

utter rubbish in the shape of wild flax. Even in the old Native cultivations, bushes which are doubtless descendants of good ones planted by the Natives, have degenerated so as to contain no fibre worth extracting. The leaves are very thin, and the fibre so fine, and so firmly attached to the woody matter, that I believe the machinery generally employed at present would break it all to pieces. The soil of the region in question is everywhere extremely rich, and so deeply and universally rooted by the wild pigs that the difference cannot arise from any want of cultivation. The overgrowth of koromiko scrub may have something to do with it, but as splendid flax is constantly found similarly overgrown in the old cultivations near the coast, it would seem that this alone cannot account for the change. The absence of wind among the hills again can scarcely be the reason, as just as constant a calm prevails in sheltered cultivations near the Coast. From whatever cause it has originated, there can be little doubt that the degeneracy, in the case of the bushes in the old cultivations, has been accomplished in the forty or fifty years which have elapsed since that part of the island was abandoned by the Natives as a place of residence, and in some cases apparently in a far shorter period, if not actually in so short a space as fifteen years, which seems to have been about the time since one very extensive patch of cultivations was given up. I mention the matter because its cause may be worth investigating, though the natives whom I have questioned on the subject, seem unable to throw any light upon it.

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(No. 31.)—Mr. JAMES HIRST, Patea, to CHAIRMAN.—11th March, 1871.

In accordance with a promise made by me to Colonel Haultain, I now beg to forward, for the information of the Flax Commissioners, a statement of the cost of planting 25 acres *Phormium tenax* at Patea. I may mention that the carriage of some of the best sorts of flax cost 5s. per 100 plants, owing to distance.

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PARTICULARS of 25 acres Flax (*Phormium tenax*), planted near Patea for "The Patea Flax Company (Limited)."

The flax is planted in rows 6 feet apart, with a space for carting of 10 feet at every fourth row. Three plants are placed in each hole, well rammed, and the holes are 6 feet apart.

The contract for digging the holes and planting—the ground having been previously cleared but not ploughed—was 9s. 6d. per hundred holes.

The plants cost 6s. per hundred plants for procuring, and were gathered under the direction of an experienced gardener, who has devoted some time to attaining a knowledge of his business.

The cost for cartage varied from 5s. per hundred plants to 1s. 6d. per hundred, according to distance, costing for the 75,000 plants, £123.

In selecting the plants all plants which would throw out seed stems were rejected, or will have to be replaced at the contractor's expense.

The sorts planted consist of the following:—

<i>Oue.</i>	Red edge.
<i>Atiraukawa.</i>	Light bronze edge.
<i>Huhiroa.</i>	Black narrow edge.
<i>Korako.</i>	Black edge, light colour in back of leaf.
<i>Atewhiki.</i>	Scarlet edge.
<i>Tihore.</i>	Orange edge and keel.

The planting of the 25 acres, including the digging the holes, procuring and planting and cartage, but exclusive of clearing and fencing, amounts to about £467, or £18 13s. 6d. per acre.

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#### VJ.—CANTERBURY FLAX ASSOCIATION.

An application to the Hon. Colonial Treasurer from the Canterbury Flax Association having been referred to the Commissioners, the following reply was transmitted:—

(No. 13.)—CHAIRMAN to HON. SECRETARY Canterbury Flax Association.—30th November, 1870.

Your letter of the 16th September, 1870, addressed to the Hon. Colonial Treasurer, requesting that a grant of £200 may be made to the Canterbury Flax Association, to enable them to assist inventors of new or improved flax machinery, having been referred to the Flax Commissioners, I have the honor to inform you that the Commissioners find the funds at their disposal to be so limited that they cannot give assistance of this general nature to local associations; but, should application be made to them in any particular case, they will be glad to take it into their consideration.

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(No. 14.)—SECRETARY Canterbury Flax Association to CHAIRMAN.—19th December, 1870.

During the last session of the General Assembly a suggestion was made by Mr. Macandrew that the Government should offer a reward of £5,000 for separating the gum from the flax, would you kindly inform me whether the General Assembly authorized any such reward; if so, what amount was agreed to?