

APPENDIX TO REPORT OF

X.—MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS.

In continuation of Mr. Fox's Report (See Ante. p. 21).

The accompanying samples of China Grass (*Rhea*)* were given to me by Mr. Christian Berridge, Manager of the Works of the Yorkshire Fibre Company, Balne Lane, Wakefield.

The Company's object is to produce, in the best possible condition, fibre for use in making handkerchiefs, umbrella and parasol materials, &c., so that capability of very fine "drawing" is required. The company has not found, for its purpose, any fibre comparable to that of China grass. It is roughly prepared in Shanghai, where it is worth, at present, from £110 to £120 per ton. The Company submits the fibre, so prepared, to a very strong chemical solution; afterwards subjects it to a softening process, by passing it through one of Hodgkins' machines; and subsequently dries it, and puts it into the form of hanks, upon bobbins, &c.

E. Fox.

London, 22nd June, 1871.

Mr. E. Fox to Mr. C. BERRIDGE, Yorkshire Fibre Company, Wakefield.—Charing Cross Hotel, London, 9th July, 1871.

DEAR SIR,—

When I called upon you on Tuesday last, for the purpose of seeing Collyer's fibre machine, you showed me some New Zealand flax, which you said had proved wholly useless for the purpose of your Company.

I think you will be interested in seeing of what the New Zealand Flax is capable; and I therefore send you, by this post, a small sample of it, which was prepared by hand, by Native women, and which has certainly not been chemically treated.

If you think that fibre, such as the sample, could be dealt with by your processes, will you add to the obligation of your kindnesses when I was at your mill, by writing me a few lines.

I am, &c.,

E. Fox.

Mr. C. BERRIDGE to Mr. E. Fox.—Bradford Mills, Balne Lane, Wakefield, 24th June, 1871.
SIR,—

I now beg to hand you a small piece of your New Zealand fibre, that has been through our chemical process. Our solutions have evidently been too strong for it, and with such a small sample we could not experiment much; but if, at a future period you could let me have a larger sample, I should like to try it once more.

Yours truly,

CHRISTIAN BERRIDGE.

(No. 28.)—EXTRACT from LETTER of Mr. G. H. GORDON to the Hon. WM. GISBORNE.

Having just read the Report of the New Zealand Flax Commission, and owing to my having been ten (10) years, five of which I was practically employed sorting and preparing for sale by the London brokers, flax, hemp, jute, coir, cotton, &c., I am emboldened to offer a few remarks and suggestions on the matter at issue. One great fault has been to call an article flax, and at the same time to represent it by what the trade would term a low quality of Bombay hemp. I may state while at home a small parcel of flax, ex the "Wild Duck" from Wellington, passed through my hands. The buyers on the day of sale were surprised that it should have been quoted flax, when it was really hemp. Having an idea of going to New Zealand, I asked their opinion on the merits of the article. They said it was folly to call it flax, as it was no use to flax-buyers. To use it for flax purposes it would require to be passed through rollers, and that would probably destroy it. That, if carefully dressed and properly packed (the parcel in question being all touseled), it would to a very great extent compete with Manilla hemp. There is one great thing that must be borne in mind by all those engaged in flax manufacture; that is, on landing in the home market it passes through the hands of entirely disinterested persons, who on account of their employers being responsible to the buyer for their sorting and classification, make a point of exposing all its defects. Any appearance of inferior quality, false and bad packing, is at once exposed. The buyer accordingly values the goods at such a price that protects him from the risk that the appearance of the goods indicate. Whereas a very ordinary attempt at sorting and dividing into two or three qualities, and a better system of packing, would often leave a good margin of profit, that now in many cases creates a loss. Manufacturers seem little aware of the importance of a uniform system of packing, some bale up one weight, some another, and some different weights; some secure the bales with fencing wire, some hoop-iron, and some with a rude sort of rope of one strand, about one inch in thickness, of very doubtful strength. The result of all this is a great diversity of tares, causing a great many more bales to be tared than would be otherwise necessary, and as the bales would not be pressed again, but only temporary secured, the flax gets out of condition and much touseled, every operation causing loss to the seller. With regard to securing the bales with iron, it is decidedly objectionable, unless the bales are first covered with gunny made from flax, scrim, or some coarse material, for this reason, all bales so packed after being stowed in the ship's hold, should there be the least steam (and some ships steam a great deal), it is bound to collect on the iron and cause rust, which damages the flax, and when landed it is passed as first, second, or third class sea and iron damaged, according to the

* Now in the Flax Exhibition.