

1878.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT UPON THE CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE, 1878.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS to the Hon. MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

General Crown Lands Office, Wellington, 16th August, 1878.

I have the honor to forward the annual returns of the Crown Lands Department for the twelve months ended 30th June, 1878.

From table No. 1, it will be seen that since the foundation of the Colony up to 30th June, 13,090,590 acres have been sold or otherwise disposed of, the total cash received being £10,450,228. The total area open for selection on same date, was 14,892,486 acres, and there was also a further area for disposal of 19,876,847 acres, but presently withheld by Land Boards, or held under lease. And there is the native territory and lands sold by Natives to Europeans, of about 16,500,000 acres. The total area of the Colony being over 64 million acres.

Table No. 2, shows that for the twelve months there have been sold of—

	A.	R.	P.	Purchases.		
Town Lands	467	1	17	to 969	Cash Received.	Scrip.
Suburban	2,023	0	27	„ 174		
Rural	828,336	3	13	„ 5,561		

Of this, Canterbury Provincial District represents no less than 554,169 acres rural, sold to 4,151 purchasers and 95 acres of town lands sold to 377 purchasers, realising a total of £1,123,823 8s. 3d. or, if stated fractionally, seven-tenths the area sold, nearly seven-tenths the number of purchasers, and nearly eight-tenths the cash realised for the whole Colony. The more immediate causes of this are: the Crown Lands in this district all open for selection; the extension of the Railway system over the plains; the bridging of the large rivers, and practically their annihilation as obstacles to traffic, and the arable lands brought either actually or in prospect within easy reach of a railway station. These facilities and the remarkable advances which have been made lately in Agricultural machinery—the double-furrow plough and the reaping machine—have converted the level grassy plains, which a few years ago seemed destined for ever to graze sheep, into wheat fields for the London market.

In Otago Provincial District where the area of Crown Lands is double what it is in Canterbury, and where the demand for land is equally great, there have only been sold of—

	A.	R.	P.	Purchases.		
Town Lands	175	0	6	to 191	Cash Received.	Scrip.
Suburban	4	1	15	„ 1		
Rural	92,865	3	11	„ 417		

The difference from Canterbury is mainly due to the fact that the Crown Lands in Otago are either under pastoral lease, or withheld as Railway and other Public Reserves. A few of the leases begin to fall in, and they will almost all have done so in March, 1883. There are about six million acres so held. After deducting Education and University Endowments, there will be fully five million acres to dispose of. The general character of this country is mountainous, intersected by numerous long narrow valleys and a few considerable plains. The elevation of the valleys and plains is from 300 to 2,000 feet above sea level, and from these the mountain slopes, run up to elevations of from 3,000 to 8,000 feet. Up to 5,000 feet the country is well grassed, and is admirably adapted for pastoral purposes. But as a large proportion is purely summer country, it is only valuable when associated with low-lying ground on which to winter stock. It therefore becomes absolutely necessary in dealing with proposals for its future disposal, to keep this prominently in view, otherwise it must happen that if the low ground is parted with, it will be impossible for any occupation of the high ground to take place, except by those who have possessed themselves of the valleys. At present, this country feeds about two million sheep, and the annual assessment is nearly £60,000. If re-let in areas properly selected, it would fetch at least double, or possibly £150,000 per annum.