

a very superior quality, but gives less than half the weight which is produced by the cultivated species. The ground for sowing the indigo seed is prepared in April—a piece of good forest land near one of the towns being selected, a part is cut to make a rude fence, and the remainder burnt, which is easily accomplished as every thing is very dry at that season—and the ground is afterwards scratched with two sticks fastened crosswise, to resemble somewhat the shape of a plough, and the seed scattered over it by hand. The rainy season always commences early in May, and the indigo is ready for cutting about the middle of July, taking about two and a half months to come to perfection. The growing crop somewhat resembles lucerne, and is in the best state for making indigo when it becomes covered with a sort of greenish farina.

“The crop of the first year is small, and sometimes not worth manufacturing; that of the second year is the best; and the third is also very good if it has been carefully weeded; but many indigo fields have lasted more than ten years without being resown, as the seed which falls naturally springs up again, and where the land is good yields nearly as large a crop as a new sown field. When the plant is ready for manufacturing, a number of men are collected, each of whom is either provided with or brings his own mule or horse, if he has one. Two men always go together, cut the plant, then about the height of full-grown red clover, and take it to the vats, which are large tanks made of brick and lime, holding at least 1000 gallons, and some as much as 10,000. Into these the plant is thrown till they are nearly full, when weights are put above it to prevent its floating, and the vats filled with water till it covers the mass of the indigo plant. After remaining from twelve to twenty-four hours, according to the state of the plant, weather, and other circumstances (the time required being determined by the colour which the water assumes), the herb is taken out, and the water beaten with paddles in the very small vats, and by a wheel suspended above, and turned by men or horses in the larger ones, till it changes from a green colour, which it has acquired ere the removal of the herb, to a fine blue, when it is allowed to stand for some hours till the colouring matter has settled to the bottom of the tank,—a process which is generally hastened by throwing in an infusion of certain herbs to facilitate its settlement, or, as the natives term it, to curdle (cuajar) the coloured water. As soon as all the colour has settled, the water is drawn off, and the blue, which is of the consistency of thin mud, is taken out of the vat and spread upon cotton, or coarse woollen cloth, and dried in the sun. The colour, in a great measure, depends upon removing the herb exactly at the proper time, and upon properly beating the water, neither too long nor too short. Unless these processes are properly performed, the indigo will never be of first-rate quality; but some estates will never produce the best indigo, whatever care may be bestowed on the manufacture. A mansana of 100 yards square, which is nearly two British statute acres, produces generally about 100 to 120 pounds of indigo, the carriage and cutting of the herb costing about twenty dollars, and the cleaning of the field and all other expenses connected with it, including the manufacture of the indigo, about as much more.

“The indigo of Central America is not put into moulds when drying as that of Bengal, but is allowed to remain in the rough shape in which it dries, and without further preparation is ready for baling and exportation. The bales are generally made up in 150lbs. each, and the quality is classed by numbers from 1 to 9; Nos. 1 to 3 being of the quality called *cobres* in Europe, Nos. 4 to 6 of that called *cortes*, and Nos. 7 to 9 of that called *flores*; Nos. 1 to 6 do not, at present, pay the expenses of manufacture, and are never intentionally made. No doubt, with a little more skill in the manufacture, the whole might, as in Bengal, be made of the quality called *flores*; but such improvements cannot be expected till a new race of people inhabit Central America. At present, about one half of the indigo produced is under No. 7, and as the cultivation is said not to pay at the present prices—and, indeed, hardly can be supposed to compete with Bengal, a country where labour is so much cheaper, and capital abundant—it is probable that the cultivation will shortly be entirely abandoned, unless the price should again rise in Europe. Such an event would leave the state of San Salvador without any available export whatever, as the value of the other productions is not worth naming, and the natives seem to have no intention of turning the industry to other articles which might be profitably cultivated.”*

Mr. Dunlop goes at some length into the proposal to unite the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, by a canal connecting the Lake St. Leon with a branch of Realejo Harbour.

A pearl-fishery has long existed on the Gulf of Nicoya, and pearls are said to be more abundant along it than even in Panama. “Considerable quantities have been offered me for sale (says our author) at Punta Arenas, but they were all of a very inferior

* A good description of the growth of indigo in India will be found in the *Colonial Magazine*, vol. 3, p. 135.—EDITOR.