

been prospecting in different places along the same range, and about the end of last year he discovered gold in a deposit of clay alongside the same creek, about two miles nearer Mr. Hooker's farm. The claim is now known as "Bryce and party," and at the time of my visit there were four men at work, but previously to this only two men were employed. The place where they are working is on an old slip from the range, where there is a considerable depth of yellowish-red clay, intermixed with quartz-grit and small quartz-stone; but a very good prospect of loose gold can be got by puddling the clay. The deposit greatly resembles the clay found on Bendigo Flat in Victoria, which was all washed away with puddling-machines; but at the same time it is not so tenacious, being more easily puddled than the Victorian clays, the largest stones of quartz found in the deposit being from 3in. to 4in. in diameter.

The clay is cut out with adzes and picks, and wheeled to a box or square trough, where it is puddled with a spade; and when every trough-full is reduced to fine sharp grit, and stones, the material is thrown into another small box adjoining the puddling-trough, the stones being taken out. The residue of the fine sharp grit is amalgamated in this box with quicksilver by hand. The amalgamated material then passes over a series of riffles, where the amalgam is collected. All stones are picked out and examined to see whether they contain gold. Indeed, it may be said they are all laid aside to be crushed. The fine material which will not pass through a sieve or hopper (having holes of about one-tenth of an inch in diameter) is stacked for crushing. At the time of my visit 38lb. of stone from this deposit were crushed at one of the batteries at Kuaotunu, which yielded 37oz. 10dwt. of melted gold, having a value of £2 18s. 2d. per ounce, which represented a total value of £109 1s. 3d. This, together with the value of loose gold obtained, from the 1st January to the end of April by the two men employed, amounted to £153 13s. 9d.

From the appearance of the slip on which the men were working it must have come from a considerable distance—in all probability from the top of the range, as it is of considerable dimensions. The quartz-grit, where the gold is found, is not all through the deposit, but is in layers. Any person looking at the face of the cutting where the men are at work could, however, hardly distinguish any difference in the appearance of the clay.

On the opposite side of the creek, and about 400 yards higher up, a large quartz-lode is opened out by Messrs. O'Brien and Kelly, the outcrop of which is about 342ft. above the sea-level. The lode here is about 15in. in thickness. They have constructed a level about 75ft. under the place where they first cut the lode, which was found at the lower level fully 5ft. in thickness, but of a rather broken character. The stone contains a large percentage of iron and arsenical pyrites, which is said to be fairly rich in gold, but, judging from its appearance, one would class it as very low-grade ore. There are some bands in the lode which contain free gold, but the greater portion is heavy, mineralised stone. Five tons were sent to be treated at the Moanataiari battery at the Thames, which only yielded 1oz. 11dwt. of gold, representing a value of £2 15s. 6d. The lode requires to be driven on in the lowest level for some distance into the hill to ascertain whether it will develop into a more compact body. At present it has the appearance of a blow. If it should maintain its present width, very little gold in the stone would make it payable for working.

At the present time there are about thirteen men working and prospecting in the district, and from the character of the rock in this locality there appears to be a fair prospect of a payable field being found. The bush is very thick and the undergrowth dense on these ranges. Where there are no tracks it makes prospecting a very arduous undertaking. The miners here are very desirous of having a bush-line cut along the top of the range, between the Kaimarama and the Mahakirau Creeks, on to Manaia, to allow them to get back into the ranges for prospecting.

THAMES DISTRICT.

There seems to have been a general depression in mining on the Thames Goldfield last year. The best of the stone in the claims on the upper levels has been worked, and the large expense in connection with the drainage of the deep levels prevents prospecting from being carried on at greater depths. There are still large quantities of stone above the 500ft. level, which will take a number of years to work out; and this is about as deep as any of the present companies can work their claims. The great cry of the people here at present is to prospect the deep levels, and every company on the field are anxious to have this done; but they have not the means to carry the operation into effect, the ground below the 500ft. level is therefore practically useless to any of the present holders of the ground; but the moment a scheme is brought forward to try and get a large company to undertake the work a large value is set upon the deep ground, notwithstanding its being worthless to the present companies on account of not being able to work it.

Several meetings have been held, and committees formed, to digest a scheme for prospecting the deep levels, but none of them have as yet brought about a practical result. The present companies which hold ground on the Thames, if they are sincere in their intentions of getting a company formed to undertake a work of this description, must be prepared to deal liberally, and offer every facility to induce men to put capital in the venture. For instance, if the deep ground is worthless to the present holders, this is one great reason that they should give it up without any remuneration. If such were done, there is a great chance of it being taken up by a large company, and the ground thoroughly prospected; and if the ground were given by the present holders, say all below the 500ft. level, without remuneration, any company taking it up should do the whole of the drainage at their own cost, and the present claim-holders would therefore be benefited by this arrangement to a great extent: it would free them from drainage-rates, thereby enabling them to work lower-grade ore at a profit than can be done at present.

There seems to be a great many different opinions on this field as to the best and most economical method of prospecting the deep levels: some advocate the use of the diamond-drill as being the cheapest mode of accomplishing this object; but very few of the mining men, and more especially the mining-managers, think that the use of diamond-drills would satisfactorily test the deep levels, and there can hardly be two opinions on this when the scheme is fully considered. The