

GOLD FIELDS COMMISSION, NEW SOUTH WALES, 1871.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honorable SOMERSET RICHARD, Earl of Belmore, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of New South Wales.

May it please your Excellency,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by your Excellency to enquire into the working of the present Gold Fields Act and Regulations, and to report upon the same with such suggestions as we think will be desirable for the framing of new Laws and Regulations for the Gold Fields of New South Wales, and also to examine and report upon the best means of procuring permanent Water Supply on the different Gold Fields of the said Colony, so far as the same may be effected by legislation, have the honor to submit to your Excellency the following Report:—

1. The short Progress Report furnished by us to your Excellency, of date September 2nd, 1870, ^{Introductory.} will show briefly the places visited by your Commissioners up to the time of presenting that Report; but inasmuch as it does not enter into the detail of our labours, it may be well to refer now more specifically to the course adopted by us in pursuance of the powers conferred upon and the instructions given to us.

2. Your Commissioners, then, commenced the taking of evidence in Sydney, having employed ^{Means taken to} ample means to invite before them witnesses of every class of experience, and representing every ^{procure evidence.} shade of opinion; and we are happy to be able to state that, not only in Sydney but throughout the country, the invitation thus put forth by the Commission has been responded to most liberally by those interested in, and acquainted with, the subjects under investigation. Obviously, an inquiry conducted in Sydney alone would not have, in any way, met the requirements of the trust confided to us, or have in any way enabled us to discharge satisfactorily the duty imposed upon us; and your Commissioners therefore lost no time in visiting the principal mining districts of the Colony. We took due care to apprise the miners of the respective districts visited by us of our intention to visit them, and of the objects of our visit; and we believe that the evidence which has been collected by us will show that the mining community generally has not, on its part, failed to appreciate the great boon which it has been generally thought the Parliament meant to confer upon that community, in appointing this Commission of Inquiry. Hardly a Field of any importance throughout the Colony has been unvisited by us; and in the body of evidence which we have now the honor to lay before your Excellency, it will be seen that there is not a mining district of the Colony that is not represented. Doubtless there may be many individuals of much experience and of great ability who have not availed themselves of this opportunity of putting their views before the Country; but if so, it cannot be for want of the opportunity.

3. It was of course not possible that every Gold Field could be visited by us; and, in especial ^{Circular inviting} consideration of that circumstance, your Commissioners prepared for distribution the circular ^{communications.} letter which will be found in the Appendix. This circular embraces almost all the branches of the inquiry committed to us, and we have reason to believe it has found its way to every post town in the Country in the neighborhood of any Gold Field. Most of the written communications received by your Commissioners, in answer to that circular, are printed either in the body of the evidence or in the Appendix; and of those communications which it has not been thought necessary to print, there is hardly one the views contained in which have not found in some shape or other fitting expression. Some of the written communications which are printed are really valuable documents, evidencing much careful study of the subject, and containing views and suggestions of great intrinsic worth.

4. Your Commissioners cannot but express a regret that an opportunity has not been afforded ^{Inability to visit} them of visiting the neighboring Colony of Victoria. We would desire to quote here an extract from ^{Victoria, matter} our letter of the 3rd December to the Minister for Lands, specifying some of the more important ^{of regret.} objects which appeared to us to render it desirable that we should visit that Colony:—