

608. What months would that be in? A little after midsummer, is it not?—A little later on; well into the autumn.

609. Do you say the best time to cut flax is about two months before it flowers?—And after the flowering is done the young blades come up, and it is fit to cut.

610. But after flowering you would wish us to understand that the old leaves become too ripe?—Too ripe, yes.

611. And a little tough?—Yes.

612. *Mr. Hamlin.*] How often does it flower as a crop?—Yearly.

613. Do you think so? You will find it only flowers in three years, and you will get a tremendous crop then. You will get every year one, or perhaps two, in a bunch of flax; but as a crop you do not have it under three years?—Not with the young flax. I thought it was leaving the flax. We know it flowers every year.

614. If you want to see proper flax-sticks you will have to wait three years?—I do not mean to cut flax, and then have a flower next year. It was leaving the standing flax without cutting that it flowers every year.

615. I have the idea, and many others with me, that it takes three years for a leaf to come to maturity, and our contention is that it only flowers, as a rule, every three years. I grant you that you would get an ordinary flower here and there, but in three years you would have an immense growth of flower?—Yes. What I go by is we expect bees to make honey well in the fall.

616. *The Chairman.*] The next point is grading: what is your opinion about that? Do you think it should be compulsory?—Yes, I believe it should.

617. Do you think from your knowledge that it would be necessary to open each bale, or would an inspection by the hank be sufficient?—It would not be necessary for every bale to be opened. I agree with Mr. Seymour that at first there should be a thorough test. It would act as a caution on the mill-owners, but as the time went on it would not be necessary for it to be so severely tested. I should say one in five bales would be sufficient, as Mr. Seymour suggested.

618. We may consider that you agree with Mr. Seymour's evidence on that point generally?—Yes.

619. Do you think, if a bonus were advertised, that the result would warrant the Government in finding a sum of money for the purpose?—For the present I should confine it to local inventors. I do not think there would be any good in going out of the colony, because the people outside this country could not test the machines. If the Americans, for instance, invented machines they would have no flax to test them with. If you sent Home flax from here it would not be in a fit state to test a machine with when it got there.

620. And, generally speaking, you agree with Mr. Seymour's evidence on that point?—Yes.

621. *Mr. Hamlin.*] Have not Americans been planting New Zealand flax largely?—I never heard of it; and if they have not started now it would take a long time to grow it.

622. What bonus do you think it would be necessary to offer for improved machinery?—If it is to be confined locally I should say half what Mr. Seymour suggested; but if it were open to America and England and other places it would require £10,000.

623. *The Chairman.*] Have you had any experience in any chemical process?—None whatever.

624. You told us privately a little time ago that you tried at Mr. Pownall's mill the scraping-machines?—Yes.

625. Do you think that would be the best system which could be adopted?—By far the best if we could get up scrapers.

626. If any scheme could be invented in which that process could be used?—Yes. That would be the thing for the fibre, because it does not break the fibre as the beaters do; it chews it up. Another system which could be adopted with advantage would be pressure—taking the gum out by pressure—and I think it could be done.

627. In what way do you think it possible?—To put it between two rollers, to crush all the gum out of it in its green state. In this way the fibre would not be broken or injured in any way. For example, I tried it with a timber-wagon. I laid some flax on a bridge at Wainui, and the wheels of the timber-wagon went over it and turned it out splendidly, leaving nothing but white fibre. A heavy load of timber went over it.

628. *Mr. Walker.*] Not one load only going over it?—Yes, just the one load.

629. *The Chairman.*] One load singly?—One heavy load of timber.

630. You have heard what Mr. Seymour said about the inferior quality of some fibre sent Home: is it your opinion that it has been owing to carelessness on the part of shippers?—Yes, that is it.

631. In the endeavour to push the flax into the market to realise?—Mr. Seymour was quite right there. I have known instances myself where it was just simply rushed over. People I have known myself in Wellington, having no experience of flax-dressing, have gone into the business, and it has been a failure.

632. *Mr. Walker.*] We have heard that a very large proportion of the mills are shut up: are those who shut up mostly "new chums," while the experienced men still carry on their business, or is it just some of both who shut up?—No, it is as you suggest; the inexperienced shut up.

633. They burn their fingers and give it up?—Yes; they spend their money on it and find they have no return.

634. *Mr. Marchant.*] Are the wants of the Australian Colonies for cordage and twine supplied at all from New Zealand, say, with New Zealand locally-manufactured cordage?—I could not speak for Auckland, Dunedin, and Christchurch; they have good machinery down there, and there might be some sent from those places to Australia.

635. What is the ordinary process? Does the raw material go from here to England, and is it then shipped back in its manufactured state to Australia?—There is a great deal of it sent in that way—even what comes to Wellington as manila.