

District Court. It is impossible to tell one day from another what new "Gulgongs" may arise in the far interior. Whilst this very Report is being written, payable gold is being found at Lake Cowal, in the Bland District, a place distant some fifty or sixty miles from the town where the nearest District Court is held. The most uninformed person on gold-mining matters can understand the difficulties that would arise were dozens, it might be hundreds, of claims lying unworked for months in such a place and the owners walking idly about.—E. A. BAKER.]

COLLECTION OF REVENUE.

More liberal
ideas now obtain-
ing.

Collection of
Revenue.

Rental of leases
too high.

Escort fee—
Government
should be
responsible for
safe carriage

Loss of the
Revenue through
insufficient
means of
collection.

50. The days are gone by when it was thought politic to lock up the gold unless it were bought from the State at a price almost commensurate with the net value of the article; it is no longer thought desirable to virtually prohibit members of a community from developing one of the most valuable resources of the Country; and it is now unnecessary to point out the immense material advantages which must accrue to the State from the increased population likely to be attracted by throwing open to industry and enterprise rich auriferous tracks, and by inviting such a population to benefit themselves and the Country at one and the same time. It must, on the other hand, be equally obvious that, before permitting individuals to appropriate to themselves that wealth which is the common property of the entire community, it is but reasonable to call upon those individuals to pay some small price for such a privilege; and when, moreover, the State is put to the expense of providing machinery for the preservation of law and order, especially for the mining section of the community, it would be idle to suppose that that expense should not be defrayed by those who benefit specially by that machinery. Your Commissioners recognize gladly the liberality of the provision by which, upon payment of a nominal fee of ten shillings per annum, an individual is entitled to mine for gold upon lands not otherwise his own, and to enjoy all other privileges which the possession of a miner's right carries with it. We do not, therefore, desire to recommend any reduction of the existing charge for miner's rights; nor are we, though at first sight the suggestion appears to possess some features of advantage, prepared to recommend what has been suggested as an improvement upon the existing system, viz., that the miner's right should continue in operation for twelve months from date of issue, nor do we propose any decrease in the charge for business licenses; but while we think that the miner's right fee is not too high, nor the charge for a business license excessive, there are some matters in which we think the charges are more than they should be.

51. We unanimously think that the rental imposed upon leases is too high; we would recommend that, instead of £2 per acre per annum, the rental should be ten shillings per acre per annum. It may be said that a rental of £2 an acre would not deter capitalist or Companies, representing large capital, from taking out leases, and we do not contest that proposition; but it is in the special interest of the ordinary claimholder that we recommend this reduction, as from the greater security of tenure which a lease would afford, we are of opinion that the ordinary claimholder would in very many instances gladly convert his holding into a lease, if not deterred by high rentals.

52. The escort fee may perhaps not be considered so much a source of revenue as a remuneration paid for services rendered, but still this may not be an inopportune point at which to place on record our unanimous and emphatic opinion, that if the Government exact a fee—by no means a small or insignificant fee either—for the carriage of gold, they should not be at liberty to exempt themselves from the ordinary liability of common carriers of property. From motives of general policy perhaps more than from the ordinary principles applying to contracts of carrying, we think that the Government, having unquestionably at their command the means of perfect security, should, more than any other carriers, be regarded as insurers.

53. So much for the sources of Revenue directly obtainable from the Gold Fields. With regard to its collection, we desire in the first place to call attention to those portions of the evidence which establish that a very large proportion of persons actually carrying on mining operations do not take out any miner's rights at all. Thus at once arises a direct loss of Revenue. In a great measure this failure to take out miners' rights is attributable not to any culpable evasion of the law by the miner, but to the practical difficulties that exist in procuring the document. It seemeth to us unreasonable to require that a miner should be compelled to go many miles to obtain this document. We suggest that every Mining Registrar and every Postmaster on a Gold Field should be authorized to issue miners' rights, accounting monthly to the Warden of the District for such issue. We also recommend that in Sydney, at the Office of the Mining Department, such rights should be obtainable. Some more effective measures should also be devised for enforcing the payment and for punishing the wilful evasion of the payment of the fee. These objects are sought to be obtained by the 8th section of the present Act, but the well-founded odium which very justly attaches to the character of an informer renders that section practically inoperative. It is sufficient to quote Mr. O'Mally Clarke upon this matter; that officer says—"Clause 8 of the present Act has been practically inoperative, because miners will not inform upon one another." We recommend the immediate abolition of that provision which directs that one half the penalty should go to the informer; but we think that the police upon a Gold Field should, upon the orders of a Warden, be empowered to demand the production within a reasonable time of the miner's right, and on failure of the production, or of a satisfactory accounting for non-production, the person so making default, should be proceeded against for unauthorised mining. The principal evasion of the fee seems to be on the part of the Chinese; it being in evidence that they are peculiarly given to evasion of the payment of the fee. The great physical resemblance of one Chinaman to another, combined with the imperfect acquaintance possessed by officials with the distinctive peculiarities of Chinese nomenclature, enables this class of miners to make one miner's right do duty for several individuals;—and possibly more stringent measures might be devised for the case