

is low enough to allow tailings to discharge from the race. They frequently have to submit to periods of enforced idleness through freshes and floods in the Buller River; but despite this heavy handicap their average earnings have been about £4 per man per week since they commenced sluicing.

Peterson and party have a good claim about half a mile lower down the river than Hill and party's. They have constructed a tail-race about 500 ft. long at a lower level than Hill's race, and they are consequently thrown idle whenever the Buller River rises a couple of feet.

Kennedy's Claim adjoins Hill and party's. The ground is considered fairly rich, but, like nearly all the other claims in this locality, much time is lost through the Buller River rising and blocking up the outlet from the tail-race.

Fitten and party's claim is next up the river. Their tail-race being at a higher level and their water-supply larger than some of the adjoining claims, they are less liable to stoppages, and are consequently getting a good return for their labour and outlay. The ground in this locality is undoubtedly rich, and I think would pay handsomely if worked by means of elevating plant.

AHAURA DISTRICT.

Noble's, Duffer's, and Half-ounce Creeks.

The population in the above districts remains about stationary. There has been no new find in alluvial mining during past twelve months. There have been three dredges built and working in Grey River. Two have closed down—one apparently for good, the other in order to finance. The one at work (Great Lead Gold-dredging Company's dredge) has done about a week's work, therefore nothing can be said as to prospects of success or otherwise. There are also two dredging companies floated to work at Duffer's and Sullivan's Creek, a tributary of Duffer's Creek.

Orwell Creek.

The population at Orwell Creek remains about same—a slight increase consequent on the two dredges at work. Erickson's Reward has been giving moderate returns for some time (20 oz. to 30 oz.), and is likely to improve, as layer of pug seems to get thinner towards upper boundary of claim. Orwell Creek dredge has been at work about two months, but so far has not reached bottom. Depth reached, about 48 ft.; maximum depth of ground, 60 ft.

There has been no new find in respect to alluvial ground.

Ahaura.

Several new claims have been opened along north bank of Ahaura River, mostly by Chinese, with very good results. There is a large area of ground along the banks of river of payable nature if water for sluicing purposes were available.

A dredge has been at work in river for about six months past, with variable results. The dredge lacked power, and has sunk in flood. Watterson's Consols Company's pontoons also sank. Whether any way damaged is not ascertained at present.

The population remains about stationary.

Nelson Creek.

There has been no new find in alluvial ground in this district during past twelve months. There is a considerable amount of sluicing carried on, water at all times being plentiful.

There are now five dredges built—viz., Nelson Creek, Pactolus, Victory, Aldinga, and Trafalgar. The two first named have so far given the best yields obtained on the West Coast. The contracts for erecting machinery on the others have been let, and the whole are expected to be at work within the next three months.

Moonlight.

The population in this district continues about the same.

No new ground of any extent has been opened during the past year. The projected water-races to be constructed by the Shetland Terrace Sluicing Company should make a great change for the better, and open up a considerable area of ground for working.

There are two dredges being built in the creek. The contract for erection of machinery on one has been let.

Sluicing is still carried on extensively at Healey's Gully, and when the new water-race now under construction by the Montgomery Terrace Sluicing Company is completed a large area of ground will be commanded by same and worked.

Blackball.

There is a slight increase of population in this district, mostly located at the township.

There has been no new find in respect to alluvial.

There has been one dredge working at the foot of Blackball and Ford's Creeks, but only indifferent success has been met with. It has been contended that this is mostly through the want of power in engine and the shortness of ladder to reach the bottom.

No Town and Red Jack's Creek.

There have been no new finds in these districts.

There is one dredge working in each creek. The No Town has only just commenced work, and therefore it is premature to speak with any certainty about it. The dredge at Red Jack's Creek has been working for about seven weeks past, and the returns have not been good. Considering locality, should be much better.

The following shows the condition of the dredges in the district: Waipuna—Mosquito, working; Grey Consolidated, temporarily stopped; Waipuna, closed down; Great Lead and Totara Flat, working. Orwell Creek—Erickson's Reward and Orwell Creek, working. Ahaura—