

Under such regulations it has been found that when once a well-designed plant, of good material, has been properly installed in a mine, and is under the charge of a capable man, there is little, if any, danger in the use of electricity, even at high voltages.

SCHOOLS OF MINES.

The schools of mines, which have now been established twenty-three years, continue to contribute to the education of mining and metallurgical students at the principal mining centres throughout the Dominion. The number of important positions occupied by students from these schools on many of the great mining fields of the world bears testimony to the efficiency of the curriculum, and the practical teaching of these schools has, no doubt, contributed to the low working-cost and the high proportion of dividends paid by the most important of our mining companies.

Including the grants made to the schools of mines in connection with the Otago University, at Dunedin, the expenditure on behalf of these institutions during the past year amounted to £3,269 1s. 4d., and the aggregate expenditure since their initiation totals £49,851 19s. 4d.

MINE-MANAGERS' CERTIFICATES.

It has been decided to add to the list of subjects upon which candidates are examined an elementary knowledge of electricity, and of the treatment by first aid to the injured.

Suggestions have been made that the period of practical experience necessary for a candidate for a mine-manager's certificate of competency should be reduced from five to three years in the case of mining graduates from our universities; but this proposal has not met with the approval of the Board of Examiners or the responsible advisers of the Government, principally on humanitarian grounds and the necessity for safeguarding the lives of the men employed. The conditions here are by no means analogous to those pertaining in many other countries, where a practical knowledge of gaseous and dangerous mines may be daily gained from ocular demonstration. As our certificates are reciprocal with those of other countries, it has been determined to maintain the present high standard of practical mining experience by our managers.

PROSPECTING.

Liberal assistance is offered under the Mining Regulations for prospectors—£2 for £1 expended by a local authority or a miners' association; £1 per man per week to small parties engaged in prospecting new ground; and up to 5s. per foot for tunnelling or driving through hard rock.

Whilst the State has for years encouraged small parties of prospectors, it cannot be affirmed that the results have been commensurate with the expenditure. It would, therefore, appear that the time has now arrived for a forward move. Prospecting parties, under the control of the Mines Department, should be properly equipped, and endeavours made to discover new lodes of auriferous quartz, deep leads of alluvial gold, or economic minerals. These parties would require to have thoroughly practical miners at their head, and should be guided in selection of locality by the advice of a Government Geologist. In this connection the Geological Survey Branch, which is carrying on extensive explorations, should be able to afford valuable assistance. Small parties of prospectors have, as a rule, kept too close to the beaten tracks and the old workings. An endeavour should now be made to penetrate into outside districts, and so pave the way for mining developments in portions of the Dominion that are at present little known.

ROADS AND TRACKS.

The Government recognises the need for constructing roads and tracks to open up mineral lands, and that policy will be adhered to.

The expenditure on roads and tracks, constructed by direct grants during the financial year ended the 31st March, 1908, amounted to £37,913 10s. 8d., and by way of subsidies to local bodies, £580 5s. 6d.