

## KAURI-GUM.

The most satisfactory feature in connection with our mineral exports during 1913 is the considerable increase in the quantity and value of kauri-gum exported, which amounted to 8,780 tons, valued at £549,106, the highest both in tonnage and value during the past seven years. The total production actually amounted to 9,596 tons, the highest since 1904. The average value of the gum marketed during that year was, however, considerably greater than for 1913, this being due to the fact that there is now a steady sale for the grades known in the trade as "chips" and "dust," which are therefore sent forward in large quantities, and are understood to go mostly to Germany for the manufacture of linoleums. The market price of gum varies greatly, according to quality. The best-grade gum, which is very scarce, sells as high as £300 per ton. For single pieces of specimen gum but little larger than a man's fist, transparent, in colour varying from that of brandy to a light amber, collectors have paid as much as £25. A collection of transparent and highly polished specimen gum of varied shades of brown and yellow makes a very beautiful and valuable exhibit. The Mitchelson collection, recently presented to the Auckland Museum, was valued at over £2,000.

The following are the grades of commercial gum as sold in the London market: Pale amber—ordinary three-quarter scraped; half scraped; brown; fair half and three-quarter scraped; fair half scraped; pickings; chips; and dust.

A good market now being available for the low-grade gum, mechanical methods are now employed in obtaining it from swamps. In the Piako district gum is obtained by ground-sluicing and saved in sluice-boxes somewhat similar to the methods of pioneer alluvial-gold mining.

A company with a capital of £30,000 has recently been formed for the purpose of dredging for gum on a swamp at Awanui, in the north of Auckland peninsula. A gold-dredge has been purchased in Otago, which it is proposed to alter to adapt it to gum-dredging. There are many thousands of acres of swamp in the gum-bearing areas of the north, and it is anticipated by the company that the dredge which is about to be placed in commission will be the forerunner of many others. Those who are experienced in gold-dredging know the difficulty in handling buried logs and in separating the gum from the roots, &c., which will be raised by the dredge. The upkeep of a gold-dredge for fuel, wages, and repairs will average approximately £40 per week if working full time.

## IRON.

The past year has again been one of inactivity by the Parapara Iron Company. The holders of the Cadman lease have been exempted by the Warden from observance of the labour-conditions of such lease during the past eighteen months. Since the beginning of 1908 this lease has been totally exempted for two years and partially exempted for two years and a half, during which time unsuccessful attempts have been made to obtain capital from abroad to work the deposit. The syndicate who own the Onakaka lease have been more industrious, employing about twenty men in trackmaking and clearing.

As the result of successful experiments in the treatment of Taranaki ironsand at the metallurgical works of the Waihi Gold-mining Company at Waikino, it is proposed to erect an experimental blast furnace near New Plymouth. The process to be adopted consists in the briquetting of 60 per cent. ironsand with 40 per cent. small coal from the Liverpool State Colliery, the coke from which contains only 0.25 per cent. sulphur. The briquettes will then be coked before introduction into the furnace. It is claimed by the patentees that by this process the titanic anhydride in the ironsand, amounting to from 8 to 9.2 per cent., is eliminated in the furnace. If this process proves successful an extensive iron industry may be established on the shores of Taranaki.

## PETROLEUM.

Drilling operations are still being vigorously carried out in the North Island, especially in the Provincial District of Taranaki; but the result of such operations during 1913 has not materially added to the known supply of petroleum. The most interesting development has been the tapping, by the Taranaki Oil Lands Company, of a productive well near Moturoa, at a distance of about 12 or 13 chains east of the No. 5 or most productive well of the Taranaki Oil-wells (Limited). In the new well, at a depth of 2,170 ft., the flow of oil commenced, and during January and February of the current year over 1,000 barrels are reported to have been produced; at 2,232 ft. the well-drilling was temporarily suspended owing to influx of water. This well is lined with 10 in. casing to the bottom.

The Taranaki Oil-wells (Limited) commenced operations at their new refinery during the year, but have experienced some difficulty in eliminating an aromatic substance from the kerosene. The two prospecting-boreholes drilled by this company at Waitara failed to find oil, and were discontinued at depths of 2,970 ft. and 3,821 ft. respectively. This company is now drilling by rotary plant a new hole at Moturoa; a depth of 2,513 ft. has already been attained.

Drilling is also being carried on by the Bonithon Freehold Oil Company near New Plymouth, the United Oil Company at Waitara, the Phoenix Oil Company at Moturoa, the Consolidated Oil-fields of Taranaki at Huiroa, and the Mangaone Oilfields (Limited) near Eketahuna.