

cwt. a day, and has been six months at work without requiring repairs. Pays men 4s. a day, and boys 2s., without food.

Messrs. Drungoold and Hamlin have also got mills in this neighborhood, but their process is very similar to Mellsof's. They have Price's machines, and the latter has one of Dugald's, also.

REES & GIBSON, Rangitikei, January, 1871.

Use steam power and both Price's and Gibbons' stripping machines, but prefer the former, as they clean the flax better and wear longer; they are, however, more wasteful than Gibbons'. Immediately after having been passed through the stripper, the flax is placed in a wooden vat, and a stream of boiling water is poured on it; it remains soaking for two or three minutes, and is then taken out and rinsed in cold water; then bleached in the sun for four or five days and dry-scutching. The boiling water takes the red colour out of the butts, but does not otherwise improve its appearance or texture. Mr. Rees thinks highly of the wet-scutching process, and will try it when they get over the difficulty of scarcity of water. The limited supply of this requisite, which is one of the chief essentials in profitable flax-dressing, certainly deteriorates the quality of their fibre. The shorter leaves are separated into bundles by the boys who take the flax away from the stripper, and it is packed separately. Mr. Rees finds that most of the fourth pair of leaves are unfit for stripping, and that even some of the third are defective and have to be rejected. He has tried a small quantity of the centre and immature leaves, and the fibre is fine and of good colour, and has considerable strength, but it cannot be procured in any quantity. He wished that some Natives should, by way of experiment, prepare after their own fashion a small quantity of fibre from the flax leaves that he was using at his mill, but after looking over the whole bundle, about eight tons, they declared that there was none suitable for their purpose, so particular are they in the selection of leaves.

MUSSEN, near Wanganui.

Has a twelve-horse power steam-engine and abundance of water, but he has to pay a very high price for the raw material. He gives the owner of the ground on which he cuts the leaves, 12s. a ton, and it costs him 10s. a ton for cutting, and another 5s. for carting to the mill; so that, assuming he requires 6½ tons of green leaf for one of fibre (and it can hardly be less, though he only estimates 5½ tons), the raw material stands him in £8 15s. 6d., which at the present price of the manufactured article can hardly leave him a profit, although he turns out a particularly good sample, mainly due to his wet-scutching, which softens the fibre and gives it a good colour. It is not left out on the bleaching field for more than three days in fine weather, being once turned in that time. He has two stripping machines at work, one of Price's, and the other, Fraser and Tinne's. He considers that the latter wear better, but that Price's dresses the flax more evenly. He employs nine men and three boys for the two machines, and pays the latter 6s. and 7s. 6d. a week besides their food. He uses a beam 36 feet long and 18 inches square at the larger end as a lever to press his bales, and manages to get 4½ cwt. of fibre into a bale measuring 3 feet square and 5 feet long. Plants that were cut quite down twelve months ago, have thrown up several leaves 5 and 6 feet long.

RITCHIE, Wanganui.

Uses the engine of a steam-threshing machine, and one of Price's strippers, which he considers the best that is made. The green leaf only costs him 13s. a ton delivered at his mill; but there is a scarcity of water for washing purposes, otherwise he would use a wet-scutching, believing that that process materially improves the fibre, besides reducing the time necessary for bleaching from fourteen to four days. He has three varieties of flax growing on his land, and plants that had been cut five months previously had thrown up fresh leaves five feet long. The best variety strips more easily than the other kinds.

SCRIVENER, Wanganui.

Produces a fibre of superior quality, and took the first prize at the Wanganui Flax Show. The reason is obvious; every part of the process of manufacture is conducted with special care. All damaged leaves are rejected, and the larger ones are split before they are passed through the machine; they are also cut high up, so that the coarse and discoloured portions of the butt are not used. He works only on a small scale, and has but an ordinary three horse wheel for driving purposes. With the assistance of one man to cut the flax, and a lad to drive the horses, he and his three sons manage the whole of the operations, and can turn out 2 cwt. of fibre per day, and as he can readily get £20 a ton for his fibre in Wanganui, it pays him very well. In feeding his horses, he mixes the strippings from the flax leaves with their oats, and they eat it greedily. He uses one of Price's machines, which he considers the best he has seen. Had he more driving power, he would not think it necessary to split the leaves, and would wet-scutch if he had plenty of water. There are several varieties of flax in the neighborhood, some of which are more easily stripped than others, but they are used indiscriminately.

GROVER, Wanganui.

Has a small steam engine, and one of Price's machines, and adopts the ordinary process of washing, bleaching, and dry-scutching. He has not sufficient water, or would try wet-scutching.

CUMMINS, Waanganui.

Has also a small steam engine, and one of Price's machines, which he finds to work satisfactorily. After stripping, he soaks the fibre in warm water, at about 90°, and then bleaches and dry-scutches in the ordinary manner. Has tried boiling water, but finds that it hardens the fibre. He thinks that wet-scutching could be advantageously used, if he had abundance of water.