985. From my experience, the burying-places would be cut out and fenced either with post-and-wire fences or with post-and-rail?—I think they would be very well satisfied with that. There are, for instance, two Natives, Ngati Maihi and Rangitutia. They have 2,000 acres in one block and 1,000 acres in another, and they have each got twenty or thirty acres additional upon which they are living, and they want me to act as their agent in trying to lease those blocks—in fact, they do not know whether to sell or lease. However, they only want some one to act for them; and I think if a person in whom they had confidence were nominated by the Government to act in that way they would all be satisfied. Their great difficulty is to get some one they could trust to receive and pay money to them. Their agents in most cases receive the money, but do not account for it.

986. Under this agent system the principal men of the tribe bag the money, and only dole out a few shillings here and there, or, mayhap, a pound or two, keeeping the largest proportion to themselves. And in many cases European agents have acted in much the same way?—I have known such cases.

WILLIAM MOON sworn and examined.

987. *Mr. Rees.*] What are you?—I am a farmer, and formerly I was a Native Land Agent.

988. What opportunities have you had, and during what time, of obtaining experience in relation to Native-land laws and the Native Land Courts?—From about 1867. I think it was in that year that I attended the Native Land Court for the first time; but I commenced to deal largely in 1872.

989. From 1867, then, you had means of observation, and from 1872 you have been interested in Native-land dealings?—Yes; largely interested.

990. Have you been since 1872 up to the present time constantly occupied in connection with Native work?—Nearly constantly—off and on.

991. Now, in your opinion, has the effieiency of the Native Land Court increased or decreased since 1872?—In my opinion, its efficiency has increased.

992. How about the incidental expenses?—Well, in the old Courts, I am not sure that fees were charged.

993. They were not at first?—Of course, the difficulty is the extra expense now entailed by sittings of the Court, and fees have to be imposed as a consequence.

994. That is owing to the time consumed in hearing the cases?—Well, perhaps there is now more time consumed and less work done outside than used to be the case. In the olden times the Maoris were more amenable to reason outside the Court than they are now.

995. Have the rehearings increased in number?—Well, I fancy that applications for rehearings have increased in number considerably. In the first place, blocks are now put through in smaller areas, and have to be made more accessible than used to be the case.

996. So far as you remember, has the reliability of the Native evidence increased or decreased? Do you think that the Native testimony now is more consistent or less consistent with truth than it used to be?—Well, in the first Courts a different class of Natives gave evidence. They were mostly old men who are now dead, and they were new to the Court; and I believe their evidence was more to be relied on than is the evidence given by younger men now. Of course, a great deal of it now is manufactured—that is to say, the evidence of young and clever men.

997. From your knowledge and experience of the Native character, would you say that ancient customs of the Maori in regard to land-dealings which have fallen into desuetude might be to some extent resorted to with advantage by casting greater responsibility on the Natives at their runangas and allowing them to settle there among themselves, or through Committees of their own, questions of boundaries and so on?—My personal opinion of these Committees is very poor indeed. I have tried that mode of settlement over and over again in the case of large blocks of land. In the case of the Wakamaru Block of 95,000 acres, I tried to settle the thing not in the Court, but on the ground. We had, as we thought, all the climants there; but the result was that the moment we tried to start the survey a party of Natives took to shooting—potting away at our heads. It was some of the people who were dissatisfied—just a small minority.

998. But, supposing the Whakamaru people had been told that they must settle the boundaries before going into Court, and that they must take their some agreement as to the hapu boundaries?—We forced them to do that eventually, but it was only by cutting out the land of the shooting party that we managed it.

999. It was done then?—It was brought into Court, and fought out bitterly there.

1000. Would it not have the effect of shortening the proceedings there?—I do not think so.

1001. Do you think that a system of peripatetic Judges—their wandering to and fro over the colony—is as useful as a system of assigning Judges to particular districts?—From my own experience, I should say that the assigning of Judges to particular districts would not be satisfactory.

1002. Why not?—It has been tried in one or two districts; and it would certainly seem as if the Natives had not the same confidence after a time in these resident Judges as in a strange Judge. They fancy that the resident Judge might be fixed up or biassed by his friends—that is, from the Native point of view, of course.

1003. Are you aware that there are disputes existing between Natives and Europeans regarding questions of title?—Of course, the only block disputed in this district was Walker's case, which is now settled; but this was really more owing to error on the part of a Judge of the Native Land Court than to anything else.

1004. In regard to the laws relating to the alienation and disposition of the interests in Native land, can you say whether at the present time there is the same amount of alienation of Native lands for the purposes of settlement by Europeans as in the past?—There is none whatever in this district, or, at any rate, very little. The principal reason is that the land is under restriction, being