

seen hundreds of acres on which he would like to settle down if allowed, and having found that such settlement was precluded,—that the Government preferred that those acres should maintain sheep rather than men,—it is not likely that he will go out of his way to look for land on which he may be allowed to settle. Thus, land in districts remote from the gold fields, no matter what its extent or quality, offers no attraction to settlement to the gold-mining population. In the localities they desire, they are not allowed to settle, and they therefore arrive at the conclusion that their settlement is not desired. The finest land in the world, if 50 or 100 miles away from the diggings, is utterly powerless to exert any influence on the miner, and utterly useless as a means of converting the digger into the settler. This work of transmuting the digger into the settler is not one which “if it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well it were done quickly.” If it is to be done at all, it must be done gradually; for if the boundary between the two pursuits has to be crossed by a single step, the digger will hesitate and weigh pros. and cons. before he takes the step, and the result of such deliberation is very likely to be to the disadvantage of this Colony. In the first place there are several drawbacks of an evident character, and these become magnified by the Englishman’s constitutional propensity to grumble at, and feel disgusted with, things as they are, to fancy every one else better off than himself, and to invest the past with charms which he never detects in the present. Old associations predispose him to like Victoria, and he is in the constant habit of drawing comparisons between the weather in the two Colonies. He has neither learned to understand, to admire, or to feel interested in the complex political institutions of this Colony. Indeed, all that he knows on this subject, or at least cares about, is the fact that these institutions, from their expensive nature, cause the incidence of taxation to be much higher here than in any of the other Australasian Colonies, and he smarts under a sense of injustice, knowing that he has been subjected to a special and heavy tax in the form of the export duty on the gold he has dug. He knows that, as an extensive consumer of dutiable goods, he has contributed largely to the revenue, and he resents a special tax of upwards of three per cent. on his earnings as an indication of a desire on the part of the Colony, to make the most out of him while here, and the land laws he regards as indicating anything rather than a desire to keep him here permanently. He does not stop to inquire into these matters, or as to who is to blame. Indeed he believes, from experience in other matters, that it would be exceedingly difficult to fix the responsibility, and this increases his disgust with the system of double government which exists here, and which he holds accountable for much of what he has to complain of, because he knows that it is this system which causes the demands on the taxpayer to be so heavy. What wonder that, when deliberately considered, these manifest disadvantages outweigh and overbalance the points which can be urged in favour of this Colony—the greater healthiness of its climate, the greater productiveness of its land, and the infinitely greater future which lies before it. These advantages are not as easily realized as the disadvantages are, and in nine cases out of ten the tangible disadvantages of the present, will have more influence than the prospective advantages of settlement here, and so the digger and his wealth go to enrich some other Colony. If, however, while working a profitable claim he had been able to purchase land in the neighbourhood and to quietly improve it with his spare time and spare money, he would gradually drift from the digger into the settler, without even pausing to state the account of New Zealand as compared with some other place. If the mining population of the Southern gold fields are to be converted into permanent settlers, it will be by some drifting process of this nature—by a gradual change from the one character to the other, and not by a sudden transition. Settlement must be gradual, and the miner must be allowed to prepare his future home, while still pursuing his business as a miner.

Considerations of far-sighted policy or of ultimate results, however, rarely have much weight or influence in small political bodies, or with the mushroom politicians who generally manage to assume a prominent position in such bodies. Knowing that they are but “dressed in a little brief authority,” the present is everything to them, the future nothing. Expediency assumes the place of policy, and as one succeeds another, each acts upon, if he does not openly profess, the adage “*Après moi le déluge*.” In such bodies personal considerations far outweigh all others, and the difference between the “ins” and the “outs” is generally more of a personal than of a political character, or of principle. Essentially the conduct of the party which is “in” differs very little from what the conduct of the party which is “out” would be if the positions were reversed; and as each successive “Executive,” “Ministry,” or “Government,” endeavours to make things as pleasant as possible for the time being, with a total disregard of what the ultimate result of what they do may be, things go on pretty smoothly until the inevitable smash comes, and then, although everybody wonders that it was not foreseen and avoided, it is found that no one in particular is at all responsible for it.

Under such a system, it is scarcely surprising that the administration of the gold fields has hitherto been conducted rather with a view of obtaining a large present revenue, than of offering the miners inducements to permanent settlement. The Colony would, of course, derive much greater benefit from the permanent settlement of twenty miners, than from the presence, for a year or two, of a hundred miners, who, after making money here, go elsewhere to spend it; but the Province would not derive such an immediate profit, for the hundred men, while here, would pay more for miners’ rights, consume more dutiable goods, and in various ways bring more money into the Provincial Treasury during the time they remained here. As to what may happen in a year or two, that is nothing; the thing is to get a large population now, and a correspondingly large revenue, and to let those who are in power in a year or two deal with matters as they find them. So things go on, and miners come here, extract wealth from our soil, and go elsewhere to spend it, without being at all tempted to select this Colony as a place of permanent settlement. Rich however as our gold fields are, and vast as their extent may be, the system under which they are at present managed can have but one result, and that a result most injurious to the Colony. The evil day may be put off for a long time; but it must come, and when the gold fields cease to be attractive of even a temporary population, it will be too late to regret that of the thousands who have made money on them, only scores have made New Zealand their home. “There is a tide,” in the affairs of nations as well as of men,