

(No. 110.)—Mr. BARSTOW, R.M., Bay of Islands, to CHAIRMAN.—15th July, 1871.

I regret having to inform you that as yet I have not succeeded in obtaining even a single article for the Flax Exhibition, though, both personally and by letter, I have applied to the leading settlers and Native chiefs. As far as mats are concerned, Ngapuhi have ceased for so many years to be a mat wearing tribe, that they no longer possess any. Three women who had promised to complete for me kits, and two "Taupos" which they had previously commenced, have, owing to sickness, discontinued their work. Of the three, one is now dangerously ill, another has lost a daughter, and the third is just recovering from a fever which carried off a sister. I believe that Ngapuhi are backward in the cause moreover through pride, being conscious that they would make but a sorry show in the "Muka" way in comparison with the Southern tribes.

Under these circumstances I have thought it advisable to return the money (five pounds) sent by you to me, but will nevertheless try still to procure something for the Exhibition.

I regret that I cannot even send my own mats, as these have been sent with my other goods and chattels to Auckland, in anticipation of shortly removing thither myself, and cannot be readily unpacked.

IV.—NATIVE DRESSED FLAX.

(No. 15.)—JOHN KEBBELL, Esq., to Mr. THOMAS BEVAN, Otaki.—22nd November, 1870.

At a meeting of the Flax Commissioners it was determined to obtain one ton of flax, Maori dressed, for the purpose of experiment. I was authorised to make an arrangement with you for the supply. For what sum will you contract to supply one ton of Maori flax, to be delivered dry in Wellington, the flax to be of the best quality, such as used to be obtained many years ago in the early days of your spinning at the Manawatu; a sample to be sent with answer. There is another condition of the contract which is most important that you should personally ascertain, so as to verify to the Commission, if required, the weight and length of green leaf, in order that the proportion of dressed fibre may be ascertained. Also, for what sum you would engage to deliver one ton, such as sample enclosed, subject to the same conditions as the one ton above.

NOTE.—The Natives refuse to prepare any flax, according to the sample, for less than 1s. per lb.

CIRCULAR addressed to NATIVES by the NATIVE MINISTER.

To _____

Wellington, 26th September, 1870.

Friend, Salutations to you. The time has now come when the cry of the *riroriro* is heard; I therefore consider it right to give you a few words of advice, lest the *riroriro* should cry in vain.

Pleiades is high in the heavens, the warm season has arrived, and the thoughtful man thinks it is time to cultivate food to enable him to live, and also to extend hospitality to strangers, lest he be in the same case as the thoughtless one who, when the season of the scarcity of food comes round, is in a very helpless condition. In former days, all descriptions of food used by the Maoris, such as the kumara, taro, and other things were largely cultivated; at present the cultivation of these articles of food has decreased. I therefore consider that you ought again to turn your attention to their cultivation lest they disappear altogether, and that the word of the proverb ought to be fulfilled, which says, "The fame of a man brave in war is uncertain; but the fame of a man diligent or brave in tilling the ground will always last."

Another work which you are able to do is the preparation of flax. Formerly that was a great industry among you, but now it does not exist, and you have allowed the flax to be burnt and to rot, without considering what a source of wealth this plant which is growing is. You know that the Europeans send flax to England to be sold; but, owing to the bad quality, it commands but a small price. Dr. Featherston has visited the principal towns of England and Scotland where they use flax and other such articles. He took with him some machine-dressed flax, but that did not find much favour. He also took a sample of Maori-dressed flax, which, though not dressed as well as it might have been, excited the admiration of the Europeans on account of its good quality and softness; and they said that if all the flax from New Zealand were as good as that sample of Maori-dressed flax, it would command a high price, and would always find a ready market in England.

Now you, the Maori people, should consider this, that the flax dressed by you is the kind preferred by purchasers, and that the machine-dressed flax is not nearly so good as yours; it therefore seems to me that, if you will turn your attention again to that industry, it will benefit you very much.

You must not forget to cultivate flax, so as to insure obtaining a superior quality to the dressed article.

Now, I have decided to give a prize to the best workman in each district. It will be in this way: the person who grows the best acre of flax in his district will get £10. The person who will produce the best ton of dressed flax in his district will get £10. The way in which a decision will be arrived at as to the best-cultivated flax will be as follows: a European and two Maori chiefs, in each district, will be directed to inspect the various fields of flax, and report to the Government, so that they may know to whom they are to give the before-mentioned prize, viz., £10.

The decision as to the best-dressed flax will be arrived at as follows: the flax will be sent to England, and there sold. The person who has dressed the ton which commands the highest price will receive the money before mentioned, viz., £10.

By and bye you will be told the districts in which prizes will be given.

In addition to the above, the Government will give to the person who cultivates the best acre of flax, over all the districts, £50; and to the person who produces the best ton of dressed flax over all the districts £50.