

"THE TIMES" ACCOUNT OF THE "OFFICIAL DESCRIPTIVE AND ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE."

Extracted from "The Times," September 13th, 1851.

ALTHOUGH, in compliance with the original design of its projectors, the Great Exhibition has itself only an ephemeral existence, it is satisfactory to think that the most ample and complete records will be preserved of its character and details. Few events have attracted such an amount of contemporary publicity. The pen and the pencil have both been incessantly at work in perpetuating its industrial triumphs, and when all the material vestiges of the display are removed from our eyes, it will still live in a form the most valuable and enduring. The reports of the juries in each class will obviously prove an important *repertoire* of facts and observations, and the information which has been collected in newspapers, in periodicals, and in other channels of instruction, may also be turned to excellent account; but it is to the *Illustrated Catalogue* that we must look as capable of being made the most complete and satisfactory work of reference hereafter on the great industrial pageant of 1851. That publication now approaches its completion, for three parts of it have already appeared, and the fourth will soon be ready. It is intended that it shall be issued in three volumes, the first two of which will be dedicated to the products of Great Britain and her colonies, while the last embraces the contributions of foreign countries. As far as our own exhibitors are concerned, the work is complete, and from the portions that have already been given to the public we are enabled to form a pretty fair estimate of its character and the style of execution. Of all literary labours, that of getting up books of reference is, perhaps, the most tedious and the most thankless. The bare name of a catalogue kills the interest of the most indefatigable bookworm, after the collection of objects to which it was intended as a guide has ceased to be accessible. The present, however, is an exceptionable case, and we predict for the *Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* a standard reputation, and a large share of public patronage when the grass has once more grown over the site of the Crystal Palace, and the great event of this year has become a thing of the past. From unavoidable causes, the contractors, Messrs. Spicer and Clowes, are only completing the last pages of their work as the spectacle to which it relates is about to close; but they need be little alarmed at such a consideration. It has an enduring interest in the mass of valuable information of almost every description which it contains. To put the industrial products of the world under a glass case was a wonderful feat to perform; but here we have a still more extraordinary example

of condensation, partly executed and in process of successful completion. The Great Exhibition is reduced within the compass of three not very unwieldy volumes, and to the intellect in all respects, and in most important respects to the eye, its features and significance are preserved. Every object in the collection will be found noted down and described with the amount of particularity due to it. The promptings of partiality and the infirmities of judgment are equally excluded from this unbiassed record. An extensive series of illustrations is made to embrace every object worthy of elucidation by the artists' power, and in order that the instructive character of the work may be fully sustained, annotations written by men of the highest qualifications are introduced to explain processes, point out the character and uses of objects, and develop in brief terms the *rationale* of the more remarkable or least understood branches of human industry; with these features of interest the popularity of the *Illustrated Catalogue* when completed seems secure. It will prove a complete literary type of the original to which it refers, opening up sources of amusement or instruction to every class of taste, and proving equally at home on the drawing-room table, handled by fashionable dilettanti in the study, pored over by the scholar or the man of science, at the merchant's desk as a book of constant reference—in the factory, the foundry, and the workshop, as a *repertoire* for designs, and as highly suggestive for future progress. A more pleasant work to dive into during an idle hour can hardly be imagined, for wherever it is taken up there is something new and striking and worthy of attention. The necessity for condensation renders prosing impossible, and the classification of subjects secures an agreeable variety of subjects without monotony on the one hand, or a miscellaneous effect upon the other. Illustrations have been sparingly resorted to in the first portion, which relates to raw materials, but, as a substitute for this, we have tables and statistics of great value, and a large mass of information entirely original in its character. In the second part, which is devoted to machinery, numerous diagrams and sketches are introduced explanatory of the different objects exhibited. The chief interest of the *Catalogue*, however, in this respect, lies in the third and fourth parts, the latter of which is still unfinished. The three volumes will contain, altogether, about 1,200 illustrations, and the greater number of them will be given in the last volume, which will be dedicated to the foreign half of the Exhibition. This is the proper course to pursue, for the foreign contri-