

water in ordinary seasons for motive-power. During the last year 731 tons of quartz were crushed, for a yield of 376oz. gold.

#### *Skipper's.*

The only quartz-mine at Skipper's is that belonging to the Phoenix Company. The mine and plant was taken over from Mr. Bullen on the 31st March, 1893, by the Achilles Gold-mining Company, which was formed in London with a capital of £100,000, in £1 shares, but up to the time of my visit no money had been sent out to carry on operations or to do any prospecting work. The manager, having in view the formation of the new company, refrained from carrying on prospecting operations to any great extent, and when the new company took the property over there was a considerable amount of dead-work to do before the mine could be properly opened out, and this necessitated extra expenditure, which the returns from the mine were insufficient to meet. As the company had not sent any money out, the workmen did not get any wages for some months, and they then applied to Mr. Bullen for payment, and he at once forwarded money to pay any one who wished to leave the work.

The shaft from which mining operations are carried on is 150ft. in depth, and an incline shaft is put down on the main lode below this level for a depth of 90ft. The incline shaft is carried down at an angle of 39° from the horizon. Formerly there were four lodes in this mine, but the north and middle lodes have come together, and the south and main lodes are now one at the lower levels. The main lode, in following down the incline, was 8ft. in width for some distance, and then contracted to about 6in., when it afterwards widened out again, and at the bottom of the well it is about 3ft. in width. From the bottom of the incline a cross-cut was made to the north lode, but after cutting it and driving on it for some distance eastward there was little or no gold. There is a small percentage of gold in the laminated quartz schist, but not sufficient to be payable for working.

A considerable amount of dead-work will yet have to be done in this mine, and an improved method adopted for working the lodes at a lower level before any large returns can be expected. From the 1st April last year to January last 1,989 tons of quartz had been crushed, for a yield of 610oz. melted gold, showing that the quartz only averaged 6dw. 3·2gr. of gold per ton. This mine is one of the oldest in the colony. It has been worked since 1863, and, as far as can be ascertained, the total quantity of gold produced up to January last is only 26,417oz., which is not equal to the value of the dividends paid either by the Keep it Dark or Welcome Companies at Reefton.

#### WEST COAST SOUNDS.

*Wilson River.*—From the time I visited this district in January, 1893, to November last there has been very little work done in the quartz claims. Every one seemed to be waiting for their neighbours adjoining them to prospect the ground.

*Golden Site Company.*—This company holds the property better known as the Prospectors' Claim. Several huts had been built and preliminary work started at the time of my last visit, but nothing further was known regarding the lode found by the Prospectors. But since my visit there has been about twenty-seven men employed by this company in constructing a head-water race for the purpose of bringing in a supply of water from the river as a motive-power to drive crushing machinery which is proposed to be erected. Excavations for the foundations of the battery and buildings are being proceeded with, and arrangements have been made to get the machinery conveyed on sledges over the cutting and formation which was made for laying down a tramway from Cromarty to the reefs. The head-water race, which is in course of construction, is said to be capable of conveying 17 sluice-heads of water, and possibly it may do this if constructed on a uniform grade; but, unless the race be properly laid out, with grade pegs put in at short distances apart, the levels are not adhered to in its construction.

A shaft is being sunk on the north side of the river to work and test the lode at a deeper level, and an adit is being constructed on the south side of the river to work the ground in that direction. The adit, however, will not be of much use for working the ground on the south side, as there is very little height of backs to the surface. The adit has, however, cut the lode, which is about 8ft. wide at the point where it was intersected, carrying a very fair quantity of gold. The workings on the south side—at least, that portion of them that are under the floor of the adit now being driven—will have to be carried on from the main shaft which is being constructed on the north side of the river. A track has been made from the termination of the tramway to the machine site, and all preparations are being made for the erection of the machinery.

*Hesperides Company.*—This company has sunk a shaft to a depth of 70ft., and from this, driving has been done to the extent of about 90ft.; but success has not attended the company's operations at this particular place, and prospecting has been commenced near the southern boundary of the claim, two men being employed.

*Surprise Claim.*—A good deal of work has been done in this claim on the surface, and a reef found about 2ft. wide, carrying a little gold. The holders are trying to form a syndicate or company for the purpose of working it.

*Lucky Shot Claim.*—There were two men employed for a few weeks prospecting this claim, but, as they were not successful in finding any payable stone, work on the claim has been suspended.

*Rata Claim.*—This is situated at the south boundary of the Lucky Shot Claim. One man has been at work trenching the surface, but, so far, has not been successful in finding any gold.

There is also a claim in the river-bed in the Golden Site licensed holding, which a man has taken up as a river claim, but he intends to work the quartz below the river-bed if he can legally do so. This will make the working of the Golden Site ground a dangerous operation, as the river may get into the workings, and endanger the lives of the workmen. On no account should a person be allowed to sink in the bed of the river to take out a quartz lode where people are working in the adjoining mine, the width of the bed being not more than 60ft.

*Cuttle Cove.*—Very rich gold-bearing lumps of quartz have been discovered by two men recently prospecting in this locality, but they have not as yet found any solid lode from which the quartz is likely to have come. There is every chance of some good reefs being yet opened up in this locality.