

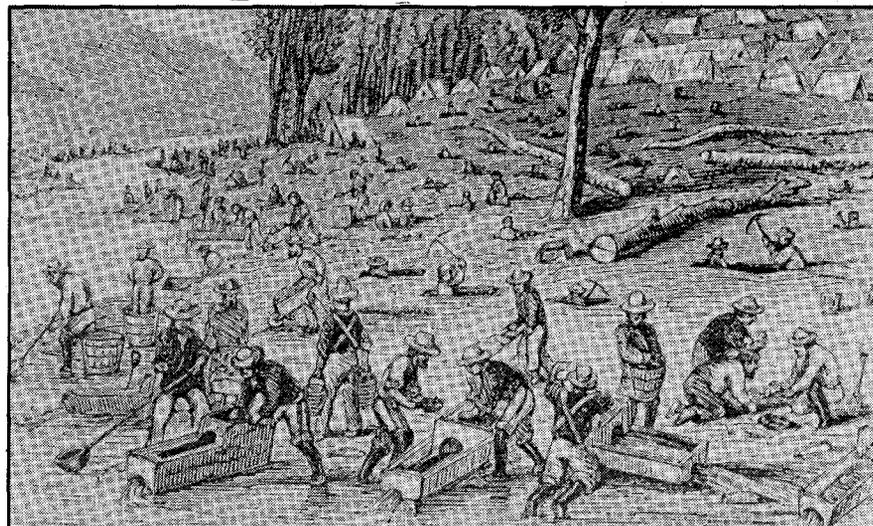


Henry King: Public Servant and Parliamentarian

Henry Edward King, (1832-1910), barrister, public servant and parliamentarian, was born on 9 June, 1832, at Mount Coote, Kilmallock, Co Limerick, son of John Wingfield King and his wife Alicia, nee Coote. Educated at a collegiate school in Gloucester, he was attracted by the gold rush and went to Sydney in 1852. He soon moved to the Northern Districts (later Queensland) where some grazing licences were taken out in his name. He does not appear to have had any major part in grazing or gold-mining but he managed to acquire a working knowledge in these fields and it was later useful to him. At Brisbane in 1858 he married Harriette, sister of Dr. William Armstrong of Toowoomba.

On 16 August, 1862, King became a first-class surveyor and commissioner for crown lands in the Mitchell District. From 28 November, 1867, to July 1870 he was gold commissioner in Wide Bay, which included Gympie. In the performance of his duties he became popular with the miners and, when Gilbert Elliott resigned in 1870, had little difficulty in winning the seat. He soon won repute for his tremendous industry and brilliant speeches, though his oratory sometimes obscured the subject matter and was marred by acidity and too great a tendency to personal attack. He was an active supporter of the Gold Fields Homestead Act. In politics generally he was a strong Liberal, with some interest in schemes for colonial Federation and independence. During the political crisis in 1870-72 he played a leading part on the Liberal side, incurring especially the enmity of W. H. Walsh. In the 1871 election he was narrowly defeated by Walsh at Maryborough, but was immediately returned unopposed for Wide Bay, holding the seat until November, 1873.

When the Macalister ministry took office in January, 1874 the treasurer, Hemmant, succeeded in persuading King to take the secretaryship for public lands and mines, though he was not then a member of parliament. In November a safe seat was found for him at Ravenswood, another mining district. His administration of his department, though very successful, appeared too costly to Macalister and Hemmant, who also found King too sturdy at times for a colleague and too dangerous as an opponent. When Walsh resigned as Speaker in July, 1876, all parties in the House combined to appoint King to the vacant post; he held it with dignity and success until November, 1883. In 1884 he enrolled as a student in law and his experience,



The gold diggers.

exact methods, knowledge of mining and command of language enabled him to pass his examination brilliantly in September, 1886, the first local candidate under new and severe rules.

King was interested in military affairs. On 25 March, 1887, he was gazetted captain in the Queensland Irish Volunteer Corps but by March, 1889 he was unattached and in 1892 was placed on the retired list. In 1888-89 he was one of the three royal commissioners who inquired into the general condition of the sugar industry in Queensland. On 30 July, 1890, he was appointed crown prosecutor, District Court, Central Division, and in 1903 the Southern Division was added to his

responsibilities. On 6 January, 1910, he retired with a gratuity of six months' salary in lieu of extended leave, but on 5 February he died at South Brisbane. He was survived by his wife and by four sons and three daughters of their eleven children.

Sources

C.A. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years* (Brisb. 1919); V&P (LA Qld), 1889, 4, 37; *Weekm* 30 June, 1877; *Brisbane Courier*, 6 Feb., 1910.

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Up country in Queensland.