

49. You have said that flax prepared by the scraping or hand process used by the Maoris many years ago is suitable for the manufacture of linen, and would command from £80 to £100?—Yes; if dressed to a similar colour, but by different process.

50. Do you think, from your experiments in machinery, it would be possible to devise a machine which would be able to turn out fibre scraped in the way the Maoris used to do it by hand?—The way I shall construct my machinery will be to suit all purposes. I intend to bring it out suitable for any use.

51. Would there be much additional cost in preparing the flax so as to be suitable for textile fabrics?—No; I should think there would be very little additional cost. The machinery must be made suitable to begin and finish the work without any handling; and therefore it will do away with an enormous lot of expense and labour.

52. You mean to say you would put the green leaf after it is cut into the machine, and that you could turn it out, by regulating the machine, in a condition fit either for rope-making or textile fabrics?—Yes.

53. Ready for export?—Yes.

54. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Have you ever grown flax?—I have cultivated a few knots in the garden.

55. You have never grown it to see how much it could be grown at per ton?—No.

56. All the flax you have used has been from ordinary natural growth?—Yes.

57. Do you think it would pay to grow flax?—Yes; I think it would pay. We are glad to give £1 2s. per ton for green flax down about our part.

58. I want to get at this: Could we go in for flax-growing as an industry; to cultivate it at £1 2s. per ton?—I have studied a great deal the growth of flax. I have three knots planted in my garden, and in the latter part of last August I cut one for experiment. The others were not touched, and the one cut, in four months, was as large as these not cut, and had better leaves on it.

59. *Mr. Wilson.*] How old were they?—They were small plants when I planted them three years ago, and they were cut again after four months' growth, and these were longer leaves and better than the others.

60. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Which variety of flax do you consider the best?—I do not know the names of them; the leaf I like best to make fibre of is the long narrow leaf.

61. Your experience in flax is from taking the natural crop?—I have cut flax from the same ground about seven different times.

62. You are preserving the old plants?—Yes, on the same ground.

63. Do the present rates you are receiving from the London market for flax pay you to send it Home?—I do not send any to the London market at the present time.

64. Do you think it best to make up flax here and ship it away as twine? How would that do?—That would be right enough if we could do it. There would then be no question about quality.

65. The most of our flax just now is made into binder-twine?—Yes; that is the principal consumption.

66. If you perfect your machine, do you think you would find a market for the stuff?—That is the main difficulty in inventing anything—to find a market for it.

67. Do you think the improved flax you would then turn out would take the place of manila at Home?—No; our present machinery will dress flax equal to manila.

68. It might, apparently, take the place, but is the fibre as strong and the rope as good as the manila, that is the question?—I have tried it both in the twine and in the rope, and flax is far stronger than manila; it will bear a greater strain.

69. It will not last as long?—I think it would last longer when properly dressed.

70. You said some little time ago that the best of our flax was used for mixing with manila?—So it is.

71. And our inferior flax used for making rope?—Yes.

72. Is the flax much weaker in the fibre that they are using for New Zealand rope than that used for manila?—Yes; if the fibre is badly manufactured it must weaken it.

73. Do you think that the dressing you refer to, cleaning the flax from all its vegetable matter, would make it quite as good as manila?—Yes.

74. And will last as long as manila and take its place afterwards?—Yes.

75. Do you know to whom that flax which you say was condemned in America was sent?—I know the firm it was shipped by; a good deal of it was rotten.

76. *Mr. Wilson.*] Have you any objection to telling us what prices you pay for cutting flax, and so on?—No.

77. Will you begin at the beginning of the process of cutting the flax: what orders do you issue to the men in cutting it?—To cut just above the red.

78. You do not like any of the red in?—Not if we can help it. If cutters cut below that we dock them in the price. We should tell a person a time or two and if he persisted we should send some one to cut the butts off and charge for the time spent in doing it.

79. What do you pay for cutting the flax?—Our common price is 5s. I have paid 6s. lately.

80. More lately than previously?—Yes; and now I am offering 8s. a ton for cutting. We leave the centre leaf untouched.

81. Just the single centre leaf?—Yes; this would cost 3s. a ton extra for the cutting, but then we get a crop every year.

82. What is the cost of cartage?—That depends on where and how far away the flax is.

83. Do you divide the flax into different lengths and grades?—We always divide it into different lengths—suitable lengths—and classes.

84. You work it in different lengths as well as classes?—Yes; we divide it into three sizes and two grades.