

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

EXPORTATION OF FUNGUS TO CHINA,

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. W. SEED to Mr. W. TOWNSEND.

(No. 53.)

SIR,—

Customs Department, Wellington, 4th March, 1872.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ultimo, giving a report on the trade of your port for the year 1871. In that report mention is made of a kind of fungus which forms a new and considerable item in the list of exports. I should be glad if you could furnish me with any additional particulars respecting this article; for instance, the price that is paid for it at Taranaki, the quantity exported, the port to which it is sent for shipment to China, and the uses it is intended for, if these are known.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEED,

Secretary and Inspector.

W. Townsend, Esq., H.M. Customs,
New Plymouth.

No. 2.

Mr. W. TOWNSEND to Mr. W. SEED.

(No. 8.)

SIR,—

Custom House, New Plymouth, 15th March, 1873.

In answer to your letter No. 58, 4th March, 1872, in which you refer to my report on the trade of this port for the year 1871, and request further particulars of the new article of export called "fungus," I have the honor to forward such information as I have been able to collect.

The demand arose here with a Chinese dealer, Mr. Chow Cheng, who advertised for and first purchased the material; the merchants and traders of the place, on inquiry of their correspondents in Sydney and other ports where Chinese merchants are established, finding that the article was in demand in any quantity in China, entered into the trade in competition with Mr. Chow Cheng, and bought of both settlers and Maoris. Further than this very little more is known of it by them as an article of commerce. The price paid for this material in Taranaki has been 2d. to 2½d. the pound, and the quantity exported to this time has been 145 bales, each containing 450 lbs., in all about 65,250 lbs.

The port in China to which it is shipped is not known here; the bulk has been carried coastwise to Dunedin, thence to be shipped to China, probably direct, by the Chinese traders at that port. A portion has been exported to Sydney, where, it is said, it also goes into Chinese hands for shipment to their own country. The use to which it is put is not certainly known here, but it is said by the Chinese buyers to be for dyeing purposes.

To recapitulate: The price paid in Taranaki is about £20 the ton; quantity exported, 145 bales, about 29 tons; the port to China shipped, not known here; uses to which it is put—said to be as a dye.

Though the export is comparatively small at present, in the opinion of those interested in the trade, there is a prospect of a considerable increase next season, and in the future.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM TOWNSEND,

Officer in Charge.

William Seed, Esq.,
Secretary and Inspector of Customs, Wellington.

No. 3.

Mr. CHILMAN to Mr. W. SEED.

(No. 45.)

SIR,—

Custom House, New Plymouth, 3rd December, 1872.

I have the honor to send you, by post, a sample of fungus, of which 146 bales, containing about 4 cwt. each, have been shipped from this port during the last twelve months. It is collected principally by Natives, and the price given for it is from 2½d. to 3d. per pound.

I have, &c.,

RICHARD CHILMAN,
Collector.The Secretary and Inspector, H.M. Customs,
Wellington.

MINUTE by SECRETARY of CUSTOMS.

26th March, 1873.

THE exportation of this article has attracted my attention for some time past. As much as seventy bales was exported from Wellington by one of the last steamers. It is quite possible that it may be of much greater value than what is now given for it, and that it may become an item of some importance in our exports. I think it would be desirable to obtain information regarding it from the Government in Hong Kong, and would suggest that the Hon. the Colonial Secretary be moved to write to the authorities there to find out its marketable value, and the uses to which it is applied. At present a few Chinamen have a monopoly of the article, and it may be that they are obtaining it at much less than its real value.

Hon. Commissioner of Customs.

W. SEED.

No. 4.

The Hon. W. FOX to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Hong Kong.

(No. 38.)

Colonial Secretary's Office,

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th March, 1873.

There is a kind of fungus that grows on the trunks of trees in the forests of this country, which for some time past has been purchased in considerable quantities by one or two resident Chinamen for exportation to China. It is not known here what use is made of this article, and the few persons who buy it for exportation therefore have a monopoly of it. I forward a sample of it herewith, and I should feel much obliged to you if you could furnish me, for the information of the trading community here, with any particulars as to the uses to which it is applied, and as to its marketable value in China. The price paid for it here by the Chinamen who export it is from 2d. to 3d. per pound.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hong Kong.

WILLIAM FOX.

No. 5.

The Hon. C. C. SMITH to the Hon. W. FOX.

(No. 351.)

Colonial Secretary's Office,

SIR,—

Hong Kong, 11th June, 1873.

In reply to your letter No. 38, of 28th March, regarding the accompanying specimen of a kind of fungus on which you desire a report, I have the honor to inform you that this fungus is much prized by the Chinese community, as a medicine administered in the shape of a decoction to purify the blood.

It is also used on Fast Days. A mixture of vermicelli, beancurd, and this fungus, is boiled and eaten instead of animal food.

The sample which accompanied your letter is considered a very good one. The ordinary price of the article is from 17 to 20 taels per pecul wholesale, and 1 mace 5 candareens to 2 mace per catty, retail—that is to say, about 10½d. per pound.

I may add that a superior kind of the same fungus is produced in the Chinese Provinces of Sze Chuen and Yun-Nan, which is sold at the rate of 30 dollars per pecul (133 lbs).

I have, &c.,

CECIL CLEMENTI SMITH,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, New Zealand.

Acting Colonial Secretary.