

ounces from its quartz and in one year returned more than £500,000 to shareholders. Nearly two hundred claims were yielding gold; in the Thames of those days it was impossible to get away from the rumble and thunder of batteries of crushers. The greatest bonanza of the field and one of the richest of all time was the amazing patch worked by the Caledonian, Golden Crown, and Manukau mines. They produced wealth that made the Thames world famous. Many of the other claims were not so lucky: the gold they found wasn't enough to pay for the axle grease of their trucks.

But those days are gone. The days of the ninety-one hotels: nearly all of them concentrated on bar trade only, and a roaring trade it was. The days of the week-ends when the miners came into Thames from the hills, the bachelor dandies in their Sunday-Saturday-night best of check shirts of flaming colours, moleskin trousers, wide silk sashes, broad-brimmed felt hats. The days when the streets were not wide enough for the milling, jostling crowds; when theatre managers knew Thames with its Theatre Royal and Academy of Music as the most profitable show town in New Zealand. The days when a lynch-hanging was cancelled only after there had been tension on the rope, the sentence commuted to a severe flogging. The

days when shares rose in value to more than £200; when the sharebrokers at Scrip Corner used to walk up and down the streets crying out the shares and their prices. They did good business. One coalheaver on the wharf, tired of his job, decided to try his hand at brokerage, Commission the first day netted him £20. He bought a "ready reckoner," decided to settle down to the job. He died worth £20,000.

But those days are gone, most of the early pioneers with them. The population of Thames district has dropped from about 20,000 to 8,000 and of Thames Borough itself to 4,200. To-day riches are poured out in another and more stable form—the produce of farm and field. What was once largely swamp land has become rich fertile soil.

The two hundred square miles or more of the Hauraki Plains were once mostly under water, a vast swamp; the small blocks of land free of water were always in danger of flooding when the rivers broke through and over their low banks. Had there been purchasers this land could have been bought at one time by the acre for the jingle of pennies. But there weren't. Now it is as valuable as any farm country in New Zealand; for one slice of 100 acres there were no fewer than 350 applicants. The greater part of these acres of wetness—the Piako Swamp it was called—has been



Main Street.