

Armstrong Dredging Company.—At the beginning of the year the disintegrator mentioned in my last report was erected, but, owing to the low grade of the deposit and the difficulties experienced in dealing with it, operations were suspended, and the dredge and beach claim sold to Mr. H. H. Adams.

Bremner's Freehold Gold-mining Company.—Four men have been constantly employed at No. 1 and low level on Bremner's lode, which varies from 3 in. to 3 ft. in width. Four tons of general ore and 250 lb. of picked stone treated produced bullion in value £216 10s.

New Waitaia Gold-mining Company.—A stoping-block 300 ft. in length is now in progress over the back of the low level (No. 6). The lode varies in width from 6 in. to 3 ft. of ore. To the northward the value improves. Rises are being put up to secure better ventilation.

Mountain King Gold-mining Company.—The development-work carried out in this mine during the year consisted of driving north at No. 5 level for 225 ft., and crosscutting for several known reefs. The country proved unfavourable. Funds becoming exhausted, protection was applied for and granted. Gold valued at £1,726 7s. 2d. was obtained from small blocks left in the upper levels.

Handsworth United Gold-mining Company.—This mine was abandoned and sold to Mr. W. J. McLean in September, and is now under protection. 36 tons treated produced gold valued at £388 12s. 9d.

Barrier Reefs, Great Barrier Island.—This mine is owned by Mr. H. Brett. Operations are still confined to driving the low level. Very hard country is being penetrated, consequently progress has been somewhat slow.

PETROLEUM.

New Zealand Oil-wells (Limited), Taranaki.—The refinery was completed and commenced operations early in August. During the year it is stated that 179,750 gallons of crude oil has been obtained. The boreholes at Bell Block reached a depth of 3,710 ft. and 2,820 ft. respectively, without success. At Moturoa Nos. 3 and 5 wells were still flowing, and a rotary drilling plant has been erected and operations commenced to drill a new well about 6 chains from No. 2, which at the end of the year had attained a depth of 2,210 ft. The average number of men employed at the refinery and boreholes was seventy-one.

Taranaki Oil Lands Acquisition and Development Company (Limited).—This company started operations in the Moturoa district on a section of the Whitely Township in March. The plant installed is of Canadian Gallician type. Boring was commenced on the 19th April with 17 ft. sheet-iron piping. The superficial water has been cut off by 12 in. casing at a depth of 973 ft. with cement. In the early part of November 10 in. casing was set in cement at a depth of over 2,000 ft., in order to isolate the salt-water flowing from the stratum situated between 1,700 ft. and 1,895 ft. On the 31st December an oil-flow was obtained which was reported to average fifty barrels a day. This company employs about fifteen persons. It is claimed that this well is the first in the district to reach a depth of 2,000 ft. with 10 in. casing and the oil-strata with 9 in. casing.

Phoenix Oil Company (Limited).—This company commenced drilling on a section marked (E) on the South Road in the Moturoa district last May. On the 22nd July, after the extraction of the 12 in. casing, which was carried down 1,723 ft., the well on the 31st December had reached a depth of 1,836 ft., with 10 in. casing in movement. The work of drilling has proceeded regularly, and it is anticipated that the oil-strata will be reached in a few months. Ten persons are employed. The plant is identical with that installed at the Taranaki Oil Lands Acquisition and Development Company (Limited).

Consolidated Oilfields of Taranaki (Limited).—A start was made to erect a plant at Huiroa on Section 4, Block XII, in May. Boring was commenced on the 23rd July; 12 in. casing has been lowered to a depth of 885 ft., and there cemented in. On the 31st December this bore had reached a depth of 1,170 ft., with 10 in. casing in movement. Thirteen persons are employed. Plant similar to that already described.

United Oil Company (Limited).—This bore was the last to start on a site chosen on Section 29, Tikorangi district, on the bank of the Waitara River. Drilling was commenced on the 11th December, but, owing to the difficult nature of the surface country, only a depth of 31 ft. had been reached at the end of the year. This plant is in type similar to the foregoing, with the exception of the derrick, which is of iron. Twelve persons are employed. The two last-mentioned bores are for exploration, being started in unproven districts.

Bonithon Freehold Oil Company (Limited).—During the year a borehole was put down to a depth of 2,505 ft. Traces of gas and oil are said to have been encountered, but, unfortunately, some of the boring-tools were lost just before Christmas. Every effort was made to recover them, without success, casing now being withdrawn.

ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES.

Fatal.

Talisman Consolidated Gold-mining Company, Karangahake.—On the 28th March, 1913, William Hyde and Thomas McBride were killed by falling down the Talisman shaft, due to the winding-rope breaking while these men were illegally riding on the skip. Action was taken against the mine-manager, Mr. Rickard, under section 254, subsection (24), and also under section 261 of the Mining Act, 1908. He pleaded guilty, and was fined £10 and costs on each charge.

New Zealand Crown Mines, Karangahake.—On the 11th December, 1913, Alexander Woods was killed by a fall of quartz in a leading stope above No. 6 level, Hauraki section, caused by a stull in the level below carrying away.