

NORTH BEACH.

Individual miners, or "hatters," to the number of thirty or forty, are at work on this beach, but as a rule they only make a bare existence.

The New Era Company, Limited, of Dunedin, has been dredging in the lagoons at the back of the beach, and, after spending several thousand pounds in plant, suspended operations owing to the unremunerative returns obtained. The result of my inquiries indicate that an insufficient spread of tables for washing the sand lifted is one of the main factors to which want of success may be attributed. It is thought probable that with a larger expanse of tables on shore, instead of afloat, as at present, a fair measure of success might be achieved.

OLD DIGGINGS.

This field derives its name from the fact that gold was obtained there in the very early days, when Mr. John Rochfort first penetrated the wilds of the Buller Valley on an exploring expedition from Nelson to the West Coast. The Old Diggings are situated on the north bank of the Buller River, about twenty miles from Westport. Ever since that time gold has been obtained sufficient to encourage a good many miners to continue operations there, and with payable results.

The White Cliffs Company put a dredge on the Buller River in this locality, at the cost of several thousand pounds, but unfortunately it turned out a disastrous failure. After working a short time the dredge became a total wreck during a flood in the river, presumably for want of proper care and vigilance, the company went into liquidation, and the dredge was sold for £40. What the purchaser intends doing with it is not yet known.

LYELL.

Nothing of any great importance has occurred in this locality during the year. The United Alpine Mine has been kept steadily at work, and given employment to a large number of men. Most of the necessary dead work involved in opening up and securing the mine is now completed, and the work of taking out the stone has been let by contract, which will reduce the company's expenditure, and it is believed will allow a good margin for profit. The battery has been kept continuously employed, and as a result the sum of £5,600 has been distributed amongst the shareholders. From the latter end of 1891 until the last month the stone treated was of rather poor quality, and there was in consequence a break in the monthly dividends. The existence of sufficient stone to keep the battery going for several years has been proved, and as the mine is now in thorough working order, the shareholders have every reason, should the stone only keep at its present quality, to expect regular monthly dividends for a long time to come.

In the Croesus Mine a few hands were employed prospecting, and a trial crushing was taken by them out of a block of stone which had been left underfoot when the company ceased working. The result, 5oz. from 20 tons of stone, was not very encouraging, and operations were again suspended, and I believe it is the intention of the shareholders to wind up the company.

From the Tyrconnell and United Italy Companies' claims good crushings were obtained during the past year, the former yielding 13oz. to the ton, and the latter over 3oz. Very good stone is still being met with in the Tyrconnell, but the United Italy leader has run out, and the tributers are now engaged prospecting.

In the Lyell Creek Extended Company's claim the tunnel is being driven by wages-men.

MURCHISON.

The Matakītaki, Maruia and Glenroy Valleys, and Blue Duck Creek still support a considerable population, including a large number of Chinese. Two large steam dredges have been constructed, one being placed on the Matakītaki River and the other on the Buller River at Fern Flat; but, so far as I can learn at present, their operations have not been successful, owing chiefly to the rough character of the river-bed, and consequently the frequent breakage of the machinery.

Mining at the Owen has completely collapsed, and every mining lease, &c., has been cancelled.

COLLINGWOOD.

The only companies in this district are the Johnston's United and the Red Hill. The former company have continued to work throughout the year and paid in dividends the sum of £1,621 5s. 3d., and they crushed during the year 5,227 tons of quartz, and the capital paid up is £12,409 5s. 11d. The mine has been put into thorough working order, but I regret to say the stone crushed recently did not come up to expectations.

The Red Hill Company, with a paid-up capital of £22,370, including £4,895 debenture capital, have done very little work during the year owing to want of further capital, which they are unable to raise, and the property of the company was transferred to trustees for the debenture-holders. The property consists of five gold-mining leases, containing an area of 64 acres 2 roods 14 perches, and two mineral leases of 571 acres and 30 perches and 640 acres, also numerous water-rights, &c. This property is about to be sold, and it is stated another company is being formed in England to purchase it; but this statement requires confirmation. As nothing whatever has been done on the mineral leaseholds, I have suggested to the Land Board that those leases should be cancelled.

The area held under licensed holdings, special claims, and gold-mining leases in this district on the 31st March, 1891, was 516 acres and 20 perches, and on the 31st March, 1892, 295 acres 3 roods 10 perches. This reduction may be accounted for by the supposed discovery of a silver lode at Anakaka, which was disappointing, and the surrender of licenses in consequence, and also to the abandonment of the river-dredging project. The approximate area held under miners' rights in 1891 was 40 acres, and in 1892 46 acres. No new discoveries have been reported.