

purchased being stored in Auckland. Many of the regular gum-diggers are still working and storing their gum on the fields, being of the opinion that at the close of the war all grades of gum will command higher rates than those which have ruled hitherto.

SULPHUR.

I regret to report that the operations of the New Zealand Sulphur Company at White Island were suddenly terminated on or about the 11th September, when eleven lives were lost and all the company's plant and works completely obliterated, as the result of an earthquake which caused a fall of about 4 chains of cliff 600 ft. in height, the debris blocking the great active thermal crater known as the Blowhole, which subsequently erupted with extreme violence, considerably changing the topography of the island. No trace of the eleven inhabitants, all employees of the company, has been found, and it is believed the unfortunate men were hurled out to sea.

It is stated that the sulphur company has no intention to recommence operations.

PETROLEUM.

Although drilling in search of petroleum has been carried out during the year at Moturoa, Taranaki, and near Waipatiki, Hawke's Bay, the results have not been very successful.

The quantity of crude oil produced at Moturoa by the Taranaki Oil-wells (Limited) amounted on the 24th March, 1915, to 776,161 statute gallons, of which 525,475 gallons were refined by the company. The product meets with a ready sale at prices equal to the imported article.

In addition to the Government bonuses which have for some years been offered for the production of crude petroleum and refined oil, two of which, amounting together to £5,000, have already been paid to the Taranaki Oil-wells (Limited) on the production of 500,000 gallons of crude oil, provision has been made in the Appropriation Act, 1914, for a loan or loans of a sum not exceeding in the aggregate £9,000 for the purpose of encouraging the production and refinement of mineral oil in New Zealand. No portion of this amount was advanced before the 31st December last, but a considerable sum has been lent since that date.

TUNGSTEN-ORES.

In consequence of the war, ores containing tungstic acid (wolfram, scheelite, &c.) are in increased demand, and it is intended to offer a reward to stimulate their production. The same remarks also apply to molybdenite-ores.

COAL-MINING.

The output of coal during 1914 amounted to 2,275,593 tons, as against 1,888,005 tons during 1913, being an increase of 387,588 tons. The output during 1914 constituted a record for New Zealand.

The principal activity in the coal-mining industry occurred in the Westport, Greymouth, and Waikato districts.

The following is a comparative statement of the coal and lignite raised during the years 1912, 1913, and 1914:—

Inspection District.	Output for 1913.	Output for 1914.	Increase, 1914.	Output for 1912.	Decrease, between Years 1913 and 1912.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Northern (North Island) ..	349,586	440,453	90,867	383,847	34,261
West Coast (South Island) ..	1,057,564	1,351,182	293,618	1,301,461	243,897
Southern (Canterbury, Otago, and Southland)	480,855	483,958	3,103	492,307	11,452
Totals	1,888,005	2,275,593	387,588	2,177,615	289,610