

Possibly, as they work into the centre of the river and towards the south side the boulders may be fewer, and the wash less difficult to deal with; however, under the careful and intelligent management of Mr. Durward, the engineer in charge of the work, the many unforeseen difficulties met with are being successfully overcome, and I hope soon to be able to report this as a dividend-paying claim. From the richness of the washdirt much larger returns were reasonably enough expected, and such expectations would have been largely realised but for the boulder difficulty.

*Ross Sub-district.*

There is very little change in mining matters in this district since last year: no new discoveries have been made public, and very few wages-men are now employed. The following extracts from the annual report of the Ross Unlimited Gold-mining Company will show what they have been doing during the past year: Statement of accounts for the financial year ending the 26th January, 1892, show that "the gold obtained during the year under review has been 1,335oz. 11dwt. 12gr., as against 1,632oz. 5dwt. 8gr. for the preceding year: 843oz. 12dwt. 10gr. come from the Ross, 358oz. 18dwt. 5gr. from the Donoghue's elevators, and the remainder from sundry small tributes paying from 5 per cent. to 12½ per cent. Since the date of closing the books 131oz. 2dwt. 16gr. of gold have been taken from the elevators, making the total yield for the year 1,466oz. 14dwt. 4gr. This, of course, could not be included in the year's returns, not having at the time been realised. The falling-off in the returns is owing to the reluctance of the miners to take up ground within the area of the company's holding (which is practically as open to them as Crown lands are, any miner having the right to mark off any portion of the company's area, and to work it, subject to the payment of tribute, the amount of which may be arranged mutually), as they find that, above the level of the drainage-adit constructed by the company, they are unable to make wages." More capital is required to put this company on a profitable working basis: this, I am told, there is a prospect of doing at an early date.

The Mont d'Or Sluicing Company shows, as the results of the year's operation, a gross return of 1,331oz. 16dwt. 15gr. of gold. This is a dividend-paying claim, and shows what can be done with a fair supply of water, even in poor ground. In Ross, as elsewhere, the tailings question is year by year becoming a greater hindrance and difficulty to miners. I understand the Mikonui Race is being handed over to the Borough of Ross, with a view to getting this important work completed.

Of the many special claims applied for, I know of only one—the Kohinoor Gold-mining Company, at Redman's—that is showing any signs of activity. Tenders are now being called for repairing and increasing the size of the old race now owned by this company, with a view to using the water in working their claim. A prospecting-tunnel is being driven from a low level in Donnelly's Creek, to find out whether certain quartz leaders, showing good prospects, make into a solid reef. This party is slightly subsidised by Government. A prospecting-tunnel on similar lines is about being undertaken in the neighbourhood of the Swiss Republic and William Tell Claims, Cedar Creek. Prospecting is still being carried on by the Rangitoto Company. Some time ago a quantity of stone was taken out by two Christchurch gentlemen, and forwarded to England, with the view of substantiating the numerous tests already made on the claim, and in various parts of the colonies. Returns have not yet been received; but, as recent tests made here are even more favourable than the former ones, it is anticipated that a favourable reply will result. If so, active and extensive operations in this mine will not be much longer delayed. The successful utilisation of the Mount Rangitoto stone means a great deal to Westland, and, in fact, to the whole colony, as the company have a mountain to operate upon.

*Okarito Sub-district.*

In ordinary mining there is nothing new to report from this district. Good gold is being found on the Salt-water Beach, and the population is on the increase. Government is giving a much-needed assistance to the miners on this beach by cutting a track from the Main South Road on Mount Hercules direct to the beach. It is desirable that the Government should further supplement the present small vote, so as to enable packhorses to get down with their loads to the beach. Gillespie's and other beaches carry about the same number of miners. On the Waiho a considerable addition has been made to the population, a strong party being employed bringing in water from the Glacier Branch, to sluice what is known as Hospital Point. Good prospects are said to have been obtained. Dredging in this district has completely collapsed, the latest failure being the Von Schmidt dredge on Gillespie's Beach. After months of vain effort to raise the sand, and an expenditure of over £5,000, work was stopped, and the company is now in liquidation, and the plant and claim has been sold to the highest bidder. All this expenditure, and not a ton of sand put over the tables! The introduction of sand-pump dredges to the Coast has been most disastrous in its results not only to the unfortunate shareholders, but to the mining interests generally. Their inability to do what they promised will inevitably retard the working of our beaches for years. After the failure of the Ball dredge, now lying sunk in the Five-mile Lagoon, the Welman's, in a similar position on the Salt-water, and a large machine of the same type on the Three-mile, with the pump broken and useless, the failure of the Gillespie's Beach directors to realise the want of adaptability of such machine to the requirements of our beaches and rivers is, to say the least of it, to be regretted; for, with the knowledge of the failure of this type of dredge before them, the directors cannot be said to have shown either business capacity or mining knowledge when they put their own and the shareholders' money into the present undertaking. Had the directors been satisfied with an ordinary bucket-dredge, the shareholders would have had a good prospect of getting their money returned to them, with a handsome profit; as it is, this last venture has been an utter failure, the money is all spent, and the beach and its golden treasures is as much a matter of speculation to them to-day as it was before they spent a penny on the plant that has proved such a signal failure. In the way of exploration, something is being done that will add to the topogra-