

A more striking contrast is, however, presented near Mangawai. There a Mr. Hogan has land adjoining the Mangawai Kauri-gum Reserve, or what the local diggers call "Coal Hill." A fence divides the properties. On the one side of the fence Mr. Hogan has let the gum-digging on his land at the substantial royalty of £80 sterling an acre. Here again there is the condition that the digging is to be done "on a face"; all timber thrown up on the surface and the land left generally in a fit state for the plough. Through the fence on the Crown reserve the land is a perfect maze of deep holes and trenches of all shapes and sizes, and whichever way one looks there is afforded the same depressing evidence of neglect and indifference; and there can be little doubt that a large area of the Government reserve was as rich in gum as Hogan's land, and lent itself as readily to similar treatment.

The following advertisement, which appeared in the *North of Auckland Times*, affords further evidence of the methods now being followed by private individuals in developing their lands:—

FAMOUS GUMFIELDS.

GUM-DIGGERS are notified that Mr. T. C. Hawkins is opening his land, known as the Wairuhe Block, at TANGOWAHINE, to diggers as from Monday, June 1, 1914.

This rich gumfield, which has been closed for fourteen years, comprises 2,600 acres.

Liberal Terms.

Conditions on application to

T. C. HAWKINS, Tangowahine.

Your Commissioners were fortunate enough to get in evidence the terms on which the digging was being let. It was first provided that the diggers should pay a weekly fee of £1 for the right to dig on the land referred to, and each digger was required to fill in all holes dug by him. This arrangement had not been found to work satisfactorily, and the weekly fee was raised to £1 5s. a week, the owner of the land putting on men to fill in the holes after the gum was taken out.

Instances such as quoted might be multiplied almost indefinitely. It is, however, quite unnecessary to labour the point. The evil touched upon is recognized and appreciated by all persons who have any knowledge or experience of the gumfields. The important question now is, what is the best course for the future? Should the diggers be restricted in any way, and should they be required to fill up the holes they dig?

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It is a difficult matter to overcome the results of so many years of lack of proper control, and your Commissioners are not inclined to recommend any arbitrary action at this the eleventh hour, but are pleased to be able to say that they can still see a bright side to the picture, and are of the opinion that much can yet be done to repair the mistakes and omissions of past years. There are still large areas of land which can be dealt with in a systematic manner, both with advantage to the digger and profit to the State. The vast areas which have been so devastated can with proper treatment in course of time be brought into profitable use.

It may be safely said that 75 per cent. of the area of the lands affected are of such a flat and undulating nature that (apart from the difficulty of the potholes) they can be easily ploughed. On many of the fields there are undrained swamps claimed by the gum-diggers to be rich in gum. Such areas require special treatment by the State. The method to be adopted should follow closely on the lines of private enterprise. These swamps should first be drained, then tested for their gum-bearing values, and the gum-digging let on a royalty or other practical basis, with the stipulation that the land should be dug "on a face," or in other respects so treated that it will be in a fit condition for farming operations after the gum has been taken out.

Among the swamp areas that might be first dealt with may be mentioned the Motutangi Swamp, of over 2,000 acres, situated between Waiharera and Hohoura; the Coal Hill and Pakiri Swamps, of 600 acres and 500 acres respec-