

much as possible. The consequence is that disputes remain unsettled for a very long period, to the serious injury of the mining community. Although I see most clearly that there is great necessity for a proper supervision of these Gold Fields in the North, yet I am unable, having the duties of Police Magistrate at this place (Armidale) to attend to, to travel to and inspect the various diggings, and hear the complaints of the miners." The effect of the present legislation is, if not entirely to annihilate the Gold Commissioner as such, to reduce that position to one merely subsidiary and ancillary to the position of Magistrate. We have no hesitation in saying that such a plan is wholly unsuited to the proper management of the Gold Fields. We adopt the opinion thus concisely expressed by Mr. Maclean:—"Any efficient Gold Commissioner must necessarily be able to discharge a Police Magistrate's duties well, while a man may be an excellent Police Magistrate and a perfectly incompetent Gold Commissioner."

Principal practical grievance of the miners.

36. Perhaps the greatest of all the grievances under which the miners labour—certainly the grievance most universally felt—is the absence of any person upon the Gold Fields to discharge the important functions which should be intrusted to a Commissioner or Warden.

No great additional expense requisite.

37. We have not kept out of sight, at any period of our investigation, nor do we forget now, the urgent importance of adhering to strict economy in the expenditure to be incurred in any improved system of Gold Fields management; and we are happy to see the way clear to such a recasting of the official arrangements as, while it will very materially remove the just cause of complaint entertained so universally to the present defective plan, and will provide the miners with fair official and judicial machinery, will not in any appreciable degree increase the expense at present borne by the State. We would, then, suggest the division of the Colony into certain Mining Districts; and with a view to this arrangement we recommend the immediate abolition of the present wholly insufficient and therefore unsatisfactory partition of the Colony into merely the Northern, Southern and Western Gold Fields Districts. For this system of division we would substitute the division of the Colony into Mining Districts, to be called respectively by the name of some principal town or well-known river within the district. For example, the District comprising the Gulgong, Meroo, and other Gold Fields in the immediate neighborhood should be called the "Mudgee Mining District." The District comprising Sofala, Wattle Flat, and other Fields in that neighborhood to be called the "Turon Mining District." These examples will illustrate our meaning in this particular, but of course the definite arrangement of this plan should be left to the Department of Mines.

Division of Colony into Mining Districts.

Appointment of Wardens.

38. We recommend that each of these Mining Districts should be under the charge of an official to be called Warden* of the District. The Wardens should also be Police Magistrates of their respective Districts, but it must be carefully borne in mind that the ordinary Bench duties as Police Magistrates are to be considered as only claiming from the Warden a consideration and attention secondary to the paramount duties as Warden; and with regard to the appointment of these officials, we beg to emphatically endorse the opinion of Mr Maclean that "every efficient Warden must necessarily be a competent Police Magistrate, but it by no means follows that every competent Police Magistrate should necessarily be an efficient Warden." The Warden should reside at some central spot within his District, and wherever practicable, in a locality itself a Gold Field actually the scene of gold-mining operations. We entertain no doubt that, with the assistance in the ordinary Bench duties which the Warden and Police Magistrate would receive from the unpaid Justices, the same official could efficiently discharge the duties of both offices, and that no detriment whatever to the fair requirements of the general community would be caused. It appears in evidence before us—and we ourselves believe—that were such an arrangement effected, the unpaid Magistracy, who now lend perhaps only a lukewarm assistance in the discharge of Bench duties where there is a stipendiary Magistrate with nothing else to do than preside upon the Bench, would readily and cheerfully give the Country and the District the benefit of their magisterial services, so as to relieve the Warden as much as possible from this part of his work. Looking, then, at the existing number of Police Magistrates throughout the Colony, we think that, if our recommendation were adopted, there would not, except for the purposes of clerical assistance, exist any occasion for the appointment of a single additional salaried official. It might be that, in some few instances, it would be expedient to increase the amount of salary,—for unquestionably gentlemen who would be thoroughly competent to discharge the duties of Warden should receive an adequate remuneration; and the salaries should not, in our opinion, be less in any case than £600 a year. Mental ability of a high order, combined with physical activity and energy to a considerable degree, is essential to the efficient discharge of duties such as we would entail upon a Warden; and we believe that the parsimonious curtailment of salaries is not a system of true economy. The payment of liberal salaries to a few really competent officers, seems to us more in accordance with prudence and sound economy than the maintenance, upon salaries just above starvation point, of a number of officers, the services of a large proportion of whom might, without any injury to the public, be dispensed with. In our opinion, moreover, the occasional presidency of such an officer as a Warden upon the more remote Benches within his District would be gladly welcomed by the unpaid Magistracy of those Benches, and would operate very beneficially upon the general population.

* Whether the official designation be "Commissioner" or "Warden" is doubtless not very material; but inasmuch as this latter term is used in the neighbouring Colonies of Victoria and New Zealand for the Gold Fields officials of those Colonies, we have thought it better, for the sake of uniformity, to recommend the substitution of the term Warden for that of Commissioner upon the Gold Fields of New South Wales.