

The Pactolus Sluicing Company holds two special claims of 50 acres each, with a frontage on the sea beach extending southwards from the Fourteen-mile Bluff for more than a mile. Portions of the ground have been worked more or less for the last thirty years, and were driven out or paddocked where sufficiently payable gold was found. More recently it became evident that a good supply of water, with systematic sluicing, had become necessary for profitable working, and the present company was formed for the purpose. The construction of the Fourteen-mile race is completed. It is about 500 ft. above sea level, a quarter of a mile long, constructed of fluming resting on a sidelong benching, terminating in a string of 11 in. piping which conveys the water to the sluicing-face. The face is opened up ready for work, and well equipped with giant nozzle, tail-boxes, and washing-tables suitable for the gold. Owing to dry weather, no sluicing has been possible since the beginning of the year. Gold was obtained to date to the value of £4 17s. 9d., the result of a small experimental washing of about 50 cubic yards of wash-dirt. The Twelve-mile race now under construction is about two miles long, traversing steep, rocky, sidelong ground at a height of 400 ft. above sea level. The company employs from ten to twenty men, and has expended between £2,000 and £3,000.

There are several terrace claims near Barrytown that are giving good returns. Amongst others the licensed holding held by E. H. Lewis deserves special mention as a paying concern; and the beach-coming is about the same as last year, affording a living to several families.

Dredging.

A number of dredging claims have been taken up all over the district, and it is expected that this mode of working will open up a new era in the West Coast mining.

At Canoe Creek, three miles north from Barrytown, where the creek discharges into the sea, 200 acres have been taken up for dredging purposes. The place is admirably adapted for this style of mining, and good prospects have been obtained. Some doubt is expressed as to whether the heavy black sand will leave the buckets or be retained in them by suction, but a little alteration in construction will obviate this defect.

Several claims for dredging have been taken up in the Grey River, and good prospects have been obtained in most of them. Steps are being taken to obtain suitable machinery.

The Grey River Dredging Company tested the property which they hold near Stillwater by means of a small dredge procured from the Grey Harbour Board, and the results were so satisfactory that a local company was formed, and plans are now being prepared in Dunedin for a dredge of suitable power to work the company's claim. The dredge which this company are procuring will cost over £5,000, and will compare favourably with the best dredges in use on the Otago rivers. Another dredge is being obtained to work on the Grey River, near the Little Grey Junction. The cost of this machine will be over £3,000.

The whole of Stillwater Creek, from its confluence with the Grey River to Maori Gully, has also been taken up, and is now being prospected for dredging purposes, some of the prospects already obtained being very good.

Besides the places mentioned, all the streams running into the sea south of Greymouth, such as Saltwater and New River, offer great facilities for dredging, and will ultimately be worked in this way. It is reasonably anticipated that in the course of a year or two the West Coast rivers will be actively engaged in the dredging industry, as those of Otago are at present. The conditions obtaining here point to the success of dredging operations, and, if the companies referred to above prove successful, there is no doubt that their success will induce capitalists to give ready attention to the dredging industry as applied to the West Coast.

Hydraulic Sluicing.

This is still the predominant mode of working on this field, and wherever water can be obtained at sufficient elevation, and there is a good dump for tailings, wages can be earned. Special mention may be made of sluicing claims at Upper Blackball and Healey's Gully, worked by the Roaring Meg Water-race; at Barrytown, by the Waihero Company, and Lewis and party with their own water-races; at Ben Hill, by a Christchurch company; at Riverview (near Ahaura), Maori Creek, and Maori Gully, by the miners; and at South Beach, Greymouth, by the Leviathan Company.

To keep this class of mining alive Government assistance in water conservation and in the construction of high-level water-races is required. Large areas of sluicing country could be opened up by the construction of the following races:—A fifty-head race from Deep Creek to supply Candlelight, Maori Gully, and the No Town district; a hundred-head race from Deadman's River to supply the Barrytown terraces and the Flat; a forty-head race from the Eastern Hohonu River to the Maori Creek and New River districts.

General.

Mining generally is improving in the district, and the construction of roads and tracks to the new mining centres by the County Council should tend to advancement of the mining interest. The new track from Upper Blackball, up the range to the Cæsus Claim, is a great boon to the prospectors, and pack-horses can now reach the summit with stores and plant, which heretofore had to be carried on men's backs. The road to Barrytown has been greatly improved; the rocks at the Nine-mile and Ten-mile Bluffs have been blown out, and a dray-road made over the Fourteen-mile and Seventeen-Mile Bluffs, and at low-water it is now an easy and pleasant journey from Greymouth to Barrytown.

Coal-mining and Timber.

The output of coal from the Brunner Mine for the year was 66,694 tons, and the output from the Blackball Mine during the same period was 52,835 tons.