

into Hundreds. That there would be much reason for considering this a breach of faith has been shown; but, in fact, it would not have the effect desired by the complainants. For, if the land were made Hundreds, it would be open for sale, and fall into the hands of capitalists, probably the same runholders. What the complainants want is, to have the lands for commonage and keep them within the gold fields, in the expectation that, in accordance with the practice hitherto invariably followed by the Executive of Otago, land would only be sold under the provisions relating to agricultural leases, *i.e.*, after *bonâ fide* occupation for a certain term of years, and a certain amount of improvements being made. Government has the power, moreover, under a very extraordinary provision in the Land Laws, to make regulations with respect to lands not under depasturing lease in the gold fields. Under this power, regulations are made for the management of common depasturage lands by Wardens, &c., similar to those adopted in Hundreds; as has been done with respect to the existing large reserve of Tuapeka. Thus the agricultural settlers would have the advantage of common pasturage given by the Hundred system, as well as advantages that system does not give—*viz.*, freedom from competition with capitalists and purchasers of large blocks, and the opportunity of purchasing on a system of deferred payments. The fact indeed is, that the Superintendent can put up such lands for sale in accordance with the Waste Land Laws of 1866, and so sell in blocks as large as are sold outside gold fields. But it is very possible that the complainants are not fully aware of this fact. Hence their desire above stated. Thus it will be seen, that to declare any of these runs into Hundreds, under the power in that behalf given to the Governor, would do a great injury to the runholders concerned, and by no means satisfy those who desire to take their places.

The third mode is to cancel the depasturing leases in question under the 16th clause of "The Gold Fields Act, 1866," and give the lessees compensation under the clauses following it.

The question, then, is, should this be done? And, first, it is to be considered whether the land is actually wanted for *bonâ fide* settlement. That sheep-farming should give way before actual agricultural settlement seems, most reasonably, always to be and to have been taken for granted. As has been already stated, in the present case the demand is made by persons who undoubtedly desire, as their principal object, to become stockowners rather than agriculturists. Even those who are cultivating small blocks of land, perhaps look rather to the increase of their cattle than their cultivations for their advance in prosperity; and it is certain that the more land for pasture that is given to small stockowners, the more they will both require and demand. If a couple of the existing runs, for instance, were now procured for the settlers in each of the goldfields of Tuapeka and Mount Benger, no doubt the present agitation as far as they are concerned, and possibly all agitation, would be allayed. Small parts of the runs would be occupied for agriculture, and the rest would be commonage for cattle. But the cattle always increasing, and the land remaining the same, in a very few years the same process would have to be repeated with other runs, and so on till all the country were taken up. But before this many of the small stockowners would have become large stockowners; and when the former, whose numbers would be continually on the increase, pressed with their cattle upon the latter, the latter, in their turn, would have to be deprived, like the runholders, of the means of feeding their large herds—the number of cattle they would get the right to run would be continually reduced. But a much severer fight would take place, and the small holders would have to contend against much greater odds, their adversaries being probably increased in number ten or fifty fold. This does not seem a very satisfactory conclusion, and the chances are that the same thing would take place which has happened in the old Hundreds—a demand for the sale of the land, without restriction, would be raised and acceded to, the largest capitalists would buy the land, and the small ones, who would be most probably the small stockowners, would be left to swallow their dissatisfaction. And it is a great consideration whether cattle would not ere this have increased so that the rearing of them would cease to be remunerative, and the cattle market become overstocked, as that of sheep already has.

Objections to third mode being adopted. Land not wanted for agriculture.

Still, although this process (above described) would be accompanied by many

Objections considered.