

COTTON COLLECTION, PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF GERALD FITZGERALD AND H. RIVETT-CARNAC, FORWARDED FROM INDIA TO THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF 1872 AND SENT FROM THE INDIA MUSEUM TO THE VIENNA UNIVERSAL EXHIBITION AT THE SUGGESTION OF BARON MAX KUBECK, ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT.

REPORT BY H. RIVETT-CARNAC ON THE COLLECTION. (Reprinted from the Journal of the Society of Arts, of 8th November 1872.)

THE International Exhibition of 1872, the programme of which included raw cotton, and everything connected with cotton manufacture, appeared to offer an excellent opportunity for bringing together a complete collection of the cottons grown in India, and of the articles manufactured therefrom; and of illustrating at the same time the measures adopted during the last few years by the Indian government to improve the cultivation and preparation of the staple, and to assist the trade in this most important article of Indian produce.

Considerable interest was taken in the subject by the late Earl of Mayo, and careful instructions were issued by his government to the central and local committees appointed in India to forward the views of Her Majesty's Commissioners for the International Exhibition, and to render the collection as perfect as possible. The result is the large array of Indian raw cotton, together with specimens of everything connected with the cultivation of the plant, its preparation for market, and the various processes of the manufacture in India of thread and cloth, exhibited in the West Quadrant adjoining the Albert Hall, specially assigned by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the purpose.

It is proposed in the present paper to give a brief sketch of the cultivation of the cotton plant in India, and to notice the chief points of interest in this collection.

Owing to climate and other influences, the staple of Indian cotton is unfortunately short, and not so well adapted to spinning as American, Egyptian, and other superior varieties. Until the commencement of the American civil war, and the consequent scarcity of cotton, the demand for "Surats," as Indian cotton was generally called, was comparatively small, both in the United Kingdom and on the continent of Europe. The year 1862, however, saw the manufacturers glad to get almost any description of cotton for their mills, and then came a great demand for the despised Surats, at prices far beyond the native cultivator's wildest hopes. Although the quantity that up to that time had found its way to Europe was, comparatively speaking, inconsiderable, cotton had always been cultivated on a large scale in India, chiefly for local consumption, and for exportation to China and elsewhere. The crop is one well adapted to the soil of many of the more fertile provinces of India, and is well understood by and popular among the peasantry. The consequence of the greatly enhanced prices offered for the produce was a remarkable extension of the cultivation of cotton throughout India, accompanied by the withdrawal of some quantities from local consumption. It is not very easy to collect accurate statistics of the area under cotton cultivation throughout all the provinces and presidencies in India. In some cases the returns prepared are merely rough estimates, but, on the whole, they give a fair idea of the effect on the cultivation of the sudden rise in the price of cotton. Thus, for instance, in the Central Provinces of India the area under cotton cultivation in the year 1862 was 375,000 acres. In the year 1865 it rose to 690,000 acres; and, although of recent years the cultivation has followed the prices, and has somewhat fallen off, there are still about 600,000 acres sown with cotton in those provinces. In the adjoining district of the Berars, in which some of the best Indian cotton is grown, the proportion of increase was hardly less than that noticed above, and the same may be said of the extension of cultivation in the Bombay Presidency. The following table shows