

What they require for making their fine mats is so trifling in quantity that they will take any pains in preparing it, and they sometimes keep it for years to improve its color and texture, placing a high value upon that which is very old; but to make several hundred weight would involve an amount of time and trouble that they do not care to encounter, unless guaranteed a remuneration far beyond its commercial value.

There are no flax cultivations at the Native settlements in the immediate vicinity of Napier. What they want for the finer purposes is selected in the swamp by those who are skilled in the art.

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(No. 21.)—ASSISTANT NATIVE SECRETARY to CHAIRMAN.—12th January, 1871.

I have the honor, by direction of the Hon. Colonial Secretary, to acknowledge receipt of your memo. of the 9th current, transmitting the draft of a report from Colonel Haultain relative to flax which is being prepared under contract by Natives at Waikanae for the Flax Commissioners.

With regard to the statement made by Wi Tako and others, that they were promised 5s. a day each, in addition to the £20, I can only say that no such promise has been made by any person in the Native Office.

I beg to enclose a memo. by Mr. Young, and the translation of a letter addressed to Wi Tako on the subject of the alleged promise of 5s. a day in addition to the contract price.

*Memorandum.*

As Wi Tako has asserted that I told him that the Natives who are engaged dressing flax at Waikanae were to get 5s. a day each besides the £20 for which they agreed to dress half-a-ton of flax, I may be allowed to state that he is in error.

I was instructed by Mr. Cooper to see Wi Parata, a chief from Waikanae, and to endeavour to ascertain from him what the cost of preparation of flax of as good a quality as the samples brought in by Wi Tako would be. I accordingly did see him on the 29th December, 1870. He told me that he thought each person could produce 30 lbs. of fine flax a day, and that a fair equivalent for the labour would be 5s. a day. This was not in reference to the half ton of flax; I did not mention it, nor did he; I was not even thinking about it. We were merely discussing the question of the cost of production of flax in a general way; and nothing that I said could be taken to mean that 5s. a day would be given to them by the Government, in addition to their shares of the £20.

Wellington, 12th January, 1871.

T. G. YOUNG.

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To Wi TAKO,—

Wellington, 12th January, 1871.

Friend, salutations to you. Colonel Haultain says that you stated to him that the Government consented to give the persons engaged in preparing flax 5s. a day, in addition to the £20 for the half-ton of flax. We know nothing about that 5s. You are probably mistaken. That is all. Your friend,

Wi Tako Ngatata, Waikanae.

H. HALSE.

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(No. 97.)—MEMORANDUM for UNDER SECRETARY by CHAIRMAN.—22nd May, 1871.

The Flax Commissioners will feel much obliged if you can ascertain from Wi Tako, and the other Natives at Waikanae, the cause of the delay in supplying the flax, which they contracted to deliver in January last.

By Wi Tako's letter, of 14th March, it appears that a quantity had been already weighed, and more remained to be done.

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(Telegram.)—Dr. HECTOR to Wi TAKO.—11th March, 1871.

When will the half-ton of dressed flax ordered by the Commissioners be ready? It was promised by the 31st January.

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(No. 30.)—ASSISTANT NATIVE SECRETARY to CHAIRMAN.—20th March, 1871.

I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy and translation of letter from Wi Tako Ngatata, in reply to a telegram sent him regarding the half-ton of prepared flax.

MR. HALSE,—

Waikanae, 14th March, 1871.

Salutations. I have received your message by telegraph about the flax. It is true that the women have finished some time ago preparing flax; they say that they are very busy after their food (crops). It is also correct that we said that it (the flax) should be carried out by the end of January, but when they asked us about the price, we told them £20 for half a ton. They told us that they could not work at that rate, for it was heavy work. Hohepa and I were troubled at their reply; but enough of that.

When I received your message, I gave notice to those preparing flax to assemble at my place, as I wanted to weigh the flax; we weighed 590lbs., but it is not all weighed yet.

This is all. I shall go and tell you all about it. This is all.

From

To Mr. Halse, Native Office, Wellington.

WI TAKO NGATATA.