right to occupy as anybody else, personal occupation for improvement or tillage was encompassed with uncertainty. If a man sowed a crop, others might allege an equal right to the produce. If a few fenced in a paddock or small run for sheep or cattle, their co-owners were sure to turn their stock or horses into the pasture. That apprehension of results which paralyses industry cast its shadow over the whole Maori people. In the old days the influence of the chiefs and the common customs of the tribe afforded a sufficient guarantee to the thrifty and provident; but when our law forced upon them a new state of things, then the lazy, the careless, and the prodigal not only wasted their own substance, but fed upon the labours of their more industrious kinsmen.

Still further evil effects followed the persistent legislation in reference to the Native Land Court. The Natives, being compelled to enter the arena of the Court and contest the title to land, which they could with ease have settled in their own runangas, learned to look upon our method of getting land as merely another form of their old wars. Formerly they fought with guns, and spears, and clubs; now, to accomplish the same end, the defeat of opponents and the conquering of territory, they learned to fight with the brain and the tongue. As in the olden time all means were fair in war, so, pitted by our laws against each other in the Courts, they held all stratagems to be honest, all testimony justifiable, which conduced to success. Captain Preece, the Trust Commissioner at Napier, and Judge Ward, at Waipawa, both gentlemen well versed from youth in Native character and Native customs, expressly make this allegation, while many other witnesses inferentially prove it to be correct.

So utterly unreliable have many of the Maoris become during late years that it is now the fashion amongst some of them not only to spoil the living, but to plunder the dead. The fabrication of spurious wills has, in the words of several witnesses, like the false swearing in the Native Land Court, "become a fine art." Natives who, speaking in their own runangas, will testify with strict and impartial truth, often against their own interests, when speaking in the Native Land Court will not hesitate to swear deliberately to a narrative false and groundless from beginning to end.

The pernicious consequences of Native-land legislation have not been confined to the Natives, nor to the Europeans more immediately concerned in dealing with them for land. The disputes thence arising have compelled the attention of the public at large, they have filled the Courts of the colony with litigation, they have flooded Parliament with petitions, given rise to continual debates of very great bitterness, engrossed the time of Committees, and, while entailing very heavy annual expenses upon the colony, have invariably produced an uneasy public feeling.

In one year—1888—there were eight Acts passed, and in 1889 nine, especially dealing with Maori lands and Courts, besides others partially touching them; and, again, others were introduced but thrown out or abandoned. There were in ten years, from 1880 to 1890, more than a thousand Native petitions presented for consideration to the House of Representatives.

Native Land Court.

Numerous witnesses bear testimony to the gradual deterioration of the Native Land Court. It takes a longer time now to hear a case than formerly. Its fees and charges are greatly in excess of what they were. Its adjournments and postponements are more frequent and inconvenient. The applications for rehearings are greatly increased. It has gradually lost every characteristic of a Native Court, and has become entirely European—as Hone Peeti said, "only the name remaining." It has brought into existence a regular system of concocting false claims, by which the real owners are often driven out, and their land given to clever rogues of their own race. It no longer visits the land, nor guides and advises the Natives in friendly settlements. Its demand for excessive daily fees is so imperious that Natives not able to pay are refused a hearing, and thus in many cases the real owners are compelled to stand by and see their land given to strangers. Its decisions are never final. Even after years of occupation under a certificate, Crown grant, or transfer title, the occupier is liable to litigation, ejectment, and ruin owing to the numerous methods available for setting them at nought, or, at any rate, interfering with them through the ever varying conditions of the law.

So complete has the confusion both in law and practice become that lawyers of high standing and extensive practice have testified on oath that if the Legislature had desired to create a state of confusion and anarchy in Native-land titles it could not have hoped to be more successful than it has been. Were it not that the facts are vouched upon the testimony of men whose character is above suspicion and whose knowledge is undoubted, it