

It is gratifying to know that most of the students who have attended the Thames School, and passed through a three-years course, have readily obtained employment—some as assayers to mining companies, others being employed by the Cassel Company in carrying on leaching operations with cyanide of potassium. A number of middle-aged men have also attended the evening classes, which enabled them to pass their examinations and obtain certificates as mine-managers.

The average number of students attending the Thames School during the last year was ninety-one; of this number, forty were regular students, and fifty-one attended Saturday lectures only. Thirteen parcels of ore were treated with the experimental plant, amounting in the aggregate to 21,610lb. All appliances necessary to treat pulverised ore by the cyanide process have been added to the experimental plant, so that any one can now have small parcels of ore tested by the most modern methods at a reasonable cost.

The progress made at the Reefton School during the past year has not been so good as formerly: this is due to the conductor having to give more of his time to outlying schools on the West Coast. It is found that unless continuous teaching is adhered to a good attendance cannot be secured, neither can satisfactory progress be made.

There was a good attendance at the School of Mines at Dunedin last year. The course of lectures at this school occupies a term of six months in the year, during the vacation many of the students going to work in the mines; so that, as far as technical teaching is concerned, the students at the Thames School pursue their studies for a longer space of time in a three-years course than the Dunedin students do in four years.

The total expenditure on Schools of Mines since their inauguration, exclusive of the amounts contributed towards the School of Mines connected with the Otago University, has been £12,896; of this amount £1,604 has been expended on buildings, £943 on chemicals and school requisites, and £10,349 on salaries of instructors. Last year the expenditure amounted to £1,056. The total contribution given towards the School of Mines at the Otago University, including £500 paid last year, amounts to £4,250.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE ON WORKS.

The total value of works authorised since votes were placed under the control of the Minister of Mines has been £439,325. Of this amount, £323,561 was paid by Government, and £94,246 by local bodies, prospecting associations, and mining companies. These works consist of subsidised roads and tracks, £130,220; roads constructed by direct grants, £153,530; water-races, £56,847; drainage-channels, £21,401; prospecting-works, £53,153; wharves, £436; diamond and other drills, assistance given towards the treatment of ores, and artesian-well boring, £6,590; Schools of Mines, inclusive of the amount paid towards the school in connection with Otago University, £17,145; making a total of £439,325. Of this amount the Government has paid £323,561, and the liabilities on the works in progress on the 31st March last amounted to £21,518. A detailed statement of the cost and expenditure on these works will be found in the tables annexed to the report of the Inspecting Engineer, pages 238 to 246.

MINING LEGISLATION.

I have deemed it desirable to have a consolidation of the Mining Companies Act, and a Bill has been prepared accordingly. The only alteration proposed is in regard to the transfer of shares, it being intended to make more stringent provisions to enforce registration. It is also proposed to enforce the winding-up of mining companies which cease to hold three consecutive meetings of shareholders, and to make the Official Assignee liquidator of such companies. This is found necessary, as there are companies in existence which do not hold any mining property, but are, nevertheless, required to make yearly returns, and some of these companies have held no meetings for years, the directors taking no interest in the matter. The date of publishing returns from the month of January to the month of March will also be altered, so as to give time to get the necessary information from companies whose head offices are not in the colony.

It is also proposed to ask Parliament to vote a considerable sum of money this session in order to meet the growing demands which necessarily arise in the mining districts,—

1. For aid to further develop the lower levels in quartz-reefing districts;
2. For the construction of water-races and storage reservoirs;
3. For compensation arising from the proclamation of rivers, streams, and creeks as watercourses into which tailings and other *débris* can be deposited;