

Stuart Range Opal Fields.

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The market for precious opal continues to be dull, and very little mining is in progress. The men remaining on the field are for the most part engaged on the large tank which is being built by the Government for the conservation of water.

In November an exhibition was made in Adelaide of necklaces, consisting of spherical beads cut from Stuart Range opal. These strings possess an individual character and a remarkable beauty that cannot be approached by necklaces of any other gems.

The field has, of course, during the year experienced and realised, in the dwindling number of miners and the decreased output, the unprecedented world depression in trade, specially in those things which may be regarded as luxuries.

It has been stated by a well-known expert in these matters that the gem trade as a whole, and including pearls and diamonds, was almost totally paralysed during 1921, and, in consequence, it is not strange that beyond a little specimen buying, the sale of opal was very restricted—indeed, the miners were strongly advised by experts not to attempt to put their produce on an unwilling market, but to hold on until the depression lifted.

The experts referred to confidently state that opal is now more widely favored than it ever has been, and the state of the market during the year is in no wise due to unpopularity, but to the general deadness of trade for all gems.

Notes for Opal Miners.

Every miner must have a miner's right. The fee is 5s per annum, and they are obtainable at the Adelaide

right. The fee is 5s per annum, and they are obtainable at the Adelaide Mines Office, Tarcoola, Port Augusta, Beltana, Hergott (Marree), and Oodnadatta Police Stations, and from Mr J. W. Duck, Leigh Creek

A miner's right may be issued to any "person"—that is, any individual above the age of 16 years. This right forms the basis of all operations under the Mining Act. Without it a person has no protection, cannot legally prospect or mine, or peg out a claim, and, moreover, is liable to a penalty of £1 per day for unlawfully prospecting and mining.

The holder is authorised to prospect for any metal, mineral, precious stones, coal or oil, the property of the Crown, with the right of possession when found. It is the authority for pegging out a claim and also to occupy for residence a quarter of an acre of land, from which the holder has the right to remove any buildings erected by him, and he may cut and use timber from Crown lands for his own mining and domestic purposes. Each claim must be represented by a miner's right, and it must be noted that no person can hold more than one precious stones claim at the same time.

The area allowed for a precious stones claim is 150ft x 150ft, and is to be pegged out in the following way :—Four pegs are to be securely placed in the ground to mark the four corners. Each peg must be not less than 3in thick and project not less than 3ft above the surface of the ground, and have clearly marked on it the number of the miner's right and the date of pegging. From each peg two trenches must be cut in the ground not less than 3ft long, 1ft wide, and 6ins deep, pointing in the directions of the boundary lines of which the peg forms the corner. In rocky ground stone direction piles may be made instead of the trenches. All these marks must be maintained

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All these marks must be maintained in position while the claim is held, or the claim will be liable to forfeiture. When pegging out ground adjoining another claim a wall 3ft wide must be left between the claims. The working conditions are, one man to be kept constantly employed for each precious stones claim. Constantly employed means eight hours for five working days of the week and four hours for Saturday. Claims can be held for 30 days without registration, and under exceptional circumstances this period may be extended for a further 14 days. The registration must be made at the Adelaide Office, and the form of application is simple and readily obtainable. It must show name and address of applicant, number of miner's right, nature of claim, locality, and sketch showing position. The miner's right must be attached to the application and a fee of 2s 6d paid. The certificate of registration is then issued from the Adelaide Office, and the miner's right returned to the applicant with the registered number marked thereon. Care must be taken that the miner's right, by virtue of which the claim is held, is kept valid by renewal at the proper time and not allowed to lapse, otherwise the certificate will become void and the title to the ground lapses.

Every holder of a claim is protected (a) while he is incapacitated from work by illness, (b) absent on urgent business, (c) in attendance at a court of law, (d) during the continuance of floods or droughts, (e) while he is engaged upon work in public or national interest, (f) during public holidays, and (g) during 14 days commencing on 22nd December.

The onus of proof of good cause for absence lies on the claimholder. Notices should be placed on the claim and also forwarded to the Mines Office, Adelaide.

MINES OFFICE, ADELAIDE.