

## No. 22.

Mr. George Gordon, being duly sworn, examined :—

Mr. Geo. Gordon.

I am a dairyman, residing on the North side of the Ferry (East Bank of Molyneux). I have a few acres under my own and three son's Miners' Rights. I have also about an acre under Business License. I have 10 cows and 4 calves. They run upon Mr. Anderson's Run, who allowed me to keep that number. He has allowed me to keep that number. I am to pay ten shillings per head. If I could get 600 acres worth taking up, I would take them up for myself and my three sons, and use it partly for agriculture, and partly for pasture. I would lease it at the existing rents, with the view of purchasing it bye-and-bye. I would pay 2s 6d per acre per annum as rent for that amount willingly. I would not trouble any squatters any more. There is a block (about 1000 acres) thrown open by the Government on my (eastern) side of the river. It has been thrown open between three and four months. I have never heard of an inch of it having been applied for yet, because it is of no good for cultivation. Take it through the piece, it is shingly soil not worth taking up. There is land between the boundary of this block and the foot of the range—a block about five miles long by an average breadth of more than half a mile. It is more than half pretty fairish agricultural land. There is no talk of throwing open this land. The land I reside on is just adjoining the shingly block thrown open. Further on, north-east of the shingly block, there is about as much fairish good land as the shingly block consists of, *i.e.*, about 1000. I believe if this were thrown open it would be taken up. I would take part of it myself.

24th Feb., 1869.

## No. 23.

Mr. William Honor, being duly sworn, examined :—

No. 20.

Mr. Honor.

I am a miner. I reside on the East side of the Clutha River. I have some cattle on Mr. Anderson's Run, I pay him 10s a head for 10 head and 5 calves, and I have 2 more running in another man's name, and paid for. I cultivate only a small paddock (about 2 acres). I have no title to the land. I am only there by Mr. Anderson's permission. It is on the Mining Reserve. There is a Reserve for mining purposes of all Crown Land for a depth of (10)\* chains on each side of the river everywhere within the limits of the Goldfields. I have no applications in for land in any of the blocks thrown open. I am anxious to buy land. I would lease with a purchasing clause 200 acres; and I know others who would also take up as much. I have been stopping here five or six years, and could get no opportunity of getting land. I did not apply for land in the blocks open, because I understood it was all taken up immediately, and I believe more would be if it were open. Two deputations have been sent from this district to the Provincial Government to request them to put up agricultural land. The first was before the granting of the Leases (in Nov., 1866). They did not seem to take much heed of the matter until lately. When it was known that this block on the east side of the river was to be thrown open, resolutions were passed at a public meeting that the Government should be requested not to throw open this block, as it was a waste of public money to do so, as it would never be sold. I am not aware that they ever answered the letter. The block is worthless, as it consists of shingle, and scarcely any water is to be obtained. There is a block, not of first-class land, but such as would be taken up close to the bad block, on the eastern boundary. I think that land would contain from 2000 to 2500 acres. I think it would be taken up by *bona fide* agricultural settlers. I have heard several parties wishing they could get this land. I think they have also the means as well as the desire to cultivate this land. I do not think the taking of these blocks would prevent the working of the Run on which they are situated. I think there should be as much pasture land, beside the agricultural, as would run 50 or 60 head of cattle for each farmer of from 100 to 200 acres. There is one evil I would lay before the Commission: All the Run land on each side of the river being in the hands of the same runholders for many miles, they have a monopoly in the sale of meat, so that no competition can exist. I wish to state this, that looking at the state of the district and the families growing up all round, they will not be able to get their wants supplied if other arrangements are not made, which will allow of a reduction of prices. The prices of meat are lower, I believe, at Tapanui and Tuapeka. I should say one-third lower. I think that this system of selecting blocks out of the Runs (as is proposed under the covenants), while the pasture on the unsold land within the blocks is left under lease in the hands of the runholders, is very injurious. I think the right of running cattle upon the unsold portion of these blocks should be given to holders of land within them, as in the Hundred system. I think land in the district should be sold on the spot. One of the evils of selling at Dunedin, is the expense and delay applicants are put to in going there; and, by having to trust agents, they sometimes get done out of the land altogether. I have heard instances of this from parties at Tapanui who have thus suffered. In the cases I allude to, the persons had to buy the land from the purchasers from the Government at double the price it was sold for by Government, simply from their not being able to go themselves to Dunedin. A great hardship is, also, the having to pay the deposit of £10 for every 50 acres applied for under Agricultural Lease, amounting to £40 if 200 acres are given; and the time the applicants are kept out of this money. I produce a receipt from Mr. Hickson, the Warden of the district, for £10, dated 26th November, 1867, to John M. Lachlan. The application was withdrawn before the Warden's decision. The money has been applied for two or three times; but has not yet been returned. Mr. Borton (Receiver of Gold Revenue ) says it has not been sent to him.

4th Feb., 1869.

\* Witness did not state the number of chains. The information was obtained at the Superintendent's Office.