

THE HEMP INDUSTRY.

W. H. FERRIS.

UNSATISFACTORY QUALITY.

WITH many millers working for only high-point fair-grade, combined with a good percentage of diseased leaf in some phormium-areas, the quality of the fibre which reached the grading-stores last month was decidedly disappointing. This was practically confined to the Manawatu and Auckland districts. In several cases the stripping has been so unsatisfactory, thereby resulting in bruised fibre, that the hemp has only reached a common grade. Two or three Wairarapa mills have been short of water for washing purposes, with the result that the fibre has been badly stained. Consequently only a common grade could be awarded.

POOR SCUTCHING.

The most unsatisfactory feature of milling-work as disclosed by the grading of the past month has been the decidedly inferior scutching generally in evidence. Failure to scutch the fibre properly is a very serious defect, as it means that cordage-manufacturers cannot produce a twine free from lumps. The presence of these lumps in binder-twine causes the twine to break, and thereby delays reaping operations. The unsatisfactory scutching is solely due to careless work on the part of the scutcher. This defect in our fibre is undoubtedly prejudicing it in the eyes of manufacturers, especially those who have a profitable substitute available.

HAWKE'S BAY AND SOUTHERN MILLS DOING GOOD WORK.

Very little good-quality fibre came to hand from the Manawatu and Foxton mills. The best phormium has been forwarded by mills in Hawke's Bay, Marlborough, and Westland. I had the pleasure of grading 189 bales of fine-grade fibre in Hawke's Bay the other day—a beautifully stripped and prepared line from one of the cleanest and most uniform fields of phormium I have seen. This swamp is practically in its native state, there being only a few shallow drains in evidence. The leaf is therefore growing under natural conditions. There was not a speck in the leaf throughout the area, in strong contrast to the poor condition of the leaf in many of our over-drained swamps. The Marlborough hemp is generally of a very satisfactory standard. In only one case is a miller of that district turning