

HOKITIKA AND ROSS.

Mount Greenland Company has carried on work at Cedar Creek during the year, and a small battery has been erected and was started and run for a few weeks, but since dry weather set in there has been no water for power purposes, and no returns have been obtained. The two levels of the mine have been connected by an uprise, but no other development-work has been done. There are some rich patches in the reef, but as no systematic sampling has been done the average value is not known.

General Remarks on Quartz-mining.

In addition to the mines above mentioned there have been a few prospecting-works in progress during the year, but nothing of value has been found, and there is now very little interest being taken in work of this kind. All the mines have been frequently visited, and the provisions of the Mining Act have been enforced in all cases. One mine-manager was prosecuted for failing to maintain proper sanitary arrangements, and was fined two guineas. Two miners were convicted of dry-boring at Blackwater Mine and fined. An official inquiry under section 266 of the Act was held before Warden Hutchison, and Messrs. T. Watson and W. Power, assessors, into a fatal accident at the Keep-it-Dark Mine. The Court decided that the manager was not guilty of negligence, though it held that the system of working at the time of the accident was faulty, and recommended that the Act be amended so as to prevent a leading stope being worked within 20 ft. of any face being worked in the level below. With reference to the table of accidents herewith, it will be seen that this one, by which T. O'Connor was killed at the Keep-it-Dark Mine, was preventable, but the others come into the class of accidents which are not preventable by any careful management or careful inspection, being caused directly by the negligence of the victims themselves.

The return-air shaft at the Progress Mines collapsed and rendered necessary the construction of new airways and installation of a fan, and this work was carried out without risk, all mining-work being suspended while it was done. The mechanical ventilation is now established and is satisfactory.

At the Keep-it-Dark Mine the return airways collapsed, and the men were withdrawn from the mine in December, and all work except that required for restoration of ventilation is now suspended.

As regards ventilation generally in this district there has been some improvement during the year, and the installation of a mechanical system at the Progress Mine will, it is to be hoped, be followed by similar installations at other mines.

Dredging.

The dredging industry in this district has not been very successful during the year, there having been considerable falling-off in the returns. Two companies have ceased operations—viz., Murray's Freehold and Red Jacks—while the Ahaura River has failed to pay expenses, and work has been suspended pending a reconstruction of the company.

The Rimu No. 1 dredge is almost ready for work, and is expected to average over 100 oz. per week, when the claim is fully opened out. The test bores have given good results, but the dredge is on the light side for the class of work she has to do, and the working-time may be considerably interrupted by breakages.

Alluvial Mining.

MARLBOROUGH.

Alluvial mining in Marlborough has given a return of only 4 oz. for the year, but Larkin and party, at Enchanted Creek, who have been unable to clean up for want of water, write that a fair return is expected.

COLLINGWOOD DISTRICT.

Parapara Hydraulic Sluicing and Elevating Company.—This claim has employed seven men during the year, chiefly upon non-remunerative work—construction of a long tail-race through worked ground to reach a new face ahead. The total return for the year was 52 oz.

There are three other small claims working in the district, but returns are very poor.

HOWARD DIGGINGS.

This goldfield has given employment to about eighty men for the whole year, and as nearly as I can ascertain they have all made fairly good wages. A number of ordinary claims are held without being registered, and from these no returns are available. The small branches of Louis Creek are now practically worked out, but some claims in the main creek will last for another year. There has also been some work done in small creeks on the Gowan side of the watershed during the past year, but returns from this side have been poorer than from Louis Creek. No important finds have been made in the terraces, and it does not therefore appear that there will be any great extension of work in this locality.

MURCHISON.

There are two parties of three men each working at Upper Matakītaki and obtaining payable results—viz., Messrs. Beilby and Richardson, and M. White and party. Taylor's Creek Company, with English and New Zealand capital, has proved another failure, and it should now be finally established that the Matakītaki is a working-man's field only, no less than five companies having come to grief.