

15. In these purchases much land had been acquired in New Zealand for the purpose of procuring timber. From 1836 onwards, owing to the prospect of the establishment of British Sovereignty, the processes of acquisition of land were quickened, and traders from Sydney, obviously prompted by speculation, bartered merchandise for land, and for a nominal consideration acquired vast areas. Native Commissioner Alexander Mackay states : “ Almost every captain of a ship on arriving at Sydney from New Zealand exhibited a piece of paper with a tattooed Native head rudely drawn on it, which he described as the title deed of an estate, bought for a few muskets, hatchets, or blankets. Other captains were liberally supplied in Sydney with blank deeds of transfer for use in these purchases.”

16. Edward Weller, of Sydney, acquired by grant from the Natives, 1,000,000 acres at Molyneux, 500,000 acres at Banks Peninsula, and 250,000 acres at Taumutu, Otago. George Weller acquired 64,000 acres at Stewart Island—being the whole of that island—and 480,000 acres at Thames and Auckland, including Rangitoto and Motutapu. The Wellers together had negotiated with Native chiefs for 3,557,000 acres.

17. Mr. Wentworth had acquired, either singly or in partnership with a Sydney syndicate, Jones, Leithart, and others, a right by grant from the Natives of some 20,000,000 acres, being the undisposed portions of the South or Middle Island, the consideration being £200 in cash with an annual payment of a like sum to the Native vendors.

18. Millions of acres were bartered for trinkets and merchandise of trivial value. Seven million acres in the North Island, including many whole islands in Cook Strait and the Gulf of Hauraki, were the subject of some three hundred and fifty grants to about two hundred persons.

19. Baron de Thierry, a Frenchman, purchased from Hongi and Waikato, through the agency of a Mr. Kendall, a lay missionary, who had taken these chiefs to England in 1820, 40,000 acres of land, the consideration for this huge transaction being thirty-six axes, and on the strength of his purchase he arrived in New Zealand in 1838 with six men, claiming for himself the title “ Sovereign Chief of New Zealand.” Finally he settled down in Auckland with the title of “ Music Teacher.”

20. In 1839 the New Zealand Land Company purchased 20,000,000 acres. This included the purchase by Wakefield of Port Nicholson (Wellington), and also land bordering on Cook Strait.

21. Wakefield, writing on the 24th October 1839 to the directors of the New Zealand Company, thus refers to his “ latitude ” and “ longitude ” purchases. After he had referred to the fact that he had on the border of Cook Strait acquired possessions for the company extending from the 38th to the 43rd degree of latitude to the western coast, and from the 41st to the 43rd on the eastern, he says : “ The Ngatiawa chiefs do not recognize the rights of British claimants from want of a consideration having been received, whilst in others, where payment was made, no document recording the transaction exists. In all the vessels now arriving from New Zealand, deeds are brought to be filled up and signed, in consequence of the land having lately acquired a marketable value, but whenever the time may come when a Commission shall examine the titles to lands in these islands it will be found that but very few written records of purchases prior to this day’s date of any portion of land within the boundaries of my purchase can be produced.”

22. His utterances were prophetic with regard to other purchases, but he was certainly overoptimistic with his own, for he says : “ In purchasing on the large scale I have done in this transaction, in marking the boundaries of territory acquired, upon the fullest and most satisfactory explanation and examination by parallels of latitude, I conceive that I have obtained as safe and binding a title as if the subject of negotiation had been but a single acre and defined by a creek or a notched tree ; and it must be remembered that nine-tenths of the land is without an inhabitant to dispute possession, and that the payment I have made to the owners is large, when valued by the standard of exchange known amongst them, and perfectly satisfactory.”