

petition I would suggest that for them the fields should be closed for a period each year, so that they should in a manner be forced to seek other work, or to settle, as a means of subsistence. It is nonsense on the part of inexperienced agriculturists to say that the New Zealand soil is not productive. I will guarantee to grow anything in a place which is considered no good, if any one will stake the money. I have visited one Austrian family living in a whare with their three little sons. They were on the eve of their departure for Home. This is the only Austrian woman I ever saw on the gumfield, and the husband was the first Austrian who came to dig. He had made many trips to and fro, but I could not persuade him to get a piece of land and settle here. That was owing to national superstitions, and to the fact that he wanted to go home to settle a dispute with a brother about a piece of land not more than 10 acres in extent. His native district is well known to me, and consists of little else but rocks. No person could live on the land unless he had other means of support, and he is a lucky man who contrives to keep out of debt. During my absence from New Zealand I was kept well informed as to the doings, conditions, &c., of my countrymen, and learnt that a great influx had taken place under a system of contract, that I could not call in terms otherwise than "modified slavery." I discovered that agents in Austria ought to be blamed for insisting that poor people should emigrate. These agents are making a good thing for themselves, and I believe some gentlemen in Auckland are concerned in this affair. It surprises me to find the class of people who have lately emigrated. I would have sooner expected the Maoris would have emigrated to Europe than the Austrians to New Zealand. Austrian newspapers have raised their voices against emigration, and strongly urged their people to remain at home, and not seek fortune in a strange land. Meetings were held in Ogram, the capital of Croatia, to petition the Government to stop poor and ignorant people from leaving the country. These articles I have read with admiration, they were so truthful and impartial. They were published in several papers quite recently—April, May, and June of 1897. It is a hard and bad system, leaving wives and children at home in such bad circumstances, and involved in debt. Women in Dalmatia are like martyrs, so much burden is cast on their shoulders. Several towns are totally deserted of male inhabitants, with the exception of children. Knowing all this, I could not be backward in trying to assist my countrymen on my return to New Zealand, with time at my disposal; and I think the Government should do all in their power to help them, for I am sure, knowing their nature well, they will easily follow should a good way be shown them to prosperity and progress. Their own home Government shows them no toleration, nor in any way promotes their interest. They are honest, industrious, working-people, and a better class for settlement could not be desired. As they are at present living here on the gumfields they make no progress, socially or otherwise, and in many cases those who would live well, and spend money in New Zealand, are debarred from doing so through family affairs and superstitions, being obliged to send their surplus earnings Home. While residing thus temporarily in this country, Austrians keep to the habits and customs of their native place, the only holiday they take being a visit to Auckland, which they spend in parading Queen Street in the night-time, which often proves rather expensive. I think New Zealand the most suitable of all the Australian Colonies for my countrymen to settle in, but something should be done at once to protect the gum industry. I am strongly of opinion that the Government should neither sell or in any manner lease lands containing gum, and that they should, if possible, take back land so leased and refund the money. Thousands are earning a living digging gum, which of necessity grows each year scarcer, and if the area of gum-land also decreases the gum-digger will shortly have to apply to his country for help. Storekeepers are not all of them quite fair and honest in their dealings, and an Inspector of Weights should be appointed to regularly visit country stores, &c. I am of opinion that Britishers would not have the same treatment in Dalmatia as Austrians in New Zealand should they open trade with them. In making this honest straightforward statement I have no wish to hurt any one's feelings; so should any one think my remarks out of place, I would kindly invite him to come out, with his name signed, on the field of literature. I think I have said enough in my present evidence, though I have ample material to spare. The public of New Zealand will remember my endeavours to establish a lodge and a club-house for my countrymen, and thus to improve their condition. I have held meetings in Auckland, Wayby, Port Albert, &c., and written to various newspapers. The following are the dates of my letters written to private gentlemen: To the Hon. W. T. Jennings—20th September, 1897, 8th November, 1897, 31st December, 1897, and 14th January, 1898; to the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon—26th November, 1897, 2nd December, 1897, 9th December, 1897, and 14th January, 1898; to the Hon. J. McKenzie—on the 10th February, 1898. Also, I append the copy of a letter written to the British Consul at Trieste. In conclusion, I do not blame any one so much as the Austrian Government and the Government of this colony, for the poor fellows are cursing their own native country and this country as soon as they put their foot on the New Zealand soil; therefore, something must be done at once, and it is never too late for doing good."

*Copy of the Letter to the British Consul.*

SIR,—

Wellsford, 7th January, 1898.

With reference to the great influx of Austrians into the New Zealand gumfields, I think, as a fellow-countryman and well-wisher, that a word of warning ought to be given. The Austrians are coming here in batches of from forty to eighty, and there is a strong feeling of animosity on the part of the colonials towards them. The English urge that the Dalmatians come here without any funds, dig the kauri-gum, live very frugally, and send home their surplus earnings, or else go home themselves with all they can gather together. If the Austrians came as *bonâ fide* settlers they would be more welcome and free, and it would be in every way better for themselves. If they sold all they owned in Dalmatia and came here with their families the Government would help them to a settlement, and they could rise by industry to a position not attainable by their class in their own country. If they keep coming in such numbers simply to pursue the gum industry, they would really be better off where they are, as the fields for such labour are overrun now, and the prospect for the future is very poor. The Government, too, in the face of such numbers coming simply to dig, are seriously thinking of imposing a tax, while if the people could be induced to take up land on favourable terms, and settle here, in time they could win a good position and name for themselves. The Parliament will deal with the Austrian question this session; meantime I am forwarding you some cuttings from various news-