

obtained in the interior of the island, and the country of the Upper Molyneux or Clutha River was particularly indicated as a gold-bearing locality.

Search for Gold in
Clutha River.

2. At a later period, other Natives confirmed these statements; and at least one party of settlers attempted to discover the El Dorado asserted to exist. Mr. Thomas B. Archibald, of the Pomahaka, has kindly favored me with a letter, dated 29th September, 1862, from which I make the following extract respecting this expedition, in which that gentleman was himself an active agent:—

Mr. Archibald's
statement.

"Nearly all the Maori residents at the Molyneux at the time of our excursion were strangers, having been only a few years in the place. There were only a man and a woman who knew the country between the mouth of the River and the Lakes. The man, Raki Raki, had resided on the Wakatipu Lake, but had left many years ago. He left a brother, who had two wives, behind, and who, he said, were the only Maories in the interior. He told me he once picked up a piece of 'simon' (gold) about the size of a small potato on the banks of the Molyneux, but did not know its value, and he threw it into the river. They told us they had seen the small 'simon' on the sides of the river, where three canoes had been lying. On seeing a small sample of gold (which, I think, Mr. Meredith brought down from Tasmania, about the beginning of 1852) the Natives were the more convinced we should find it in the sands of the Molyneux. As some of us were on the eve of starting for Australia, we thought we would give the river a trial first, more especially as we had the services of a Californian miner, who had left a whaling vessel in the Bay. We made a party of five, and started up the river, in March, 1852, in a whaleboat which I brought from Dunedin. We prospected the bars and banks of the river, as far as a creek now named the Beaumont. As none of us knew anything about gold-seeking, except the American, and getting nothing more than the color, we resolved to return, after having nearly a three weeks' cruise, the more so as the river seemed a succession of rapids, which it was difficult to get the boat through. If our Californian miner had been the practical hand he represented himself to be, I have no doubt we would have been successful at least in getting a good prospect."

Gold found by set-
tlers.

3. Gold was also found in various parts of the Province by the settlers themselves, but the fact was either suppressed, as likely to produce mischievous results, or neglected, as of trivial import. I have been shown a small quantity of fine, scaly gold, which was procured in 1853, in the neighbourhood of the remarkable chert rocks known as the Fortifications.*

First official Report,
1856.

4. The first official intimation of the discovery of auriferous deposits in Otago appears to have emanated from Mr. C. W. Ligar, formerly Surveyor, or Surveyor-General of New Zealand, and who now holds the same office in the Colony of Victoria. A letter written by that gentleman in 1856 to the then Superintendent Captain Cargill, contains the following passage:—"In my recent visit to the south part of the Province of Otago, I found gold very generally distributed in the gravel and sand of the Mataura River, at Tuturau; and from the geological character of the district, I am of opinion that a remunerative gold-field exists in the neighbourhood."

Prospecting dis-
couraged.

5. No effort was ever made to test the value of this discovery. Indeed, the policy of the Government at that period appears to have been adverse to the encouragement of what is termed "prospecting;" for the then Superintendent, in his address to the Provincial Council (December, 1856), commenting upon Mr. Ligar's statement, observes that—

"In no circumstances would it be advisable to allow a searcher to go upon a run without leave of the lessee, or upon a Native reserve without leave of the Natives."

Rumours.

6. Still, from time to time, vague rumours were circulated of gold being found in the mountain streams, and individuals occasionally brought into Dunedin small quantities of the precious metals. These circumstances, however, attracted very little attention, for the sufficient reason that the "finds" were inconsiderable. The Chief Surveyor, Mr. Thompson, in his Report on the Reconnaissance Survey of the Southern Districts, states that "the existence of gold is undoubted," but adds,—

"I have nowhere yet known of individual success at the occupation of gold washing or digging as a business, nor have I seen above the small fraction of an ounce in the hands of any one."

Mr. Thompson tried the sands and rocks for gold in various localities without success; but when it is considered that his only implements were knives and pannikins, this result is not surprising. However, on the Waiau River, near the Limestone Gorge, one of his assistants obtained a single speck, the residue of the sands consisting of black grains, probably magnetic iron, "and a few small crystals not unlike the garnet."

Waiau River.

Garvie's Report,
1857-8.

7. More ample confirmation of the presence of gold was at hand. In the months of October and November, 1857, and during the early part of 1858, Mr. Alexander Garvie, late Assistant Surveyor, executed a reconnaissance survey of the South-eastern Districts, and in his very full and complete report he remarks that—

"The eastern portion, from the coast to the Manuherikia, appears to be composed almost entirely of rocks belonging to the mica-schist systems. Towards the south-west, clay, slate, and altered rocks appear, as at Tapanui, the lower part of the Pomahaka, and the Clutha, below the Tuapeka. * * * Traces of gold were found in the gravel of several of the streams and rivers. The trials were all made on the very surface, at such odd times as would not interrupt the proper work of the survey, by one of the party who happened to have previously visited the Australian gold-fields. The gold found was in every case small and scaly, varying from the

* It is in this locality that the West Taeiri gold-field is situated.