

In conclusion, I must say that it was with some surprise that I heard of the Resolution of the House in which the subject for this Essay was proposed, and it is with very little self-confidence that I have undertaken to write on it. It appears to me that if the legislators and Government of New Zealand had not a sufficient knowledge of their own functions and power to devise whatever means are necessary for the due development and welfare of the country, it was highly improbable that a single essayist would be able to instruct them. Unless the prizes are offered with the object of inducing the people of New Zealand to educate themselves so far as to be able to write an essay, it appears to me that it was scarcely a matter for the General Assembly to take in hand. If the honorable member for Mount Herbert really believes in the efficacy of prize essays, I think he should apply to those directly interested to offer a prize.

I fear New Zealand has a great deal more to dread from her different Governments undertaking too easily tasks which should be left to private persons, than from official indolence. The latter would work its own cure; the former tends to make the people more and more dependent, a tendency which, though its effects may not be easy to discover, will eventually produce the most wide-spread evils, and end in the paralysis of all honest public spirit. Generally speaking, it may be said that industries grown by the hotbed system of Government interference are liable to pine away when exposed to the open air. It was most easy for the British Parliament to create Provinces with a view to the local government of New Zealand, but it would be very difficult for it to find a remedy for the injury which has been thereby inflicted upon the out-districts, in the stunting of their industrial and political development. For whatever has been said or written of Centralism and Provincialism, a dispassionate observer cannot deny that it is a false issue which is raised; Provincialism, far from checking, is in itself a most unfortunate instance of centralization. If our statesmen can carry through any plan of self-government by which districts may be relieved from all interference not required for the general welfare of the Colony, I believe that, in spite of the mismanagement and impecuniosity which will probably ensue for some years to come, more will have been done towards the development of New Zealand's industries, mining included, than if the Government had expended millions in itself experimentalizing on behalf of the people.

No. 2.

Carpe diem.

THE problem of settling a mining population down to fixed industries is one that presents many difficulties. The roving and improvident disposition, deeply ingrained in the character of the true "gold digger," is one not easily overcome. He is naturally fond of change, and considers himself as belonging to no country in particular, but is ready, at a moment's notice, to follow gold wherever it may lead him, from Africa or British North America to the Fijis or China, deterred neither by heat nor by cold, by distance nor by savages. These are habits not taken up hastily, and therefore as easily abandoned, but are the growth of years, and from the constant association of large bodies of men, all deeply imbued with the same ideas, are thoroughly incorporated into the system.

It would therefore be idle to hope that any mere published regulations, or Act of Assembly, would so totally alter their habits as to make diggers anxious to forsake gold digging, and to settle down to farming or any other stationary pursuit. The speculative habits, also, that they have acquired during a long course of searching for gold, are not at all well adapted for success in agriculture, which requires the greatest prudence and economy to bring it to a successful issue; and the improvident disposition, principally occasioned by receiving large sums of money at uncertain intervals, without any ready and safe means of investing it at once, and without any inducement for them to do so, is sadly against success in any steady line of business. Those few, however, who, tired of the constant toil and wandering life of a digger, wish to marry and settle down to farming, have as good opportunities for obtaining land as others, and there seems to be no reason for supposing that a free grant of land, no matter under what conditions it was given, would avail much towards inducing miners to turn their attention to agriculture as a means of living. That experiment was lately tried in the Waikato, for by far the greater portion of the Militiamen had been diggers. These men had fifty acres each given them, for the most part of excellent agricultural land, and also pay and rations for three years, so that they had every chance of establishing themselves on a good farm if they had wished to do so; yet very few ever attempted to cultivate their land, most of them sold it for a few shillings an acre, and went off gold digging again. The failure of the experiment is notorious; and, if the scheme was originally an unwise one, it would be absolute folly to attempt it again.

Another industry which might perhaps be more largely developed is the cultivation and dressing of the native flax. Until, however, it is ascertained that a European market of large extent exists, and that the plant can be profitably cultivated, it is uncertain whether it will be permanently remunerative. Supposing, however, that such should be the case, it would not, in my opinion, by any means follow that it would be an attractive occupation for miners. It would not be sufficiently speculative; the nature of the operations would be so unlike those to which they had been accustomed, and the contrast between a noisy gold digging town and the comparative solitude of a flax swamp would be too sudden and too great. Land also would have to be given to cultivate and dry the flax upon, as it will probably take fifty acres of flax to keep one machine in constant employment; and therefore I do not think that flax-dressing would succeed any better than farming in inducing miners to settle down in the country. For these reasons I consider that it would be useless to try to change suddenly the miner into the farmer or flax-dresser. Nevertheless, as agriculture is the only settled occupation for which there is unlimited scope, that must be the object ultimately aimed at, but the means used to bring about the change must act indirectly and slowly on the character and habits of the miners.

It has been already said that the constant herding together of large bodies of men is the most important cause of a careless disposition, while the all but total absence of women on a gold field takes off one of the strongest and most natural checks on dissipation and recklessness. I look upon the