

In dealing with the immigrants I have always endeavoured to advise them in their own interests. I have never attempted to coerce them by endeavouring to enforce the obligation they undertake in England to settle on the block; on the contrary, in many instances where I saw that tradesmen sent to me would be out of place on the block, I have sought and obtained for them good employment elsewhere; and during the winter of 1874, when the discomforts were so great to the new arrivals, I encouraged rather than otherwise their not coming to the block when profitable employment presented itself elsewhere. The only fault I have had to find with my later immigrants has been that they have been too respectable a class to be fitted for the rough work of the first years of a bush settlement. Those that have left the Manchester Block are, most of them, filling useful positions in the neighbourhood; and as I can always obtain experienced colonists in their places, the exchange is to the advantage of all parties concerned. I have before explained the arrangements under which the immigrants have been placed in possession of their cottages in the towns. They have all, besides, the right to take up 40 acres of rural land at a rental of £5 per annum or 2s. 6d. per acre, with a right to purchase, at £3 per acre at the end of seven years: these 40-acre sections being all made accessible by metalled roads.

Those who have availed themselves of this right are rapidly improving the land; but with the majority of the immigrants the acquisition of their cottage and acre in town has been as much as they could manage to do during the first three years of their settlement, besides supporting their families; but during that three years they are undergoing an education in bush-work, and gaining experience without which they could not possibly have succeeded as bush farmers. I find, as I expected, that many of the first immigrants, having thus fitted themselves for the occupation of their country sections, are now taking them up and preparing them for occupation, with the intention of selling their town sections and cottages and expending the proceeds in the improvement of their larger holdings. No difficulty has hitherto been experienced by any of the immigrants desiring to sell in obtaining a considerable premium, prices varying from £60 to £100 having been realized from colonists for the property for which the immigrants had to pay £42 to the Corporation.

Appendix A will show the extent to which the lands of the Corporation have as yet been dealt with. The principle adopted has been that, before being put into the market, the land must be made accessible by roads, and the cost of the roads must be put upon the purchasing price of the land. The adoption of this principle is absolutely necessary to the successful settlement of bush country, although to carry it out the realization on the land is necessarily slow, and the capital outlying on surveys and road formation is necessarily large.

It will be seen that my operations have hitherto been chiefly confined to the western half of the block, but the exploration of road lines is now going on in the eastern division with a view to the commencement next summer of road formation and subdivisional surveys.

As to the general results of the Corporation's operations, there can, I think, be but one opinion in the mind of any impartial and practical man. They have opened up a block of very difficult and expensive country in a shorter space of time than such a work has been done in this colony, except perhaps at some of the gold fields. They have settled a population of 1,600 people where little more than three years ago there was not a soul to be seen, and by their operations they have largely benefited the neighbouring country. Such of their emigrants as are not settled on the block are, in most cases, doing more useful work elsewhere, and their places are more than filled up by men more fitted for the special work to be done; and the Corporation has now reached a standpoint from which its future operations can be carried on with greater rapidity and with a better opportunity of obtaining the *bond fide* settlement of a self-supporting population on its lands.

The Corporation, too, has been terribly overweighted from the first. Having had nothing to do with the Feilding contract except the difficulty of carrying it out, I may be allowed to point out in what respects it has been unduly burdensome on the Corporation.

In the first place, the price paid for the land—namely, 15s. per acre—which *primâ facie* appears low, was in reality a far higher price than was at that time paid by the purchasers of small surveyed sections of open land on deferred payments. When the cost of survey—namely, 5s. an acre according to the estimate of the Chief Surveyor in Wellington—and the accumulated interest on so large a block of land before it can possibly be put into the market, is taken into account, the cost price of the land is nearer 25s. than 15s. To this has to be added the cost of road-making before the land can be brought to market, which, exclusive of any Government subsidies we are fortunate enough to obtain, cannot be estimated at less than from 10s. to 15s. an acre. Then, when to such sums as are shown in the accounts in Appendix E—of £12,080 for survey, £10,890 interest paid to Government, and £9,976 expended on roads—are added such indirect burdens as £2,124 paid to make roads through other people's lands, and £1,394 paid for road rates, of which £25 4s. only is returned to the property, no one can, I think, say that the Corporation has obtained its land too cheaply.

In the second place, the two great inducements held out in the contract to balance the immigration and settlement obligations have proved utterly fallacious. The first of these inducements was the offer of free passages to the Corporation immigrants, which was a very valuable concession, when, as was the case at that time, no other free passages were given. But before the Corporation immigration commenced free passages were the rule; and instead of having a monopoly of free immigration, as the contract had seemed to provide, the Corporation found itself engaged in a competition with the Government Emigration Agents, and at a disadvantage, because the free passages the Corporation had to offer were burdened with the condition of settlement on the block, while the Government immigrant could land perfectly unfettered in any part of the colony.

The other inducement was the provision to find work for the Corporation immigrants for four days in the week only, at 5s. a day, in the block or within ten miles of it. As to this, it must be apparent to any practical man of colonial experience that, with the current rate of wages, much higher than 5s., and with the cost of provisions as high as they must be in a new outlying settlement, no working-man who is worth his salt will accept such terms; and the Government is freed from the obligation implied in the contract, simply because the immigrants prefer leaving the settlement to accepting those terms.