

Price's machine is used in the ordinary way, being driven by water-power. Great care is taken in selecting the leaves, and water is liberally used in the washing process. The superiority is not attributed in any way to the raw material, but simply to the care and attention which is taken in every part of the process, and especially in the proper adjustment of the machine. The cost of the fibre delivered in Blenheim, ready for shipment, is stated to be £14 to £15 a ton; the prices it has realized in London have ranged from £31 to £36.

Southern District.

There is at present more life and enterprise in respect to the fibre industry in Canterbury than in any other Province. The mills at Leithfield and Ashley Gorge are the only large fibre manufactories which are in full operation, but there are several others of a smaller class still at work.

Messrs. Stonyer and Co., of the Kaiapoi mills, took the first prize of the Canterbury Flax Association in 1870, and their fibre still maintains its reputation. The superiority is due to its being passed through a second machine placed immediately below the first, whilst the water is constantly pouring over it; after which it falls into a shoot of water which carries it down to the washers.

The fibre is white, of fair texture and strength, and can be produced for £15 a ton, with another £1 for covering the bales. They prefer Anderson's machines.

Improved wet scutch.

The mills of Messrs. Benn and Walker at Leithfield, are conducted with great method and economy, and are the most perfect that have been visited. Wet scutching is successfully adopted; the scutch having rounded wooden beaters revolving at a speed of 250 revolutions per minute, and not wasting much fibre, as $6\frac{1}{2}$ tons of green leaf will give one of fibre. Another improvement is a travelling table that takes the fibre away from the stripper, which answers perfectly, as it saves labour, and permits a flow of water to be pouring over the fibre whilst being put through the stripper. Price's machines are preferred. All accounts are accurately kept, and the cost of manufacturing one ton of leaf is estimated at £18; this includes the expense of the steam engine, which is £3.

The Ashley Gorge mills have seven machines at work, and give employment to about 120 hands, including wood cutters for the steam engine. Here, also, the travelling table is used to take the fibre away from the stripper. The estimated cost of a ton of fibre is £16 11s., including £3 for the expenses of the steam engine; but exclusive of carriage to Lyttelton, wear, tear, and interest on capital.

Mr. Ollivier has supplied some samples prepared by a new process, supposed to be chemical; but he has not made any communication or proposal to the Commissioners.

Retting and rolling.

Mr. Journeax has also forwarded to the Commissioners some samples of a very white and soft fibre, which he states can be prepared for £14 a ton. The leaves are first stripped, then retted for four days without the aid of heat, afterwards passed about 100 times through rollers in five minutes, while a copious flow of water pours over them.

The only large mill in the neighbourhood of Dunedin is at Blueskin. Kincaid and M'Queen's machines are used, and although steam power is employed, and the green leaf costs 18s. a ton, the expense of a ton of fibre does not exceed £16, exclusive of carting to port, interest on capital, &c., but as firewood is used for the engine, the cost of this is calculated at £1 13s. only. A wet scutch and rollers were in course of erection, and if a travelling table and flow of water through the strippers were added, the machinery would be complete. The rate of wages is higher in Otago than in the North Island.

Mr. Miller, of Silver Stream, takes great care in the rejection of bad leaves, and in every part of his process, (which is that in ordinary use) and, consequently, makes a superior sample.

Mr. Campbell who is near the town, and has several members of his family working at his mill, can produce fibre and deliver it in Dunedin at a cost of £14 a ton.

New inventions.

The Commissioners had not any mechanical inventions, having for their object the improvement of the manufacture of the fibre, brought under their notice at a sufficiently early date to allow of their being assisted with the view of the results being embodied in this report.