

for the work have recently sued the trustees of this tunnel for work done, and the matter is still unsettled. The correct levels have not been kept by the contractors in the latter portion of the work done by them, and I refused to certify to the work because it was not done in accordance with the specification.

Another shaft will have to be put down a short distance beyond the present face, as it will soon be too far to truck the stuff, and the air is now getting bad. Authority has been given by the Mines Department for another shaft, but, owing to the dispute between the contractors and the trustees, no action has been taken in the matter.

GENERAL.

A very large number of special claims and prospecting areas have recently been granted in this district as dredging claims, and a still larger number are being applied for. That considerable areas of ground on the coast will pay for dredging is doubtless correct, but at the same time it is certain that a large number of the areas taken up will never have dredges at work on them, and many of those that do will be failures.

Companies have been floated to work ground that is totally unprospected and of unknown depth, and the promoters intend making a rise on the scrip market, and not from gold obtained from the ground. The splendid returns from dredging in Otago, and the ready manner in which scrip is disposed of all over the colony, is the cause of the present boom in dredging on the coast, and persons putting money into dredging as an investment would do well to be cautious.

I have, &c.,

ALEXANDER AITKEN, Manager, Water-races.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

[For table showing the result of working the Kumara Water-race for seventeen years, see page 158A.]

MOUNT IDA WATER-RACE.

Mr. R. MURRAY, Manager, Mount Ida Water-race, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Mines Department, Wellington.

SIR,—

Naseby, 19th April, 1900.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Mount Ida and Blackstone Hill Water-races for the year ending the 31st March, 1900:—

Mount Ida Water-race.

The total sales of water from this race during the year amounted to £1,870 15s. 6d., and the expenditure on maintenance and repairs for the same period £1,325 12s. 2d. The total cash received was £1,896 1s. 7d., leaving a balance in favour of the race of £570 9s. 5d.; probably a half of this amount should be placed the supplemented supply from the reservoir. On account of payment in advance free water to the value of £18 17s. 3d. was supplied. Free water to the value of £16 12s. 9d. was supplied to assist in opening up new claims, and free water for washing up was also supplied to the value of £161 6s. 1d. The total value of water supplied from this race during the year was £2,067 11s. 7d. The average number of mines supplied with water was 49·75, about the same number as last year. The approximate quantity of gold obtained by parties using water from this race was 3,392 oz., valued at £13,059 4s. From the 1st April to the 7th July the water-supply was sufficient to keep the miners supplied during the daytime.

The winter set in very early. It commenced to snow on the range on the 23rd May, continuing to the 26th, when frosty weather set in. During this period a small break occurred in Store Gully. On the 7th July it began to snow at noon so heavily that by half-past 2 next morning it completely choked off the water in the race. During this short period fully 10 in. of snow fell—the heaviest one fall in so short a time since 1895. From this date to the end of August all mining operations were at a standstill. The old hands say that the frost was the hardest they ever experienced here—27° on the night of the 24th July. On the 11th August, on an exposed dam, I bored through the ice in two different places and found a thickness of 9½ in. of ice. I started to clean out the race on the 4th September. Got all the strength at the reservoir until they were able to make a start there. Had the water from the East Eweburn and reservoir on on the 12th. After having got as far as Long Gully by the 24th (34-mile peg) it began to snow again, fully 1 ft. falling. The men had to be knocked off, and no further cleaning could be done until the 3rd October, and finished on the 5th November.

The retimbering (twenty-three sets) of a portion of the tunnel at the East Eweburn was done during the winter by the maintenance men. This tunnel is now fairly secured, and should give no trouble for a good many years. The greater portion of the flume crossing Main Gully was strengthened, and sole-plates put under several of the legs. With the exception of two small breaks in Store Gully, and two about a mile above Pearce's Gorge Creek, the race has been kept in fair working-order by the maintenance men. The quantity stored in the reservoir kept up the supply during the period of the breaks.

The water in the reservoir supplementing the race-water having run down on the 6th March, I had the water in the race turned off, and started to widen the race from the reservoir to Coal-pit Dam, giving it a thorough cleaning and repairing from Home Gully to Coal-pit, a distance of five miles and a half. About half of the length of the West Eweburn sideing and Butcher Gully, where almost all the sod-work has to be done, was finished by the end of the month. The water was off two days at Christmas, and during the Naseby races in February.

There were nine elevating claims (the same number as last year) supplied with water.