

the inside without opening the bale, or, if he had any doubt, he could pull the hank right out of the bale. If he put a hook into it it would come out.

576. As a rule it is the butt where there is a large quantity of gum remaining, and also on the tips of the flax and edges, and in that case you could not see unless you drew the hanks out or opened the bale?—Most is left on the edges that you do see. Those who make up their hanks carefully for show work it so that those are hidden inside, but if you get hold of a hank at the doubled part and pull that part open you would see if there was much of the edges left without opening the bale. It might be necessary occasionally to open a bale and see if there was much on the tips, but I think in a very short time the Inspector would know what brands he could trust to being packed uniformly, and very often it would not be necessary for him to open, perhaps, more than one of a parcel of a certain freight that came to him. Inspection, as a matter of course, will make people a little more careful in packing than they have been.

577. *The Chairman.*] Do you think it necessary that an Inspector appointed in any of the ports should make it his duty to visit the different mills and see the system adopted by the millers in the manufacture of their flax?—I do not think he would gain anything by it except a great deal of trouble. He would not know much about it. What I say is this: The flax will vary a good deal according to where it is cut.

578. *Mr. Marchant.*] Do you think, with the examination of such a small percentage of bales, there would be no risk of unscrupulous manufacturers getting bales branded as first class which had been unfairly packed by design?—Well, of course it would be very difficult to say whether you could take such precautions as to prevent the possibility of any wilful misrepresentation being made; but I think, on the whole, it would not be attempted.

579. It seems to me to be rather a serious matter that the Government should undertake the responsibility of branding an article as first class, making as it were a representation upon which the buyer at Home would purchase the article, unless the Government servant takes every precaution to satisfy himself that the article he brands as first class is really so. Does not that occur to you also, Mr. Seymour?—I do not think there would be any great difficulty in it.

580. You think the knowledge of the existence of the Inspector, and the probability of detection of unfair packing, would be sufficient to deter unscrupulous manufacturers from packing unfairly?—I think, if I could get at every bale in the shed, I could tell without any difficulty whether any of them ought to be opened and further inspected.

581. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Do not you think, Mr. Seymour, that, supposing the Government go in for grading and appointing Inspectors, it would be absolutely necessary to open the bales and make a very drastic system of inspection at the start?—You may leave that to the Inspector—you would certainly give him the power to open—and he would probably open more at first than he would afterwards, and in a very short time he would get to know people's brand. He would know those whom he could trust, who packed honestly, and those who did not. But the very fact of inspection would lead to more honest packing than now obtains.

582. *Mr. Walker.*] Do you not think it would cure itself in a very short time without inspection? Look at our wool trade; the matter has righted itself there pretty well. People who do not pack fairly inevitably suffer?—Yes.

583. And the result is that that staple is got up with as great skill and care as possible?—Yes.

584. The results always reward proper care and attention, and do not you think this industry will right itself naturally?—Undoubtedly, in time, but it differs from the wool rather. There is not so much wool, I should say, purchased by the local merchant, but the greater proportion is sent Home by the owner, who becomes then directly responsible for it, and directly feels any loss that may be entailed by bad packing or bad sorting.

585. But do you not think that would be in favour of flax righting itself? Suppose a Wellington merchant buys a parcel of flax on certain representations, or on his own judgment, and it turns out to be a fraud, he undoubtedly loses by it; but he is within a few miles of the perpetrator of the fraud, and he could get at him in a way that a London broker could not. I should think myself the moral effect, and, indeed, the commercial effect, would be so much the more conclusive and rapid in its operations, because the thunderbolt is so much nearer the vendor?—I think you are taking an extreme case to call it fraud. A great deal of this does not apply to fraud.

586. Call it ignorance?—It applies partly to ignorance and partly to carelessness. Undoubtedly it must right itself in time, but we want it righted at once, and we hope to do it by inspection.

587. *The Chairman.*] Is it not the case, as far as wool is concerned, that the purchasers of wool buy from information received from old account sales which have been in existence, as far as possible, but that with the flax there is no such basis to go upon at the present time?—Yes, I would say that, and also that the two cannot be compared, because the wool of the flock will only vary from year to year in a very small degree according to the season; but, as I said before, the fibre varies with every different bed of flax you are cutting, and it varies somewhat with every different season of the year.

Bonus or Reward.

Witness: Would it be of any use? I think so. A reward of £20,000 produced Harrison's chronometer, and made long voyages practicable, for lunar observations were always very precarious. Conditions: (1.) Cost of production of fibre, after delivery of raw flax at mill, ought not to exceed £5 a ton. (2.) On the number of flax-machines used after a certain date from application for bonus. (3.) If chemical, on the number of mills adopting the new process. (4.) On certificate of flax-millers' associations that the problem of cheap manufacture of good fibre has been solved. Any of these separately or combined might be adopted. Inventor receiving bonus not to patent, or, if patented, must abandon. Wet fibre will not fire. Wet tow heats a little like stable-dung and then rots down quickly.

588. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Have you, Mr. Seymour, any idea of what bonus, if any, should be offered?