

pay these miners to combine in parties, each party employing a competent man to attend to the timbering of, say, two or three adjacent claims. In one instance (in addition to the Undaunted Company's mine) I noticed, with pleasure, that the timbering was very well done. A fatal accident, by which two young men were killed through neglecting to properly secure their working-place, will doubtless lead to more care in the future among men working underground.

The gold at Orepuki, like that at Round Hill, is very fine, and, owing to the very primitive and, I think, inefficient methods adopted generally for catching it, a very considerable portion must be lost. Where ground-sluicing is the method adopted at the claims the force and volume of water are too small to allow of the complete disintegration of clay and dirt. In consequence it is unlikely that all the gold is liberated, and the clay lumps and thick clayey water must carry away some gold in their flow down the tail-races at the claims, and into the main outlet channel or tail-race. This latter channel is washed up periodically, and is said to yield good returns, but I cannot for a single moment think that anything like the whole of the gold which escapes from the claims is caught there. This view is confirmed by the fact that men working on the sea-beach, near the discharge of the channel, are making very fair wages. Why the parties of miners who own this main tail-race are not more alive to their own interests appears very surprising.

I am of opinion that the several parties who hold interests in the tailings-channel might mutually arrange for the construction of an elevator with sluice-boxes and tables similar to those in use at Round Hill, which are admittedly among the most perfect appliances of their kind in use on any known alluvial goldfield in the world. Taking the channel at 4 ft. deep, and allowing 2 ft. of drop into channel at end of boxes, an elevator-lift of 14 ft. at the outside would allow of a long run of boxes with side-tables of large area, and this height would not require a greater pressure of water than is available. Such an arrangement would, in my opinion, pay well. The plant, once in position, would not need moving and re-erecting as in ordinary hydraulic claims, but be permanent, and could be attended to by one man, with a little assistance occasionally.

Waiau Beach.—The hydraulic claim here does not appear to have been a success. Operations are suspended.

West Waiau.—A small number of miners are engaged here, mostly ground-sluicing. Fairly good results are said to be obtained.

There are still several Chinese diggers scattered about Orepuki and district; their number appears to be gradually decreasing.

Preservation Inlet.

Sealer's Creek.—A water-race 90 chains in length, taking its water from Sealer's Creek, has been constructed, and at end of March the pipe-line was being laid. It is intended to work an area of ground here by hydraulicking. As the work is fairly well forward, mining operations are expected to commence early in May. Mr. F. McKenzie is in charge. Twelve men employed.

Four men at Gulche's Head (the Neck), four on Coal Island, and two at Digger's Creek practically comprise the remnant of the numerous small parties who were attracted to the district by the glowing reports of some six or seven years ago. So far as I can learn, they are only making a bare living.

Remarks on other claims in the southern district will be found in the report of Mr. E. R. Green, Inspector of Mines.

Accidents.

The quartz-mines of the district have been entirely free from accidents of a serious nature during the year, only one or two accidents of a minor character having been reported.

The following accidents occurred at, or at works in connection with, alluvial mines and diggings:—

18th April, 1899.—John Patterson and Alexander Beatson were accidentally killed by a fall of earth in Patterson and party's claim at West Waiau.

29th April, 1899.—Ly Gee Yup, a Chinese miner, sixty-two years old, was found under a fall of earth in his claim at Waikaia. The man had been missing for a week, and was dead when found.

22nd June, 1899.—John Clarke, employed in the construction of a water-race from Deep Creek (a tributary of the Waipori River) for the Golden Crescent Sluicing Company (Limited), Wetherstone's, Lawrence, lost both eyes owing to the explosion of a charge of dynamite which had evidently been left in a drill-hole some months previous, and of which Clarke was not cognisant. The work at this place had been standing for some time. It is thought that Clarke, who was clearing away the ground loosened by shots fired the day previous, had with his pick struck a primed charge which had been inadvertently left when the work was formerly in progress, and that the drill-hole had been obscured. Personal inspection satisfied me that there was no carelessness on the part of Clarke or the man in charge at the time of the accident.

15th July, 1899.—Sin Sing, a Chinese miner at Macrae's, working his claim single-handed, was accidentally killed by a fall of earth.

1st August, 1899.—John and Alexander Pearson were accidentally killed by a fall of roof in their claim at Orepuki. The accident was owing to neglect on the part of deceased to set timber at the working-face. There was an abundance of timber quite handy.

3rd August, 1899.—Michael Hickey, a raceman employed by the Golden Key Company at Waipori, was accidentally killed by a fall of rock on the company's water-race. Deceased, with the manager, was engaged in some repairs to the race, and whilst waiting for some material for which deceased had sent his son a piece of rock fell without warning. It was considered that the fall of rock was occasioned as the result of recent heavy frosts, followed by a rapid thaw.

15th August, 1899.—Kong Lip (fifty-six years of age), a Chinese miner, was killed by an explosion of dynamite in his claim at Moke Creek. Deceased was alone at the time of the accident, and there was no evidence at the Coroner's inquest to show how the explosion occurred.