

Since then the hopes of the early diggers have been continuously fulfilled, and up to 1938 over 6,500,000 oz. had been won in Westland, valued at almost £26,000,000. One thousand pounds' worth of gold has been won from Westland fields each and every day of their existence.

Little individual prospecting is done in Westland to-day. Perhaps there are a few rich strikes yet to be discovered, but, as the claim manager put it, a floating population of 60,000 people, all with one end in view, prospected the possible goldfields fairly exhaustively. But by the old manual methods claims were not completely worked out, nor were they followed to any great depth because of numerous difficulties facing the early digger. Modern machinery has enabled the old fields to be reworked more intensively as well as economically, and new methods of treatment still encourage the earth to yield up a payable amount of gold. Although rich strikes are no longer the usual thing, quartz-mines, gold-dredges, and large sluices all win gold from places which would not have been accessible to the methods of the early digger, though nearly all these locations were first worked by the pan-handlers of the last century.

Sluicing is the oldest of these methods and was used extensively in the early days. Modern improvements have increased its effectiveness, but it retains more of the atmosphere and romance of gold-seeking than the other methods do. This is because its processes are simple and it is conducted outdoors.

Gold-bearing wash exists in the earth's strata at varying depths. As free gold it is found in a stony gravel from depths of 1 ft. or 2 ft. to over 100 ft. On the flat, bucket dredges can tear out this large gravel. In the hills it is collected by sluicing. At Moonlight Creek gold was found in quantity in the early days; some large pieces, known as nuggets, weighing up to 79 oz. To-day, where the old workings stood, a huge jet of water tears out the hillside 70 ft. below its surface and washes the earth down into a race, which carries it away. Here in the quiet bush where the old diggers found some tons of gold, a 2 ft. 6 in.

pipe-line descends the hill from a creek 300 ft. above and carries its volume of water two miles into a cliff-face, where it is forced out through a 6 in. nozzle at the rate of 35 cusecs a minute.

A huge arc of water like that of a gigantic fire-hose roars at the base of this 70 ft. cliff, undermining higher portions as it washes out the rocks at the foot. Its projector, called a telescope, is more like a piece of small artillery than a hose. The telescope, which forms the barrel, is based on a swivel at the end of the pipe-line and can also be lowered or raised in elevation. Rough rifling in the barrel concentrates the jet. One man directs its fire, all the time endeavouring to keep a square edge to the cliff face and not allow a curved face to show up. Thus he aims at a clean cut from the cliff rather than a huge oval bite.

Where the 30-yard stream lands, a cloud of yellow dirt, like the burst of artillery fire, rises up. The stream tears at the boulders, loosening them and washing them down over the solid rock that forms the cliff base. In time the overhang created brings down the earth above, so, and by keeping at the base, the whole cliff face ultimately finds its way to the race.

In the old days where water of sufficient pressure was not available to work hard ground, tunnels 40 ft. deep were bored in the cliff base about 6 ft. apart and gelignite placed in the intervening pillars to blast the face down. To-day, as the power of the jet tears out the cliff, it also washes dirt, gravel, boulders, and clay down over the limestone base, to an artificially formed bottle-neck built of large stones, which leads into the race, down which the rubble travels.

A torrent of water washes the dirt along, and just as a fall provides the method of getting the water to the claim at high pressure, so a fall in the race takes water and boulders away. The race is like a large wooden gutter, 2 ft. 7 in. wide and 2 ft. 4 in. deep, running back 200 yards from the claim and distributing the "tailings" or rubble out into the valley behind. The water moves fast down the race (as it must do to keep the larger boulders moving),