

has been extended to the Inside lead and washing started there last November. The returns at once showed a decided improvement, and should the ground not become hard or cemented, the company will probably enjoy a richly deserved spell of prosperity.

The Shamrock and Golden Sand Claims have not been worked during the year; and the Virgin Flat Company after a long struggle has shut down temporarily. There is a splendid plant on the ground, an ample water-supply, but apparently up to the present the wash-dirt has not been found to be payable.

Waimangaroa.

The Britannia Gold-mining Company (Limited).—Several small blocks of stone were met in levels 4 and 5, but the quality was not very good. However, the operations for the past year paid all expenses, including the cost of an additional water-supply, and better stone has been recently cut in No. 5 level. There is every indication that the mine will give better returns in the immediate future.

Stony Creek Gold-mining Company (Limited).—This company has not crushed any stone during the year. The working-reef cut out and only prospecting-work has been done since. Several small parties are working on the banks and in the bed of the Waimangaroa River. As they stay on year after year, it is evident that they must at least be making a good living. All dredging operations in this neighbourhood have been discontinued. The dredges have been sold, and the claims abandoned or protected.

Mokihinui.

The Red Queen Gold-mining Company (Limited).—After going to heavy expense in providing a quartz-crushing plant with all accessories, the claim has been closed down and the company is in liquidation. The stone taken out was fairly rich, but the reef is so small and the faults so many, that returns did not cover working-expenses.

All dredging claims taken up in the Mokihinui River and its tributaries have been abandoned.

Old Diggings.

There are now only three small parties of miners working on the banks of the Buller River at this old-established field. The wash is evidently rather poor, because large quantities are being removed by hydraulic sluicing, and yet the parties are reported to be barely making wages.

Charleston.

Back Lead.—This famous lead was at one time the best-paying field in the Charleston district, but at present it supports only eight parties of miners, five of which are ground-sluicing, and three crushing cement. These parties have been continuously employed during the year, and have worked a considerable area, but the returns are far from equal to those of former years.

Powell's Claim at the Nine-mile Beach has been steadily worked, and it is understood that the returns have been uniformly good.

The beachcombers in the same locality—or the greater number of them—have had a favourable year.

The "Fly-catchers" in Darkie's Creek still keep their tables collecting fine gold as in the past and their returns depend altogether upon the quantity and quality of the tailings sluiced into the creek above them.

The Charleston Beach Sluicing Company at the mouth of the Totara River have constructed a race and expect to be sluicing shortly. The claim will be worked practically in the same way as Powell's, and it is to be hoped it will prove equally payable.

The mining population of Charleston is decreasing year by year, and, unless large sums of money are expended in working auriferous ground where water is obtainable only by considerable outlay of capital, the district will in the course of time cease to be a gold-mining centre.

Brown's Terrace.—Two parties only are now working here both crushing cement and getting fair returns. There is a large area of ground in this neighbourhood which is considered payable, but the heavy outlay required to provide a sufficient water-supply prevents working-miners from taking it up.

Croninville.

The small parties of miners who have worked in this locality for many years past have now suspended operations, having recently sold their mining privileges to the Charleston Beach-sluicing Company.

AHAURA DISTRICT.

Half-ounce and Duffer's Creeks.—There has been no change in this district during the last twelve months. The population remains about the same. Two dredges are working in the locality; one has been working for some time with moderate returns, the other has only lately started.

Noble's and Mosquito Creek.—The population in this district remains about the same. No new ground has been opened up. Two dredges are working in Mosquito Creek. One, the Mosquito, has been at work for about fifteen months, obtaining on an average of between 40 oz. and 50 oz. of gold per week, and since starting has paid £1,500 in dividends. The Mosquito No 2 dredge started work in June last, but so far the returns have been only moderate.

Orwell Creek.—The population has fallen away considerably in this locality during the year. The two dredges that were at work have closed down. One has been removed, while the other has been sold,