

Turning now to the second part of the subject, it is evident that the same principles which are the best adapted for inducing miners to settle down, apply equally to reducing the imports into mining districts, viz., the formation of small towns instead of large ones, and the selling of all available agricultural land in the neighbourhood; but to these we must add now, telegraphic communication between the mining districts and the mercantile ports. A large town producing only gold, and surrounded with but little agricultural land, is obviously obliged to import all the necessaries of life in exchange for its gold, and these imports will be brought from the nearest and cheapest market, in whatever country that market may be situated. Rapid communication between the consumer and the producer is of equal importance with cheapness of production; and it is more than probable that if telegraphic communication had been established between the West Coast gold fields and Auckland, a large portion of their imports would have been supplied from the Manukau instead of from Melbourne, and the gold would have been fixed in the Colony instead of finding its way to Australia. So far, however, was this from being the case, that West Coast news often first reached Auckland *via* Melbourne.

Small towns will import less, in proportion to their size, than large ones, as they will have greater facilities for producing in their neighbourhood a larger quantity of the necessaries of life; and if telegraphic communication was established between them and the principal mercantile ports in New Zealand, Australia would not be able long to compete in the race for the supply of any articles that New Zealand can produce, as its information would always be behindhand. This I look upon as the only legitimate way of checking foreign imports. Trade cannot be regulated or forced with impunity—neither can it be advantageously driven into particular channels. It must be allowed to take its own course unimpeded; but every assistance should be given to inter-provincial trade by enabling the wants of one part to be instantaneously known in all the others. No bolstering up by protective duties will establish permanently in the Colony a trade or industry for which it is not fitted by nature; for although it may, like a well-spun top, present for a time the appearance of stability, sooner or later a time must come when the conditions will change, and it will have to rely on its own resources, and the collapse which must follow will do infinitely more harm than if it had never been attempted to be established.

SUMMARY.

I have thus attempted to show that the roving improvident nature and speculative habits of the gold-digger are so deeply implanted in his character that it would be vain to expect that grants of land, even under the most favourable circumstances, would induce any large number of them to take to farming or flax-dressing, and in order to persuade them to settle down, means must be tried to change these habits slowly. The principal causes that tend to keep up this reckless disposition are the highly speculative nature of their employments, and the crowding together of large numbers of one sex having only one pursuit; and the best way of undermining and altering their character is to provide them with some congenial employment, less speculative and more permanent than alluvial gold-digging, and which, at the same time, is likely to form small but numerous towns. This employment can only be regular vein-mining, and there are many reasons for thinking that a large number of mining towns or districts might be formed in different parts of the Colony.

The means that the Government should adopt for opening up these mineral districts are—

- I. By publishing maps of the most likely districts;
- II. By making bridle tracks and roads in mining districts;
- III. By offering rewards for the discovery of metallic lodes;
- IV. By framing regulations to facilitate as much as possible the working of the lodes;
- V. By selling all the neighbouring agricultural land, reserving the metals;
- VI. By establishing schools and savings banks; and
- VII. By connecting the towns with the principal mercantile ports by means of the electric telegraph.

The effects of this would be, that many mining towns would arise in the country, which, surrounded as much as possible by farms, and connected with the mercantile centres by instantaneous communication, would reduce their foreign imports to a minimum; while at the same time the steady employment, the association with a proportionately larger number of women, and the facilities for educating their children and saving their money, would induce many of the miners to marry, and make that district their permanent home.

It must not be thought that these are theoretical principles only, that have never been tried. The experiment is now going on at the Thames; and although the Government have not as yet promoted it by any of the particulars here recommended, beyond the first offering of a reward of £5,000 for the discovery of a payable gold field, it is nevertheless turning out most satisfactorily for the Colony. Already settlements of a permanent character have been formed at Shortland, Puriri, Hastings, and Coromandel; and others on the sea coast and up the valley of the Thames will speedily follow; while, if the Government would cut bridle tracks to enable the miners to explore the interior of the country, there is little doubt but that still more would be established. Thus, without the benefit of roads, schools, savings banks, or agricultural land for sale, the discovery of metallic veins and lodes in the North Island is rapidly inducing a large number of miners to settle down permanently amongst us, many of them being married men with their wives from Victoria, and the large number of women, children, and weather-boarded houses on the field is remarked by all. Why should not this be extended to other parts of the Colony? I can see no reason why it should not. It only wants perseverance and prospecting, both of which can be had if fostered by the Government. The present opportunity should be seized, while a large body of men, admirably adapted for the work, are still in the Colony, but who, in a few years, may have gone, and the present chance of developing our mineral resources may be then indefinitely postponed. "*Carpe diem.*"