

SCHOOLS OF MINES.

The Schools of Mines continue to do good work, and the students, when they finish their course of study, readily find employment in connection with mining. Some years ago the Cassel Company sent men out from Great Britain to take charge of the different cyanide plants that the company had erected, but latterly the students from the Thames School have been employed, and have given every satisfaction.

The situation of the Thames School, in the immediate heart of a large mining centre, affords opportunities to many students to attend night-classes while they are earning their livelihood in the mines. This they could not do if the school was not where mining operations are carried on. The subjects taught at this school are: General and Mining Geology, Mineralogy, Mathematics, Land and Mining Surveying, Mining, Applied Mechanics, Hydraulics, Assaying, Theoretical and Practical Chemistry, Metallurgy of Gold and Silver, Physics, Practical Astronomy, and Mechanical Drawing. Several of these subjects are also taught at the Reefton School; but the attendance at that school has not warranted a continuous course of instruction. The instructor has been for a portion of the year engaged at the Denniston and Brunner Schools.

The course of instruction at the School of Mines in connection with the Otago University embraces not only the whole of the subjects taught at the Thames School, with the exception of Practical Astronomy, but it also includes subjects not taught at the Thames School—namely, Biology, Petrography, and Palæontology. But as there are no crushing or cyanide plants attached to this school, as at the Thames, the students have not the same opportunity of acquiring a practical knowledge of the working of these plants. It is, however, gratifying to know that steps are now being taken to have crushing and cyanide plants erected at the Otago School of Mines, so that auriferous and argentiferous ores can be thoroughly tested there in order to ascertain their commercial value.

The expenditure on Schools of Mines last year was £1,709, including £500 paid to the school attached to the Otago University. The total expenditure for the last ten years, since the schools were established, has been £18,855.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE ON WORKS.

The total expenditure on the construction of works authorised by the department up to the 31st March last has been £479,554. Of this amount, £348,120 has been paid by Government, and £101,941 by local bodies, prospecting associations, and mining companies. These works consist of: Roads and tracks constructed from direct grants, £173,940; roads constructed on subsidies, £130,906; water-races, £61,649; drainage-channels, £22,923; prospecting works, £63,958; diamond and other drills, £4,955; wharves, £436; Schools of Mines, assistance given towards the treatment of ore, £19,487; artesian-well boring, £800; repairing flood damages, £500. The liabilities on works in progress on the 31st March last were £29,493. A detailed statement of the cost and of the expenditure on these works will be found in the tables annexed to the Inspecting Engineer's Report, pages 274 to 284.

MINING LEGISLATION.

It is proposed to ask the House to pass a measure amending the Mining Act, so as to give greater facilities, and to afford better security, for carrying on prospecting operations on an extensive scale for gold, silver, or other minerals, excepting coal, in order to afford encouragement to persons who wish to invest their money in mining, and at the same time find profitable employment for the working-classes. It is also proposed to limit the time that any person can hold ground, without either complying with the labour conditions or having the ground, protected without being absolutely forfeited. This will prevent the locking-up of large areas for speculative purposes. Provision is also to be made requiring foreign mining companies to have a colonial register, so that the stock can be dealt with in the colony. I also deemed it desirable