

excellent land which would support in comfort hundreds of families. The time will, no doubt, shortly arrive when a Land for Settlements Act will be one of the statutes of the parent-colony.

I must, however, state that much greater difficulties exist in New South Wales in dealing with this subject than in any other colony, and this is clearly shown in the report by the Superintendent of the Labour Bureau of last year. He says, "In addition to the estimated number of thorough professional loafers are a number treading closely on their heels, and who work sufficiently long to enable them to unfit themselves for more exertion by drinking to excess; and there is still another class, principally of younger men, whose only work consists of waiting until others more honest and less cute earn it, and then proceed to fleece them in various ways. I regret to say that this class appears to be on the increase, judging by the large number of such cases noted at the Bureau."

Fossicking.

Mr. Creer informs me that in August, 1893, the Under-Secretary for Mines prepared a minute, showing that a number of the unemployed might make a living on the old goldfields of the colony. This minute was approved by the Minister of Mines, and afterwards by the Premier, with the result that a Board was appointed to give effect to the minute. The Board consisted of the Under-Secretary for Mines, the Chief Inspector of Mines, and the Superintendent of the Government Labour Bureau. The Board met from time to time to consider the best means to adopt, with the view of sending out fossicking parties from those of the unemployed who desired to go, and it is surprising the large number who have taken advantage of this means of obtaining a livelihood.

The mode adopted is this: those desirous of going on the old goldfields apply first at the Mines Department. If the applicant is considered to be suitable he is given a recommendation to the Superintendent of the Labour Bureau, who is empowered to grant a railway pass and a miner's right, and the applicant signs a guarantee to refund the cost when able to do so. Those in destitute circumstances receive, in addition to the miner's right and railway pass, the following stores to assist them to reach their destination—namely, 10lbs. flour, 5lbs. sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. tea, costing 2s. each.

During the year ending February, 1895, the number of rations issued to destitute fossickers was 2,320, at a cost of £232.

There is evidence that a large number of these men have succeeded, in the fact that no less than 600 families have been sent to join their husbands, making their homes in different parts of the country, where the opportunity of doing so is easier and better than in the city. Of course, a number of men who have been sent out have done little or no good. Want of means with some, and want of experience with determination and perseverance, with others, have been the chief cause of failure.

Other evidence, and perhaps the best, is in the increase of gold. In 1893 and 1894 the Sydney Mint authorities state that the increase was of the value of £263,086 as compared with previous years, and for the months of January and February, 1895, the increase was 7,000oz. over the corresponding period of the previous year.

I fully indorse the views expressed by the Superintendent of the Labour Bureau in the following paragraph of his report: "Considering the large number of men who have been sent out in this way, many of them thoroughly practical miners, it is but reasonable to expect, and sincerely to be hoped, that some of them may succeed in finding payable fields, and thus be largely instrumental in reducing to a minimum the depression from which the colony is now suffering."

I have, in accordance with your instructions, obtained full details of the working of the Labour Bureau and copies of the various forms used there. It would take up too much valuable time to enter fully into the matter in this report, nor is this the place. I therefore propose to furnish you with a separate report on this subject, and also separate reports on one or two other matters which I have noted in my tour, more especially a training-ship for boys.

VICTORIA.

In this colony an Act was passed on the 31st August, 1893, in consequence of so many people being out of employment in Melbourne, to provide for the establishment of—

1. Village communities.
2. Homestead associations.
3. Labour colonies.

Village Communities.

The Act provides that any land not alienated from the Crown, and not being auriferous land, or lands permanently reserved for any purpose, may be set apart for village-community allotments, and surveyed into areas of from one to twenty acres each, according to the quality of the soil and situation of the land. The Board of Land and Works may grant to any person a permit to occupy a village-community allotment for a period not exceeding three years at a nominal rental (generally about 6d. per acre), and such permit contains conditions as to *bonâ fide* occupancy during such period as the regulation may prescribe, and, at the expiration of the period specified in the permit, the Board may grant a lease of the allotment to such person for a period of twenty years provided that the Board is satisfied that the conditions of the permissive occupancy have been fulfilled, and that such person is a fit and proper person to hold such lease. It is also provided that the Board may cancel the permit if it is found at any time during the permissive occupancy that the occupant is not a fit and proper person to hold a lease under the Act.

Every lease of a village-community allotment contains the following covenants:—

1. For the payment in advance of the annual rent reserved in forty equal half-yearly instalments of the price of the allotment.