

father paid my passage-money, and I have returned it to him. I came out with ten others. Those that came out with me paid their passage-money by the help of some of their friends, and some paid for themselves. Most of my countrymen are coming out under the same conditions as I did—repaying the passage-money advanced to them. There are about thirty here who come from my part of the country, about twenty miles around. I am just able to make my tucker, which comes to £2 10s., and sometimes £3, a month. I make from £3 to £7 per month. We work together, and divide the proceeds. There are nine men in my camp. Sometimes we work together, and other times we work alone. I have sent home about £80 in the three years. My passage-money cost from £25 to £30. I sent the rest to my father; but I do not work so hard now, and shall not send any more money Home. Every one of my countrymen speaks English a little. I like this country best, and do not intend going Home. The married men will go back, but the young fellows I do not think will go back. If a call to the army was sent to me I would tear it up.

*John Bunteridge* : I am a sailor and soldier, and unmarried. I come from the same place as last witness. I have been here five years. I have been digging gum. I came direct from Home to New Zealand. My friends advised me to come out here. I came here as a free man. I was at Dargaville for three years. I worked at Mitchelson's, at Kawarua. I came out in a party of twenty-five, and we went to the Wairoa first. Friends advanced our passage-money. Some of our friends met us at Auckland to take us up to the Wairoa. We paid our own passages there. We paid no royalty on Mitchelson's lease, but we had to deal with him—selling gum and buying stores. I have only recommended one friend to come here. I got tired of the Wairoa, and came here. I got from  $\frac{3}{4}$  cwt. to 1 cwt. of gum at Mitchelson's per week. I make the same here. Mr. Yates pays from £2 10s. to £2 16s. per hundredweight. I spend all my money. I have only sent Home £25; that was two years after my arrival here. It was a cousin of mine who advanced the £25. Some of us make £1 a week and some £1 10s. a week above tucker.

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PARENGARENGA, 7TH FEBRUARY, 1898.

*Gustavus Yates* : I have been gum-buyer to my father since 1885. I was born here. I know the gum-trade in all its branches. The quantity of gum won is not falling off; more has been obtained in the last three years, as we have more men on. The prices are better for inferior gum lately. I am selling gum now I could not sell years ago—two or three grades we used to burn before. Britishers earn £5 to £6 a month, tucker not deducted. Austrians average from £7 to £8, clear of tucker. They make more money than the Britishers, as they work longer hours, and waste no time. They work together in small parties, not in large ones, two or three together. Sometimes they divide their gum, and sometimes each holds his own independently. The Austrians make a face, and stick at it, and take every bit of gum; that is why the Britishers do not like them. Britishers do not like digging after them. Austrians do not live as well as the Britishers as a whole. A Britisher's tucker comes to 15s. a week here; an Austrian's about 10s. Flour, lard, rice, and salt are their principal articles of diet. They drink more coffee than tea. They save a lot of money. Most of them send it Home. There are a lot who bank it in the post-office bank at Auckland. The Commissioners in yesterday's examination picked out two Austrians who spoke English best, and they stated that they saved no money. This was a fact, the reason being that these two Austrians, unlike the others, were much given to wasting their money, and working only half their time. There are about eighty Austrians here. It is very hard to tell the exact number, as one man will give the order for others. We had more last winter. When the wet weather sets in we look forward to a large influx of Austrians. I would not be surprised to see two hundred come, in addition to those we have. They arrive in twenties and thirties. The winter before last we must have had close on two hundred and fifty. They are industrious and peaceable men. They would make good settlers. We have only about fifteen Britishers and other foreigners. There would be about one hundred Maoris, but they do not work half their time. It would amount to about thirty Maoris working steadily. This year we have had altogether, including Maoris, an average of close on two hundred working on the fields. We exported about 8 tons a week during the last year. We hold 56,678 acres. Besides this, the adjoining land is Native land, with the exception of a part towards the Cape, which is Crown land. All the adjoining lands are practically gum-lands. We do not charge rent or royalty to gum-diggers for working on our field. The Natives on the adjoining lands charge a royalty of £2 per annum, and for digging on other Native lands they charge a royalty of 2s. per hundredweight. Any profit we make is on stores or in buying gum. The diggers do not complain about prices, either on gum or provisions. Sometimes diggers stop here for a time; they get tired and leave, and then come back again. I think it is rather hard upon the British gum-digger to be elbowed aside by the Austrians. If I was a digger I should probably think so myself. My father for a long time objected to allow any Austrians coming on to the field, his reason being that they are like a flock of sheep—once they start to come we may be flooded out by them. I think that may be the case. We can regulate it as far as our own freehold is concerned, but not in regard to the Native lands or Crown lands. This field was supposed to be worked out ten years ago. There were men here then who could not earn their tucker. Now we export more gum than before. More gum has been sent away in the last four years than in the fifteen years previously. Austrians can get gum where the Britishers would not, and I believe that some parts of the field now worked by the Austrians would not be touched by Britishers. Regarding the character of the Austrians, there is much to be said in their favour—for instance, if one amongst them is sick or in trouble the others immediately assist him. If he has to be brought to town to the hospital they depute one or two of their number to bring him