

QUICKSILVER-MINES.

The Great British Cinnabar-mines, Ltd., Puhipuhi (T. A. Black, Owner).—An adit level was driven for upward of 400 ft., with a view to picking up the cinnabar-bearing formation at greater depth than previously worked, but up to the end of the year this working had not been carried far enough to reach its objective.

Mount Mitchell Mercury Mine, Puhipuhi.—One man was engaged at prospecting, but nothing of definite value appears to have been found.

Kaikohe Ltd. (R. H. Goodwin, Manager).—After testing by means of numerous boreholes an area of about 600 acres at Ngawha Springs, in North Auckland, an English company, satisfied with the prospects of the property as a quicksilver-producer, has made a start with the installation of the necessary plant for mining the deposit and recovering the mercury. The average number of men employed was five.

SULPHUR.

A resumption of operations took place in connection with the working of the sulphur deposits on White Island, a new company, known as White Island Products, Ltd., having been formed to work them. The sulphur is mainly to be used for the manufacture of fertilizers. A lot of work in the way of installing machinery, erection of houses for plant and employees, &c., was carried out. The average number of men employed was twelve. Some 2,107 tons of crude ore, containing 33 per cent. sulphur, were mined and sold, realizing £8,164 12s. 6d., and a further 71 tons were quarried, valued at £35 10s.

OIL-WELLS.

Blenheim Oil-well Reclamation Co., Ltd.—Work at this well consisted mainly in reconditioning the whole of the 7 in. and 10 in. casing. After a great deal of trouble the 10 in. casing was withdrawn from the well, put in good order, and restored to its place. At 2,200 ft. the well was securely plugged, and the water was effectively shut off at the 1,889 ft., 8 tons of cement being used. The shutting-off was done in October, since when efforts have been made to bring in the well, without any successful result up to the end of the year.

New Zealand Oil Syndicate.—This syndicate, operating at Whangamomona, started the drilling of a well, known as Prospect Valley No. 1, and up to the 22nd September had penetrated to a depth of 893 ft., when, owing to continued breakages of the boring-rods, it was decided to case the hole. The latter was then reamed out and cased to 600 ft. with 3 in. casing, and the hole was rebored to its original depth by the 21st December, when operations ceased for the time being. Slight traces of light oil were noted in the material coming from the bore, and faint blows of gas occurred from time to time.

Taranaki Oilfields, Ltd.—This company during the year operated exclusively in the East Coast district. The No. 2 well at Waiapu was continued from 2,908 ft. to 3,260 ft., at which depth drilling was suspended in view of the absence of encouraging developments. The first objective sought in this well was what is known as the "igneous conglomerate," which marks the distinction between the tertiary and cretaceous beds; but no evidence of its presence was discovered, the ground penetrated consisting entirely of grey shale, much of which was very soft and inclined to cave. Gisborne No. 1 well, at Morere, was continued from 2,140 ft. to 3,040 ft. Much difficulty was experienced in getting this well down, particularly in running the casing. Every effort was made to carry each string down as far as possible, but the 15½ in. casing had to be landed at 359½ ft., and the 12½ in. at 661 ft. The 10 in. casing was carried to 1,502 ft., and as it was found impracticable to run it deeper was set in cement at this point. A fairly good shut-off was made, but salt water was struck in sand at 1,640 ft. Throughout the whole of the depth the sinking was in alternate bands of shale and sandstone, and as much of the latter was unusually hard the wear-and-tear on drilling-tools and cable was much above the average. A string of 8½ in. casing was cemented at 2,245 ft. without success, but a second effort effected a satisfactory shut-off. Below this mark further water was met in sand, which continued to 2,350 ft., below which a bed of shale 600 ft. in thickness was entered. In this shale continuous caving gave much trouble. Between 2,975 ft. and 2,980 ft. a bed of sandstone came in, some of which smelled strongly of petroleum, and the samples gave strong reaction for oil when subjected to the chloroform test. Just above 3,000 ft. 5 ft. of hard shale was met, below this several feet of running sand, and below this again soft caving shale. Efforts sustained for several months did not succeed in carrying the bore below the 3,040 ft. mark. There was a show of gas at 2,065 ft., and there was evidence that gas, together with salt water, occurred at the 3,000 ft. horizon. The gas was inflammable.

The Gisborne No. 2 well is situated about seven miles in direct line westerly from the No. 1 well, and about sixteen miles from the Port of Waikōpū by road. This well was started in April, and to the end of the year had been carried down approximately 2,000 ft. Near the surface a recent deposit of sand and boulders was found, which gave a good deal of difficulty in penetrating. From 40 ft. to 80 ft. the ground consisted of shale, carrying boulders or hard concretions, and from 80 ft. to 230 ft. sandstone. Below this were alternate bands of slate and sandstone. Hard concretions occurred at several horizons, especially at 250 ft. to 450 ft., and at 1,250 ft., which hindered progress considerably. A show of gas was got at 140 ft. to 175 ft., and another at 765 ft.

Much geological work was carried out on the various areas.

ACCIDENTS.

One fatal accident occurred. On the 13th June a miner named Alfred James Brian, employed in the Ohinemuri Gold and Silver Mine at Maratoto, was killed by a fall of ground. Deceased and his son were working on contract, extending the north drive on the Camoola lode in the Silverstream level, in somewhat broken country. At the time of the accident the men were engaged in cutting a hitch preparatory to putting in a set of timber, when a piece of rock shaped like an inverted V dropped from the back, burying deceased, who at the time was holding a moyle his son was striking. Death must have been almost instantaneous, as the spine, pelvis, and right thigh of deceased were fractured. The son stated that before starting to cut the hitch they had pulled down any loose ground overhead, and considered the working safe. An inquiry was held at Paeroa, at which, after hearing evidence, the Coroner returned a verdict that deceased was killed by a fall of dirt on the 13th June about 11.30 a.m., and in his opinion the cause was purely accidental, and no blame could be attached to anybody.

Two serious accidents unattended by fatal results were reported. On the 13th June a miner named Frank Thornton, working in a stoping-block on the Edward lode on No. 13 level of the Waihi Mine, had the middle finger of his right hand blown off by the explosion of a detonator. Thornton, who was a miner of thirty years' experience, stated that in preparing charges for two holes he had taken two detonators from a detonator-box in the magazine and placed them on a box near by, then took off the cover of the tin in which the fuse was kept, and was drawing the coil of fuse out, when a sudden explosion occurred, with the before-mentioned result. Thornton was positive he did not have a detonator in his hand at the time, and had no idea how the explosion was brought about. The other accident happened to a miner named James College, on the 31st July. He was engaged in a drive on the Martha lode at No. 2 intermediate level, below No. 9 level, of the Waihi Mine, when a fall of quartz resulted in the bones of his right leg being broken below the ankle. College was an old and experienced miner, and at the time was engaged in barring down after firing a round of holes, when a boulder slipped out from between two heads, striking him on the leg.