

MINING LEGISLATION.

It has been found desirable to deal with the question of mining under lands which have been alienated from the Crown. A Bill has been prepared giving facilities for mining underneath the surface of private lands, on certain conditions as to depth at which workings may be carried on, *et cetera*. This Bill has been drafted on the lines of a similar measure which has passed the Queensland Legislature, and I have no doubt will be found to be useful in this colony.

It is also proposed to amend the Mining Act so as to give greater encouragement to prospect the deep levels, construct large water supplies, and thus further develop the mining industry. For these purposes it is proposed to take power to advance loans from time to time to mine prospectors and others to the extent of one-fourth of the value of the prospecting work done, such moneys to be refunded out of the first profits derived from the mine, together with interest at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum, a first lien being taken on the property as security for repayment.

A question having been raised as to the validity of titles to lands held as licensed holdings and special claims, and which are severed by rivers, streams, watercourses, and roads, it is proposed to take power to validate all titles heretofore issued for lands so severed. The regulations will also be amended in a similar direction.

It is also proposed to adopt a provision embodied in the Victorian Mines Act, which requires that all safety-cages shall be examined and passed by an Inspector of Mines before they are used. This will prove an additional safeguard tending to prevent similar accidents to that which recently occurred at the Thames.

It has been found that the rates allowed by the existing regulations in aid of prospecting are inadequate. It is proposed to amend them in this respect, and to enlarge their scope and operations to other metals and minerals.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding my remarks on the mining industry, I may be permitted to state that the gold-miner has, in the past, been the pioneer of the colony, and the same can be said of him even at the present time. His avocation leads him to search for golden treasures in the back-wilds and portions of the country where few had travelled before him. Full of hope he trudges along, pitches his tent, prospects here and there, lonely and companionless, supported by hope and the expectation that some day he will find sufficient wealth in the bowels of the earth to repay him for all the labour and hardship he has undergone; and being, as it were, the forerunner of civilisation, he is entitled to some consideration from the colony by way of assistance in opening up the back-lands, and developing the mineral wealth, thereby enhancing the value of property belonging to the Crown. The expenditure of money is necessarily larger in the construction of roads and tracks where new country has to be opened out; as generally where gold is most abundant the country is broken and mountainous, requiring a large expenditure in giving access to new mines which are continually being opened up. The local authorities in the mining districts, owing to there being a limited amount of rateable property, are not in a position to make new roads and tracks, and therefore require exceptional consideration. It must therefore be borne in mind that, although the expenditure on roads in goldfield districts tending to develop mining is considerable, further assistance is still required to prove the auriferous or metalliferous nature of the ground, thereby providing profitable employment for the labouring classes. And although a great deal of our rough mountain-land may be at present considered almost valueless, even for pastoral purposes, the time may come when this land will become valuable mining property, affording a good livelihood to numbers of people; and places where, at the present time, no habitation is to be seen, may yet become stirring, populous districts. Every encouragement should, therefore, be given to further the mining industry.
