

The Commission entered upon its duties on the 3rd August, 1911, and on the 16th December presented its report. It is proposed to incorporate the recommendations contained therein in Bills to amend the Mining and Coal-mines Acts.

### THE REGULATION OF STONE-QUARRIES.

The necessity for the proper regulation of stone-quarries in the interests of safety having become apparent, a Stone-quarries Act was passed in 1910, and on the 1st April of the following year it came into operation. In that Act it is provided that all stone-quarry managers or foremen (where explosives are used or any stone-face exceeds 20 ft. in depth) shall be the holders of permits of competency or of service granted by an Inspector of Quarries; and during the year 261 permits were so granted in twenty-one inspection districts. General rules and regulations provide for the safe storage and use of explosives, and for suitable ropes, chains, ladders, and other appliances.

This Act is administered by the existing staff 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 remaining districts the Overseers of the Public Works Department carry out the duties in conjunction with their other work.

During the year there were four fatal accidents, causing five deaths, at quarries coming under the operation of the Act, three persons being killed by explosives, one by machinery, and one by a truck. The consensus of opinion, as conveyed in the reports of the Inspectors, is that the Act is a wise and necessary measure, and that it has already been the means of additional precautionary steps being taken.

### GOLD-MINERS' RELIEF FUND.

The Gold-miners' Relief Fund, which was inaugurated by the passing of the Mining Act Amendment Act, 1910, has worked satisfactorily, the balance to credit on the 31st March last being £3,720 13s. 5d. During the year the payments from the fund amounted to £2,947 6s. 3d.

### TABLES AND APPENDICES.

Attached hereto are the usual tables, and the customary reports on the gold-fields and coal-mines of the Dominion appear as Appendices to this Statement.

### CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I desire, in a very few words, to remind honourable members of the beneficial results to the community of the establishment and progress of the mining industry. The discovery of gold in any country is the means of attracting people to its shores, and this alone has in the past brought thousands of people to New Zealand who otherwise would not have come, and although many of them have ceased to be connected with mining, they have followed other pursuits and made this country the land of their adoption.

New Zealand is to a large extent indebted to the miner, who, in the early days, forced his way into the wilds where no civilized human being had ever trod before, overcoming all difficulties and dangers in order that he might wrest from nature the riches that for ages had lain hidden, and thereby causing attention to be directed to other sources of wealth.

The day of the individual miner is doubtless fast drawing to a close, as the more easily won deposits have become or are becoming exhausted, and it is now to the geologist and chemist, as well as to the engineer, that we must look for the future development of the industry.

There is, however, still great mineral wealth to be won, and abundance of opportunity for the judicious investment of unemployed capital.