

to the pit-head pulleys over the shaft. A level has been carried along from the bottom of the shaft for a distance of 1,030ft., and at 900ft. along this level a winze has been sunk to a depth of 150ft. The workings at the time of my visit were on a block of quartz about 30ft. from the bottom of this winze; the quartz is very bunchy. It can hardly be termed a lode, being more in the character of a "blow" or large pocket. The block of quartz is about 30ft. long and 20ft. wide, having an arm going away from it about 6ft. in width. Taking the whole length of the quartz to be about 75ft., it would average, say, about 10ft. in width. It lies almost flat in the bottom of the place where they are working, and has the appearance of an inverted saddle-lode; but it wants that defined character which lodes in general have, and which enables their trace to be followed. A great deal of prospecting work has been done in this mine, and the company deserves to have had better success than it has met with. During last year this company crushed 3,875 tons of stone, which yielded 1,162oz. gold, representing a value of £4,624.

*Keep It Dark Company.*—This company's main shaft is sunk down to a depth of 503ft., and a level constructed at 475ft., and at 520ft. from the main shaft; at this level a blind or monkey shaft was sunk to a further depth of 375ft., at the time of my visit, and the sinking was still being proceeded with. It was intended to go down to a depth of 400ft., and then open out a level which will be 150ft. below the No. 5, or lowest level where the workings have been carried on. From this blind shaft the lode has been stoped out, as far as payable stone is concerned, to a depth of 850ft. below the level of the mouth of the main shaft, which makes the workings about 150ft. below sea-level. A block of stone was struck in the bottom of the No. 5 level, and it is this block the company now proposes to work when the No. 6 level is completed. If gold is not found on this level the company proposes to abandon the mine, unless some assistance is obtained from Government to further test the mine at deeper levels.

This company, since it commenced to work the mine, has paid about £108,000 in dividends, but in the palmy days, when rich stone was being got, there was no reserve fund put by to carry on prospecting operations or dead-work; the principle has been to pay away all the profits, and trust to circumstances as to future developments. The time has now come when calls have to be made to carry on prospecting operations, and some of the present shareholders, who bought their shares when the yield of gold was beginning to fall off, and paid a considerable price for them, are not now in a position to pay heavy calls, and unless some gold is struck, or some assistance given, the company will in all probability suspend operations.

When in the district, some of the directors met me in reference to an application which they made to the Government for a loan, under the provisions of the "Mining Act Amendment Act, 1893." They proposed to sink the blind shaft to a further depth of 400ft., and prospect the ground at this depth. They estimate the cost of sinking this shaft at £2 15s. per foot, which would amount to £1,100; and they will require an air-winch erected near the mouth of the blind shaft to wind with. This is estimated to cost £600, and they put down £300 for contingencies, so that in all they require £2,000 to do the proposed work.

The country rock at the lowest level worked may be said, in a mining phrase, to have a "kindly appearance." It is not that hard crystalline structure that is met with in some places at that depth below the surface, neither is there any water of any consequence to contend with at this depth, so that prospecting the deep levels in this mine will not be a costly undertaking. Judging from the way in which the amount of gold decreased as the depth of the lode increased, my impression is that before another good shot of gold is obtained an entirely new lode or block of stone will have to be discovered, and the nature of the rock favours this supposition—that is, if the Maitai slate is not cut off by the Devonian formation, which is met with at Lankey's Creek, and known to be dipping towards the Keep It Dark No. 2, but the angle of the dip at this point cannot be easily ascertained.

During the past year this company has crushed 450 tons of quartz, which yielded 125oz. of gold, representing a value of £625, while calls to the extent of £2,000 have been made.

*Hercules Company.*—This company holds the ground formerly held by the Nil Desperandum Company, and adjoins the Keep It Dark Mine. Prospecting has been carried on in this mine for a number of years without being successful in finding payable stone. Last year, after driving about 180ft. from the bottom of the shaft on No. 8 level, without cutting the lode, an uprise was made for 62ft., when a block of stone was discovered about 5ft. in thickness; but this block was soon worked out. Prospecting was carried on, to prove if the stone lived down, but so far it has not been found to do so. During the past year 1,092 tons of stone were crushed, which yielded 791oz. of gold, representing a value of £3,164, out of which £1,500 was paid in dividends.

*Keep It Dark No. 2 Company.*—The operations of this company at the time of my visit were confined to the 450ft. level, which was in course of construction. The lode in the company's ground is stoped out down to a depth of 283ft., and from this level a winze was put down on the lode to a depth of 117ft., and a portion of the lode stoped out from this winze. From the bottom of the shaft at 450ft. a cross-cut was put in for 155ft. to the line of reef, thence the line of reef was followed for a distance of 74ft., but it is merely the track of a lode. The manager expected to have to go about 200ft. further before getting under the block of stone that was worked from the intermediate level put in from the winze. The bearing of the line of the lode was about 24° to the west of north, and dipping westerly at an angle of from 60° to 70°.

*Globe Company.*—This company has crushed a considerable quantity of stone during the last year, but it has not been of a highly payable character. From 7,330 tons, 2,539oz. gold was obtained, representing a value of £10,156. The workings have been carried on from No. 5 level in the stopes between this and No. 4 level; but the lode is now pretty well taken out, and a good deal of dead-work in prospecting will have to be done before any good stone is again opened up. The main shaft has been sunk a further depth of 200ft., and a level is being driven from near the bottom to intersect the line of reef. A winze was sunk down on the lode from No. 5 level to a depth of