

manufacture being greatly curtailed, the chances of securing full prices become almost out of the question. I therefore trust that our "Flaxy" friends will arouse themselves to a state of friendly emulation, and strive, at least, to keep pace with our friends in the North.

I calculate that the condemnatory strain of this portion of my communication will be unpalatable to some, but I think it is certain that the longer the present state of things exist, the more seriously the enterprising spirit of the public will be damped and kept back. I have no other object in view than to do good, hoping, by the exposure of existing errors, to thereby guide intending investors for the general benefit of the country in which, like many others, I have a large family to leave behind me.

Since writing the above, I have seen the letters of Mr. Thompson and "Nemo," and deem it better to briefly notice them before proceeding with the remainder of my communications. I am inclined to think that the writers in question must have founded their ideas on the migratory or rough out-of-doors works, as any such cost as £4 or £5 per ton for scutching is far beyond the mark, and a total of £19 as the cost per ton of flax dressing is equally so, while the loss of weight and tow can only happen when the material has been manipulated in the way I have already condemned, and with machinery of the roughest character. I calculate that with a proper scutcher, fixed in a well-organized establishment, requiring little more than one-horse power to drive it, two men and two boys will scutch properly 20 cwt. to 25 cwt. per day, and the diminution in bulk (already alluded to) will save fully as much in freight as will cover the expense of scutching; while the transactions with shippers or insurance agents will be more readily effected. Thus, if we lose in freight what we spend in labour, we benefit the country by the employment of such labour, as we maintain customers for our general producers and traders, and I think "Nemo" will hereafter be found on the scutching side of this question.

It is, however, time to be dealing with the plant, and to glance at the advantages which it holds out. Recent information (re-published in your paper) will have made your readers somewhat acquainted with the vast extent now growing in the North Island; but that report only represented certain districts, which fall very short of the quantity obtainable throughout the whole of the main and minor islands north of us,—an extent, if available, that would suffice to keep fully half their population (European and Maori) in profitable employment for many coming years, and render them good customers for our cereals, &c.

Again, as to the supply on our own island; although not equal to that of the North, there is still sufficient to employ many thousands of hands for years to come. It is true that some of it may be too much detached to be available during the early stages of a new industry, but if properly cut and attended to, the supply of flax from the more convenient blocks can be kept up at a trifling cost; and when machinery is more perfected, and workmen become properly expert in the operations, it will pay to collect the detached patches, especially when the quality of various specimens (to which we shall hereafter allude) becomes recognized, and a brisk demand ensues, of which I for one have not the slightest doubt. It is well known that of late the supply of manilla and other fibres has fallen far short of the demand, thus creating an opening for the producers of this fibre to prove its value for various purposes, which if once established are likely to be permanently maintained. In point of strength, its superiority over manilla has already been successfully established, and to supply the deficiency in the quantity of manilla will alone absorb much more than our present means will allow us to produce; but we have also good reason to believe that well-prepared samples are suitable for higher textile usages, and that a very large demand and highly remunerative prices may be expected as soon as the British manufacturers can rely upon a steady supply. We also have the pleasing knowledge that our enterprising American friends (who first utilized our kauri gum) are anxiously awaiting the supply of bulk samples, in order to test its adaptability for various purposes, and that they are ere long likely to become large customers; so that by-and-by, though the whole of our present young population were engaged in preparing the fibre, we should likely prove unable to supply the demand.

Some persons imagine that our flax is so far inferior to that in the North as to render it less marketable. My observation on this point is not of yesterday; on the contrary, I have been an observer of such things for many years, and I fail to distinguish any noticeable difference in all the most common varieties. Flax grown on swampy ground differs from that produced on the dry ground on our plains, or on the hills. Volcanic soils generally produce a fine quality, as, for instance, on the Peninsular, and even on the Port hills, several fine varieties will be found, some of them closely resembling some of the species so favourably noticed as the choice of the northern Natives. Again, as the main ranges of the island are approached, the fine-fibre plants will be found, and full observation on these points would lead to a belief that altitude has something to do with the fineness and tenacity of the fibre. If I am right in these views, we must conclude that, when the article has secured a place in the home market, the extra quality of such fibre will compensate for the increased cost of carriage from the interior. Many a stockman knows that from such flax as that now alluded to, whip crackers are more silky and durable than from low-land flax, and far exceeding the best hempen whipcord.

The swamp-grown leaf now generally operated upon, produces (under the existing process) a ton of fibre to six tons of green flax, and that from firm soils about one in five, averaging about five and a half, which is about the same as from similar districts in the North.

Although it is clear that flax is generally found in moist situations on the plains and level parts of the country, yet it does not thrive best in very wet localities; and land intended for cropping by flax, dressers will well repay the cost of suitable drainage, which, if done with judgment, will make it produce double the quantity per acre, and also improve the quality.

With respect to any comparison between this place and the North, we may attach more importance to the difference in our winter climate for drying, inasmuch as in this part of the Province the damp hangs until late in the morning, and comes on early towards eventide; but as we ascend into the interior this will scarcely be noticeable, and there is nothing to prevent us adopting suitable means to enable us successfully to compete with less damp localities. I stated in my former communication that bleaching on grass was necessary to secure uniformity of colour, using lines only for the purpose of drying. If this be adopted with lines covered by roofing, like the drying-sheds of brickworks, allowing the air to draw through, the process may be much accelerated, while simple drying machines, which will neither be costly nor require much force to drive them, can easily be adopted so as to