

in connection with them, be it purchase-money for the freehold, rent, goldfields revenue, or payment for timber or flax, will always be of an unsatisfactory nature and a fruitful source of dispute not only between Natives and Europeans, but also between the Natives themselves. It is well known that in "most of the blocks the individual ownership of the grantees is not equal, some having, according to recognised Maori custom, much larger interests than others, but in the present state of the majority of the titles there is nothing to show who have the larger and who the smaller interests. The Court has, however, already told the Natives that, in the cases of all blocks that shall in the future be dealt with by it, those who are found to be the owners must, when sending in the list of names, fix the proportionate share of each in all cases where the shares are not equal, and in the cases of blocks already dealt with by the Court the owners have been asked to set about defining the individual interests as soon as possible; and, where they cannot come to any agreement themselves outside the Court, they have been told to bring the matter into Court for the Judge and Assessor to decide. Judge Mair, who commenced the adjudication of Rohepotae titles four years ago, is still the Judge, and he still has Paratene Ngata with him as Native Assessor.

GOVERNMENT LAND PURCHASE.

At the beginning of the present year Government commenced its endeavours to secure by purchase some of the blocks that have now been adjudicated upon within the Rohepotae Block, but up to the present very little progress has been made, as the Natives, with very few exceptions indeed, have shown a decided disinclination to sell. The truth of the saying "that it takes two to make a bargain" is as apparent in Native-land-purchase operations as in other matters, and, notwithstanding that the desire of Government (or any one) be ever so great to acquire land by purchase, unless the owners of the land can be got to reciprocate that feeling, and the desire becomes mutual that the ownership of the land shall change, very little progress can be made in land-purchase. Up to the present time very few of the Rohepotae owners have evinced such a desire. The offer of 3s. 6d. and 5s. per acre (according to quality and position of land), with 10 per cent. out of each block returned as reserves, has not, so far, proved sufficiently tempting. The reason of this objection to sell arises from several causes: one, and it may be called the real reason, is that they are not really in want of money just now. Maoris hardly ever sell land through feelings of sentiment. The argument about the benefit that European settlement and enterprise in their midst will be to them is paid little heed to. They think they see that we are not really so disinterested as we would make it appear to them, and that, with perhaps the exception of providing schools for the education of their children, we seldom want to do anything which will be of benefit to them, unless we have discovered that benefit or profit will in the first instance be reaped by us, or that it is equally for our good as well as theirs that the result we strive for should be brought about. Hence, they consider the reason why we desire to get them to assist us in bringing about certain results, and they generally manage, if possible, when that is the case, that we shall pay for the privilege of enjoying the profits or advantages of such results. There is a considerable amount of human nature in this, and also a great deal of smartness or business-acumen, which goes abundantly to prove that the Maori of the present day is able to take care of himself and look after his own interests. The above position can, however, only be taken up by those Maoris who can afford to wait: once let them be really in want of money and then, like many Europeans when placed in the same circumstances, they will sell at almost any price; this will, I think, be the case when their source of revenue from the sale of flax and flax-cutting, also the sale of rabbit-skins and payment for road-making, ceases. Another reason why they refuse to sell at present is that they consider the prices offered by the Government are too small, and they could get more if they were allowed to sell to private purchasers. A proposal is talked about by a few at the present time to get up a petition to Government requesting that the proclamation over the King country, which gives the Government the sole right of purchase, be removed, and that free-trade in land-purchase be allowed. It is useless to tell them that private purchasers would probably give a little more per acre if allowed to purchase small areas, and in the best localities, that is, to "pick the eyes," as it is called, out of the blocks, and leave the Natives with the balance of the land on their hands, useless and unsaleable; they think differently.

There is another matter that has an important bearing in connection with land-purchase operations at present, and which is, perhaps as much as anything else, the cause of retarding them. It is a fact that a number of the owners have taken to sheep-grazing. During the past two or three years a few intelligent and industrious half-castes at Kopua, near Alexandra, have done very well by purchasing a few sheep, grazing them on the large area of waste land in the locality owned by them in conjunction with other members of their tribe, and disposing of the wool and lambs at the proper season. News of their success soon travelled through the whole of the Ngatimaniapoto and Ngatiraukawa districts, the profits being most likely very much exaggerated, whilst the losses and the care and attention required in looking after the sheep were possibly very much underrated, if considered at all. The result is that there is now a craze throughout the district for sheep-grazing, and I think there are now fully six thousand sheep grazing within the Rohepotae Block. They are owned mostly by the Natives, but in one or two cases Europeans have joined them in the speculation, the latter finding the sheep in the first instance, which they hand over to the Natives, who place them upon the land, the payment to the Europeans being a proportion of either lambs or wool, or both, as the case may be. Under this condition of affairs, and whilst the result of the sheep-speculation is in abeyance, those Natives who are concerned in it can hardly be expected to be prevailed upon to dispose of their lands. Some of them anticipate making large profits out of the venture, and talk of being able to pay all the costs incurred for the survey of their lands, as well as the Native Land Court fees, out of the sale of the wool and lambs. I have my doubts, however, about the success of the venture, and, unless the Natives exercise great care and supervision, and are fortunate in having a mild winter, it is very likely that they will lose a number of their sheep through scarcity of food and exposure. Then there are the depredations of the large number of dogs that always infest Native settlements to take into consideration; and last, but not