

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS AND MINING.

Although there is a considerable variety of minerals in the Dominion, very little has so far been done to develop them, attention having been chiefly directed to gold, silver, and coal. Recently, however, the high price of copper caused consideration to be given to the development of the deposits of this metal, but the price having since declined less eagerness is shown for developing some of the areas taken up. Smelting has, however, been started in connection with the copper-mines at Aniseed Valley, Nelson, and work is going on at Whangaroa, north of Auckland.

The scheelite deposits in Otago are now being steadily developed, and satisfactory prices are obtained in the European markets, but last year there were considerable fluctuations in the quotations for this valuable mineral. There is an abundance of manganese and antimony in the Dominion, but the low price at which these minerals can be produced in other countries precludes competition to any great extent on our part. The deposits of hæmatite ore at Parapara, though still unworked, have lately attracted the attention of capitalists, and the manufacture of iron may be added to our other industries in the course of a few years.

The output of coal for the past year is the highest yet attained, being 1,831,009 tons, which exceeds the output during 1906 by 101,473 tons.

The amount expended last financial year on works for the development of goldfields was £8,632, and it is proposed to take a vote of £35,000 for the current year. Under this heading will be included subsidies towards assisting the deep-level developments at the Thames and Ross. These works, which are of great importance, not only to the districts in which they are being carried on, but to the Dominion as a whole, are in the hands of strong companies, and the results of their operations will be watched with interest by the mining community.

TOURIST AND HEALTH RESORTS.

The expenditure last year amounted to £45,027. Of that amount the new bath-buildings, Rotorua, absorbed £14,938, and the water-supply works, drainage works, and electrical works at the same place £7,981, £1,233, and £1,517 respectively. The installation of high-pressure water-service and efficient drainage works in Rotorua are now practically complete, and are working very satisfactorily. The land on which the accommodation-house at Waitomo Caves stands was purchased during the year, and, as the present building is not large enough to cope with the traffic, it is proposed to erect a new accommodation-house, some little distance from the present site, at an estimated cost of £2,500. The accommodation-house and land at Te Puia Hot Springs, Gisborne, was purchased by the Department during the year, but a new accommodation-house is required, and provision has been made for it on the estimates. The new water-supply for Hanmer was also completed during the year. The estimates for the current year include £14,000 for new bath-buildings and furniture, Rotorua, which will complete same; £4,200 is asked for additions to the electric-lighting plant, Rotorua; and £5,000 on account of the erection in stone of a new accommodation-house at Mount Cook Hermitage. Provision is also made for the purchase of a new steamer for Lake Te Anau, at a cost of £3,000; for a vote of £1,000 on account of a new steamer, estimated to cost £20,000, for Lake Wakatipu; and also for much-needed improvements at Te Aroha, Whakarewarewa, Queenstown, and Te Anau. The gross authorisation asked for is £47,093 (as compared with £66,744 last year), on account of which a vote of £35,000 is proposed.

TELEGRAPH-EXTENSION.

During the financial year £155,491 was expended on telegraph and telephone extensions.

The new lines erected and in course of construction totalled 701 miles of poles and 2,307 miles of wire. Telegraph offices were opened at 164 townships, while 2,999 new subscribers were added to the telephone-exchange system.

A new cable of 42½ knots was laid across Cook Strait from Lyell Bay to White's Bay, thus providing additional communication between the two islands.