

KUAOTUNU.

This is the most promising field in the Coromandel County. The lodes do not contain rich ore, but their great width, and the easy means of transporting the ore from the mines to the crushing-batteries in most of the principal claims, make them payable ventures. At the Try Fluke Company's claim they have abandoned grinding and amalgamating the tailings in pans, and have erected a Cassel plant, and are now treating the tailings by the cyanide process. The first cleaning-up gave them sufficient money, within a few pounds, to pay for the erection of the plant, after defraying all expenses in connection with working. Since this plant was erected, another plant has been put up at the Great Mercury Company's claim, and other companies are likely to follow suit, the Cassel process being specially adapted for the treatment of the Kuaotunu ore, where the gold is in an extremely finely divided state. The only difficulty in the way of dealing with the treatment of ore by the Cassel process is the amount of slimes which the ore from certain claims contains, preventing filtration. This appears to be the weak point in the Cassel process. During last year there were 10,093 tons of stone crushed, and 2,760 tons of tailings treated, which yielded 9,507oz. of gold; and for the former year there were 11,227 tons of stone crushed, and 200 tons of tailings treated, which yielded 8,794½oz. of gold. In referring to the yield from this field last year, I omitted to include the stone crushed by tributaries, and the yield of gold from the same. None of the lodes on this field are yet worked to any great depth, but they carry the shots of gold-bearing stone for a far greater length than any other lodes in the Coromandel County; and, though none of the lodes contain rich ore, the gold is very regularly distributed, and the lodes being of great width ores of very low grade can be made to pay, especially when the mines are connected with the crushing-plants, as in the case of the Try Fluke Company.

THE THAMES.

There has been a considerable falling-off in the yield of gold from the Thames District according to the Customs returns. Last year the yield amounted to 19,880oz., representing a value of £79,318, as against 23,867oz. for the former year, representing a value of £95,069, which shows that the value of the produce last year was £15,751 less than for the previous year. This large decrease in the gold produced has caused a depression in this district, as it is feared that unless something new is discovered, many of the working population on which the tradesmen depend for a livelihood will leave the locality to seek employment elsewhere. Different schemes are propounded to further prospect the field, but as any one of these would be a large undertaking, involving many thousand of pounds of expenditure, no definite scheme has yet been decided on. There are so many divided interests to be consulted—each person trying to get as much as possible for his particular mine, which, below a certain depth, is not at present of the least value to him—the mine proprietors not having the means themselves to test the deep levels, nor can money be raised in the locality to carry out schemes of the magnitude proposed; and until the different mine proprietors come to an understanding amongst themselves, and are prepared to offer liberal terms to those who would embark their capital to assist them in further developing their properties, there is no likelihood of anything being done. It is certainly to be regretted that the gold is getting less on the upper levels, thus necessitating further prospecting; and, so long as high values are placed on mines which do not warrant the estimate set upon them, it will only be sheer necessity that will compel the owners to accept terms on which capitalists may be induced to assist in developing the deep levels. The principal gold-producing mines at the Thames last year were the Moanataiari, with 6,430oz.; Waiotahi, 2,579oz.; Hazelbank, 2,328oz.; Cambria, 2,001oz.; Fame and Fortune, 1,817oz.; and the New Alburnia, 1,687oz. It is to be regretted that the Sylvia Company, who erected one of the best plants in the district for the purpose of concentrating ores, have had to go into liquidation. The present proprietors are satisfied that this venture can yet be made a remunerative one.

OHINEMURI.

The Ohinemuri District is likely to become a large field for gold- and silver-mining. There are numerous lodes in many parts of this district likely to be taken up and worked at a profit, which have heretofore been considered of too low grade to pay. There has been very little prospecting done here yet, beyond the immediate vicinity of the mines that have been worked. This is, no doubt, due to the rough, broken nature of the country, full of gorges, and covered with dense timber, making prospecting a difficult and arduous undertaking.