

actually paid a portion of the price. But whether this be so or not, Captain Mair has, we are informed, paid to the Natives of this hapu the sum of £400 for this very land. It is said, too, that the money consists of private funds, and it is concluded that the purchase is a private one. Some of the Ngati-rangitiki chiefs have refused to receive any of the money, though it was publicly tendered to them on the 15th instant at Te Karamuramu, and refused in presence of Captain Mair, it being at the time alleged as the ground of their refusal that the Government was in treaty for the land. The fact that such a reply was given would lead to the supposition that Captain Mair was purchasing on private account. On the 14th instant we are informed that Captain Mair had offered £100 of immediate cash payment on the Waikowhiwhi block. The offer was made to the chief Tikitiki, who subsequently refused the money on the ground that they had received Government money for the land from Davis and Mitchell. This again would imply that the offer was made by Captain Mair on private account, for we cannot conceive the only other alternative explanation—that he and Messrs. Mitchell and Davis are both outbidding each other for the same lands, and thus creating further difficulties and performing the unpleasant operation of checkmating each other's efforts, to the detriment of the Government they serve. If Captain Mair has been endeavouring to traffic in land on private account, either directly or indirectly, he evidently has totally misunderstood his duties as a public servant and as District Officer under the Native Land Act. There is a wide power in the matter of reserves for Natives, reposed in the hands of the District Officer; and so necessary is it to avoid the very appearance of evil in such a delicate matter as the control of public lands, that no official, either for himself or his friends, by any arrangement, however hidden or remote, should traffic in the slightest degree, or act as the agent or purchaser for private parties. A District Officer doing this at once places the Government he serves at a great disadvantage, for he exercises his special knowledge obtained at the expense of the Government and really the property of the Government, in the service of private persons, who become competing parties for the land which it is desirable should be acquired for the public estate. By the Act, the following, among others, are set forth as duties to be performed by the District Officer: "He shall prepare for record a general skeleton map of the district assigned to him, distinguishing the different tracts of country in possession of the various tribes or hapus of Natives at the date of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi." He shall also "compile, with the assistance of the Assessors and of the most reliable chiefs of the district, or with the assistance of such other person or persons as he may consider to be trustworthy, accurate and authentic information relative to the district aforesaid, defining the intertribal boundaries by their Native names, giving an estimated acreage of such tribal land, with a description of the course and direction of the principal rivers running through such land, and the names and positions of the various mountains, lakes, or other salient points in the general features of the country. They also supplement the information by tracing the genealogy and names of the various families or hapus to which the different portions of the original tribal land shall have descended." The Native Reserves Commissioner of any district is also required to furnish in writing to the District Officer a list of all lands set apart for Native reserves, with descriptions and boundaries of the same and tracings thereof. There are sundry other special powers affording large means of information which really belong to the Government and which a District Officer has no right to employ for any private object, either as a land agent or otherwise. It will thus be seen that any action of the nature of dealing with the Natives for land purchases, on behalf of private persons, on the part of an officer in whom such large powers are vested, is practically a breach of the contract between him and the Government and ought on no account to be permitted. Apart from the mere question of breach of tacit agreement, such dealings for private persons may lead to serious complications and dissatisfaction among the Native land owners. It would shake their confidence in Government officials and lead to jealousies and divisions, out of which might spring quarrels, of which the land question has so frequently been a prolific cause. If there is any reason to suppose that any Government officer has been trafficking in land or making efforts in that direction on behalf of private purchasers, the Government cannot too soon interfere and place a peremptory veto on such a practice.

No. 8.

Captain MAIR to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Armed Constabulary Depot, Wellington, 3rd August, 1874.

I have the honor to enclose for your information copy of a telegram I received last week from Messrs. Mitchell and Davis, in answer to a letter I wrote asking them if they had anything to do with the leader in the *Daily Southern Cross* of May 30th. It is evident from their reply that they, at least, do not consider I have interfered with their land negotiations as represented.

Falsehoods have been circulated about me by some malicious or disappointed person, and I now appeal to the Government, and earnestly request that this matter may be inquired into at once. If this is not done, it is only fair to me that these reports be officially contradicted.

I feel very strongly on this matter, for I have, at great personal sacrifice, endeavoured to meet the wishes of the Government, and carry out the promise I made to the Hon. the Defence Minister.

I have several other letters and telegrams I can produce if necessary.

I have, &c.,

GILBERT MAIR, Captain N.Z. Militia,
District Officer Bay of Plenty District.

H. T. Clarke, Esq., Under Secretary, Native Office, Wellington.
