

to much animadversion. It has been strongly inveighed against by those who have practically investigated its comparative physical advantages; and, surely, the testimony of those who have resided there, and marked its physical allotments, should not be disregarded. We will examine its title to superiority a little more in detail.

Not only, we contend, in the first place, should the immediate spot upon which a new settlement is founded, but the neighbouring localities, be salubrious, so far as circumstances will admit of their being so, or the duties of the founder are but half achieved. We will view its eligibilities as stated by a resident, though certainly not an economist. An intelligent correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, of October, 1845 (a competent judge and eye-witness, as it would seem, of the subject), whilst dilating on the physical capabilities of Port Essington, and its local allotment of nature's gifts, so far as they combine in rendering it eligible for British settlers, has the following remarks:—

“The country throughout such parts of the Coburgh Peninsula as I have visited is generally composed of low undulating hills, alternating with plains of small extent intersected by creeks and lagoons of salt water, and extensive mangrove swamps about the heads of the various bays. Although there are various streams and a few lagoons, the country may be said to be badly, because unequally, supplied with fresh water. These lagoons are invariably dried up towards the end of the dry season. The forest land, which constitutes three-fourths of the district, shows a surface strewn with iron stone, indicative of the sterility that reigns; but there are a few scattered localities flooded in winter where its soil is rich, of which the new garden is one. This is probably about two acres in extent, and in it may be seen specimens of many valuable tropical plants; arrow-root, sugar-canes, turmeric, indigo, bread-fruit, Jack-fruit, cotton of two kinds, &c., yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, pine-apples, melons, pumpkins, and cucumbers, thrive there remarkably well. In the thick jungles, also, the soil is very rich, being composed chiefly of decomposed vegetable matter. The indigenous plants of importance, otherwise than as producing timber of various kinds, are true nutmeg, a large tree which produces excellent cotton, and a cabbage palm, the young shoots of which is truly a delicious vegetable.”

Much has been said on the subject of the importance of this port for the trepang fishery. Mr. G. W. Earl has given us many details concerning the procuring and preparing it for the Chinese market, where it meets, as is well known, with a very extensive sale. Indeed, many parts of the northern coasts of Australia may be said to stand in regard to China, pretty much in the same relation as the grand fishing bank of Newfoundland does to many of the nations of Europe—the one supplying to the epicurism of the Chinaman, in the shape of the sea-slug, the same, or a similar, article of luxury as the other provides in the form of green or dried cod. But many other shallows along the same latitudes of North Australia present the same facilities for gathering this fish as Port Essington. Some of the proahs—the peculiar sort of vessels employed in this fishery—are known to descend half way down the Gulf of Carpentaria in search after this article of Chinese delicacy, especially on the eastern side of it, where it is generally found most to prevail. So that the settlement of Victoria, built upon the promontory of Minto Head, cannot, or is not entitled to, lay claim to a monopoly in this article of commerce. The port of which we here speak has now been established upwards of eight years. But, notwithstanding the flattering