

SESS. II.—1879.
NEW ZEALAND.

CULTIVATION OF FLAX

(PAPERS RELATIVE TO).

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

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,— 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 4th April, 1879.

I have the honor to inform you that, Mr. Thomas Kirk having communicated to me his desire to obtain information relating to the cultivation and preparation of flax, I have obtained, through the Colonial and Foreign Offices, and forwarded to him by the present mail, copies of reports on the subject made by British Consuls residing in France and Belgium.

I have also forwarded to him copy of a letter which I received from the secretary to the Belfast Flax Supply Association in reply to an application which I made to that institution.

As these papers contain matter which may be of interest to the Government, I have thought it right to send press copies of the same for their information.

I only received one copy, each, of the printed report, and Instructions for the Culture, &c., of Flax in Ireland, mentioned in Mr. Andrews's letter, and these I have forwarded to Mr. Kirk.

I have, &c.,

JULIUS VOGEL,
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 1.

REPORTS ON THE CULTIVATION AND MANUFACTURE OF THE FLAX PLANT.

DISTRICT OF HER MAJESTY'S CONSULATE OF NANTES.

1. *Rotation of Crops.*

Well-manured light clay-soils are chosen in preference for the cultivation of the flax plant. They must be well weeded, and follow a pasturage, clover, hemp, oats, carrots, beans, potatoes, beet-root, or colza crops.

It is a common belief among the peasants that, unless they have a very exceptional piece of land, the flax plant should be grown but twice in a man's life; but in the Valley of the Loire, between Cours and Nantes, little or no attention is given to this saying.

Horse-manure and guano are not used, as both are considered as detrimental by drying too much the fibres. The lands are generally manured by herding sheep on them, or else with cow-manure or fæcal matter.

2. *Opinion as to the Possibility of Sending the Flax-Straw to Europe for Manufacture.*

It is the general opinion of the manufacturers spoken to, of this district, that unprepared flax-straw would be simply unsaleable, and most certainly a very unprofitable transaction—first, because the straw sustains a loss in scutching of from 25 to 50 per cent. of useless matter; second, because the amount for carriage of this 25 to 50 per cent. of useless matter would go to decrease the value of the marketable fibre.

In France the fibre is prepared and sorted by the growers prior to being sold to the manufacturers, purposely to get rid of the useless matter.

3. *Best Mode of Packing and Pressing the Dry Straw.*

It is not customary, so far as concerns this district, to pack and press the dry straw.

4. *Price likely to be obtained for Fibre imported into Europe.*

The price for flax-fibre in this district varies from 50 francs to 120 francs the hundred kilogrammes (£20 to £48 per ton). The difference in prices is according to the land and its exposure on which it is grown, and especially to the system under which it is cultivated.

5. *Machinery best adapted for Scutching the Flax and for the Preparation of the Dried Flax-Straw.*

The machinery, or, rather, tools, used for scutching the flax-straw in this district are the most simple and inexpensive, and are termed "broies," "busoires," "cillotes." Several machines for scutching have been proposed, among which Hoffman's invention can be mentioned; yet none appear to have been able to do away with the cheap and primitive tools now in use.

ROBT. CHAS. CHIPPERTON, H.M. Consul.