

OTAGO.

The discovery of gold in Otago was the means of the first rapid influx of population to our shores; and from this district 5,054,592oz. of gold, representing a value of £19,975,412, have been obtained. This goldfield is a portion of the colony where there is comparatively no dense bush, and consequently the difficulties met with in prospecting are not very great; at the same time, some of the land is at such an elevation that mining operations can only be carried on for about six months of the year. I have not been able to visit this important mining district yet, but hope to do so during the recess.

There is a large area of land in Otago having a very old quartz schist formation, and where this exists the overlying drifts are in most cases auriferous. The elevation in many places, however, prevents an adequate supply of water being obtained. This is the case, for instance, at Mount Criffel, Mount Buster, and the Old Man Range, where the supply of water is dependent on the melting of the snow. Last year 4,132 miners were employed in the alluvial workings in the Otago District: of these, 1,233 were Chinese.

MAEREWHENUA.

There is a considerable area of ground covered with auriferous drifts in this locality, but the expense in bringing in a large water-supply to the field is too great for individual miners. The number of miners on the field has varied very little for several years. Last year there were seventy-seven men employed in mining, and the gold obtained was 2,397oz., representing a value of £9,849, which is equal to about £128 11s. per man. This shows that even with a small supply of water on the field the miners here are doing better than on many of the other goldfields.

MOUNT IDA.

The Mount Ida field includes Taieri, Nenthorn, Hindon, Hamilton, Hyde, Kyeburn, Mount Buster, St. Bathans, and the Upper Manuherikia Valley. In these localities 530 miners were employed in alluvial mining last year, of whom 180 were Chinese, and the quantity of gold obtained was about 13,880oz., representing a value of £55,583. In some parts of the field the miners are making only small wages, but in other parts rich yields are obtained.

In Naseby, where the largest population is situated, the ground is very poor, and it is only by having a good supply of water that the miners can earn even small wages.

MOUNT BUSTER.

This was known as Clark's Diggings in the early days, where very rich drifts were found in the beds of the small gullies; but as these shallow workings became exhausted the gold was traced into a large deposit of quartz drift, which has been worked every season since the discovery, yielding handsome returns. It is, however, only for about six months of the year that mining operations can be carried on, owing to the severe frost and the large quantity of snow which falls at this elevation—about 4,000ft. above the sea-level. The discovery was not only an important one to the lucky finder, but it has led to similar deposits being worked in other localities in Otago, with equally good results. From the explorations made by the Mining Geologist, there appear to be many places yet untouched which contain similar formations, and which are likely to prove remunerative for working by systematic methods on the hydraulic principle. Passing on from Mount Buster, at the foot of the range is the Kyeburn diggings, where a limited number of persons are said to be earning small wages. The line of quartz drift can be traced along the foot of the mountains through the Naseby field and into the Upper Manuherikia Valley, and similar drifts occur in almost every goldfield in Otago.

ST. BATHAN'S.

The whole of the alluvial workings at St. Bathans are in the same class of quartz drift as found at Mount Buster, and some of the claims in this locality are yielding handsome returns. One of them, belonging to Mr. John Ewing, has been giving a large yield for a number of years. Last season he washed up 800oz. of gold, and he has only eight men employed. The depth of the quartz drift at St. Bathans has never yet been tested. Mr. Ewing is now down nearly 200ft., and no bottom has yet been reached. The gold occurs in bands and layers, and, from the manner in which this deposit lies, it must be one of the oldest auriferous drifts in Otago—being found in some places under 500ft. of "Maori bottom," belonging to the Miocene formation.