

Many accidents have happened in the dangerous rapids of that river; a great number of canoes having been dashed to pieces and their cargoes swept away by the impetuous stream, while of the ill-fated adventurers who accompanied them many have been swept into eternity.

The others, nothing daunted by the spectacle of ruin, and buoyed up by the hope of amassing wealth, still keep pressing onwards towards the coveted goal of their most ardent wishes.

On the 25th of last month the American steamer "Commodore" arrived in this port direct from San Francisco, with 450 passengers on board, the chief part of whom are gold miners for the "Couteau" country.

Nearly 400 of those men were landed at this place, and have since left in boats and canoes for Fraser's River.

I ascertained through inquiries on the subject that those men are all well provided with mining tools, and that there was no dearth of capital or intelligence among them. About 60 British subjects, with an equal number of native born Americans, the rest being chiefly Germans, with a smaller proportion of Frenchmen and Italians, composed this body of adventurers.

They are represented as being, with some exceptions, a specimen of the worst of the population of San Francisco; the very dregs, in fact, of society. Their conduct while here would have led me to form a very different conclusion; as our little town, though crowded to excess with this sudden influx of people, and though there was a temporary scarcity of food, and dearth of house accommodation, the police few in number, and many temptations to excess in the way of drink, yet quiet and order prevailed, and there was not a single committal for rioting, drunkenness, or other offences, during their stay here.

The merchants and other business classes of Victoria are rejoicing in the advent of so large a body of people in the Colony, and are strongly in favour of making this port a stopping point between San Francisco and the gold mines, converting the latter, as it were, into a feeder and dependency of this Colony.

Victoria would thus become a *dépôt* and centre of trade for the gold districts, and the natural consequence would be an immediate increase in the wealth and population of the Colony.

To effect that object it will be requisite to facilitate by every possible means the transport of passengers and goods to the furthest navigable point on Fraser's River; and the obvious means of accomplishing that end is to employ light steamers in plying between, and connecting this port (Victoria) with the Falls of Fraser's River, distant 130 miles from the discharge of that river, into the Gulf of Georgia; those falls being generally believed to be at the commencement of the remunerative gold diggings, and from thence the miners, would readily make their way on foot or after the summer freshets by the river into the interior of the country.

By that means also the whole trade of the gold regions would pass through Fraser's River and be retained within the British territory, forming a valuable outlet for British manufactured goods, and at once creating a lucrative trade between the mother country and Vancouver's Island.

Taking a view of the subject, simply in its relations to trade and commerce, apart from considerations of national policy, such perhaps would be the course most likely to promote the interests of this Colony; but, on the contrary, if the country be thrown open to indiscriminate immigration the interests of the Empire may suffer from the introduction of a foreign population, whose sympathies may be decidedly anti-British.

Taking that view of the question it assumes an alarming aspect, and suggests a doubt as to the policy of permitting the free entrance of foreigners into the British territory for residence without in the first place requiring them to take the oath of allegiance, and otherwise to give such security for their conduct as the Government of the country may deem it proper and necessary to require at their hands.

The opinion which I have formed on the subject leads me to think that, in the event of the diggings proving remunerative, it will now be found impossible to check the course of immigration, even by closing Fraser's River, as the miners would then force a passage into the gold district by way of the Columbia River, and the valuable trade of the country in that case be driven from its natural course into a foreign channel and entirely lost to this country.