

article?—Yes; it would not pay them to do it. The leaf is so diseased now, and this grub is playing havoc with it.

43. Have you yourself ever tried any chemical dressing or anything of that sort on a small scale to see if you could cope with the disease?—No; I have never tried it. It is a grub just like the codlin-moth—not quite as big though.

44. It might be possible to get some experimental men to try experiments on it?—It will come to that directly; some of the millers will have no leaf at all.

DAVID BOYCE, Flax-miller, Tuamarina, Blenheim, examined. (No. 15.)

*Witness:* I have been a flax-miller for over thirty years, and I have seen as good flax turned out thirty years ago as now. You might think it very strange, but the statement is quite correct. The machine has been improved by Mr. Price, Onehunga. You can turn out a great deal more fibre than then, and the machine is a very good machine, provided that it is properly looked after. If I heard them stripping flax a quarter of a mile off, I could tell whether they were working correctly or not by the sound of the machine. If a stripper is worked correctly, it is something like a good saw—it is always singing; and if it is not, or the bearings are too slack, it is like a jumping machine. You can always tell a slack belt by the jumping. If the belt is loose the machine will always jump. If a driving-belt is put up about 10 ft. high, and running at an angle of 45° or less, the belt has a tendency to lift both the rollers and the drum of the machine from their work. The best way to place a driving-belt is to put it about 4 in. below the spindle of the machine. By doing so it keeps both the rollers and the drum more in their place. There is no difficulty in making good flax if the stripper is looked after. I have seen a stripper working well for ten minutes, and ten minutes afterwards it would be off its work. I have nothing to say against the grading of flax. I think it is an improvement to the whole system. Previous to the introduction of the Government grading system a great many millers found fault with the merchants' grading, and I got a circular stating that they wanted the Government to grade the flax. Well, they have got the Government to grade the flax, and they found fault with some of the first Graders. They wanted some experienced man from England to do the grading. I do not think for a minute that it would have been any advantage to them, for I consider an inferior article is a flax-miller's own fault. Certainly there are different kinds of flax—old flax you cannot dress so well as flax about three years old. Old flax has generally a small red rib in it, and that is a little different from the other flax.

45. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] Have you anything to say about the export—after it leaves you—or in regard to the points?—I have always been content with all the merchants I have dealt with.

46. And you do not wish any alteration in the grades?—Well, if you make an agreement for a certain thing, I suppose you must adhere to it.

47. Does the present grading system deal fairly between the miller and the merchant?—That is the opinion of different people.

48. We want to get your opinion?—Well, supposing you agree for seventy-five points, the merchants will give you so-much, and if you do not get seventy-five points there is £2 10s. per ton taken off. But you agree to that yourself. Sometimes you get flax that you can get better fibre out of than other flax. Well, I have asked them if I would give them "fine" would they pay for "fine," but if I sell them flax they will give me the same money for eighty-three points as for seventy-five.

49. Do you think that it fair?—It does not encourage a person to make good flax, and I have told them so; but if you agree to it I suppose you must be content.

50. Would it not be better to alter the agreement? You would be agreeable to alter it a bit I suppose?—Oh, yes, I should, because if you have good flax you can call it "superior" or "fine"; but sometimes you get flax not so good.

51. Look at the samples down there [indicating some samples in the room]?—There was a meeting of flax-millers and merchants not long ago, and I was surprised to see a proposal mentioned that the bad flax that had been rejected by the Graders should be sent Home, let the sample be what it like. They never considered that the man you sent it to perhaps had fibre from some other place, and might mention that this inferior hemp was New Zealand fibre. That would be ruination to the trade. I think it is the flax-miller's own fault when bad flax is turned out.

52. Do you approve of stuff manufactured from inferior flax being prohibited from being exported?—I would stop it, providing it did not injure the miller. I have heard them say it did not matter what they exported so long as it was paid for.

JAMES TOOMATH, Flax-miller, Shannon, examined. (No. 16.)

*Witness:* I have been thirty-five years connected with the flax-milling industry, and for sixteen years have been a practical miller and ropemaker. The first point I want to bring before the Committee is that there are none of us manufacturers or millers who know really the value of our hemp abroad, and that, whilst the grading is very good, the Graders do not know what they are grading for. I consider that it is necessary that the Chief Grader or some practical man should go abroad to any part of the world in which our flax is imported, and ascertain what use it is being put to, and the value of the manufactured article. It is generally accepted that our New Zealand flax is only sufficiently good for rope-making and binder-twine purposes. Well, I contend that it is being used for fabric and other manufactures, and that its value is not sufficiently known. In proof of this, I myself shipped to a firm of merchants (Ledger, Smith, and Co., of London) a specially prepared line of New Zealand flax, the return for which was quoted at £75 per ton. I have not continued on this line, simply because there was a slump in the market, and for the time being I went out of the business and have never since had an opportunity of dealing particularly with those lines on my own to try and exploit flax. So that we want to find