

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

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

The SECRETARY of CROWN LANDS and SURVEYOR-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 10th June, 1897.

I have the honour to furnish herewith the annual reports on the operations of the Lands and Survey Department for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1897.

I have, &c.,

S. PERCY SMITH,

Secretary for Crown Lands and Surveyor-General.

The Hon. J. McKenzie, Minister of Lands.

LANDS.

No alteration in the laws relating to Crown lands properly so called took place during the last session of Parliament, but an amendment in the Land for Settlements Acts was passed which materially affected the system of ballot for lands acquired under those Acts, and which is referred to further on in this report. A series of regulations, made under the authority of the above-named Acts, was published in the *New Zealand Gazette* of the 4th February, 1897, and subsequently in pamphlet form for the use of selectors.

In accordance with established custom, the following table has been compiled in order to show at a glance the total transactions in lands during the past period, the details of which will be found in the several tables attached hereto as appendices. The New Zealand land system comprises a great variety of tenures which differ but little in detail. This is a source of some confusion to the public, who find a difficulty in grasping the distinctions between them; and, moreover, this diversity leads to a great deal of book-keeping, and numerous tables are required to illustrate their operations. It would not be advisable to alter them, however, for the expense of doing so would be considerable. Some of them will disappear in process of time by the expiry of the Acts under which the selections were made. This has already occurred before—several systems which were in force some years ago are no longer recognised. The constant tendency for some years past has been in the direction of retaining the freehold in the State, a fact which the table below brings out strongly.