

last week, he having bought out my late Greek partner. Most of the Austrians deal with me, they being very dissatisfied with prices charged by other storekeepers. My lowest price is 7s. 6d. per hundredweight for white swamp sugar-gum, and my highest price from £2 2s. to £2 8s. for good hard block gum. The prices that I charge to the Austrians at present are as follows: Sugar, 3½d. per pound; flour, 8s. per 50lb. bag; candles, 9d.; tea, 2s. to 2s. 3d. per pound; tin of coffee, 2s.; tinned meat, 1s. 2d. Mr. Richards supplies fresh meat, delivered at the camps, at 3½d. per pound. All the younger men would be willing to settle in the colony if suitable blocks of land were offered to them by the Government, but those who have parents and families at Home would not do so. Those who remain at Home have to serve in the army. I believe that if the land-laws were translated into Dalmatian language many of the Austrians would be very glad to avail themselves of the privileges offered by the Government. I should think that as to the proportion of the money saved by the Austrians they would send away £8 out of every £10 earned to support their families. As a storekeeper, I think that an Austrian lives even better than a Britisher—it costs him quite 15s. a week to live. The Austrian earns from about £2 to £2 10s., exclusive of tucker. They work all days, except Sundays, from daylight till dark.

*Peter Sulenta*: I was born in Makusk, in Dalmatia. I was a labourer, and have not completed my military service. My friends told me about New Zealand. I paid my own passage. I have been here five years, on the gumfields all the time. The prices charged by different storekeepers on different fields are as follow:—

|                                 | Yates.                 | Evans.          | Bowker.           |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Sugar, per pound ...            | 4½d.                   | 4d.             | 3½d.              |
| Tea (same brand), per pound ... | 4s.                    | 4s. and 3s. 6d. | ...               |
| Flour, 50 lb. ...               | 9s.                    | 9s.             | ...               |
| Butter (tin) ...                | 1s. 6d., 1s. 9d. (keg) | 1s. 6d.         | 1s. (keg and tin) |
| Tinned meat ...                 | 1s. 6d.                | 1s. 3d.         | ...               |
| Candles ...                     | 1s.                    | 1s.             | ...               |
| Coffee, per pound ...           | 2s.                    | 2s.             | ...               |

I was not quite satisfied as to the prices I got for my gum. I was satisfied with the prices I got for white gum at Mr. Yates's, Parengarenga. I left Mr. Evans after first fortnight at Te Kao, and dealt with the Maoris, as I got a better price from them. At Waiharaha I dealt first with Mr. Evans. I dealt with him for a fortnight; then I went to Mr. Bowker: from him I got better prices. At Te Kao I paid £7 5s. for the right to dig gum, but I only stopped there three months. I was sick of Te Kao, and went back to friends at Parengarenga. Mr. Yates charges £2 a year. I have no intention of going Home. If I could have a good piece of land offered to me here I would settle.

*George Raday*: I am a Dalmatian and an agricultural labourer, working vines and olives in the mountains. I have been one year in New Zealand, gum-digging all the time. I paid my own passage. I earn sometimes £2 and £3 and 10s. I am satisfied with to-day, but do not know what may come to-morrow. If I could make a living on a piece of land contingent to a gumfield I would take it up.

*Frederick Russell*: I am a gum-digger in this district for over six years. I have grievances in reference to the Austrians. A few years ago a young man could make his 8s. and 10s. a day comfortably. I have known clerks from Auckland earn 8s. and 10s. a day—that is, five and six years ago. He is a good man who can make 6s. a day now, and I do not think he can do it in eight hours. When the Britisher finds gum he will work it, and then sometimes leave it, and then return to it at a more convenient time. But the Austrians, having twenty to forty men in the camp, will work a portion of the field profitably when an ordinary man could not make wages, because they work in a body on the face. I have known instances where they drained a small swamp in fine weather. The settlers in this district would have gone there for months, and made fair wages at a certain season of the year; now the land is being drained and turned over from end to end. It is perfectly useless to try and find gum there now. The swamps are ruined, and, where Natives and settlers could make good wages hooking, the Austrians have worked them with buckets. Five and six men work behind each other, baling out, so as to enable the others to get the gum. They dig square holes, and cut the soil away in steps, baling and working out step by step until the bottom of the hole is reached, or, at all events, a depth into which by leaning forward they can grab the gum under the water with their hands. These holes fill up afterwards in freshes with water and slush, and are very dangerous to others who follow in other seasons, as I myself was nearly thrown into such a hole. This mode of work surely spoils the swamps for further prospecting. Wherever there has been a big crowd of Austrian diggers the price of gum has fallen on that particular field shortly after their arrival. The reason is that, digging on the face, they get inferior gum with the good. They take everything. When a buyer visits a field and buys a camp of gum he samples several sacks from different diggers (Austrians), and that rules the price of gum in that field, except a man has a particularly good sack of gum. If, therefore, Austrians mix the most inferior classes of gum with whatever other gum they find, it will have a tendency of lowering the price of the gum for that particular camp. I also consider that the Austrians subject us to another grievance by putting large quantities of gum in the market, which necessarily tends to depreciate the price. The Austrians generally have one particular day for selling, and one man transacts the business. Two or three men bank the whole of their money, so that the others do not lose time going to Mongonui (nearest bank), and their expenses are defrayed by the whole company. At the present time there are more Britishers making 5s. than 6s. a day. I have known an Austrian make over 10s. a day, including tucker. I have always found them very peaceable,