

IRON MINING NEAR PLYMOUTH,

The existence in the neighbourhood of Plymouth of iron ore of excellent quality has been known for many years; but like the iron lodes of the West of England generally it has, hitherto remained practically unworked.

The main deposit, contained in a lode which crops out at Mount Batten has now been traced easterly for some miles, and it appears from indications near Cawsand to be continued across the Sound. The demand for high quality iron ores which have sprung up of late, coupled with the approaching exhaustion of the hematites in some parts of the North has caused attention to be turned at length to the iron ores of the West, and those of the neighbourhood of Plymouth are now receiving their share of attention.

Already operations suspended for many years, have been resumed at Mount Batten, and on another part of what appears to be the same lode, ochre in paying quantities is being raised near Laira, Bridge, There is an extensive ochreous deposit on the seaward beach at Batten.

The most promising indications are, however, being afforded by operations carried on upon the lode about a mile to the southward of Plympton station, in which locality, by the way, Sir Henry De la Beche mentions the existence of iron ore of excellent quality In this vicinity for a long time the occurrence of fragments of red hematite in the lanes and scattered over the fields has been observed, Somehow or other, however, no one seems to have taken the trouble to trace them to their source until a short time since Mr. F. P. Balkwill took the matter up, and soon hit on the lode, upon land belonging to Mr. Pearse. Here explorations have been conducted and pits sunk, with results which so far are of the most promising and satisfactory character. Considerable quantities of red hematite have been found, of an average produce exceeding 60 per cent, and all that is wanted now is the judicious expenditure of further capital to prove what is certainly well worth deserving enquiry.

The iron ore occurs in what may be described as a gigantic flookan in the slate hill, clayey- in character, and having all the appearance of a decomposed trap, It has been traced to a width of over 100 feet. In this the hematite has been found in scattered modules, fragments and bunches, and in strings and veins running east and west, with a general underlie south, and making together in depth.

The principal trial pit is now down four fathoms, and in the bottom of the driving south the ore courses have come together to form a well defined ran of over three feet in breadth, increasing as it descends. What is evidently needed now is that the shaft should be sunk further, and the character of the lode tested at a greater depth. If the favourable indications now visible are continued, of which there is every prospect, a valuable mine must be the result. The experiment is well worth the trial. A comparatively small sum will suffice to settle the question, and a more legitimate occasion for mining speculation it would not be easy to find.

The mine is well situated for working, and within easy distance of railway carriage, and the amount required to prove it is very moderate.

extract from the Westen Morning News. 1871