

1890.
NEW ZEALAND.

RESULTS OF PROPERTY ASSESSMENT, 1888.

(COMMISSIONER'S REPORT.)

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

From the following returns of property in the colony it appears that the balance—the net property—was almost the same in 1886 as in 1889, the totals both being above £128,000,000.

The real property is stated to have decreased from £116,376,659 to £111,137,714, equal to £5,238,945; but personal property increased from £82,540,315 to £85,530,210, equal to £2,989,895. In considering the decrease in real, and the increase in personal, it must be borne in mind that both differences are owing largely to the way in which the tables giving the totals have been compiled. In the real estate a deduction of nearly three millions has to be made from the 1886 total, that being the amount by which the valuation of certain land companies, as stated in their balance-sheets, exceeded the value as assessed by the department. The larger amounts were included in the 1886 statistics, although tax was not paid upon them. It has been considered better to give, for the last assessment, the figures upon which tax was charged. This disposes of about half the apparent depreciation in real estate. The total value of real property is thus arrived at: Crown lands, £12,205,703; Native lands, £5,790,366; education, church, municipal, and other reserves, £8,933,415; taxable real estate of persons and companies, £45,810,873; and non-taxable real estate of persons and companies, £38,397,357. The last item includes the real property of persons who were not taxable in consequence of the deduction of mortgages, debts, and of the exemption of £500, and also includes that portion of the real property of taxable persons upon which tax is not paid, in consequence of the deductions made for mortgages, debts, &c. For instance, an owner having property worth £40,000, and owing £30,000, would appear in taxable real as £10,000, and in non-taxable real as £30,000. The land of an owner having more liabilities than assets would appear in the non-taxable real estate.

From Table No. 16 it will be seen that the largest decreases have been in Auckland and Otago, in each of which the total shrinkage approaches two and a half millions. Wellington shows an increase of rather more than two and a half millions, and Hawke's Bay an increase of £677,126. In this table there have been omitted the larger sums added in 1886 to real estate for owners' and companies' higher values. The percentage reduction in value during the three years was but trifling—namely, 2 per cent., which may be styled nominal, and is a much less margin than would be allowed for a legitimate difference in the valuation of large properties by experts. The total values of Crown and Native lands, education, church, and municipal reserves are almost the same at both assessments, there being an increase of £154,590. The decrease is therefore in the value of lands owned by persons and companies; but even on these it does not reach an important percentage. It is as well to state that the 1888 assessment was not high, and the prices realised at very many sales made since have