

cost of the work, the lessee of the adjoining land being specially exempt from contributing, while he has, *de facto*, the use of the other's land until it is fenced. Thus, the small freeholder is unable even to find pasturage for the cows necessary to supply his family with milk. One of the best possible means of promoting settlement on the Otago gold fields, and the conversion of the diggers who throng those fields into permanent settlers, would be the introduction of a system similar to that of the old Hundreds—the opening to purchase of large blocks of *mixed* lands in the immediate vicinity of the actual gold workings. The adoption of such a system might inflict hardship on the runholders, who would thus lose large portions of their runs; but any compensation which might be necessary to avoid injustice would be as nothing compared with the good results which would ensue to the Colony. If blocks of mixed agricultural and pastoral land were thus opened up, under regulations which would prevent its purchase *en masse* by the pastoral tenant or by capitalists who would only use it for pastoral purposes, there are thousands of diggers who would purchase small areas, and, while gradually bringing their land under cultivation, make a profit out of depasturing a few head of cattle each, on the adjoining and unsold land. On almost all the gold fields they might do this while still following their occupation as diggers, and thus gradually form for themselves comfortable and productive homes, to which they could retire when their claims were exhausted, or they themselves tired of a digger's life. The land which was at first only valuable for pastoral purposes, would gradually acquire an increased value from the improvements on the neighbouring agricultural land, and would, in process of time, find purchasers, as most of the old Hundreds have done—the purchasers generally being the men who originally purchased the agricultural land, and who, by the profits made by the privilege of almost free pasturage for a small number of stock during the first years of settlement, became able to enlarge their holdings by the purchase of the lands which have helped to make them prosperous. Such are the results of the old Hundreds in Otago, and many of the most prosperous settlers owe their prosperity almost entirely to that system. There can be little doubt that the application of a similar system to suitable lands within the gold fields, would lead to equally satisfactory and happy results—the faults which experience has proved to exist in the original scheme, being of course remedied in the new system.

The eagerness with which the agricultural areas (hereafter convertible into freeholds) are leased, shows how well such a scheme as the one indicated would answer; for the inducements to purchase from fifty to two hundred acres of land would be much greater than those to lease areas not exceeding thirty acres in extent, even with a prospect of hereafter acquiring them as freeholds. The area is altogether too small to encourage permanent settlement. It is almost hopeless, however, to expect that any such policy as that of Hundreds will be applied to the gold fields while the administration of the waste lands—the estate of the Colony—remains in the hands of the Provincial Governments; for the members of those bodies are, as a rule, too deeply and selfishly interested in the matter to permit of the adoption of any far-sighted policy, which might prove less profitable to themselves, than compliance with the counsels of temporary expediency. The digger is generally spoken of as “one who has no stake in the country,” and anything likely to place him in a position of political power is dreaded. He does not care much for this, and if he digs for gold which he intends to spend elsewhere, he at least does so openly and avowedly. But there is another and very numerous class, who, although supposed to have a stake in the country, are in reality no more *bona fide* settlers than the diggers. These men regard commerce or wool-growing as mere means of obtaining the wealth which will enable them to quit the Colony and retire to some other country to spend what they have made. They see in Provincial politics an admirable means of furthering their own ends, and they do not hesitate to use the political power which it is so easy for them to obtain, to do so. In every colony under the sun the land question has been a debated one, and the land the subject of jobbery and the prey of speculators and jobbers, political and commercial. The smallness of the area of Provincial politics, and the great immediate and personal interest which Provincial politicians almost invariably have in the land question, renders the jobbery on the subject much greater than it would be if dealt with by the representatives of the Colony instead of by those of a single Province—by an impartial instead of by a partial and personally interested body.

What is wanted is, that a sufficient supply of land, entitling the purchaser to certain rights of pasturage, should be thrown open for sale in the immediate vicinity of the centres of population on the gold fields; but although in Otago the land is there, it is almost hopeless to expect that it will be so opened up under the existing *régime*. When the cry is raised that more land is wanted for settlement, those in power point to the figures representing the thousands of acres open for sale, but unsold, in certain districts, and tell you, with perfect truth, that this land is of excellent quality. So it is; but although such land may be, and is, attractive to the intending settler newly arrived from home, and who cares not in what part of the Province he settles so long as he gets good land in a good situation, it is no attraction whatever to the digger who has not previously made up his mind to settle in the Province. His ordinary avocations never lead him to its neighbourhood, and he is never likely to see it unless he goes for the express purpose. Then, if he buys, he cannot do anything with it until he has totally given up digging. He cannot carry on the improvement of his farm and his digging at one and the same time, living by the one until the other is capable of supporting him. He must relinquish the pick and shovel and take up the plough and spade, before he can do anything with his purchase, and this sudden transition from one pursuit to the other is not one consonant with the habits and feelings of a digger. In the comparatively rare cases where a digger has made up his mind, and is in a position to abandon digging at once and for ever, he will usually, if he has no special ties to bind him to New Zealand, depart either to see the world a little, or to settle down in some country where he has friends, or where he fancies there is a better prospect open to him than any he sees in this Colony. Very rarely indeed will he visit other parts of the Province or of the Colony, to look for the prospect which he has failed to meet with during his residence on our gold fields. Having resided so many years in New Zealand without being in any way tempted to settle, he is apt to jump to the perhaps not unnatural conclusion that New Zealand does not offer any attractions or temptations to settlement, and so depart at once for some place which does. Having every day of his residence here