

Royal Gazette.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1867.

Council Office, 6th November, 1867.

HIS Excellency the Lieutenant Governor in Council has been pleased to appoint *Mr. John Rodd* Postmaster at Bonshaw, in terms of the Act of 14 Victoria, Cap. 12, in the place of *Mr. Albert Morrow*, resigned.

CHARLES DESBRISAY, C. E. C.

GENERAL ORDER.

Militia Department.

15th NOVEMBER, 1867.

By His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief.

KING'S County Regiment of Volunteer Militia.

BROWN'S CREEK RIFLE COMPANY;

Alex. Campbell to be acting Captain vice E. McPhee who resigns; Kenneth Martin to be acting Ensign.

QUEEN'S COUNTY REGIMENT OF VOLUNTEER MILITIA.

Captain E. Purdy, 2nd Artillery Company, to be Adjutant.

A. J. DOUGLAS SMITH,

Col. Insp. Militia.

CIRCULAR.

DOWNING STREET,

25th October, 1867.

Sir,

With reference to the Circular Despatch from this Department of the 30th of March last, I transmit to you herewith a copy of a Letter from the Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew, enclosing extracts from the Reports of "The Agri-Horticultural Society of Bengal," containing instructions with regard to the cultivation and preparation of China Grass.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant

(Signed)

BUCKINGHAM & CHANDOS.

To Governor Dundas,
&c. &c. &c.

Dr. Hooker to Sir F. Rogers.

ROYAL GARDENS, KEW,

3rd October, 1867.

Sir,

The issue by the Secretary of State for the Colonies of the Circular respecting the cultivation of Grass Cloth (March, 1867) to the Colonies, has resulted in very numerous demands being made upon me for information regarding the method of preparing the fibre of that plant for exportation.

As the information required is to be found only in various volumes of the "Reports of the Agri-Horticultural Society of Bengal," a work not accessible in the Colonies, I have extracted from them the accompanying passages, which contain the necessary instructions; and I would take the liberty of suggesting, for the information of the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that it would be very advisable that these passages should be printed and circulated to the Colonies in which the aforesaid Circular was sent.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

JOS. D. HOOKER,
Director.

Sir F. Rogers, Bart.,
Colonial Office.

Instructions relative to the Cultivation and Preparation of the Fibre of Chinese Grass Cloth (Boehmeria nivea)

1.—ON THE CULTIVATION AND PREPARATION OF RHEEA FIBRE, OR CHINA GRASS. Communicated by Dr. D. J. MacGowan to Vol. VI, Part IV, of the Journal of the Agri-Horticultural Society of India.

Planting the Seeds.—In China, this takes place in May. Great care is first taken in the selection of seeds, and in the preparation of the soil. The seed should be gathered on the appearance of frost; those produced from a recent root are the best. After being dried they are stowed away in a basket or jar mixed with sand or dry earth, others say moist earth. The jar is then covered with straw to protect the seeds from the cold, as, if exposed to its influence, they yield an imperfect plant. Before planting, the seeds are tested by immersion in water, those which float are to be rejected, those

at the bottom to be planted. A loose dry soil is to be selected, if near a canal or rivulet it is preferable. The ground is to be well ploughed or broken finely, manured, and then divided into beds about eight yards long and one wide; the beds are to be raked and afterwards made compact with a hoe. After this it is watered and left for a night; on the following day raking up and pressing down is repeated. The beds being smooth, two or three table spoonsful of seed are mixed with a bowl of earth and sown broadcast over half-a-dozen beds, then they are swept with a broom to cover the seeds. In some places, the seeds are first made to sprout, and then planted in drills, which are carefully filled up. Just before the blades appear, a framework is to be constructed over the beds, on which mats should be spread to protect them from the heat of June and July. The matting must be kept moist by day, and removed at night that the blades may receive the dew of heaven. The beds are to be constantly weeded. When the plant is about two inches high, the framework and matting may be removed. When three inches high, it should be transplanted, having been well watered the night before; the blades should be taken up separately with a portion of earth and planted in a field, far removed from mulberry trees, about four inches apart. It may form a border to the cerealia and vegetables, protecting them from the depredations of domestic animals, which all avoid the "ma." In dry weather, the field is to be watered every three or four days until the second decade, when it may be watered every tenth day.

In November and December, manure it with horse or buffalo dung, earth, straw, or any rubbish, a foot or more thick, to protect it from cold. In March, rake it away and expose the plant, watering it in dry weather, and using rubbish of any kind for manure. A caution is given never to use swines' dung, as it is "saltish" and hurtful to the "ma." In the third or fourth year, some say in the second, the plant may be cut and used.

Planting the Roots.—The roots are to be cut in pieces of three or four fingers' length, and are to be planted in May, half a yard apart, and watered every three or four days. On the appearance of the blades, use the hoe and water them; they will be mature for cutting in the second year. In the course of ten years the roots become unfruitful, the shoots may then be cut off, and, if enveloped in earth and covered with matting, can be transplanted in places thirty or forty inches distant. The ground should be first well prepared with manure, and freely manured afterwards, the manure being half water. Here, as before, the plants should be hoed from time to time. In many cases fresh earth, pulverized bricks, ashes, &c., are used for manure. Some years the husbandman has his crop injured by worms, he needs, therefore, to seek for and destroy them as they appear by picking them off. It not unfrequently happens that the crop is in some places remarkably small, and sometimes the produce is very great without assignable cause.

Cutting the Ma.—It yields three crops every year. The first cutting takes place in June. Care is to be taken not to cut the young shoots, keep therefore an inch from the ground. In a month or two the shoots are seven or eight feet high, when the second cutting takes place—do not cut the original stem. During the latter part of September, or in October, the last cutting is performed, from which the finest cloth is made, the first being inferior, coarse, and hard. After each cutting, the plant is to be covered with manure and watered, but not day by day unless it be cloudy. At Canton, the plant is pulled up by the roots every year, from which it is evident that it differs widely from the "Ma" just described.

Peeling the "Ma."—On being cut the leaves are carefully taken off with a bamboo knife, by women and children, generally on the spot. It is then taken to the house and soaked in water for an hour, unless it is already wet by recent showers; in cold weather the water should be tepid. After this the plant is broken in the middle, by which the fibrous portion is loosened and raised from the stock; into the interstice thus made the operator, generally a woman or child, thrusts the finger nails, and separates the fibre from the centre to one extremity, and then to the other. The steeping process is very easy. It appears to be difficult to remove the fibres from the Canton "Ma," as it is soaked in water for more than forty-eight hours before peeling, which is done by men. They first cut off the roots, and then, separating the fibre from the stalk, strip it off by drawing it over a pin fixed in a plank. In either process half of the fibre is taken off at one stroke. The next process is scraping the hemp, to facilitate which the fibre is first soaked in water. The knife or scraper is about two inches long; its back is inserted in a handle of twice its length. This rude implement is held in the left hand; its edge, which is dull, is raised a line above the index finger. Strips of hemp are then drawn over the blade from within outwards, and being pressed upon by the thumb, the pilous portion of one surface and the mucilaginous part of the other are thus taken off. The hemp then "rolls up like boiled tendon." After being wiped dry, it is exposed to the sun for a day, and then assorted, the whitest being selected for fine cloth.