to get the timbers in place, when the ground gave way and buried him. In my opinion, the reason of the ground giving way was due to the frost during the night previous and the subsequent thaw during the day. A verdict of "Accidental death, caused by a fall of earth," was returned, the jury not considering any blame attachable to the management. In connection with this accident, Robert Ledlie, manager of the claim, was summoned for a breach of "The Mining Act, 1891," in not reporting the accident to the Minister and Inspector. Mr. Hawkins, S.M., inflicted a small fine.

Lee Chong, a Chinaman, aged sixty-five, was caught by a slide of earth in his tail-race at Yankee Gully, Waikaia, on the 10th August, 1898, and severely crushed, his bladder being ruptured. He died on the following day. The Coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death." This accident was not reported to me.

Under date of the 27th September, 1898, Mr. Warden Dalgleish advised me of a fatal accident to Joe Bun Yan, a Chinaman, working at a claim at Kyeburn. Deceased was caught by a fall of earth from the face of the claim and badly crushed, death resulting some two or three hours after the accident. Verdict of the jury, "Accidentally killed by a fall of earth from face of workings; no blame attached to any person."

At Round Hill (Southland), on the 6th October, 1898, Robert Stewart, employed by the Round Hill Mining Company (Limited), was drowned in No. 2 Paddock, and his body found blocking the mouth of the elevator. I inspected the claim and attended the adjourned inquest. It appeared that Stewart's shift commenced at midnight on the 5th October, a young man named Graham being Stewart's mate. Graham did not turn up to work, and the men on the offgoing shift offered to remain with Stewart, who declined their offer, saying that if his own mate did not turn up in course of an hour or so he would come for one of them. When the morning shift came on it was found that the sluicing-nozzle was playing on the face, and the paddock flooded at its lower end, but no men could be seen. On the paddock being pumped out, Stewart's body was found as described. I think deceased had been moving some obstruction from the mouth of the elevator with his hands or feet instead of with the pick provided for the purpose, and had been drawn against the mouth-piece, his body naturally blocking it. This would allow the water from the sluicing-nozzle to accumulate until Stewart was drowned. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

John Pringle, age thirty-five, a miner working a sluicing claim at Sutherland's Gully, Livingstone, was killed on the 29th November, 1898. The evidence went to show that there had been a fall of ground, and deceased and two other men were breaking the lumps with picks, when a large piece of sandstone split and broke away, falling partly on deceased and causing immediate death. Verdict of Coroner's jury: "Accidental death."

A Chinaman named Chin Mun Ock, age forty-eight, was found dead in his claim at Stockyard Gully, Galloway Run, near Alexandra, on the 1st February, 1899, and had apparently been dead about four days. From the evidence it appeared he had been killed by a fall of earth.

Ah Mow, a Chinaman, working a sluicing claim at Nevis, was killed by a fall of earth. Mr. W. W. Masters, reporting on this under date of the 25th February, 1899, says the place was a very