

to the Middle Island, £141,179; and of these sums, £36,272 in the North Island, and £48,453 in the Middle Island, were devoted to school buildings. As the expenditure on school buildings is not supervised directly by the Public Works Department, the amounts on the expenditure of which the department has had control have therefore been—£35,362 in the North Island, and £92,726 in the Middle Island: total, £128,088.

In the North Island, exclusive of school buildings and the asylum at the Whau, no very large work has been completed, and the only buildings of considerable magnitude commenced have been the new post and telegraph offices, and prison at Mount Cook, Wellington.

In the Middle Island the lunatic asylums at Sunnyside and Seacliff are the principal works in progress. At Sunnyside considerable additions have been made during the year, and others are being proceeded with, while designs have been got out for still further additions. At Seacliff the works, which are of large magnitude, are being gradually carried out. It is expected that these two asylums, when completed, will compare favourably, both in appearance and utility, with the best institutions of a similar kind in England. The only other building of importance in progress is the new courthouse at Oamaru.

In all, about thirty buildings in the North Island and forty buildings in the Middle Island have been either in course of erection, or alteration, or under considerable repair within the year.

COAL FIELDS.

The coal now used on the New Zealand Railways is entirely raised in the colony. Thus the Hurunui-Bluff section is supplied by contract from the following mines: Springfield, Glentunnel, Homebush, Shag Point, Kaitangata, Nightcaps, and Westport; and, with the exception of a supply from the Waikato and Brunner Mines, the remaining sections of the railways obtain their supply mainly from the Westport Colliery company's mine.

The only New Zealand coals in the market of a description suitable for marine purposes is that of the Kawakawa Coal Field, the Kamo Mine, and the coal of the west coast of the South Island; the former is very largely used by the Union Steamship company.

During the past year the development of the New Zealand coal fields has chiefly consisted in the extension of those mines which were already at work. Of these there is a notable improvement in the output from the Banbury or Westport company's mine at Westport, due principally to the increased facilities for transport which have been provided by steamers; and more steamers are in course of construction, which will tax the powers of the company's self-acting tramway to keep them constantly occupied. The Koranui Mine is not yet putting coal in the market, but will shortly be able to do so.

The Riverton-Otautau line has been instrumental in causing the Nightcaps Coal Field to be opened up, and two seams are now being worked there, the company having constructed a short line to connect with the Government railway. It is expected that, when the Orepuki line is completed, the fine coal-seam in this locality will also be worked, and Southland will thus become entirely self-supplying in the matter of coal.

Mines are now opened in Southland, Otago, Canterbury, and Auckland, which are capable of supplying the local wants of those districts; and the mines of Greymouth and Westport are being further developed, yielding very superior gas and steam coal respectively.

The published reports upon the control and inspection of mines show that the quantity of coal raised in the colony during the years 1878 to 1881 has steadily increased; while the quantity imported has as steadily decreased. During 1881, however, there is a slight increase in the imports as compared with 1880; but the increase in the quantity raised in the colony during 1881 is relatively as great as in previous years, and far exceeds the increase in coal imports during same year. In view of these facts, and bearing in mind the increased facilities which are being provided by the railways for the transit of coal from the local mines to the centres of population near the seaboard, it may reasonably be assumed that the consumption of local coal in the colony will become far more general than it is at present, and that the importation of this commodity will gradually diminish, and finally cease.