

destroyed the furze. This man was a member of the Canterbury Association; but when he found he could not get on to their land he came down the coast and worked at mills. He saw this section, which was advertised, and it was looking nice and green in furze. He understood that the next neighbour wanted the section for the sake of the water on it, for the purpose of working his machinery for a butter-factory, and was willing to give a big price for it—it was only a 100-acre section. That is the reason why this man gave £1 5s. per acre for it. Now, when he sees the furze growing, he is very sorry he took the section, and would like to give it up again. Was that a fair basis upon which to settle the market-value or of the prairie-value of that land when it had been ring-fenced? My land was not ring-fenced, but it was so covered with flax that you could not see a chain away from you, and if you put 50 head of cattle in a furze-break you could not see them. This I have cleared at my own expense. I have spent £500 in eradicating the furze off this section. If any man thinks I am exaggerating, I will take him over the place, and show him the adjoining land, and will bring people who will say that their land was in the same condition as mine. The land of the man next to me is smothered with furze, brambles, blackberries, and sweetbriar. On that question I wrote once to the Public Trustee, telling him what the furze had cost me, and what a nuisance it had been to have those persons adjoining who allowed the furze to run at its sweet will. This is the reply that I got:—

“Public Trust Office, Wellington, 9th May, 1894.

“SIR,— *Sections 26, 27, 28, pt. 29, and Section 33, Block IV., Cape.*

“With reference to your letter of the 26th March, upon the subject of the eradication of the furze, sweetbriar, &c., growing upon a section adjoining your leasehold, I may state that the attention of my reserves agent at New Plymouth has been drawn to the question, and I am now informed by him that the owners of the adjacent sections have expressed a willingness to clear the furze, &c., off the land, in fact, they have already commenced the work of clearing.

“This information will, I have no doubt, prove satisfactory to you.

Yours obediently,

“J. K. WARBURTON, Public Trustee.

“Mr. W. J. Wells, Puniho, Taranaki.”

When I received that letter I left it lie. What was the use of my making any complaint when I had that thing returned to me, simply telling straightforward men that their word was no good, it would not be trusted? It is not fair to treat honest, hard-working men in this way. I do not think that I want to say anything more on that matter, except I may, perhaps, read you this letter of the 1st July, 1895, to Mr. McHardie. He had written to the Public Trustee asking him to fence the adjoining section, a thing that the Trustee had done on previous occasions. McHardie is a hard-working Scotchman; so are his sons. He has taken up land to make himself a home. He has felled 200 acres or more, and he wants a ring-fence so that he can graze the grass on it. He applied to the Trustee to fence his portion, and this is the Trustee's reply:—

“Public Trust Office, Wellington, 1st July, 1895.

“SIR,— *Section 75, Block IX, Opunake.*

“I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd ultimo in reference to the fencing between your section and Section 74, also a Native reserve, and in reply to inform you that the land comprised in Section 74 is about to be leased, the advertisement calling for tenders appearing in this week's *Gazette*; and as any one taking up this land must fall and burn the bush on the boundary between Sections 74 and 75, any fence which may be erected now would only get damaged, if not totally destroyed, by falling trees, &c.

“Tenders for this and other lands will close about the 15th August, and should none be received for Section 74, the matter of contributing towards the cost of erecting the proposed fence will be again considered by me.

Yours obediently,

“J. K. WARBURTON, Public Trustee.

“Mr C. McHardy, Opunake.”

That is an answer that no practical man would give. Any one knows when you are running wires between trees in the bush that you take the wire from one tree to another, and simply staple the wires to the trees. There is no need for strainers, for the trees serve that purpose. When you want to burn the bush near the fence you simply pull out the staples and coil up the wires, and there is little expense or loss. The fence is just simply to keep the cattle on the ground. Then, again, previous to the passing of this Act of 1892, several persons had leased from the Natives certain portions of the timber-land. Mr. McCullum was one. The arbitrary action of the Trustee caused a very great loss to the district as well as to Mr. McCullum. Mr. R—, who had a saw-mill further up the road, employed Natives at his mill. He bought timber from the Natives, and employed them all that he possibly could. That mill being there was a source of revenue to the Natives. He was informed by the Trustee that he would have to remove his mill within a certain time, and he had to do it. There were others in the same position. Amongst them was a neighbour of mine, Mr. Leidham. He and Mr. Blake had a flax-mill, which was then in working-order. Mr. Leidham was living on this land, which was of some thirty acres in extent. He had notice to leave, and he wanted to lease this land, but he was not allowed to do so. The Trustee would allow no man who had a footing on the ground to have the privilege of tendering for his homestead. On the Puno Road, some two years and a half ago, there was some land advertised to be let. There was no mention made as regarded the formation of the road. The persons who tendered for that land thought, as was usual with Government land, that that meant that such road would be made for them. They have been there now for two years and a half, and they have felled the bush, and fenced and grassed the land, and they had to carry their grass-seed and their wire through the bush after making a track at their own expense. More than twelve months ago they were promised a road, but to this day it has not been made. The Trustee has made what he considers to be a great