

*George Warren Shaw Patterson*: I am a storekeeper, gum-buyer, and exporter of gum. I have lived in Kaikohe for sixteen years, and am well acquainted with the industry. There are not more than fifty Britishers, one hundred Austrians, and Maoris (who dig in a casual way) on this field. The production of gum is not nearly so much as it was five years ago. There is a demand for any quality of gum now. Stuff is being dealt with now that would not be looked at a few years ago. The bold gum has run out now pretty well. The earnings of a Britisher would not average more than 18s. to £1 a week, not including tucker, which amounts to about 10s. to 12s. a week. Austrians average £1 10s., and tucker-bill will amount to pretty much the same as the other. Once they get established they live pretty well. The swamps are being dug now. The principal grievance against the Austrians by the digger is that they pay their accounts: they growl because they strip the fields, and send their money out of the country. I send a lot away for them. An Austrian sends three-fourths of his savings Home. I have heard it remarked that they come out here under contract, but not on reliable authority. I have heard that Austrians get money advanced to them through an institution in their own country, but the nature of that institution is only a lending bank. There appears to be one man appointed with every gang of Austrians who come out whose business it is to see that the money advanced, with interest, is returned. I am positive of this. I have studied the Austrian question out very carefully, and have written to the papers on the subject, and I have failed to see what we can do in the shape of legislation. There is no doubt that a great deal of money is being sent out of the country by the ever-increasing swarms. I have been in Trieste, and have passed through the country that these Austrians come from, and I know that no European person would like to be debarred from the privileges of citizenship of their country, and therefore I recognise the difficulties of the international law. I consider the attempt to induce Austrians to settle, by means of offering them blocks of land adjoining gum-fields, would be the only legitimate way of meeting the difficulty. Take our little district alone; there is a vast extent of good land here; and, if settled, the adjacent gumfields would be of immense service in helping to keep the settlers on it. I am sure the Austrians would make good settlers. I think not only the Austrians, but the British diggers should be induced, if possible, to cease their wandering life, and become settlers—inducement should be offered by Government for them to settle on blocks of land, which should be thrown open, near which blocks portion of Crown lands bearing gum should be reserved as an endowment for them and their particular settlement. A law should be enacted that no person should be allowed to dig kauri-gum unless possessing a residential qualification. It was a great pity that the export duty was not put on in 1893, as recommended by the last Commission. There would not now be the complaints about the state of the roads in the North. I do not think the industry would stand it now, as there are other gums coming into competition with it for varnishing purposes; notably the Sierra Leone and Brazilian gums. There is on the East Coast of Africa, a strip of country seven hundred miles long and fifty miles wide in which there is a fossil resin similar to the kauri, called Zanzibar gum. That country is becoming opened up now, so there is a fear that the production from that country may affect our gum. In America they use commoner grades of the kauri-gum in varnish-making for the material which is to be used in interiors, where the rays of the sun do not penetrate; but, in places fully exposed to the light, kauri-gum of good grade must be used on account of its greater elasticity, as it is not affected by the solar action. Some cases of New Caledonian gum have been imported into Auckland, but this gum is never mixed with kauri-gum, for it is too easily detected by the smell, and the new Caledonian gum lying in Auckland is totally unsaleable. There is an acid in it, which the varnish-makers at present cannot eliminate without a great deal of alteration to their plant, and therefore the sale price is almost nil. It is the only thing that keeps the price of that gum down, and prevents it coming into competition with the gum derived from kauri.

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PAKARAKA, 14TH FEBRUARY, 1898.

*Guy Coldham Williams*: I am a runholder. I have been connected with some experiments in growing furze for feeding stock. I do not wish any remarks I may make to be considered as conclusive, because the matter is still in the experimental stage. The experiments began five years ago in a very small paddock. I have since extended the planting of furze to some thousands of acres, but have only had small experience in stocking a small portion of the land sown. I have also planted at Kerikeri, on soil of a different nature to that at Pakaraka. The experiments have in many ways proved very satisfactory at Kerikeri: for instance, before the introduction of the furze it was with difficulty that 150 sheep found subsistence, but since furze has been planted some thousands of sheep have been carried there. On some of the Kerikeri land it might possibly carry one sheep to 4 acres, but sown in furze the same land has carried (wintered) from four to five sheep to the acre. On four acres of this property (Pakaraka) we wintered twenty-six sheep on the furze. Some of the land has been sown in rows 2 ft., 6 ft., 7 ft., and 8 ft. apart, and some broadcast. I believe the most useful way to sow it would be 3 ft. apart, so as to allow the sheep to go through it, and also to form one continuous row, making it easier to burn, so that the dry stuff in the bushes would let the fire run from one end to the other. The best way to operate the furze is to put the sheep into the paddock when the shoots are young (beginning of spring) and tender, to feed it down closely, then remove the sheep to another paddock, and so on. By the time they have been through three or four paddocks the first paddock has again sprouted, and is ready. In the spring a paddock is ready for the sheep in a fortnight or three weeks after it has been stocked down. When, after about three years, the centre of the bush has grown too tall, and out of reach of the sheep, it should be burnt off in the summer, and then, if the tops are left too thick, another fire is put through as soon as they are dry enough; then the bush shoots again from