

dread of the Gold Fields being monopolized by a comparatively small body of men. Considering the vast area of unoccupied gold country in New South Wales and that if the claims are larger they will take a longer time to work out, we can discover on reasonable cause for this dread. On the contrary, we are of opinion that the settlement of the miner on claims of such a size that they will take a long period to work out, instead of compelling him to wander about in search of new claims, would be a great benefit to the miner and the community. No doubt cases are not uncommon where small claims return large sums to their fortunate owners,—but the limited extent of this rich ground renders it of little importance when compared with the aggregate value of the much larger area of poor ground which will only yield moderate profits for efficient working. The Regulations should be specially framed to encourage the working of these poorer deposits, even at the risk of the rich claims being greater prizes than they now are, if this is any practical disadvantage. Many of the skilled miners now in other Colonies would be attracted here by liberal Regulations. Such men would be a great acquisition to the Colony, and by their enterprise would increase rather than decrease the demand for labour. Similar objections were urged against the increase of the areas allowed for mining, some ten or twelve years ago, in Victoria, but experience has shown how baseless they were; and, step by step, the Mining Boards elected by the miners have extended the areas allowed, until they are more liberal than those we recommend for adoption here. Notwithstanding the prejudices represented by the local elected Mining Boards, the experience gained in practical working gradually overcame the erroneous opinion that it was to the advantage of the miner that he should be restricted to the minimum quantity of ground out of which he could make a bare living by pick and shovel work. If the granting of large areas to the miner has been attended with such advantageous results in Victoria, where the extent of auriferous country is much less, and the mining population much larger than is the case in this Colony, the objections urged against the introduction of a similar system here do not appear to rest on any sound foundation.

85. We think that, instead of framing our Regulations on the level of these prejudices, we should start at once from the base afforded by the experience of other Colonies. In considering what should be the minimum areas allowed to miners in New South Wales the gold deposits may be divided into two classes:—

First, the shallow and easily-worked deposits, for which the present area of 80 feet by 80 feet for block claims may be considered sufficient.

Second, the deposits requiring mining in its true sense to work them with efficiency; for instance, quartz claims, river and creek claims, sluicing-claims, hill-tunnelling claims, and alluvial claims presenting more than ordinary difficulties in working, whether from poverty of the ground, water, depth of sinking, or other causes.

On claims of the second class we are unanimously of opinion that such an area should be granted, to any party of miners sufficient in number to open and prove the ground, as would form a mine capable of being worked to the best advantage. After a mine is once opened, it is the obvious interest of the proprietors to work it out in the shortest possible time, to enable them to make the most profit; and this will be sufficient inducement for the employment of as much labour as can beneficially be used.

86. In the case of quartz veins, the work is similar in character to the mining carried on in mineral veins producing the baser metals; and in the great mining works of Europe and other places, we have excellent examples of the best style of mining, exactly applicable to the working of our quartz reefs. Guided by this experience there can be no dispute as to what is the best—meaning by the best, the most efficient and profitable system that can be adopted here. To favour the introduction of such a system should be the object of our Regulations; at least, so far as the different conditions attending mining in this country will allow. Where four shafts are used for working an extent of vein that can be worked from one shaft, it is evident that the cost of sinking three shafts, together with the outlay of attending at three shafts, surface men, &c., is so much needless waste of labour to be deducted from the profits of the mine, and which in many cases would afford a good return from ground now considered as too poor to pay for working. But whether the ground is rich or poor, the objection to needless waste of labour is equally valid, and Regulations whose tendency is to encourage and in some cases enforce this are clearly indefensible. Under the present Regulations, the ordinary quartz claims are 30 feet per man, with a limit of 180 feet in length. We have had a series of claims brought under our notice (at Hawkins Hill) where for claims varying from 30 to 120 feet in length shafts of several hundred feet in depth had to be sunk, and some seven or eight shafts were so sunk in an area that could have been better worked from one shaft. Again, these small claims compel the crushing and mining to be carried on as separate businesses, even in the cases where the quartz is in quantity sufficient to keep a crushing plant in full work from a good-sized claim. In consequence, the miner frequently has nearly as much to pay for crushing per ton as the cost of both raising and crushing should amount to under a better system. The proprietor of mineral land, on letting the working of the minerals to a Company on royalty, provides for the efficient mining by stringent clauses in the lease granted, knowing that this is necessary to ensure his obtaining the largest possible return from the mine. The State is somewhat in an analogous position to the private proprietor of mineral property; it is equally to its interest that the deposits should be worked efficiently, and with as little loss and waste as is practicable. For the interest of the Country and the miner himself, it might even be a question whether the working of these small claims, or at any rate the subdivision of claims, should not be prohibited.

87. In considering the area that should be allowed in quartz-mining, we think that at least

Principle upon which the size of areas should be determined.

Areas of quartz claims.

Areas proposed.