

MANNING, COLLYER, and Co. to Mr. MORRISON.—21st February, 1871.

Referring to our conversation some days ago respecting New Zealand flax, we do not find that we can give you more precise information in respect to the requirements of consumers here than is contained in our last three Market Reports, of which you have copies.

The best process we are aware of for preparing the fibre is that of Mr. C. Thorne. A very satisfactory report has been received this week from one of our largest ropemakers, who finds the fibre treated by Mr. Thorne to be much superior to that ordinarily imported.

We think the very long flax leaves might have the butt ends cut off with advantage before the fibre is prepared. There is no practical advantage in sending flax over about 4 to 5 feet long. The butt ends might be utilized for paper material, together with any refuse produced in the preparation. These, with the raw leaves, are readily saleable at £8 to £9 per ton (if shipped dry) here. The gum might perhaps be expressed by heavy rollers, or some simple process of reducing the whole to half stuff before shipment to save freight, care being taken to have it thoroughly dry before packing. For paper, any pressure applied would not injure the material; for cordage purposes, a moderate pressure only is best.

Ultimately, we believe, the better qualities of flax will be taken by textile manufacturers. At present, the trials in progress are not sufficiently advanced to justify a decided opinion.

(No. 91.)—CHAIRMAN to Mr. MORRISON.—11th May, 1871.

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letters of 26th February and 15th March, 1871 (Nos. 65 and 121), which have been referred to the Flax Commissioners by the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, informing of the shipment of sample bales of those fibres which compete with New Zealand flax in the English market, and enclosing duplicate bill of lading, Messrs. Noble's invoice, copy of letter per "Edinburgh Castle," and duplicate policy of insurance.

With regard to the invoice, the Commissioners beg to remind you that by the mail which left here at the end of December or beginning of January last a further sum of £200, in addition to £50 sent previously, was transmitted you to meet any expenses you might incur on account of the Flax Commission.

The reports by Messrs. Noble on the samples of fibres which they have selected are very full and interesting, especially the one in answer to your queries; and the Commissioners request that you will convey their thanks to these gentlemen for the way in which they have executed the commission intrusted to them.

The samples of *Phormium tenax* will doubtless be useful in guiding manufacturers as to what qualities are most in demand at home.

The letter of Mr. C. Thorne, and the reports by Captain Manning, Messrs. Manning, Collyer, and Co., and Messrs. Frost Brothers, are full of interest to all who are alive to the great importance to the Colony of the proper manufacture of flax.

The report by Captain Manning seems especially favourable, and appears to be founded on a good practical test of the rope made from New Zealand flax.

The measures taken by Mr. Thorne to discover the real qualities of New Zealand flax rope are very complete; but he does not say what is the cost of dressing flax by his process, nor does he give the price of the rope manufactured for him by Messrs. Frost Brothers. We shall look forward with great interest to the reports of the different shipowners and captains on the subject.

Herewith I beg to hand you duplicate bill of lading for one bale of flax shipped at Auckland per "Queen Bee;" also a duplicate bill of lading for a flax-stripping machine, by Messrs. Fraser and Tinne, of Auckland, shipped per same vessel.

(No. 18.)—CHAIRMAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.—5th December, 1870.

The Flax Commissioners think it very desirable to procure the particulars of the preparation of the Manilla fibre, and request that you will be so good as to move His Excellency the Governor to apply to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for any information on the subject that can be obtained from the Public Department of the Spanish Government.

(No. 22.)—CHAIRMAN to FORBES WATSON, A.M., M.D., &c.—8th December, 1870.

For several years the economical preparation of the fibre of the *Phormium tenax*, or New Zealand flax, has occupied the attention of the settlers of this Colony, and various machines and processes have been tried and invented for the purpose; but these have hitherto failed in producing a sample which can be sold at a remunerative price in the English markets, or which is equal to that obtained by the simple but expensive and tedious mode of hand-dressing by the Natives.

The Government of the Colony have now appointed a Commission to inquire and report upon the best mode of extracting and manufacturing the fibre, and the Commissioners think that it might assist them in their investigations if they could obtain the particulars of the process by which the Manilla hemp is prepared: but they scarcely know where to look for accurate information, and venture to apply to you for aid and advice, knowing how great an interest you have taken in all inquiries of this nature. They would feel much obliged for any information you could give them on this subject, and request that you will kindly furnish a list of publications referring to the cultivation and mode of preparation of the Manilla fibre to Mr. Morrison (Adelaide Buildings, King William Street, London), Agent for this Colony, who will procure and forward them to New Zealand.

P.S.—I beg to enclose copies of recent Parliamentary Papers of New Zealand bearing on this subject.