

ALLUVIAL MINING.

I will now, Sir, refer to the alluvial mining which may be said to include hydraulic-sluicing. This class of mining is entirely confined to the Middle and South Island, and, indeed, there are so few mines in the South or Stewart Island, that the alluvial goldfields may be said to be confined to Otago and the West Coast. There are about 10,393 miners actively engaged in this branch of the gold-mining industry, of which number 2,967 are Chinese, and nearly three-fourths of the gold produced in the colony last year was obtained from the auriferous alluvial drifts. Notwithstanding that a large number of miners have been continuously engaged in this class of mining since the discovery of gold in New Zealand, there are still existing extensive areas of country covered with auriferous ground which will afford remunerative employment to a large population for many years if worked with modern appliances. A great deal of the shallow and easily-worked ground has been gone over; but even after some of these places have been worked two or three times they are found to yield sufficient gold to pay for reworking them by hydraulic-sluicing where plenty of water is available. Ground is now taken up and worked with profit which a few years ago was considered valueless. Indeed it may be said that the number of men who could be profitably engaged in working the auriferous drifts is only limited by the quantity of available water which could be taken to command and work the ground.

MAHAKIPAWA.

The most recently discovered field—Mahakipawa—suffered very much in prosperity last year by the wet season, which caused a succession of floods in the creek in which the principal workings are being carried on. Notwithstanding this, a considerable quantity of gold was obtained from this field last year for the number of men employed. The whole of the creek claims on Crown lands will be worked out within twelve months if it is moderately fine weather; but the lead or run of gold-bearing drift having been traced out of the creek-bed into the flat, which is comprised in Mr. Cullen's freehold, the field may last a considerable time. However, if the gold continues to go down the flat, heavier pumping machinery will have to be erected than is now used, as it is found there is a large quantity of water to contend with in the ground.

A new discovery of auriferous ground was made by four miners in Duncan's Gully, about two miles from Mahakipawa, nearer Queen Charlotte Sound, in February last, the prospectors getting one piece of gold about an ounce in weight, and several smaller pieces, the sinking being about 24ft. This discovery is about two miles and a half back from the Grove—Mahakipawa Road, and about one mile and a quarter up the gully above Mr. Duncan's freehold. Some other claims were bottomed higher up than the Prospectors, and gold got; but the wet weather coming on flooded the whole of them, and very little work has been done since to prove whether there is any extent of ground or not that will pay for working.

WEST COAST.

The quantity of gold produced from the West Coast last year was 118,158oz., representing a value of £472,672. Of this quantity, about 90,000oz. was obtained from the alluvial workings, in which 5,080 miners were employed—namely, 3,779 Europeans, and 1,301 Chinese. The whole of the West Coast may be said to contain auriferous-drift deposits, as well as lodes in which gold, silver, and other metalliferous ores are found; but owing to the rough and broken nature of the country, which is also covered with a dense forest, requiring metalled roads and horse-tracks to be constructed before provisions and supplies can be conveyed to those residing in it, the back and south portion of that part of the colony has hardly ever been prospected to any extent. Indeed, there are many parts of the West Coast that have never yet been trodden by man. Yet gold is found in almost the whole of the river-beds between Collingwood and Big Bay.

WESTPORT.

There are a few miners still working on the ocean-beach between the Buller and the Mokihinui River, but most of the mining population is between Westport and Fox's River, near Brighton. The quantity of gold obtained in the Westport district last year was 14,148oz., valued at £56,540. There is an extensive area of ground, in which numerous leads or runs of gold-bearing drifts have been found—at Addison's, Croninville, and Charleston. At the latter place the Buller County Council is bringing in an additional supply of water for the miners from the Four-mile Creek, as it is considered by those in this locality that, with a plentiful supply, ground which was considered valueless in the early days of the field can now be made,