

Wakatipu Gold Field.

75. The Wakatipu gold-field is, without doubt, one of the richest and most extensive ever discovered. From personal observation I am justified in stating, that it contains an enormous acreage of payable alluvial workings. Gold is found in the river beds in such quantities as to place every other gold-field yet discovered in the shade. The Shotover itself is incalculably rich, and from its peculiar appearance, passing through deep gorges overhung by precipitous cliffs, it may be said to be a second Ballarat, devoid of any superincumbent soil. But the river itself is a more formidable guardian of its golden treasures than any quantity of rock or earth could be. To divert the waters and lay bare the bed of the torrent, has been the object with which much time and labour has been expended. It is difficult, under any circumstances, to form a new channel for a river so peculiarly situated, and this difficulty has been greatly increased by the heavy floods of the winter season, from which Otago is only now just emerging. Another serious drawback has originated in the indisposition of the claimholders to form associated companies, for the construction of flood races sufficiently strong and capacious to carry off the superabundant waters. But recent experiences have not been without their due effect, and the miners are now combining for this purpose in such numbers as to justify the belief that, by their joint labours, the common enemy will be kept within due bounds; and we may therefore reasonably expect that the coming season will develop the hitherto undeveloped treasures of this truly golden stream.

Upper Shotover.

76. During my recent visit to the Upper Shotover district, the remarkable richness of that locality was brought under my own observation. One party working in the river at Maori Point valued a disputed portion of ground, only five feet in width, by twelve feet in length, at £3,000, and subsequent events have proved that the estimate was not exaggerated. Another party was averaging two pounds weight per day from beach workings. And, in a third instance, one man, with the assistance of a hired labourer, was obtaining four ounces per diem from the river bed, by the rudest of appliances. At Carmichael's, above Skipper's, 6 lbs. 8 ozs. were obtained from a single dish of wash dirt; and a solitary miner, working with a cradle in the rotten slate, informed me that he could get from six pennyweights to half an ounce, and occasionally an ounce, per day by that process. These are facts that speak for themselves.

Mr. Wright's Report on the Wakatipu Gold Field.

77. Mr. Mining Surveyor Wright thus reports of the Wakatipu Field generally:—

"Very few places have been prospected within this district that have not been found to contain some traces of gold, which, although in many instances not rich enough to be considered payable according to the present state of mining matters, yet are sufficiently so to warrant the conclusion that many will ultimately be worked to profit.

Principal auriferous localities.

"The principal auriferous localities are—1st. The Shotover, including the Moak, Moonlight, Stoney, and Skippers, together with several minor creeks flowing into them, and into the river itself, Arthur's Point, Maori Point, and Skipper's being the most popular. 2nd. The Arrow, including the Twelve-mile Creek, Donnelly and Fox's Rushes, the latter, which is now the Arrow Township, being the centre of population. 3rd. The Cardrona and its tributaries. 4th. The head of the Lake, including the Buckleburn, the Donald's Simpson's, and the Five-mile.

Method of working.

"The workings were for some time carried on in the river beds and beaches, and were confined to washing the drift deposits by the most simple means, the Californian pump, cradle, shovel, and tin dish, being the only appliances in use. Many, however, who held river claims worked very successfully by wing dams, consisting of bags of sand laid into the stream, so as to cut off a portion of its bed, which, being drained by pumping, was paddocked out and passed through the cradle. This method of working is still carried on in all parts of the district. Most of the gold hitherto found has been obtained by these simple means.

Terrace workings.

"Terrace workings are in many places proving highly remunerative, particularly on the Arrow, in the neighbourhood of Moak Creek; and, at the head of the Lake, various methods are resorted to for carrying on this class of mining according to the nature and extent of the auriferous deposit. It has been found to be a rule that the run of gold on the terraces is in a parallel direction to the rivers or creeks; these, when the wash is confined to the height of a few feet, and that immediately lying upon the bed rock, are generally worked by means of tunnelling, the drives being securely timbered; but, when the gold is more dispersed, so as not to form any distinct run, the terraces are frequently sluiced right away, the drifts being of so loose a nature as to be readily separated by the action of water. Sluicing is greatly carried on at Arthur's Point, and around the neighbourhood of Moak Creek, to which places, many long and very costly races have been cut. In places where timber is plentiful, shafts have been sunk, and the ground is being worked by driving.

Turning of the Shot-over.

"The principal work, however, consists in the many attempts that have been made to divert the rivers from their natural beds, for the purpose of working them. In every breach where there was sufficient width to admit of a fresh channel being cut, the shareholders in the various claims united for that purpose, and several parties had successfully accomplished their task previous to the occurrence of the late floods. I regret to say that these unexpected catastrophes have, in most cases, proved fatal to the carrying out of these operations, and have, in almost every instance, obliterated all traces of the work. Some of the companies have recommenced, but the greater number are deferring till the season is more advanced. I have estimated that about fifty companies have been engaged during the last three months in this class of work, employing in the aggregate from fifteen to sixteen hundred men, and reckoning wages at £1 per day (the lowest that has to the present been given), added to the cost of tools and materials, I am not exaggerating the sum that has been thus spent, when I state that it has amounted to £150,000. Very little machinery has up to the present time been used in any class of mining operations, three or four simple water-wheels, for the purposes of drainage, comprising all. A large one,