

Other mining ventures in this district are the dredges. The Kohinoor is the only one at work, having just started. This is one of the most powerful dredges on the Coast, and is at present opening out the claim at the mouth of Redman's Creek. The prospect obtained by boring with the Keystone borer (6 in. pipes) showed very rich wash on the 37 ft. bottom, and it was to work this that the present dredge was built; but the borer proved that what the old miner considered the main bottom was only a false bottom, the bore going down 26 ft. through very rich wash before the bed-rock was reached. This will necessitate the building of a more powerful dredge, as the present plant can only work to 45 ft. or 50 ft. This deep ground is in the bed of the Mikonui River, the ground in Redman's Creek being only 40 ft. This the present dredge will be able to work, leaving the deeper ground for a more powerful plant.

The Prince of Wales dredge at Donohue's is not yet out of the hands of the contractor, but good progress is being made with the erection of the machinery. This claim is already opened up, and the dredge will get to work on a good face as soon as she starts. The Day Dawn dredge, in Donnelly's Creek, after having their pontoon built for some time, are at a standstill for want of the machinery—insufficient capital. However, I understand they have got over their financial difficulties, and the erection of the plant will now be proceeded with.

The Totara dredge has ceased working for some time, and is now for sale. As this was a private company, I cannot say how much gold was won; but I understood that when the machine was at work they were on fairly good gold, but the plant was unable to deal with the washdirt in a satisfactory manner, a more powerful plant being necessary.

A special claim on the Alymer lead has part of their plant on the ground, and are about calling for tenders for the erection of same. This being a beach claim, there will be less difficulty in dealing with the auriferous wash.

On the south side of the Mikonui River, what is known as McLeod's Terrace has been taken up as a special sluicing claim, 100 acres. This terrace, lying on the western slope of Mount Rangitoto, has been known to carry gold, and has been prospected by various parties many years ago, but the difficulty of getting water on to the ground was the great drawback. Some time ago McLeod and party, on behalf of a Wanganui syndicate, undertook to prospect the ground, and for this purpose drove a tunnel 154 ft. into the terrace. This tunnel was driven through what appears to be glacial silt, distinctly laminated, and standing at an angle of 43 degrees. At 154 ft. they struck the washdirt, and out of a 6 ft. jump-up washed 2 yards of dirt, giving a return of 22 gr. of gold. A shaft was also sunk about 28 ft. on the south-west side of the claim, with similar results. The washdirt is similar to that found on the Mont d'Or, Ross, and is favourably situated for sluicing, there being plenty of fall and tailing-room in the bed of the Mikonui River. Prospects can be got on the surface, but before going to great expense it would be wise to sink a few more trial shafts and prove the ground thoroughly. The company propose taking eighty heads of water from the Waitaha River. Length of race, from nine to ten miles. A portion of the race has been surveyed, but unforeseen difficulties have arisen that may modify their plans. This is a very promising piece of country, and will warrant further expenditure.

Nothing is being done in quartz-mining. The last work done in this direction was the driving of a tunnel in one of the spurs of Mount Greenland by the late well-known prospector Antonia Zala, who had been at work for a number of years, but without results.

OKARITO SUB-DISTRICT.

The principal mining operations going on in this district are on the Westland Dredging and Sluicing Company's claims on the Waiho. The company's claims consist of about 170 acres, situate near the Waiho River. The company is registered in England under the English Joint-stock Companies Act. During the year the company has spent £2,000 in race-extensions and race-improvements, and in providing plant for an efficient hydraulic elevator to work the flat on the banks of the river. Want of steam communication to carry this plant to Okarito has hindered operations in this direction very considerably, otherwise this plant might now be at work. In sluicing the company has found great difficulty in coping with the large stones and boulders. To deal with these a derrick has been ordered from a pattern by Mr. Mace, of Collingwood. From practical experience of the working of these derricks (which are operated by the Pelton wheel), it is confidently expected that this serious stone difficulty will be got over, and the remaining wash will then be easily dealt with by the water, and the result should be a handsome return of gold as indicated by the prospects obtained in the face. Owing to the difficulties of transit the elevation plant will be some time yet before it is ready to commence work. A small sawmill plant has been erected to cut timber required by the company, the whole plant being worked by water.

A small dredging plant has been placed on the Okarito Lagoon for prospecting purposes; but work has been suspended owing, I understand, to financial difficulties.

On the Five-mile a special claim of 100 acres has been taken up on the north end of the beach. The water from Alpine Lake, 310 ft. above sea-level, is to be brought down two miles and a half in pipes, and hydraulic elevators erected. This should prove a payable venture if properly handled.

Other dredging claims are held further south, and some of them are under option to investors. A few men are still working on the beaches and in the back gullies, but nothing new has been found.

There are several claims on the Saltwater, and a Wanganui company is calling tenders for the erection of a suitable plant to work same. The engine and boiler are already on the ground.

There is very little to report from the extreme south. The means of communication are so uncertain and the want of tracks is so well known that many men, who would otherwise be glad to go out prospecting if any such inducements were held out to them, under present circumstances prefer to take their chances in the older and more settled districts.