

came down to one or other of the fences and commenced fencing across the gap, when they were immediately arrested. They made no resistance, and came down to the work knowing perfectly well that they would be taken prisoners, and that their attempt to re-erect the fence would prove a mere demonstration—a demonstration repeated some forty or fifty times at least.

Telegrams,
passim.

48. In this course they persevered for nearly two months, during which time 216 of their number were arrested and despatched to different gaols in the Southern Island, under the Maori Prisoners Detention Act. Of this number, fifty-nine, who were arrested after the passing of the West Coast Settlements Act, were sentenced to two years' imprisonment under the penal clauses of that law. The last arrests took place on the 4th of September; but barriers continued to be frequently placed across the gaps, and the same process of fencing and pulling down might perhaps have continued to the present day but for a change in the form of the proceedings of the Natives. On the 12th November, the Maoris appear to have hit on an expedient which, had it been sooner adopted, might have saved much irritation, and preserved the liberty of those now in prison.

Bryce to Roberts.

49. On that day, the Maoris, instead of, as usual, erecting a solid fence across the road, put up slip-rails, which, of course, sufficed to keep animals out of the growing corn, yet which could be taken down to allow the passage of any horse or wagon using the road. Colonel Roberts telegraphed for instructions, and was very wisely told to allow the slip-rails to remain.

50. Since that date there has been no further attempt at fencing. No obstruction has in any other ways been at any time offered to the roadmakers.

51. Such is a brief, but, I believe, not inaccurate, account of the transactions on the West Coast during the last two years, and of the legislation consequent thereon.

Of the prisoners taken, 79 have since been released—56 of those engaged in ploughing, and 23 of those arrested for fencing.

52. My stay in New Zealand has been of such short duration that I hesitate to express, or even to form, any very confident opinion on the questions I have dealt with.

53. What was indeed in 1879 the actual position of the lands within the confiscated territory it would be very difficult to determine. That, as regards the district between the Waingongoro and Stoney River, the confiscation had for ten years been practically abandoned is a patent fact; but it had not technically been so, and, indeed, there has for some years past existed no machinery by which such confiscation could be formally reversed. It is, however, most important to observe that, whilst it is admitted that the confiscation did not touch the property of loyal Natives, no attempt had ever been made to define the localities or limits of such property. That the Crown, consequently, if the rights it had acquired by confiscation were still insisted on, possessed land, and that the Natives also possessed land, within the district in question, was clear; but, with regard to any particular spot or area, except perhaps what was actually in use and occupation, it would have been difficult to say with confidence that it was the property of either.

54. I have no doubt whatever that the Royal Commissioners are correct in their conclusion, that the ploughing of confiscated land was resorted to by the Maoris in order to force on the Government the consideration of their claims. Such proceedings have not been unusual in a similar state of society from the earliest times, and it is far from improbable that the idea may have been suggested to Te Whiti, who is a most diligent student of the Bible, by the example of the mode employed by Samson to compel the attention of the Philistines to his grievances. It may also be remarked that, if this was their object, it was completely successful. The proceedings of the ploughmen undoubtedly led to the appointment of the Royal Commission, and that Commission at once recognized the existence of the grievances, which had been derided as imaginary and unreal, which had remained for so many years unnoticed, and which, except for that Commission, would probably be yet undealt with, but which are now in the course of rapid and satisfactory adjustment.

55. But, whilst the Maoris would have been amply justified in taking such steps as might have raised an issue as to the ownership of the land in a form which