

STONE-QUARRIES.

The Stone-quarries Act, which came into operation during 1911, and under which inspection districts were defined and Quarry Inspectors appointed, appears to have considerably improved the safety conditions at those quarries and places to which the Act is applicable. During 1912 the number of quarries inspected was 202, at which 1,899 persons were ordinarily employed under certificated management. Only two fatalities occurred at quarries during 1912, as against five in 1911—a most satisfactory improvement. The Act is being administered by the existing staffs of the Mines and Public Works Departments without additional cost. In mining districts the Inspectors of Mines, in addition to their ordinary work, have been assigned the duties of Inspectors of Quarries, and in the remainder of the Dominion the overseers of the Public Works Department carry out the duties in conjunction with their other duties. In all, forty-one Inspectors have been appointed, of whom six are Inspectors of Mines and thirty-five Public Works officials.

STATE AID TO MINING.

A considerable amount of encouragement has been given by the Government to the development of the mining industry in all its branches. Such encouragement has taken the form of subsidies to prospecting associations and miners, to prospect new ground; loans for the development of mines the prospects of which are reasonably assured; subsidies and direct grants for the construction of roads on goldfields; and subsidies for the exploration of deep levels at existing mines, in cases where private capital is not obtainable and the prospects warrant such exploration. The mining industry has also been materially assisted by the free use of the Government prospecting-drills, and by Government water-races, which supply water to alluvial gold-mines at extremely reasonable charges.

(1.) SUBSIDIZED PROSPECTING.

During the year ended the 31st March, 1913, fifty-six approved prospecting parties were granted subsidies amounting to £5,843, of which sum £2,533 was expended during that period. As a result of such expenditure 8,407 ft. of drives have been put in, 390 ft. of shafts have been sunk, and thirty-nine boreholes have been drilled, all in search of gold. In addition to the above expenditure, £2,867 granted during previous years was expended during the financial year 1912-13. As much of the work for which the above grants were made during the past financial year is still in progress, it is impossible to state definitely the result of the whole of the prospecting operations; but of thirty-two subsidized operations already completed, in twenty-one cases the results were valueless and in eleven cases the results warrant further development of the claims. In no instance was a new goldfield proved, or anything of considerable value, the operations being mostly confined to the testing of ground in the vicinity of proved fields. The result to the mining industry is small, but to the successful prospectors, all of whom are miners who operate on a moderate scale, they are of material benefit.

Since the discovery of the Blackwater quartz-mining field during 1905 by a Government-subsidized prospecting party no new goldfield or find of great importance has been made for the expenditure of about £25,000 in subsidies to prospectors since that year. Without the assistance of Government subsidies, in all probability the exploration of the back country for minerals would almost entirely cease, as year by year there appears to be a growing disinclination, notwithstanding greatly improved means of access, to leave the more congenial atmosphere of the towns, where work is plentiful, for the arduous and primitive life of a prospector, in which the chances of success are gradually becoming more remote. The experience of New Zealand in this respect is similar to that in all the Australian States, and other mining countries.

(2.) LOANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINES.

Since 1905, when statutory provision was made for advances by way of loans for mining development, three new companies have been assisted, to the aggregate