

quartz mining. That the natural difficulties to be overcome are very great, and that the outlay of capital which would in consequence be necessary to develop these mines must be something very large, are undeniable facts; but when we recall the amount of energy and enterprise which have elsewhere been expended on gold mining,—the years of labour, crowned at last with the richest result, of which we have read in Californian and Australian annals,—it can hardly be conceived but that, if the same energy and perseverance were applied to the West Coast of New Zealand, similar fortunate results would be attained. “Impossible” is a word which it is at all times rash to cast in the teeth of human industry, and in the present case I do not think it can imply more than that the development of these mines may have to be left until the available capital and labour to be found in or attracted to this country have considerably increased.

To what, then, do these considerations lead? It appears to me that the conclusions of Mr Pike with regard to the Otago field, are equally applicable to those of Canterbury and Nelson. Men of a class which is likely to give us permanent settlers and money in almost any quantity, are the requirements of the New Zealand gold fields. I have but little hope of ever inducing the majority of alluvial diggers to settle down finally in any one locality; and until there are good and certain wages, if not a fortune, to be found by miners who possess a greater stability of character than diggers, it is not to be expected that they will come hither. Nevertheless, as year by year capital tends to become more and more cosmopolitan, so also, with labour, constant communication, and, more than anything, accurate information, will produce their effects; and it is indubitable that in the course of time miners from other parts of the world will find their way to New Zealand, provided they can obtain an assurance of being able to benefit their condition. That proportion of diggers who choose to remain and settle down to permanent mining pursuits will form the nucleus round which the industry will gather. As a brief description of how these permanent mining operations are gradually developed, I do not think the following extract from Phillips’ before quoted work will be regarded as superfluous. (The remarks are made in reference to the Australian and Californian diggers.)

Mining and Metallurgy of gold and silver, page 130.

“Whilst the supply of shallow auriferous dirt was sufficient to supply employment for the whole labouring population, the gold produced was almost exclusively obtained either by solitary diggers, or by small private companies of working men, whose capital consisted rather in their united strength than in an accumulation of money. Things went on in this way until the richer and more easily worked alluviums had become partially exhausted, when it was found that, to carry on successfully the deeper diggings, combinations on a somewhat more extensive scale became necessary, and that capital and intelligence, as well as strength and endurance, were required by the gold miner. Whilst there was no difficulty in finding shallow claims that would pay from 25s. to 30s. per day to the hand, it was almost impossible to obtain the labour necessary to carry on either deep digging or quartz mining with any chance of success; but when these began to be worked out, this difficulty gradually disappeared, and attention became directed to operations on a more extensive scale, generally conducted either at the expense of a co-operative company or joint stock association. In this way the uses and exigencies of a newly discovered gold region rapidly change, and become more assimilated to those of more commercial and longer established communities.”

I have now discussed, as far as seems practicable with the information at present to be obtained, the possibility of finding an industry in New Zealand such as will give permanent employment to a gold-mining population; and I think sufficient has been said to prove that in Otago certainly, and on the West Coast probably, there exist supplies of gold virtually unlimited. For the gold fields of the North Island there seems to be no need of prize essays to point out the means of permanently settling a mining population. Short as has been the existence of the Thames Gold Field as such, there is no question that it is proved to be one of the richest gold-bearing districts in the world, and as far as mines of any kind can be said to be permanent, those of the Thames may be considered so. Even here, however, where the natural facilities offered to quartz miners are greater, perhaps, than on any former field, the expenditure of a considerable capital is necessary before a return can be realized. Machinery must be erected, if not immediately by the miners, by persons who have sufficient confidence in them to lay out their money, depending on the miners’ support. Months of work too often have to be undertaken before any auriferous quartz is struck. The same thing must be expected to occur wherever it is hoped to obtain gold from quartz. We come, therefore, to the conclusion, that, inasmuch as capital is necessary for the development of these mines, the only method of permanently settling a mining population in New Zealand, since it must be identical with the means for opening up mines, is through the investment of capital. As no other mining industries can be expected to give so large a return as gold mines, I have not thought it necessary to allude to the various discoveries of silver, copper, iron, and coal which have from time to time been reported in New Zealand, and of which the coal alone is to some extent being worked.

This point having been attained, it will now be practicable to bring the whole discussion under one head. The manner, however, in which the second portion of the subject has been set forth renders it necessary that, before proceeding further, I should make a short digression concerning the trade of this country.

PART II.

EXCESS OF EXPORTS OVER IMPORTS.

THERE appears to me to be a slight incorrectness, or at all events a tendency to mislead, in the second clause of our heading. It is required to find the means whereby that capital may be fixed in the Colony which is annually being drained away from the gold fields, as shown in the great excess of exports over imports at the ports of the exclusively gold-mining districts. Now we know that an excess of exports over imports does not necessarily show an export of capital. The question therefore arises, where is the point at which the disproportion becomes so great as to be in itself sufficient evidence that capital is being sent abroad? “The value in any country of a foreign commodity depends upon the quantity of home produce which must be given to the foreign country in exchange for it.” It might be possible

Stuart Mill’s Elements of Political Economy.