

of £3 per ton?—I do not know that they would be now. I speak of last winter. At one sale I know there was a difference of £2 10s. or £3 per ton.

42. You think it would not pay them—a high grade?—No; but I claim that some of it is “fine” now. Messrs. Patterson and Co., of Dunedin, bought some hemp, and the buyers wrote to the millers that in every respect the hemp was satisfactory; the only fault was that the leaf was a bit short, but they took no exception to that. It was not the millers’ fault. I have no doubt that if Mr. Thompson (manager for Messrs. Patterson and Co.) were called he would show that.

43. Do you hear many complaints about the leaf being short?—I have never heard them complain much about it.

44. Perhaps you have not seen much that was very short?—No, I cannot say that I have. The fault, I think, is that it shows more ends in the twine. This affects the appearance of it, because there are more ends to stick out.

45. The longer the flax the smoother the twine?—Yes, and the nicer the finish.

At the Hon. Mr. Duncan’s request, the witness examined some hanks of flax in the room, and expressed his opinion regarding them to the Committee, the Secretary to the Department of Agriculture (Mr. J. D. Ritchie), and the Chief Grader (Mr. Fulton).

46. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] About altering the grading, I think it is the business of the millers and merchants to deal with that; that we should confine ourselves to giving you the points, and that you should alter the grades to whatever class of stuff would pay best?—I would certainly be in favour of that. I would not be in favour of altering the grades very much, because, if we let the worst hemp go through or reduce the standard, we should be doing an injustice to the foreign buyer.

47. And that would react upon yourselves?—Certainly; we have got to pay for the lot in the end. In this case, about the coarse hemp, I think it would give more satisfaction by allowing it to go through a little coarser than now, more especially by allowing in it a “good fair” grade, so long as it was equally cleaned.

---

WEDNESDAY, 25TH OCTOBER, 1905.

Mr. G. MCGREGOR examined. (No. 19.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you be kind enough to give the Committee your full name?—Gregor McGregor.

2. And your address?—Maxwelltown.

3. And occupation?—Farmer.

4. The Committee will be very pleased to hear any statement you may be disposed to make, either as to flax-growing, flax-milling, or as to the export trade of the flax industry generally?—Well, I may say, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that I have studied the flax question very closely for the last thirty years. At the same time, I may tell you that I have no axe to grind. I do not own flax myself, nor have I any interest in the milling or any of the financial aspects of the flax question at all. I simply take an interest in the matter in regard to the collection of the different varieties, and the testing of these varieties from time to time. Now, there are a great many different varieties, and each variety has its own peculiar value. I may say that during the past twenty-five or twenty-six years I have been through all parts of the North Island, particularly among the Natives, and it was from them that I first noticed there were so many different varieties, each locality having its own special varieties—varieties cultivated by them for particular uses. Take one of their ordinary mats, for instance. There will be two or three different varieties of flax in the same mat. The body of the mat will be a fine, soft, white fibre, and the edges in many cases will be made of the coarsest and strongest fibre procurable. These two fibres will have been grown for this specific purpose. Then, in the manufacture of their fishing-lines and ropes, which would require a strong and elastic fibre, these ropes and fishing-lines would be made from fibres especially selected and cultivated by them. It was this in particular which drew my attention to the fact of the relative values of the different kinds of flax. Since then I have studied the matter very carefully. I have studied the growth of the flax, and from time to time I have tested the fibres, and I find there is a great difference in the quality of the fibre. I have also found a very marked difference in the quantity of the fibre to the leaf. Some flax-leaves which may have a strong fibre are absolutely unfit for milling purposes, in that the quantity of the fibre to the leaf shows too much waste. Then, on the other hand, with regard to other flax, although the fibre may be much finer, it is a strong fibre, and practically the whole leaf is fibre—there is practically no waste. These, in my opinion, are the varieties which should be collected and cultivated. I find that in many districts through which I have travelled each locality has its own special or particularly best variety—that is, from the Native point of view—strong, bright, elastic fibre. In many cases many of the so-called varieties are really one and the same variety under different names. Of course, the same thing obtains with regard to fruit or anything else; but I think this is so to a more remarkable degree with regard to flax than anything else. There are at least three so-called different varieties in my own district which are one and the same variety. This I have proved conclusively. The ordinary flax which is milled—we will call it the swamp-flax—it is a flax that grows to a great length, and is much sought after by millers. It is in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred practically a useless flax, because, although there is plenty of fibre, the fibre is coarse and very brittle, and more easily damaged by the stripper than a finer fibre. There is also another matter I wish to refer to, and that is the cultivation of flax. I have studied the matter for some time, and by cultivating the flax the quantity and quality of the fibre is very much improved, particularly the colour of the fibre. I know that under systematic cultivation it would give a greater yield of fibre, and I can say with every degree of truth that it certainly improves the quality of