

LAND SOLD.

The areas of rural, suburban, and town lands sold during the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1882, are, as nearly as may be, the same as in the previous year; but the cash proceeds are fully £8,000 more, due mainly to a less exercise of scrip last year. The average price of rural land sold in the Auckland Land District was 10s. 2d. per acre; that, and the Nelson rural lands at 10s. 8d., are much the lowest prices per acre for the year in the colony. The sales in the West Coast Land District, North Island, at £2 6s. 3d. per acre, is the highest average, although that falls far short of £5 10s., the average for the same district in the previous year. The explanation of the difference is that the higher price represents what was paid for the open land in the Waimate Plains, together with a comparatively small area of bush land; while the lower price is almost entirely representative of bush land lying behind the Continuous Native Reserve. In Wellington, Canterbury, Otago, and Southland Land Districts the average prices realized per acre were respectively £1 0s. 8d., £2, £1 6s. 3d., and £1 3s. 1d. There still remain large areas in most of the eleven land districts of the colony that will, as they become more accessible, be rendered saleable at the prices presently fixed by law. But, on the other hand, there are considerable areas which, inherently, are not worth the statutory price, and consequently are not saleable. For instance, in the Hawke's Bay Land District, where the price of Crown lands is 20s. per acre, there are lands which have been surveyed for years, and also rendered accessible by roads, that are lying in their original state of wilderness without an occupant. It simply will not pay to give 20s. per acre for fern-hill land, and then set to fencing and grassing it to keep sheep; and the country referred to is too steep and rugged for cultivation. Even on the pastoral deferred-payment system, with payments spread over fifteen years, it has been found that land of this nature will not sell at an upset price of 20s. per acre. It would be in the true interests of settlement to lower the price, so that settlers might be induced to take the land up, and render it productive by grassing and stocking it. Another disability with regard to some blocks of land in Hawke's Bay is, that while they will not sell at 20s. per acre, neither can the department offer them on pastoral license, for the law is that they must remain open for application at 20s. per acre, and that runs counter to requiring to give a year's notice before taking land from a pastoral license for sale. These states of deadlock can only be remedied by the Legislature.

During the year there have been several sales and leases of endowment lands; and although such lands do not technically come under the designation of Crown lands, yet, as they may from a settlement point of view be deemed public lands, and the department has had more or less to do with their survey and disposal, the dealings with them may be enumerated here, so far as known:—

1. Part of the Wanganui Harbour Board's endowment was offered for sale, when 384 acres 1 rood 13 perches sold for cash, realizing £492 18s.; on deferred payments, 1,789 acres 2 roods 17 perches was sold for £2,832 17s. 6d., of which sum the deposit instalment has been paid, amounting to £141 13s. 1d. This land was sold subject in all respects to the provisions of "The Land Act, 1877," the same as though it had been Crown lands.

2. The Dunedin High School Trustees offered 10,000 acres of the Wyndham endowment for sale by public auction on the 21st January last, the land having been previously surveyed into town, suburban, and rural sections. The upset price per acre of town lands was £12, of suburban £3, and of rural land from £1 to £3. Through the courtesy of the Secretary to the Board of Trustees the result of the sale can be reported as a total of 5,671 acres disposed of for the sum of £17,632 4s. 9d. The sale was either for cash, or on deferred payments, bearing interest at 6 per cent. at the option of the purchaser; but there were no settlement conditions.

3. The Southland High School Trustees on the 25th February last offered by public auction, through their agent, eight town sections in Gore, and five sections of rural land in the Wairio and Wairaki Districts. Two quarter-acre sections were sold at £35 and £31 each; and Section 21, in the Wairio District (500 acres of rural land), for £1,770 2s. 8d., with the option of paying in cash, or of spreading the payments over a period of three years, bearing interest at 6 per cent.; also Section 41, in the same district (1,000 acres), for £1,000, on deferred payments, extending over ten years without interest. There were no settlement conditions in either case.

4. The Taranaki High School Trustees leased for a term of twenty-one years the 500 acres set apart in the Waimate Plains as an endowment for that institution, as follows:—

					Acres.	Rent.
Section 21, Block III., Waimate Survey District ...					150	} at 6/6 = £65 0 0
" 63,	"	"	"	"	50	
" 22,	"	"	"	"	100	
" 23,	"	"	"	"	100	
" 24,	"	"	"	"	100	
					500	£245 0 0

5. *Rotorua*.—In pursuance of "The Thermal-Springs Districts Act, 1881," the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, offered for lease by public auction, at his office, on the 7th March last, the leases for ninety-nine years of town, suburban, and rural lands, as under:—

		No. of Sections Offered.	Area.			Upset Rent per Annum.	No. of Sections Sold.	Area.			Price Realized.
			A.	R.	P.	£ s. d.		A.	R.	P.	£ s. d.
Town	...	220	58	3	0	1,341 10 0	211	56	0	0	1,924 10 0
Suburban	...	30	266	0	23	143 0 0	28	246	0	0	347 0 0
Rural	...	22	905	3	6	126 19 0	22	905	3	6	398 0 0