

The population of the Colony, it may be observed further here, is, in no small degree, shifting and migratory, one and another becoming dissatisfied with their actual position, and leaving it to make trial of some more promising location, to be in like manner forsaken whenever anything more inviting presents itself. This is particularly the case with the gold-mining portion of the population—the most vague and uncertain rumours of favourable indications in some new field being quite sufficient to draw away large companies, even from spots where they are already gaining what, with ordinary care and prudence, would in a few years render them independent.

There is, moreover, a constant drain on the population by the departure of persons who, during the period of their stay in the Colony, have succeeded in accumulating what they deem sufficient for a comfortable subsistence, or, at all events, sufficient for profitable investment elsewhere; and also, as not unfrequently happens, by the going away of persons whose over-sanguine expectations of here acquiring a rapid fortune have been disappointed, and who consequently abandon the Colony in utter disgust with it and with all belonging to it.*

For the present, at any rate, the loss thus sustained by the population is not fully compensated by new additions from without, while of those who do come to the Colony with a view to permanent settlement, not a few discouraged by the frigid reception which they met with, and by the official obstructions which thwart their endeavours to secure an eligible homestead, embrace the earliest opportunity of leaving, betaking themselves perhaps to the neighbouring territory of the United States, where they may, with some confidence, count on a friendly welcome, and on all reasonable facilities towards their getting comfortably established.†

* At the gold-fields there is a discontinuance of the usual work during the winter, and large numbers of the miners—though not so many now as formerly, when the cost of living in the mining districts was excessive—then quit the scene of their labours for some more agreeable place of residence until spring recalls them. A miner just arrived from Cariboo states that among the company with whom he travelled downward there were over 20 persons who had left, not only with no intention of returning, but with the determination of bidding farewell to the Colony altogether—their earnings at the mines amounting severally to from 1000 up to 2000 and 3000 dollars. The population of Victoria is still on the decrease; that of New Westminster has also fallen away greatly from what it was, though the neighbouring country seems to be filling up.

† POPULATION.—This is what, above all, British Columbia needs in order to its material prosperity. A strong desire is often expressed for the incoming of men of capital, who would employ their wealth in developing the great resources of the country. But population would create capital, and meanwhile the price of labour is such as to offer little inducement to capitalists to venture into this field. A good deal might be done by the Colonial and Imperial Governments which is not done, towards bringing people to the Colony, as by diffusing trustworthy information concerning the advantages which it offers to the settler, by free grants of land, and by helping to meet the expense of the long journey from the British shores, and also more directly by reducing the cost of government and lightening the burden of taxation, by the application of a portion of the revenue, in some more efficient manner than heretofore, to the exploration of the country and the opening up of interior means of communication, and by imposing restrictions on the holding of land kept lying from year to year waste and unproductive for mere purposes of speculation. In these and other respects much is hoped from confederation; but, with whatever beneficial results this measure may in reality be attended, the notion of any speedy large accession to the population by emigration from the Dominion, through the lately-acquired territory and across the Rocky Mountains, must be pronounced altogether visionary. Another rush for gold is neither likely nor, judging from former experience, is it to be desired. Railroad communication between the St. Lawrence and the Fraser, if ultimately certain, may, nevertheless, be long deferred. Americans are averse from settling in the Colony while it is under British rule. On the whole, even under more favourable conditions than those now existing, we can see no reason to anticipate any rapid increase of population. It is not impossible that emigration from the westward may play a more important part than is yet commonly conjectured in the filling up of the vast regions now lying unpeopled and solitary on this side of the Pacific.