

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE PREPARATION OF THE PHORMIUM FIBRE, OR NEW ZEALAND FLAX.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY.—

THE Commissioners appointed by your Excellency to enquire into the manufacture and uses of the *Phormium tenax*, in accordance with certain resolutions adopted by the House of Representatives on the tenth day of September, 1870, respectfully submit the following report of the steps taken towards the fulfilment of the duty remitted to them, of the information they have collected, and of the conclusions at which they have arrived after careful consideration of the various matters that have been brought under their notice. It has not been thought necessary to recapitulate the valuable information which was collected with labour and zeal by the Commissioners appointed by your Excellency in 1869.* Notwithstanding the difficulties which these gentlemen, as the first official enquirers, had to encounter, few of their conclusions have been disputed; and most of what they set forth has been verified by subsequent information, and still remains to assist and guide manufacturers. It is, therefore, only necessary to refer to those points in their report in respect to which fuller particulars have been obtained, or where light has been thrown on what was then obscure.

In accordance with the terms of the Commission, and with the view of circulating as early as possible the information obtained, a report was forwarded to your Excellency on the 20th December, 1870, the greater part of which has been incorporated in the following pages.

The extracts from correspondence and other papers and tables given in the Appendix, will explain in detail the manner in which the instructions received have been carried out, and it is intended in the present report to summarize that information.

The Commissioners met in Wellington on the 17th November, 1870; and, in the first place, took into consideration the appointment of agents in England, and the drawing up of instructions for their guidance. Several persons, well qualified for the duties, offered to proceed from this country in order to conduct the investigations, but the Commissioners were compelled to decline their services, having no funds available for such expenditure. They therefore, had recourse to the services, willingly and zealously rendered, of Mr. John Morrison, agent to the General Government; and also secured the good offices of Messrs. Christie & Co., of Sermon Lane, St. Paul's, London, who are largely connected with the fibre trade, and had already taken much interest in the introduction of the *Phormium* fibre into the English market. As a first result of the correspondence with these gentlemen, sample bales of those fibres which compete in the English market with *Phormium* fibre, have been procured from England. (See App. p. 5, *et. seq.*) These are Russian, Italian, Bombay, Sisal, and Manilla hemp, Egyptian flax, and Aloe fibre. Mr. Morrison also re-exported two bales of machine dressed *Phormium* fibre, which Messrs. Noble, who selected the other fibres, considered it desirable to send in order that flax-dressers in the Colony might have an opportunity of seeing for themselves specimens of those qualities which were most in demand in the English market at the beginning of this year. These bales are now in Wellington, and samples from them will be available for distribution.

Appointment of,
and Instructions
to, Agents.

Competing fibres.

* App. to Jour. H. of R., 1870.