

me and point out the different kinds. He was often puzzled, and more than once took two varieties out of the same clump, and pointed out distinguishing marks which did not always agree. I took tracings of all the kinds he named, which I enclose, but I was not satisfied that he had entire confidence in his own discrimination. Several of the varieties are named by Mr. Kelly, Rev. Mr. Taylor, and others, but the descriptions seldom agree; none are cultivated here, and all must be stripped with a shell. I think it is probable that under cultivation they would improve into *Tihore*.

The women preferred the *Oue* and the *Ngutunui*, the latter having a greater abundance of fibre, and the former being very white; the *Raumoa* is the most common about here. Wi Tako and all the natives agree in saying that this is a bad time of year to prepare flax, when the flower stalk is green. The fibre will strip out much easier when the stalks are dry. There is not much flax in flower this year in this district.

It is evident from the colour of the "scull" that is stripped away with the fibre, that the epidermis of the upper side of the leaf only appears green from the green tissue underneath, for it is in itself of a light buff yellow colour. The epidermis of the under side of the leaf is a decided green.

4th January, 1871.—I went out to-day to see the party who started yesterday to work; there were nine women and two men, and they had bivouacked fully five miles from Waikanae. As we rode along, W. Tamihana pointed out several clumps of flax bushes, which the party had tried on their way, and which had not satisfied them; and it is plain that only a small proportion of the flax is suitable for the fine fibre; and, where they did fix on a good clump, they did not select one in twenty of the leaves that were on it. They choose fully matured leaves, which are quite perfect, and have no signs of decay. They had no preference for any one of the sub-varieties in particular. I enclose small samples of the several kinds, which they dressed for me, cleaning the fibre from the scull before it was dry. They show, as far as I can judge, that there is little, or no difference in quality and colour.

I don't think that this party of eleven Natives will complete more than 50 lbs. of fibre for their two days work; but I could only form a very rough guess, from what I saw lying round them. They have no scales and weights themselves.

Manawatu, 5th January, 1871.

The Natives at Otaki are not preparing any of the fine flax; they think the price insufficient. I tried to induce T. Rauperaha to take it in hand; but he seemed to consider the attempt was useless. They are making a little at Waikawa, on the Ohau, some five or six miles further on, but I could not make any arrangement for the purchase of it, although I offered to take what they could get ready; they would not listen to £40 a ton, at which rate I told Rauperaha I was prepared to purchase. I did not go to the settlement, but several of the principal men were at Otaki. The Otaki Natives maintain that there are but two kinds of flax growing in this district, *Harakeke*, and *Wharariki*; and when I told them that a great many varieties were recognised by the Waikanae people, they said that it was only Ngatiawa "gammon," and that the *Oue Ngutunui*, &c., were not to be had nearer than Taranaki, that it was all *Harakeke*. They are again stripping common flax for Mr. Bevan, at 1½d. a pound; and I enclose a sample stripped with a piece of iron hoop, which they use for their own ropes, halters, &c.

Opunake, 13th January, 1871.

The Natives at Opunake, after some consideration, declined to prepare any fibre on the terms made with Wi Tako and the Waikanae Maoris. They said that the work was too much, and the price too little; and, moreover, that they had leased all their flax to the mills, and were busy making roads.

They produced samples of fibre from eighteen different varieties of flax, and gave me the names. I tested their knowledge in various ways, until I tired their patience, and they refused to answer further questions, but asserted that there was no "humbug." They were, however, anxious to prove that there was no mistake about the names, and more than once sent the sample in question to another hut, where it was referred to an old woman, who was considered an authority in these matters. Mr. Kelly, M.H.R., says that there is but this one woman in the whole district who has a good knowledge of the varieties.

I offered them 6d. a lb. for the samples, which they agreed to take, but on finding that the parcel weighed only fifteen pounds, they refused to let it go for less than 10s., and, on my objecting, carried it off. I had to accede to their terms the next day, as I wished to get the samples for experiment and comparison.

They consider the *Atiraukava* the best plant in this neighborhood, but I have come to the conclusion that the varieties of flax have different names in each district, for I could not find the descriptions agree either with what I had seen elsewhere, or with those given in the Commissioners Report of 1869-70.

There are no varieties cultivated in this part of the coast, and the Natives all referred to Taiporohenui and Matangarara, in the Patea district, as the only places at which there are plantations. Ngahina informed me that they would be quite ready to prepare any quantity we might require if they were allowed to go back to those settlements—an inducement that is not likely to be accorded to them.

13th June, 1871.

I have found it impossible to procure any fine dressed Native flax from Waikato, Bay of Plenty, or Napier. The Maoris will not undertake the labor of preparing a large quantity. One of the replies from Waikato was, "that they did not care about money now as it would not purchase arms and ammunition."

I set a Native to work at some of the *Rataroa* flax, growing near St. John's College. He was tolerably expert, and wasted no time, but barely managed to prepare two pounds weight in a day of eight hours. There was no difficulty in stripping out the fibre, but a great deal of time was occupied in completely removing all the vegetable tissue that remained attached to it. It was only the unblemished first pair of leaves, next the centre, that yielded a pure white fibre, all the others were more or less stained or discolored.