

82. We recommend that, in future in all frontage claims registration shall be compulsory; then, that, starting from the prospector's shaft, no claim, after payable gold has been struck in such shaft, should be left unworked within sixty single men's ground from that point. That this distance—sixty men's ground—be the guide in subsequent operations, so that no payable gold being struck in any other shaft, all claims within a similar distance should immediately be worked. So far our recommendation merely amounts to the principal embodied in some of the Frontage Regulations already in force. But we would recommend that, in addition to this, this registration should be endorsed on the miners' rights upon the registration being effected, and that a copy of the registration certificate be kept continuously and conspicuously posted on each frontage claim. Upon such posting of the certificate, the claimholders to be exempt from either the necessity for working (pending the striking of payable gold within the prescribed distance), or from attendance upon such claims, *i.e.*, shepherding. The striking of payable gold in any fresh shaft should be notified by some particular signal, as perhaps by the hoisting of a flag; and upon such notification being made, the exemption from work to cease within the prescribed limits. Registration in this Colony has hitherto been confined to registration merely by individuals for one man's ground; whereas we think that power should be given to register as a party,—it being always required that the miners' rights for the whole of such party be produced at the time of registration.

AREAS.

83. Your Commissioners found a general impression existing among all classes connected with the Gold Fields, that the mining operations of this Colony are usually conducted in a manner far inferior to that adopted in Victoria, and they have ever reason to believe that this impression is only too well grounded. This inefficient working may fairly be ascribed to our defective mining Regulations, which are apparently only intended to provide for mining on the rudest scale with pick and shovel,—as if our mineral deposits were confined to the shallow and easily worked alluvial ground. Certainly the present Regulations are not calculated to encourage the working of deposits requiring mining. The length to which the Report will necessarily extend prevents our quoting in detail the evidence bearing upon this part of the question we therefore contend ourselves with referring to the evidence of (amongst others) Mr. Mohr, Mr. Cleghorn, Mr. M'Kay, Mr. Travers Jones, Mr. Commissioner Johnson, and Mr. Rossister. These witnesses are all men of large and varied experience upon the subject of gold mining management, and most of them are thoroughly well acquainted with the theory and practice of the systems of both Victoria and of New South Wales. Nearly all the witnesses who have had an opportunity of comparing the working of the Gold Fields in Victoria and New South Wales corroborated the statements made by the witnesses named, and a comparison of the Victorian Regulations with those in force here bears out these views. Victorian mining legislation offers every facility and encouragement to the miner to enter on large operations: ours appears as if intended to cramp the miner's energies, and to keep him to mining work of the rudest and most wasteful kind. It would appear as if the Government thought it good policy to dole out the gold deposits to him in the smallest portions,—and the Regulations upon this head afford a singular contrast to the reckless way in which the gold-bearing lands have been and are being alienated on a large scale.

Existence of general feeling that our mining system is inferior to that of Victoria.

84. The present Regulations provide for two modes of working the gold deposits: first, by the miners under the miner's right, under conditions which place him at a great disadvantage; and second, by Companies working on a large scale and holding the land under lease. While not desiring to undervalue the benefit to be derived from the introduction of capital, or Companies,—and urging that to both every facility and encouragement should be given,—we are unanimously of opinion that it is to the working miner we must look as the principal developer of our mineral wealth, and our Regulations should be so framed as to encourage the miner to adopt an efficient system of mining. If we agree with the principle that, in the interest of the Colony, the gold deposit should be so worked as to secure the extraction of the gold at the least cost of time and labour,—or in other words, mined with the greatest degree of efficiency and economy combined,—such areas must be granted to the miner as will allow him to carry out his work in this desirable method. With the present small areas economical working is impracticable, and therefore an indispensable step towards improvement will be the increase of the areas to such an extent as will allow it. It has been pointed out, when speaking of leases, that the working of a mine may be divided into two periods of time: first, the opening and proving of the ground, during which only a limited number of men can be advantageously employed; and second, the working out of the deposits, when a much larger body of men can be engaged. Every prudent Company will open and prove the value of their mining ground prior to incur the expenses necessary before the deposit can be worked to profit; and this same work of opening and testing can generally be undertaken by parties of working miners, with greater economy, and in many instances with greater efficiency, than it can be by Companies. If successful the party of working miners would have no difficulty in getting capitalists to join them, and to provide the appliances required for working the mine on reasonable terms. We cannot see why the same inducements and the same chances of making an independence should not be offered to the miner, whose principle capital is his labour, as is offered to the capitalist, who pays for the labour he has to employ; and if this were done, we feel assured a great impulse would be given to gold-mining, much to the advantage of the miner and of the Colony. We are aware that one section of the miners is opposed to any large increase in the areas granted for mining, through a groundless

Advantages of liberal areas.