

EXTRACT from LETTER of Mr. GEORGE BOOTH, of Christchurch, dated 3rd August, 1890.

I am somewhat interested in flax, and have taken the liberty of urging the necessity of Government inspection before the Chamber of Commerce, Christchurch; the Commercial Conference, Dunedin; the Industrial Association of Canterbury, and elsewhere. I may state now that I have very little sympathy with the proposal to place a sum of £10,000 on the estimates as a bonus for the production of an improved machine. The machinery now in use is quite capable of producing fibre suitable for cordage, and improved machinery is not required unless—First, it will produce the quality required for the purpose at considerably less cost than at present; or, second, it will produce a quality suitable for textile purposes, and capable of commanding a higher price than cordage-fibre.

If these conditions are insisted upon there cannot be much harm done. But, on the other hand, I am strongly in favour of having all fibre for export inspected by duly-qualified officials, and graded and marked to fixed and uniform standards. I urged this eighteen months ago, and feel convinced that, had such a course been adopted, our fibre would never have experienced so severe a drop in price as has been the case.

Geo. BOOTH.

DEAR SIR,—

Wellington, 4th August, 1890.

I send you the sample of fibre referred to in my evidence, and would be glad to have it returned when the Committee have done with it. Our friends write: "We send you a sample of *Phormium* grown at St. Michael's from the seed of your *Phormium tenax*. This is a very good specimen, and comes nearest to manila hemp we have ever seen. There were only 35 bales—about 5 tons—and we bought them at £23 5s. per ton, which we consider very cheap. It is not so long as the New Zealand fibre, but its cleanness is the attraction."

You will see I made a mistake in naming St. Helena as the place at which it was grown, the proper place being St. Michael's, which lies north of Madeira.

I send you a table showing the shipments of flax from the colony for the first five months of this year. June gave 8,250 bales; but July is comparatively small, probably 4,000 bales.

Yours truly,

JOHN DUNCAN.

Geo. Beetham, Esq., M.H.R.

Shipments of New Zealand Hemp from 1st January to 31st May, 1890.

—				Wellington.	Auckland.	Canterbury.	Otago.	Total.
				Bales.	Bales.	Bales.	Bales.	Bales.
To London—								
January	...	...	...	6,611	401	1,571	873	9,456
February	...	...	...	4,269	416	887	295	5,867
March	...	...	...	8,395	...	875	701	9,971
April	...	...	...	8,706	1,878	803	559	11,946
May	...	...	...	4,001	1,927	979	742	7,649
				31,982	4,622	5,115	3,170	44,889
To America—								
January	...	...	...	1,272	3,745	1,533	...	6,550
February	...	...	...	3,084	1,719	...	...	4,803
March	...	...	...	5,071	1,980	...	...	7,051
April	...	...	...	...	3,822	...	...	3,822
May	...	...	...	239	2,852	..	...	3,091
				9,666	14,118	1,533	...	25,317
Total shipments—							Bales.	
To London ...				...	...	...	...	44,889
To America—								
San Francisco ...				...	...	...	6,784	
New York and Boston				...	...	...	18,533	
								25,317
								70,206

DEAR SIR,—

Brandon Hall Hemp-mill, Bull's, 4th August, 1890.

Re flax or hemp: I wish to bring before your notice the fact that there is existing number of fabric samples, manufactured many years ago, and now in the possession of L. Natrass, of Bull's. The samples range from "China silk," so called, brown holland, and down to No. 1 canvas. There is ample documentary evidence of the canvas, having been submitted to Her Majesty's Royal Navy for four years' test, the result being that the canvas beat everything in the market for durability. It is not easy to here enter into all the details, as there is a large number of printed forms, circulars, and a pamphlet bearing on this process, and now stained with age; but the possessor is willing to submit the same for inspection and verification, but being only a working-man, with a large family, would require his expenses paid. I may say that the process was a combined one, mechanical and chemical. The patent was secured at the London office between 1830 and 1840, otherwise the secret died with the inventor, named Donaldson, who, it seems, was treated as