

## NORTH ISLAND MINING GENERALLY.

## COROMANDEL.

Gold was first discovered in this district in 1852 by C. Ring, in a creek which now bears his name; but little or no work was done to prospect for the precious metal for eleven years after that. It was not until the rich finds in Wetherstone's, Waitahuna, and Gabriel's Gully, in Otago, were attracting the attention of the mining community from every part of this and the adjacent colonies that the rush set in for Coromandel. Ever since this period the district has maintained a fair mining population, and very rich auriferous-quartz lodes and leaders have from time to time been discovered. The general characteristic of this field is that the rich deposits of gold are generally found in small leaders branching off from the foot-wall of the main lodes; still, rich patches of gold have been got in some of the main lodes—for instance, in the Tokatea Mine and the Union Beach Company's ground.

The Tokatea Hill is interstratified with a mass of quartz leaders running in every direction, some of which are only like a thread in places, but, when followed up, occasionally widen out to 2in. and 4in. thick. Even in some of the small threads almost solid gold is sometimes in the seam. Claims have from time to time been worked and abandoned, the owners believing them to be worked out; others have taken them up, and taken out as much, and sometimes more, gold than the original holders. Still, this hill is being worked with success, and continues to pay some of the holders of the ground handsome profits.

This is a portion of the district that is more suitable for individual miners than for large companies, as the leaders are very thin, and a great deal of prospecting has to be done, there being no occasion for a large outlay in plant. The quartz is very rich, but there is no large body of it, requiring expensive crushing-machinery to be erected. It takes a considerable time to get even 10 tons of quartz from these leaders. The rich specimens are all picked out as the leaders are worked, and the rest stacked until a quantity is obtained, when it is then taken to the crushing-battery on the Coromandel side of the range. A great deal of the quartz from these leaders averages 10oz. of gold to the ton; but the quantity takes a long time to obtain. A stranger visiting the quartz-workings on Tokatea Ranges would compare them to a complete network of rabbit-warrens, burrowed in every direction. Quartz-mining here requires men acquainted with the district. There are many excellent miners, well acquainted with the mode of working large mines, that would not be successful here for a time, until they attained a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of the district, to enable them to adopt an economical method of working; and the same could be said of the quartz-miners in this district if they were to engage in this branch of mining in other parts of the colony, especially in the Middle Island. Many failures of quartz companies all over the colony may be attributed to this reason. They engage mine-managers holding high testimonials from England and elsewhere, without having any knowledge of the character of the lodes in a particular district, and before that knowledge is obtained they open out the mine in a systematic manner, such as they have been accustomed to, and find, when it is too late, that large sums of money have not been judiciously expended. The success of quartz-mining companies depends in a great measure on the skill and knowledge of the mine-manager, who ought to have local experience of the character of the lodes in the particular district where the mine he has charge of is situate.

There are about fifty individual miners employed on the Tokatea Range, and, from what I could learn, all are making fair wages; but they also informed me that they sometimes have to work for six and twelve months prospecting on the small leaders before they get paid for their labour. The same remarks apply to Waikoromiko, which is a continuation of the Tokatea Range, and the same character of country.

Recently a new discovery has been made by Mr. McGregor in the Waikoromiko District. He has been for some time past prospecting with aid under the prospecting regulations. He discovered a very rich leader on the top of a high spur at the head of the Waikoromiko Creek, about three miles from the Tokatea Saddle. The leader is about 8in. in thickness, and contains very rich specimens on the surface; but, having only been lately discovered, nothing is known respecting it beyond what is seen on the surface. If the leader continues to go down, it is situate in a very favourable place for working—1,000ft. of backs can easily be got by a short distance of tunnelling. Mr. McGregor has been prospecting in this locality for the last eighteen months, and from the appearance of the stone that he has now got is likely to be well rewarded for all his labour. It was from this locality that a very rich specimen was obtained, which was forwarded to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition.

This district has so far proved extremely patchy. The gold has not gone down to any great depth. Whether this new find will be an exception to the general character of the district remains yet to be proved.

*Tokatea Company.*—This company's ground is situate on the Tokatea Range. In former years a large amount of gold was taken from their mine. Latterly they have driven a low-level tunnel for nearly 3,000ft. about 800ft. underneath the crown of the hill; but, so far, no payable lode has yet been got. The upper levels on the lode they were formerly working on are now nearly worked out, a few tributors being engaged in taking out the remaining blocks. In the low level the quartz lode is greatly broken up, and filled with mullock; but the manager informed me that there is payable quartz underneath the foot of a portion of this level, which cannot be worked, on account of the large body of water there is to contend with, until another tunnel is constructed, which would require to be about 4,000ft. long; but the company is not in a position at the present time to incur so large an expenditure as this would require. They have commenced to prospect on the third level, and have constructed a tunnel, which was, at the time of my visit, 285ft. in length, with a view of cutting a large reef that can be traced on the surface for a long distance, but which does not contain sufficient