

MISCELLANEOUS.

MATERIALS FOR TEXTILE FABRICS.

The late Paris Exhibition contained ample proof that the colonies of Great Britain could produce an inexhaustible supply of vegetable fibres adequate to all the requirements of our textile manufactures in lieu of the flax and hemp of Russia of which the war is to a large extent depriving us. When the supply of rags fell short of the demand for paper-making, attention was turned to the vegetable kingdom for a substitute, and not one, but many ligneous fibres were speedily discovered, of acknowledged suitableness for the purpose. The paper-makers, however, found that, in order to take advantage of these discoveries, expensive alterations would be required in their existing machinery; and in the meantime, the supply of rags, which had been kept up on the Continent in the expectation of increased prices from the demand for cheap newspapers, has become sufficient for ordinary wants; although newspaper proprietors have not been relieved of the extra price laid upon their paper during the scarcity of rags. The capability of India to supply this country with substitutes for Russian flax and hemp, was demonstrated in the collection of products exhibited at Paris by Dr. Royle; and a corresponding collection from Jamaica, prepared by Mr. N. Wilson, of the Botanic Garden in that island, exhibited an equal capability on the part of our colonies in the West Indies. There is now a reasonable prospect that sugar, their staple product, will no longer be an unremunerative article of produce. But with the revival, as we fondly trust, of the prosperity of these fine colonies, the proprietors have an opportunity of pushing their enterprise into other and more lucrative fields of production. The *Kew Garden Miscellany* for November, edited by Sir W. J. Hooker, contains extracts from a report on the Jamaica Botanic Garden, deserving the careful consideration of proprietors in that island. The report bears testimony to the increasing desire for growing new plants and adopting new staples in Jamaica, as well as for a more extended and varied cultivation of the island, in order to meet the exigencies of its altered condition. Numerous plants have been introduced by Mr. Wilson, who has tested their fitness for the soil and climate, and who finds that the island now "possesses the finest fibres and the greatest number of textile plants in the world, hitherto of no avail in the country in general, and held of little value by individuals, but which may now be turned to the greatest account in a national point of view." No fewer than *fifty one* of the samples of fibres shown at Paris from Jamaica were the products of plants indigenous to the island, and all suited more or less for textile purposes, from the coarse cocoa-nut coir to filaments rich as those of the finest silk. We subjoin an extract from this important and seasonable report:—

For the Mantain, Pinguin, and all similar herbaceous plants, machinery is absolutely necessary to separate and clean the fibre advantageously; when this desideratum is accomplished, and with one or two years' practice, there is nothing to prevent Jamaica competing with any part of the world of ten times the same extent. The inducement to do so cannot be much greater than it is at present. I find, by a statistical account, that the imports of flax into the United Kingdom during 1853, amounted to 94,163 tons, 14 cwt., and, at the exorbitant price of £110 per ton, to which the average price of foreign flax has already risen, it shows a sum of £10,358,007, which has been paid in cash for foreign flax fibre last year; and since the prohibition of Russian hemp into European markets, prices and demand are increasing daily.