

low-grade. Some 5,542 tons of quartz were crushed for 922 oz. 19 dwt. of gold, valued at £3,469 16s. 10d. The mine is now in the hands of a Christchurch company.

Murray Creek Mine.—The new plant was completed and crushing was resumed in May, since when 9,728 tons have been treated for gold valued at £21,726 16s. 2d. No dividends were paid. Development work was confined to the continuation of No. 4 level, but was rather disappointing, inasmuch as the drive proved to be in a zone where faulting had somewhat disturbed the reef. This is not expected to seriously affect the future of the mine, as the stone will be picked up again below the level.

New Big River Mine.—Work has progressed steadily. Like all the other mines of the district, the mine has been somewhat hampered by lack of sufficient supply of skilled labour; nevertheless the amount of stone crushed was only about 300 tons less than last year. The value of gold produced was £19,177 17s. 3d., as compared with £19,363. The mine is one of only two which appear on the dividend list for the year for this district. Dividends to the amount of £7,200 were disbursed, making the total dividends paid by the company £98,400. Development work has been practically confined to No. 11 level. Some fairly extensive bodies of stone have been opened up, but faulting has greatly disturbed the reef, making prospecting-work difficult.

North Blackwater Development Syndicate.—The sinking of the Prohibition shaft was continued to 1,360 ft., and at 1,350 ft. a chamber was cut and a crosscut started towards the line of the reef worked in the adjoining Blackwater Mine. In this crosscut a number of parallel reefs have been met with, at least three of them carrying good values. It is believed by the management that the reef worked in the Blackwater Mine has not yet been reached. The developments are thus extremely satisfactory, and on its present appearance the mine promises well as a future gold-producer.

Progress Mine. Not much development in the way of shaft-sinking or driving has been done, but a large body of stone has been opened up in No. 11 stope. The falling-off in production noticeable during 1916 has continued during the past year, returns falling to 19,840 tons crushed for 5,576 oz. 6 dwt., valued at £22,707 13s. 3d. Shortage of men has been mainly responsible for this. For the great part of the year work has had to be restricted to one shift.

Wealth of Nations and Energetic Mines.—A good deal of development work was carried out, particularly on Nos. 6, 7, and 12 levels, without any important results. There was a decrease of about 7,000 tons crushed as compared with last year, due greatly to shortage of labour. There has also been a decrease in values from an average of £1 10s. 10d. to £1 0s. 10d.

HOKITIKA AND ROSS.

Mount Greenland Company.—Very little development work has been done at this company's mine at Cedar Creek during the year, but stoping was carried on steadily. Owing to the very dry season experienced on the West Coast the battery, which depends on water for power purposes, has been idle for a good part of the time. Some 493 tons of quartz were crushed for 806 oz. 9 dwt., valued at £3,145 19s. A small dividend absorbing £250 was paid. This is the only quartz-mining in this part of the district.

WESTPORT.

Columbia Reef.—Messrs. Bagley Bros.' prospectors have located the cap of a reef which is thought to be the downward continuation of what was known in past times as the Columbia reef, and from which years ago crushings were taken giving highly payable results. All trace of the reef was completely lost in the workings, however, and it was assumed that the stone worked was merely part of a reef which had slipped from higher country. A small company has been formed to test the present discovery. At present there is nothing showing but the cap of the reef, which is considerably broken.

STILLWATER.

Victory Mine.—A small company has been formed to work a gold-antimony lode situated about 1,000 ft. above Stillwater, on the range. A battery is being erected. The outcrop has been opened up at a number of places, but very little prospecting has been done to prove the extent or value of the lode below the surface. The lode is flat, and appears to be considerably split up.

General Remarks on Quartz-mining.

Apart from the mines mentioned, very little prospecting has been done for quartz. Owing to the war and the difficulty of getting men, mining companies have been obliged to refrain as far as possible from everything except essential work, and there are very few men now who voluntarily devote their time to searching for new reefs. The mines have been visited regularly, and all care taken to see that the regulations have been strictly adhered to. Only one fatal accident happened during the year. This occurred at the Progress Mine to a miner named Thomas Robbins, through his being struck by a rock falling from the back. The Coroner returned a verdict of "Accidental death." One miner was prosecuted for dry-boring, but the case was dismissed.

Dredging.

The dredging industry in the district has shown a little improvement for the year, the recovery of gold being valued at £30,325, as against £27,889 last year.

One dredge—the Ahaura River—only worked about six weeks and then closed down; while two new dredges have been put in commission, the Kapitea and the Rimu No. 1. The former won 792 oz. 16 dwt. and the latter 1,782 oz. 10 dwt.

The Rimu No. 1 dredge has not been so productive as was anticipated. It was estimated that, judging by the values shown by the test bores, 100 oz. a week would be recovered. This hope has not