

industries of the colony from the time the Office was first established, it is found that under the heading "Minerals," which includes all classes of inventions relating to gold-saving, &c., 33 applications were received in the period from 1861 to 1870, and 47 in the following decade. The next ten years showed an increase to 363, which number about doubled during the 1891–1900 period, and has been maintained at the same rate since.

Only 3 applications were made in the "Dairying" class up to 1883—*i.e.*, in the first twenty-three years. From 1884 to 1890, 58 inventions were protected, and from 1891 to 1900, 249. During the last six years the number was 285.

"Wool": Under this heading, which includes appliances for shearing, washing, and generally treating wool, 22 applications were received during the first twenty years, and 121 in the next ten years. In 1892, 30 applications were lodged, and from then the number decreased until 1902. In this and the following year it rose a little, but has since again receded.

"Flax-dressing": From 1861 to 1870 the inventions patented on this subject numbered 19; from 1871 to 1880, 22; and from 1881 to 1888, 28. Next year 47 applications were recorded, the highest reached on the subject. From that time till 1897 the number fell, but revived in 1898, only, however, to fall in the next four years. In 1903 the number rose again, and has been steadily on the up-grade since.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION.

During 1906, 29 applications were received under the Convention, as compared with 26 in 1905, and 17 in 1904. Of these 17 came from the United Kingdom, 9 from the United States of America, 2 from France, and 1 from Germany. Seven applications were received from Australia, in accordance with the arrangements for mutual protection made with that country.

#### PUBLICATIONS.

The importance of affording applicants for patents and others every facility to become acquainted with the specifications of inventions has always been recognised by this office, and it has done much in that direction by publishing the abridgments of the inventions in the *Gazette*, and in supplying copies at small cost.

It is no doubt desirable that the specifications and drawings should be printed in full, but this would involve a heavy expenditure, which the sales for some time to come would not go far to meet. The publication of classified indexes with short description and possibly a drawing, or a reference to the *Gazette* in which the complete specification was advertised, and a general index of names, could be undertaken at a comparatively small cost, and would, in my opinion, prove useful to inventors, agents, and others.

The English office has now published illustrated classified abridgments of inventions from 1855 to 1904, which may be seen in the Patent Office Library, the Public Libraries at Auckland and Christchurch, and the Town Hall, Dunedin, or be obtained from the Patent Office (Sale Branch), 25 Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. Such publications cost little, and are very useful to inventors, manufacturers, and others who wish to ascertain what inventions have been patented in respect of any subject.

#### PRACTICE.

The practice of granting letters patent in New Zealand, while mainly on the lines of the English system, differs from it in some respects, as well as from that prevailing in other countries.

In England the office has no power, except in case of opposition, to refuse an application on the ground of want of novelty, but it is obliged to refer to its records, and, subject to appeal, to require a reference to be inserted of any similar inventions patented during the past fifty years.

In Canada the office may refuse a patent on the ground of want of novelty, and a certain inquiry seems to be made into the subject.

The Commonwealth office is required to ascertain whether the invention sought to be patented is described in a former specification, and has power to refuse a patent if such is the case, or if it has other grounds for believing the invention to be not new.

A strict examination referring to all available publications is made in Germany and the United States of America, and both countries freely exercise their right of rejection. In Austria, the Scandinavian States, and a few other countries a more or less extensive inquiry is also made.

In France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Mexico, Argentine, and Brazil, and all British possessions except those mentioned above, there is no investigation into the question of novelty, the applicant being left to satisfy himself as to the validity of his patent in that respect, and generally to take all risks in the matter.

In New Zealand the office has power to refuse applications for inventions it knows to be not new, and, although no examination is specially prescribed, reference is made to the records, and patents are refused where similar inventions are found to exist.

Where, however, there is room for any possible doubt, the practice of the office, following that of the Supreme Court in dealing with applications for patents on appeal, is to allow the matter to proceed, and leave any question of the validity of the patent to be afterwards contested.

A thorough examination into the novelty of inventions is not, however, possible without a much larger staff than this office possesses, and it should be understood that all patents are granted entirely at the risk of the inventor as to the novelty of the invention, and it therefore behoves him to make all possible inquiry into the subject.