

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS AND MINING.

The gold-mining industry continues to steadily advance. The output of gold for the year was greater than during the preceding twelve months, and was the highest for any corresponding period since 1873.

The value of gold entered for export during 1902 was £1,951,433, being an increase on the previous year of £197,650.

The quantity of gold entered for export during 1902 was 508,045 oz., valued at £1,951,433, and of silver 674,196 oz., valued at £71,975; as compared with 455,561 oz. of gold, valued at £1,753,783, and of silver 571,134 oz., valued at £65,258 for 1901; being an increase of 52,484 oz. of gold, valued at £197,650, and 103,062 oz. of silver, valued at £6,717.

As already announced by my colleague the Hon. the Minister of Mines in his Statement submitted to Parliament this session, the Government has acquired the extensive pumping plant and machinery erected by the Thames Hauraki (Limited) at the Lower Thames and recently sold by order of the Court. The Government has also agreed to subsidise local contributions towards putting down bores to prospect for gold at deeper levels than heretofore worked, and it is hoped that before long the question of whether it will pay to mine for gold at deep levels at the Thames will be determined.

The amount expended last financial year on works for the development of the goldfields was £24,213, while the liabilities at the close of the year amounted to £5,002. It is proposed to take a vote of £20,000 for the current year.

TELEGRAPH EXTENSION.

The expenditure under the head of telegraph extension during the past financial year totalled to £68,578. The greater proportion of this was expended on Telephone Exchanges, an item governed by the requirements of the public and the rapid expansion of this branch of the service. The number of new subscribers during the year was 1,373.

The most important telegraph and telephone lines constructed were: To Doubtless Bay, connecting with the Pacific cable; Horeke; Tuakau—Onewhero; Limestone Island; Warkworth—Whangarei; Raupo—Rehia; Auckland—Waiheke Island; Waerenga; Peria—Fairburn's; Gisborne—Tokomaru Bay; Weber—Waione; Leeston Trunk; Geraldine—Hilton; Waimate Trunk; and Gore—Otama.

The vote this year is limited to £50,000, which includes liabilities on the 31st March last amounting to £27,409, leaving £22,591 for works put in hand since the commencement of the financial year and further extensions authorised.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The total expenditure on public buildings last year amounted to £249,303—namely, £51,848 under the Consolidated Fund, and £197,455 under the Public Works Fund. For the current year a total appropriation of £282,995 is proposed—namely, £47,055 under the Consolidated Fund, and £235,940 under the Public Works Fund.

GENERAL.

Under this head the expenditure amounted to £10,534, of which rather more than half was for the acquisition of additional land adjoining the site of the general departmental offices in Auckland to provide for an urgently necessary enlargement of the building. For the current year a vote of £15,670 is proposed, which provides for going on with the enlargement of the building just referred to; for the new offices and laboratory for the Mines Department, Wellington; for continuing work on the reconstruction of the departmental offices, Napier, &c.

JUDICIAL.

Courthouses.—New Courthouses were erected last year, or are now in hand, at Wellington, Dunedin, and Orepuki; and additions, or fairly extensive renova-