

The treatment of flax-refuse from the mills must also be taken in hand ; for here, as in the conservation of the fibre, waste must be prevented, and what is now thrown away may be turned into profitable products. There are no less than 8 tons of refuse from every 9 tons of green flax. In one mill there are 50 tons of refuse per day, the whole of which is at present valueless ; and in some cases this refuse is a source of trouble and annoyance. Scientists have informed the Committee that the whole of this waste contains valuable constituents —such, for example, as commercial alcohol and potash—and it is recommended that a bonus be offered, payable on the production of a marketable commodity.

GOLD-MINING.

Unfortunately, time did not permit an examination into the gold-mining industry on the Hauraki Peninsula ; but from the evidence tendered in other districts your Committee has arrived at certain conclusions. It is clear that this industry has been permitted to drift for many years without any sustained effort being made by the Government to revive and foster it. It should be remembered that no less a sum than £88,000,000 has been produced from our goldfields during the past sixty or seventy years, and your Committee is of opinion that the questions of the maintenance of the industry and its future development are of national importance. The Waihi Mine itself has given, up to the close of the year 1918, returns to the value of over £11,000,000, and it is surely reasonable to hope and expect that other mines of great, if not equal, wealth may yet be discovered in this country.

Encouragement of Prospecting.

The provision of cheap water-power would undoubtedly materially assist not only gold but other mining industries. The development of the water-power of Tasmania has resulted in the establishment in that country of great metallurgical works, and there is no good reason why the same result should not be expected in our own country when cheap electrical power is provided on a national scale. Prospecting as carried on for some years has proved a failure, and your Committee is of opinion that the Government should equip and send out prospecting-parties under the control, where possible, of a man with local knowledge, the whole work to be carried out under the direction of the Geological Survey Department. This Department has been doing valuable work since 1905, but in order that the best practical results may be obtained, prospecting-parties under Government control should be associated with the Department's work. Under the present system large sums of public money are expended on geological surveys of which little or no use is ever made.

Other Minerals and their Treatment.

In order to deal successfully with the many reefs which contain a percentage of lead, zinc, copper, galena, &c., it is imperative that smelting-facilities should be provided by the State. At present only the gold or silver is extracted, and the base metals are lost, because the expense of sending the concentrates to Cockle Creek or other smelting-works in Australia is prohibitive. If a smelting-furnace were established in New Zealand in a central position the cost of treating the concentrates would be reduced probably by £4 per ton, and many properties now lying idle might be profitably developed, and in addition miners would be encouraged to prospect for, and produce, other minerals than gold.

State Stamper Batteries.

As a matter of fact, the present mining legislation, with its accompanying regulations, is sadly out of date, and requires a thorough overhaul by a body of mining experts. A further and necessary adjunct of the industry would be the setting-up of Government stamper batteries for the treatment of parcels of ore at bare cost, or even less.