

511. Did the purchases made by you on the west coast of the Middle Island contain the gold- and the coal-fields now being worked in that Island?—Yes. I may state that in 1857 I took the first piece of coal seen in Nelson from the site of the present Brunner Mine. Mr. Brunner found coal in 1847. I found it in 1857.

512. What was the price paid for this land?—Three hundred pounds, and 10,000 acres were set aside as reserves. There were only about a hundred and ten Natives in the whole district. It was practically unoccupied territory. Sir Donald McLean was of the opinion that there was only a handful of Natives altogether—about thirty—and I was sent down to deal only for 2,000 acres of reserves and £200. But they wanted to have reserved for themselves all the land between the Grey and Hokitika Rivers to the sources of both—the most valuable portion of the land. I came back in 1859, and saw Governor Gore Browne. He said it was an absurd price, but that it was his duty to see that there were sufficient reserves. His words were: “The reserves would be of greater value to the Natives when the rest of the district was occupied than if the whole country was left in its then condition.” The country on the East Coast was all pastoral land. It was a partly overlapping purchase. It overlapped some of the work which Mr. Hamilton, Collector of Customs, had done at Canterbury. All the money I gave to the Ngaitahu was £300 and 10,000 acres of reserves.

513. Can you state what is the rent now received by the Natives from time to time for the reserves made for them on the west coast of that Island?—I cannot say. I had nothing to do with the leasing of these reserves. They were all leased after my time.

514. Still, you can say they are of considerable value?—Yes; but I fancy from what I heard when down on the Grey a few years ago the rent has been reduced. The reserves on the east coast of the Province of Marlborough were not dealt with so far as I know.

515. You had to make several of the arrangements with the Natives, had you not, about the goldfields in the North Island?—Yes; I procured the cession of all the lands ceded to the Crown except the Tokatea Block—that is to say, in the district extending from Cape Colville on the north to Te Aroha Mountain on the south, and including the Thames and Coromandel Goldfields.

516. I believe that up to the present time you have been engaged in Native matters, and are still, so far as there can be said to be any Native matters now?—Yes. I may tell you the manner in which I conducted the negotiations for the goldfields, as it will throw light on our dealings with Native lands. That peninsula of which I have just spoken was held by four divisions of the Marutunahu Tribe, commencing at Cape Colville on the north, and ending at Te Aroha on the south, and these four divisions were known respectively as the Ngatimaru, Ngatiwhanaunga, Ngatitamatera, and Ngatipaoa. The holdings of these divisions of people were all interlaced, here a strip belonging to one, there another strip, and then perhaps a long patch belonging to another tribe. We had no Native Land Court, and only a surveyor or two. I went on the ground and arranged not only the whole of these boundaries between these four large divisions of the tribe, but also the hapu boundaries. I firstly walked the ground, getting individuals from each tribe to accompany me. I would say, “Now, then, where is that boundary?” Sometimes they would agree as to where it was; at other times they would not. I eliminated from it all they agreed upon, and then took the disputed points. I will give you an instance of how we settled these things; it relates to only a small piece of ground. The disputed portion began about a mile from the beach. They agreed as to the boundary from the spur to the main ridge. Then one party contended that the ridge was the boundary, while another held that a neighbouring stream was the boundary, the distance between the two places being only 44 yards. I asked how long they had been disputing about this. They said, “About seven generations.” I remarked that it was a trumpery piece of land to be disputing about for seven generations. I ascertained that the dispute began shortly after the inter-marriage of a man and a woman, one each of the contending tribe; and it seemed that the man had gone upon the woman's land, and the woman upon the man's land. As a rule the husband acquired no right to his wife's land: they separately remain and are known as the man's land and the woman's land. After discussing the affair for half the day I put in my peg midway across the disputed portion—22 yards from ridge and stream—and thus settled the dispute. In this way I settled matters; and generally compromises of this sort were agreed to. There were many other difficult cases to settle—very old-standing disputes. In fact, when Dr. Shortland became Native Secretary, and I was appointed to be Civil Commissioner for the Thames district in his place, he left me four or five of what he called Native legacies, saying, “If you settle them you will be a very lucky fellow.” At any rate, I did manage to settle them.

517. What was the method of dealing with the Native people in those days?—I dealt under the old land-purchase system in the Middle Island, and was mainly engaged there in fixing up the reserves. Generally what the Government was most particular about was that the Natives should have ample reserves, and that was the first thing we were instructed to do—see that the Natives had proper reserves. After the Taranaki war it was thought better to have some tribunal for dealing with the land, and the Native Land Act of 1862 was passed in consequence.

518. That was to decide as to who were the proper owners?—Yes; because it was said that if proper care had been taken to inquire as to the owners in that case the war would not have arisen.

519. Both before and after the establishment of the individual title, what was the real method of dealing with the Natives themselves?—We simply used to call meetings of the Natives, telling them we were willing to give so much money for certain land. Perhaps the arguments would last days and weeks at a time, but agreement would be come to at last, and then, when the reserves were fixed up, the deed would be signed by all the Natives present.

520. Did every man, woman, and child who was interested sign?—Yes, every one you could get hold of, once they were satisfied with the purchase.

521. In many instances were not those who signed representative people?—Some of the older deeds were signed by only a few people, but in later years we got as many to sign as we could.