

1886.

NEW ZEALAND.

## CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT

(REPORT UPON THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1886.

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

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

SIR,— General Crown Lands Office, Wellington, 25th June, 1886.

I have the honour to forward the annual report and returns of the Crown Lands Department for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1886.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Hon. John Ballance, Minister of Lands.

JAMES McKERROW,  
Secretary for Crown Lands.

## REPORT.

BEFORE dealing with the actual land transactions for the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1886, it is fit that allusion should be made to the passing of "The Land Act, 1885," which consolidated into one statute twenty-six previously-existing Acts bearing on land administration.

By the amendments relating to small grazing-runs and other modifications in respect of the occupation of Crown lands on settlement-conditions, the facilities for acquiring land on more advantageous terms than before have been very considerably increased, while the law has generally been brought well up to the existing requirements of the colony. As the Act only came into operation on the 22nd September last, no very great experience has yet been obtained of its working, but so far it seems to answer well. In the small grazing-runs a system has been inaugurated that is likely to be very successful in settling the hilly and back country, which is generally too rough for agriculture, and yet very suitable for mixed farming by a thrifty class, who, by clearing and surface-sowing, by subdivision, by the use of the hill-side plough, and by planting, can greatly increase the carrying-capacity of their runs, the area of which must not exceed five thousand acres.

With the view of making known the provisions of the Land Act it was published in pamphlet form, with an explanatory preface, in November last, and an issue of three thousand copies distributed in the colony and in the Home-country. The seventh number of the *Crown Lands Guide* was also issued in February of this year, and freely distributed.

Coming to the actual transactions for the year, it is satisfactory to observe that, notwithstanding the continued low prices for agricultural and pastoral produce, there has been a greater area of Crown lands disposed of during the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1886, than during the previous year. The increase has been mainly on land taken up on settlement-conditions, and in this class the number of settlers is greater than last year or the average number of former years. The revenue from cash land sales has been steadily decreasing for several years, and it is matter for surprise that it has not diminished even to a greater degree than it has done, seeing that tacitly it has become the practice to dispose of the best land on settlement-conditions, selling for cash only inferior land or odd pieces to complete freehold properties.

The following abstract of the tables in the Appendix gives, under a few headings, the principal dealings with the Crown lands for the year:—

1—C. 1.