

A few individual miners are also at work in this district, and earn a somewhat precarious living by sluicing.

*Vinegar Hill and Cambrian's.*

*Never Fail Claim* (Area, 10 acres).—The owners of this claim, which has been profitably worked for the past twenty years (Messrs. Hughes, J. and E. Morgan, and Mills), have recently acquired an increased water-supply, a line of 15 in. iron pipes being used for the purpose. The claim was in active operation at the time of my visit, four men being employed. The last washing-up yielded 320 oz. of gold, valued at £1,232, for a period of eleven months.

*Ewing's Claim*.—At the time of my visit this claim was idle, on account of the scarcity of water.

Excell and Coulson, Fordham and Gay, and Davis and party were all at work when I visited this district, and it is understood that their returns are satisfactory.

The claim situated between Cambrian's Township and Dunstan Creek, owned by Mr. J. Ewing, was also at work, and elevating operations were being carried on, with satisfactory results.

*Matakanui.*

*Undaunted Gold-mining and Water-race Company, Limited* (Area, 45 acres).—Operations are carried on in this company's property by hydraulic sluicing. The water is conveyed from the head-races by three different lines of pipes, with pressures of about 350 ft., 270 ft., and 230 ft. respectively. The number of men employed depends on the supply of water, but is generally from five to ten. This season's water has been very short, only about four months' water being available to carry on work to advantage. The Mountain Race Gold-mining Company amalgamated with this company on the 22nd August, 1896, which gives the new company command of about 40 acres of known payable ground. The depth of the present face is about 65 ft., the upper part (about 33 ft.) being composed of very compact clay intermixed with layers of gravel. The remaining 32 ft. is very heavy wash, which is elevated with an 11 in. elevator, the nozzle used in the bottom being 2½ in. in diameter and the throat-piece 5 in.

Sims and Morgan's claim, Ewing and McConochie, the Sugar-pot, Matakanui Water-race Company, and Sheehan and Barron's claims are all worked for profitable returns, the ground in the locality being, on the whole, considered rich. About forty men were employed in these claims. In the Devonshire and Drybread seven claims are at work, employing about twelve men.

*Pactolus Claim, Shotover River*.—This claim is held under special conditions from the Warden, whereby the owners are entitled to work 70 chains of the river-bed. The wash is raised by a suction elevator. The nozzle from the water-pipes is 1½ in., and, as there is 250 ft. of pressure and a supply of three sluice-heads, there is considerable power available. The pipes are brought along at the level of the beach, and the nozzle injects water into a horizontal pipe at a bend from which the suction-pipe extends downwards to the bottom of the workings. The owners find this a very economical method of working the river-bed, which became too poor to be worked by the ordinary methods. The ground had been abandoned for twenty-four years, and was thrice worked over before that time. A yield of 1½ gr. per cubic yard can be made to pay for working, and the owners, Messrs. Rogers and Tripp, are satisfied with their earnings.

*Enterprise Claim, Skipper's Creek* (Area, 14 acres).—This claim is held by Alfred Smith and Sons. The wash is raised by a suction elevator, two sluice-heads of water, with a pressure of 400 ft., being used. A paddock 20 ft. square is worked to a depth of about 20 ft. per week, and yields about 4 oz. of gold. Four men are employed.

*Alpine Claim* (Area, 50 acres).—The owner, Mr. R. Johnson, has given an option of purchase to the New Zealand Minerals Company, and a prospecting drive of 600 ft. has been put in. On account of the dry season, little water has been available for sluicing, and no returns have been forwarded.

*Blue Jacket Claim, Maori Point* (Area, 8 acres).—This claim is owned by Mr. J. S. Collins. There are altogether in the claim some 500 ft. of piping, 16-gauge steel, commencing with an intake gradually tapering from 18 in. to 9 in., with a Little Giant director. The water for use is stored in two large dams during the night, so as to give sufficient to run fifteen heads for some four hours during the day. The ground is about 140 ft. in depth, and is very stony, there being three layers of wash, of an average depth of 4 ft. each, all carrying fine gold. The wash stones are got rid of by being broken and forced into the tail-race by the jet of water from the nozzle. This tail-race is 16 ft. deep, cut in rock, boarded to a height of 3 ft. and 2 ft. 6 in. in the bottom. For saving the gold light tramway-rails are laid longitudinally for 100 ft. in length, with about 2 in. of scrub between the rails and bottom of the boxes. This forms a catch for the gold as it gets worked down between the rails, which are about 1 in. apart. It is found that the rails make a very even bottom, thereby helping away the stones. The gold in the layers is very fine, but the bottom gold, or that found on the main bottom, is of a much coarser nature than that in the high layers. The top or high layers, together with the gold in the main bottom, would give a return of about 100 oz. with four hours' water per day for twelve months, with two men's labour.

*Aspinall's Claim* (Area, 5 acres).—This claim was famed for its richness in the early days, gold to the value of over £60,000 having been taken out by different parties. The ground has now been worked by ground-sluicing for nearly twenty years, first by hose, and now by a very complete sluicing plant. There has been a very considerable amount of tail-race cutting in the solid, the ground being very deep at the back. An underground tail-race, 370 ft. long, in the solid rock has just been completed. The water is brought in by a race a mile long to two good dams, and from thence is conducted by 11 in. piping under a head of 250 ft. pressure to the workings below. The ground remaining to be worked is a little less than 3 acres. Work has been rather slack this season, on account of the scarcity of water.