

Kanara, said that he had first applied to the Native woman who had lately prepared some for Bishop Hadfield, which was sent to England by Mr. Sewell, but she refused to work at any more, as she considered she had been insufficiently paid for what she had done. I believe she got 4d. per lb. for it. Annie Kanara got 5s. from me for her two days' work, and would have earned as much if she had been stripping flax for the rope-spinners. These pay 1½d. per lb. (£14 a ton) for fibre that has been merely stripped and tied up into bundles. Of course the Natives take all leaves as they come for this purpose, but they only use the upper portion, as they cannot strip the butts, and the spinners object to longer lengths than 3½ or 4 feet as being unmanageable. I got a sample from Mr. Dodds at Otaki, which he had prepared for rope-making by hand-hackling it, the labour and loss of weight bringing the cost up to £25 a ton (the breaking strain was 188 lbs). He had sent five or six tons to England, and it sold there at £25 a ton, leaving him to bear the cost of transport to Wellington, £6 a ton, and thence to England £8 or £9 a ton more.

Mr. Bevan is not making rope at present, as the Natives are demanding 2d. instead of 1½d. a lb. for the flax.

SAMPLES accompanying this letter.

1. *Harakeke* (Tuhora) fibre, washed.
2. *Harakeke* (Tukura) fibre, washed.
3. *Harakeke* fibre, unwashed.
4. *Harakeke* stripped for rope-spinners.
5. *Harakeke* stripped, hackled.
6. *Harakeke* leaves stripped on both sides, showing difference of colour.

Colonel HAULTAIN to CHAIRMAN.—Waikanae, 3rd January, 1871.

A number of women, and some of the old men are very busy preparing the half-ton that was ordered by the Commissioners. They do not consider that £20 is by any means a sufficient price for it, and they are under the impression that they are to receive 5s. a day, besides the price of the flax, from the Government. They tell me that they quite understood the terms proposed by yourself, viz., that they were to get £20 paid down, and also any balance on the home valuation after expenses had been paid; but that the women would not work on those terms; and Wi Tako and others asserted that Mr. Halse, Mr. Young, and Mr. McLean had promised them each 5s. a day, in addition to the amount to be paid by the Commissioners. I told them that I was sure this was a mistake on their part. I am, however, not surprised at their objecting to £40 a ton as not sufficient, for I do not believe they could earn an average of 1s. 6d. a day each at this rate for fine thoroughly cleaned flax, such as the Commissioners have stipulated for. It takes so much time to free it from all the scull, and the suitable leaves are not readily procured; they can get but little of it in the immediate neighbourhood of their settlement, and a party of them have gone off to-day some three or four miles to a better locality, taking their food and blankets with them, and are not to return till to-morrow. It is difficult to get any accurate estimate of what quantity a Native woman can prepare in a day. At a large meeting I asked the question, and Mary, Wi Tako's wife, said that some could do 1lb., some 2lbs. and others as much as 4lbs., according as they were fortunate or otherwise in quickly finding the proper leaves. Wi Tako said he thought that a woman could do as much as 10lbs. in a day. Some others assented to this provided she had not to collect the leaves herself, and that it would take a woman two days to collect leaves enough for 10lbs. of the fibre, but it is evident that they have no clear idea as to weight in pounds. I examined the days work of several women, and they certainly did not average 5lbs. Wiremu Tamihana (the teacher) showed me what his wife, Penelope, one of their best workers, had got ready; it filled two 100lb. flour bags, but there certainly was not 1 cwt. of flax, and he said that she had been working steadily at it since the 10th of November, and had not missed a day, except Sundays, so that she had not averaged more than 2lbs. a day, but she was fully calculating on getting 5s. a day all this time in addition to her share of the £20.

The women here do not prepare the flax in exactly the same way as that I procured from Otaki. This is stripped and then allowed to dry before the scull is scraped off, and it is not touched with water. It has in consequence a harsher feel than the other, and is not so silky in appearance. I pointed this out to Mrs. Tako, and she admitted that the washing was an advantage, and showed me a few hanks that she had treated in this way. I enclose ticketed samples of both. It would add to the labour considerably if they took their flax down to the river here to wash it, and therefore they are adopting the dry process, which makes it white enough.

It is not every mussell shell that will strip well. They require one with a straight edge. The best come from Wellington, and Wi Tako on his recent visit brought them up a supply. A shell will not last more than two or three days, it then gets too smooth to strip, and is used only for scraping off the scull.

I observed that Mrs. Tako had three shells for completing her work, and others always used a different shell for the scraping part of the process, and occasionally roughened the edge of the stripper, if it was not working well.

The women use several of the sub-varieties indiscriminately, they will take any of those named by Wi Tako in his letter of the 19th December, viz., *Oue*, *Raumoa*, *Huhiroa*, *Ngutunui*, *Atiraukawa*, *Rataroa*, *Ateweheke* and *Tarariki*; but I could find no one who had an accurate knowledge of all these varieties. No one could decisively point out to me which were which, from the parts of the leaves that the women were working at; and whilst discussing the question, a boy who had heard what was going on, went off to the swamp, cut a bundle of leaves, and threw them down before us, when there was immediately a dispute as to what varieties they belonged to. It was agreed that W. Tamehana, who was looked up to as an expert, and an authority, should go with