

of it as good as anything in New Zealand. I have had experience in a small way in cultivating at Opepe and in the Taupo Township. Where there has been bush you can grow anything. In the Taupo Township, which is, I think, as poor land as any in the district, I have seen splendid vegetables grown without manure. If the land is trenched and the soil left exposed to the atmosphere for some time it grows excellent vegetables of nearly every kind. It grows also fruit-trees, including apples, cherries, and the smaller fruits. One of the finest orchards I have seen was situated around the Mission Station at Pukawa, near Tokaanu. The hill-slopes surrounding Tokaanu and as far as Lake Rotoaira, containing many thousands of acres of land, are also, in my opinion, really good land. At the time I was there a considerable area of these slopes was cultivated by the Natives as gardens. The reason the station I was on was abandoned by the lessees was that it was only Native leasehold held by a short term, and the lessees were prevented from acquiring the fee-simple by the passage of an Act of Parliament passed about that time which prohibited dealings in Native lands by private individuals. In my opinion there is a great future before the Taupo-Tokaanu district once it is served by a line such as the Taupo Company's tramway. I would like to say that I have no interest whatever, directly or indirectly, in the Taupo Company or in the district. My object in giving evidence is merely to assist in the development of the district, which I think has a great future before it.

12. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Are you not aware that there were other causes which induced the lessees of this big extent of country to abandon it?—None whatever.

13. What about the young stock? Is it not a fact that lambs, for instance, partly grown up to the stage of having to be, to a considerable extent, dependent upon grass instead of milk food sickened and died—are you not aware of that?—I am perfectly aware of that, but it was not a factor at all in Messrs. Morrin and Studholme abandoning the country. It is a fact, but we arrived at the cause by a *post-mortem* examination of the hoggets. The full-grown sheep were not apparently affected. There was a poison plant on the Waimarino Plains which used to set up an intense inflammation of the smaller intestines, and it was only in the hoggets that there was a considerable loss through that. But that was not a factor in the abandonment of the country.

14. Are you not aware that this trouble in young sheep was more of a lingering character than an inflammation or any complaint characteristic of poisoning?—No, sir; I would certainly say that was not correct. I think it was not lingering. It was very quick in its operation, and the inflammation disclosed by the opening-up of these hoggets showed that they could not possibly have lived any length of time, owing to the intense inflammation of the smaller intestines. It was some time before we were able to find out what was killing off the hoggets. The only other man besides myself who inquired into the matter was Mr. Maunsell, cousin of the Maunsells, of Masterton, and for our own satisfaction we started dissecting these hoggets, and that is how we discovered that every one had exactly the same symptoms. There was a tiny young growing plant there—a species of trefoil—and in each one of the hoggets we found an undigested portion of this trefoil. But it was not a lingering disease at all. I think they died very quickly after they got poisoned.

15. Are you aware that this trouble extended to other parts of the country?—No, sir; as far as my knowledge goes, which embraces the Karioi Run, and the Karioi Plains, and other country, I never heard of it at all.

16. Are you not aware that other settlers took up country in that region and abandoned it because of their inability to bring their young stock to maturity?—No, excepting on that large area of the Waimarino Plains.

17. Would you be surprised to learn that an admission was made to me by a well-known settler in the Auckland Provincial District that this was so?—I would be surprised, because I have been living in the country for many years, on sheep and cattle stations, and it is the only place I have ever heard of it. The only similar thing to my knowledge was in the north of Australia, where the horses used to get poisoned and die off like flies. Practically it was the same kind of plant.

18. You are aware of bush sickness in the Rotorua district?—I have heard of it; I do not know of it.

19. You have seen prominent references to it in the Press of the Dominion, and the endeavours made by the Government to ascertain the cause and find a remedy?—Yes, sir, but those conditions you speak of have arisen in the public mind years after I left the district. I am talking of close on thirty years ago.

20. Why do you say this question of bush sickness has arisen in the public mind? Are you not aware that it has actually occurred on a large tract of country?—Judging by the public prints, I am quite aware of it.

21. Could Messrs. Morrin and Studholme have got their lease renewed?—I am not really sure, because I was not in the secret councils of the firm; but I am not at all sure whether it was a legal lease or not. It was a more or less verbal lease between the father of a Native whom I saw going out this morning—Te Heu Heu—and Messrs. Morrin and Studholme. I am not sure whether it was anything more than an agreement drawn up between the two without the sanction of the Court; but it was generally known and understood that Mr. Grace—who was nominally the manager of the run, but whom we really never saw, because nearly the whole of his time was devoted to trying to get the signatures of the owners of this country to put it through the Native Land Court—was endeavouring to obtain a proper lease or the fee-simple. I think all they wanted was a proper lease, and Mr. Grace had the whole of the signatures except three, as far as my memory serves me, when the disabling Act was passed. Then we all had instructions from headquarters to go, and the whole country was thrown up. Everything was abandoned except the sheep, which we took down to Hawke's Bay and sold, and Messrs. Morrin and Stud-