

The Cotton Supply.*

There are, as far as my information extends, but two countries that are likely to furnish us with a fair supply of good cotton, and this not in substitution of the cotton of America, but as considerable auxiliaries to it. These are our recently acquired territories on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal, including Arracan, Pegu and Martaban, but excluding those on the Tennerasim coast, and the lately formed colony of Queensland in Australia. I shall describe the little I know of them.

Our territories on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal embrace four degrees of latitude extending from the 16th to the 20th degree, and contain an area of 64,450 square miles, or are larger than England and Wales by at least 10,000 miles. Their scanty population ranges from 8 to 50 inhabitants to a square mile, or on an average about 26, not one twentieth part of the average density of the population of lower Bengal. The country is watered by one great river and three considerable ones, each with branches and affluents, forming an extensive network of internal boat navigation, so that the territory, on a minor scale, bears no inconsiderable resemblance to that of the Lower Mississippi. The coast has at least four safe harbours to which there is inland communication by water. The greater portion of the country is a rich alluvial plain, producing as before stated, by far the largest amount of the rice which is exported from British India under the name of "Bengal," a commodity of which we ourselves imported in 1859, about 64,000 tons of the value of £686,000, forming 88 parts in a 100 of all of that grain which we imported.

The wild or unoccupied land must, of course, from the sparseness of the population, be large, and there ought to be no more difficulty in obtaining the fee-simple of it by Englishmen, than there is in Canada or Australia. This would be a necessary preliminary to the production of good cotton. If the local population—a very docile one—were not found sufficient for the requisite labour, the exuberant population of India is close at hand to make up the deficiency. The periodical rains of great severity, extend from April to September, and during their continuance, the cultivation of cotton could not be carried on. Sown in March, however, the crop would have six months of dry weather to ripen, which, it may be presumed, would suffice. A rice crop, in this case, would occupy the land during the rains, so that there would be a cereal and a cotton crop within the year. I resided for some time in the country I am now giving an outline of, and the impression which my acquaintance with it has left is, that it seems better adapted to the culture of the cotton plant than any other part of India. Experience alone, however, must be the only test of its practical adaptation.

Of Queensland we know, as yet, far too little to enable us to speak confidently of its capacity to produce cotton. It is described, however, as having a fertile soil with sufficient moisture, and to possess some commodious harbours. It certainly lies within latitudes (that is from the 30th degree south to the tropic), corresponding with those parts of Brazil which produce cotton superior to the average of American. Should Queensland be found adapted to the cultivation of cotton, the heat of the climate will necessitate Asiatic labour, and this may be obtained from India, as in the case of Ceylon and the Mauritius, or from China, equally ready to yield it, and indeed, yielding it already largely to Australia in the case of the gold mines.

From the facts which I have adduced in the course of this paper, I must come to the conclusion that there exists no reasonable ground for apprehending any se-

rious deficiency in our supply of cotton, although in cotton, as in every other product of the soil, fluctuations must be expected which no care can obviate. Our chief reliance, must long, in my opinion, be on Anglo-Saxon America, which at present furnishes us with four-fifths of the value of all that we consume. This mere name, however, does not imply that we receive the whole from a single country, for no fewer than seven sovereign states, each as large as an European kingdom, contribute to our supply,—all, too, competing with one another to make that supply as cheap, good, and abundant as possible.

The integrity of the cotton manufacture is indispensable to our prosperity, but the cultivation of the plant is, if possible, of still more vital importance to the Southern States of America. We derive our chief supply from them, and we are by far their best customers. There exists between us, consequently, a mutual and profitable dependence, which promises a long duration. If other countries can supply us with better cotton than America, our market, the best in the world, is free to them, and no doubt they will furnish it, but it does not appear to me that we are called upon to make extraordinary or eccentric efforts to insure it, any more than we are to insure a supply of corn or any other staple article of our consumption. In a struggle of seventy years, the Southern States of America have, in a great measure, succeeded in driving all other competitors out of the market, leaving to the rest of the producing countries but a small fraction of our consumption. To save themselves from their overpowering competitors, the tropical countries have betaken themselves to the culture of the sugar-cane and coffee, in the production of which they have the same advantage over the Southern States of America that these have over them in the culture of cotton.

ERRATUM.

In the April number of the Journal, page 86, 2nd column, eighth line from the bottom, for "*imago* state," read "*pupa* state."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Correspondents sending communications for insertion are particularly requested to write on one side only of half sheets or slips of paper. All communications relating to Industry and Manufactures will receive careful attention and reply, and it is confidently hoped that this department will become one of the most valuable in the Journal.

TO MANUFACTURERS & MECHANICS IN CANADA.

Statistics, hints, facts, and even theories are respectfully solicited. Manufacturers and Mechanics can afford useful coöperation by transmitting descriptive accounts of LOCAL INDUSTRY, and suggestions as to the introduction of new branches, or the improvement and extension of old, in the localities where they reside.

TO PUBLISHERS AND AUTHORS.

Short reviews and notices of books suitable to Mechanics' Institutes will always have a place in the Journal, and the attention of publishers and authors is called to the excellent advertising medium it presents for works suitable to Public Libraries. A copy of a work it is desired should be noticed can be sent to the Secretary of the Board.

* Extract from a paper read before the Society of Arts, by John Crawford, F.R.S., late governor of Singapore.