M.R.O. 14—5,450—23-10-25.

# MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

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## Government of Madras.

Revenue **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No. 865 Press ~~Mis.~~

226.227

Dated 13—4—1867.

***Not to be folded or roughly handled***

## *Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 13th April 1867.*

No. 226. Read the following Despatch from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India, (Revenue), to His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor in Council, Fort Saint George, dated India Office, London, 7th March 1867, No. 7:—

1. I transmit to your Excellency in Council fifteen copies of a Memorandum by Mr. McClintock, American Vice-Consul at Bradford, respecting the manufacture of China Grass, and the price which can be obtained for it in this country, which I have received from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

2. Lord Stanley, in transmitting this paper, informs me that he has ascertained, through the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, that the importance attached by the writer of the report to this article is not exaggerated, and that nothing but its high price stands in the way of its being largely consumed.

3. Under these circumstances I agree with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that it will be useful to forward copies of the report to any of the officers of your Presidency who reside in places which may be favourable to the cultivation and export of this grass.

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*Report by Mr. McClintock, American Vice-Consul at Bradford, respecting the manufacture of "China Grass."*

CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES, BRADFORD,
*December* 15, 1865.

The Chinese have for centuries made, by hand labour, various descriptions of "grass cloth," well known in America and Europe, and often of great strength and beauty, from the fibre of the Boehmeria cordata, or Urtica nivea, known in commerce as Chinese grass.

Large quantities of the grass have at various times been brought over to England, and probably also to the United States, in the hope of finding a market among the dry goods manufacturers who are always on the look-out for new materials; but it has hitherto been, and it is even now, found impossible to produce a true "grass cloth" by machinery. The fibre is rather brittle, though very strong, and it is found that the China grass cloth of commerce is only to be woven by hand labour, in which, of course, the Chinese themselves are beyond the reach of competition. Large quantities of the grass have, therefore, been in store in London and elsewhere for years. Some enterprising manufacturer would occasionally purchase a few tons with which to make experiments, but the only result for a long time was, that he who experimented the most lost the most. Thousands and even tens of thousands of pounds were sunk by one and another, who each fancied for a time that he had discovered the true method of working up this intractable substance. Whether it was tried in the United States or not, I do not know; but the concurrent testimony of my American friends in the trade is, that no one is now successfully working it at home. Within two or three years past, however, several firms in this neighbourhood have succeeded, by chemical means, in bringing the fibre into a state most closely resembling the best mohair or other bright worsted, and have worked up great quantities of the refined material as a substitute for worsted in many kinds of stuff goods, always, however, in combination with cotton (the warp being of cotton, and the weft of the China grass), as they have not yet been able to work it properly alone.

The manufacture of worsted goods—that is, of goods made of long-staple wool, as distinguished from short-staple or ordinary wool—has become an immense trade, of which Bradford has at present almost a monopoly, although the manufacture has lately been extending in many parts of New England. Four-fifths of these goods are of mixed material—that is, are made with cotton warps. And for many articles of the kind, especially for those requiring a stiff, strong, and cool

texture, combined with a glossy, silky appearance, it is found that the prepared China grass makes the very best material.

Of course, the grass manufacture is yet in very few hands, but its development already, even within the last few months, has been signally rapid. The market value of the raw material has for some years past maintained itself at the very high rate of about 80*l.* per ton, which price it is supposed cannot be much lessened for many years to come. Two things are certain in this respect: one, that there is now, and will be here, a practically limitless market for all the raw "grass" that can be imported at from 70*l.* to 80*l.* per ton; the other, that under any fluctuations of the market the material is intrinsically so valuable that it will always in the future command a price as high as that of cotton, and nearly or quite as high as that of worsted itself, if not even higher.

Here, then, is a great and rapidly increasing market for a certain vegetable production at a very high price. In America we have, on the other hand, vast tracts of country which, being in the same latitude and with very much the same climate as those districts of China of which the grass is native, should be able to grow this production to great advantage. Why not, then, introduce its culture?

It seems certain that the manufacture of the grass fibre will be established in our country at no distant day; but in the meantime there is a market in England for all that we can conveniently grow. It is, for our planters, simply a question of experiment with the seed, having in view the market price of the raw product. Successful experiments have been made very recently in Java and in India, proving that the grass will grow in any climate warm enough for the culture of cotton and sugar, provided the ground chosen be sufficiently moist.

I venture to suggest that further information, as well as quantities of the seed, &c., can doubtless be furnished by our Consular Officers in China, especially, perhaps, by the Consul at Hankow, that place being the chief market for the grass, which is brought thither from the interior, and often from a great distance.

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No. 227. ORDER THEREON, 13th April 1867, No. 865.

Miscellaneous.

1. Ordered that the Memorandum in question be communicated to the Board of Revenue for circulation to all Collectors, and that copies be distributed as follows:—

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|---|---|
| Sydapet Farm Committee ... ... ... ... | 3 |
| Agri-Horticultural Society ... ... ... ... | 3 |
| Remount Agent, Oossoor ... ... ... ... | 3 |
| Superintendent Government Gardens, Ooty ... | 3 |
| Do. do. do. Bangalore | 3 |

2. Ordered also to be placed on the Editors' Table.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) W. HUDLESTON,
*Secretary to Government.*

To the Board of Revenue.
" the Farm Committee.
" the Agri-Horticultural Society.
" the Remount Agent, Oossoor.
" the Superintendent Government Gardens, Ooty..
" the do. do. Bangalore.
" the Editors' Table.

Extd. S. T. Augustin.

India Office
London 7 March 1867

Revenue
No. 7

My Lord,

I transmit to your Excellency in Council fifteen copies of a Memorandum by Mr. McClintock, American Vice Consul at Bradford, respecting the manufacture of China Grass and the price which can be obtained for it in this Country which I have received from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Lord Stanley, in transmitting this paper informs me that he has ascertained through the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, that the importance attached

His Excellency
The Right Honorable
The Governor in Council
Fort St George.

attached by the Writer of
the Report to this Article
is not exaggerated, and that
nothing but its high price
stands in the way of its
being largely consumed.

3 Under these circumstances
I agree with the Secretary
of State for Foreign Affairs
that it will be useful
to forward Copies of the
report to any of the Officers
of your Presidency who
reside in places which may
be favorable to the cultivation
and export of this Grass.

I have the honor to be
My Lord
Your Lordships most obedient
humble Servant

C Cumberbatch

No 1.

Revenue,
March 67

To
The Collector of Fort St. George,
Madras

Received on 6th
April 1867
Via
Marseilles &
Bombay

No. 865.

Ordered that
the Memo. in question be
communicated to the Board of
Revenue for circulation
to all Collectors and that
copies be distributed as
follows.

| | |
|---|---|
| Agri & Hort. Farm Commtee | 3 |
| Agri Hort. Society | 3 |
| Remount Agent, Coimbatore | 3 |
| Supt. Govt. Farms, Ooty | 3 |
| Do. Bangalore | 3 |

Ordered also to be
placed on the Editors' Table.

13th March 67

Transmitting with
reference to Circular No. 865 of 1867
fifteen copies of a
Memo. by Mr. W. Chisholm,
Director Rice Culture Bengal
on the cultivation of Chinese grass and the high price
which can be obtained for it
in England.

No. 865 - 15 April 1867

With Order

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