

prosperity; this was brought under the notice of Parliament when the subject of the eligibility of Port Essington for a new Colony was discussed.

If, however, as just now noticed, subsequent trial shall have demonstrated that first appearances were fallacious, and that further experience had by no means confirmed the flattering anticipations which were generated at its formation; if its climate has been pronounced by a resident to be "decidedly unhealthy;" if intermittent fever is endemic, and breaks down the strongest constitution, these advantages are somewhat neutralized. If, again, the immense extent of mud and mangrove swamps which are left dry at low water and then acted upon by the fierce rays of a tropical sun; if with these considerable drawbacks, the eligibility of Port Essington, either as a military station or as a commercial port, hangs upon so equivocal a basis, why retain it?

"No one," writes an intelligent eye-witness, "who has resided in Port Essington, in the seventh year of its formation can help being struck with the ruinous appearance of the place, and the small progress which has been made in bettering the condition of its unfortunate inhabitants, whom a mistaken policy has doomed to a residence there of an uncertain period of years, until hope itself has almost deserted them."

A most discouraging picture of a new settlement! A reinforcement (miserably scant it is true) was, as we have seen, received in October, 1844, which served to keep it alive, although not sufficient, assuredly, to subserve the high ends of protection and commerce, in those remote seas, for which it was avowedly established.*

Under these disadvantages, and upon fairly balancing the preponderance of claims which Port Essington has to the support of the British Government, it may be finally said, with regard to this settlement, that the general unhealthiness of its situation must prove an effectual obstacle to its becoming great and flourishing, either as a commercial emporium, or in any other way. Instead, therefore, of doling out parsimonious supplies for its temporary necessities, does not policy and regard to self-interest plead for its abandonment.

* The uncertainty which at that period prevailed, in the Councils of the Cabinet, upon the subject of the retention of Port Essington as a military station, may be gathered from the following copy of a Dispatch from Lord John Russell to Governor Sir George Gipps:—

"Downing-street, June 27, 1841.

"SIR—I transmit you herewith a copy of a letter from the Secretary to the Board of Admiralty relative to the settlement of Port Essington; I also enclose a copy of the reply which has been returned by my direction to that communication. You will perceive it to be the wish of Her Majesty's Government that you should continue to make any advances which may be necessary for the preservation of the settlers at Port Essington, and for preventing the entire abandonment of the place until some account can be received from which Her Majesty's Government may be guided as to the ultimate retention or abandonment of it. The time has now arrived when it may be fairly judged how far it may be advantageous to retain that settlement; and I have to request that you will obtain a report with as little delay as possible, from the officer in command as to its real state and prospects.

"I have, &c.,

"RUSSELL."

(Signed)