

Jute.

The amount paid for jute imported into the United States in 1873, was \$4,500,000; in 1880, for the year ending June 30, it was \$7,000,000, and for 1881 it will probably exceed \$10,000,000. Jute is an annual plant of the order *liliacea*, and of the genus *corchorus capsularis*. Its stem is from one-half inch to one inch in diameter, grows to the height of ten or twelve feet, is very straight, and branches out only at the top. It has sharply serrated, lanceolated leaves, about six inches long and nearly two inches wide. The flowers have five sepals and five petals. The stamens are numerous, but they have only one pistil. The bark is fibrous, like that of hemp or flax, and it is the fiber that is used. It is more soft and silky than either flax or hemp, and is very fine—that is, capable of minute division; and its being so fine and of such great length, causes it to be sometimes woven with silk in cheap fabrics. The seed is sown from April to June, and it may be cut in June, July and August. It is best to cut it when it begins to blossom, as the fiber is then better than when the plant is older. After being cut, the stems are steeped in water until the fiber separates easily from the stems. It is then prepared for the loom in a manner similar to that in which flax is prepared, only the stems are not dried and broken, as are the flax stems. In Egypt and Syria the *corchorus olitorius* is cultivated as a pot herb. The American linden or basswood, sometimes called "linn wood," is the most familiar representative of the order to which jute belongs, and the renowned honey of Lithuania is made from linden blossoms, and the highly prized Western honey comes from apiaries which are located near the great basswood forests in the West.

Jute is used to make coarse cloth, matings, cheap carpets, burlaps, coarse bagging, gunny, rice bags, coffee sacks, and like articles. It is not good for ropes, as it cannot stand the weather; yet our hemp ropes are frequently adulterated with jute. When the "waterfall" for the head was in fashion, many were the switches which were made of jute, instead of flax, as was then said.

Gunny is the name of the coarse cloth used to bale cotton. The yield of this year's cotton is set down at 6,000,000 to 6,250,000 bales. Each bale takes about 7 yards of gunny, hence 6,000,000 bales of cotton alone require 42,000,000 yards of cloth made from the fiber of the jute plant. This is one item, and the largest, but to it we must add the bagging for the increasing rice crop, and for wheat and coffee and pepper, until the whole catalogue is filled.

From experiments in jute culture in different parts of the United States, there is no doubt but that we could supply this demand, and find it a very profitable crop. It is a settled fact that in many of the Southern States we have splendid jute-growing lands. From Virginia to the Gulf it can be grown to perhaps a greater profit than any other crop. California, realizing the benefit of its culture, has been bagging her own products from her own soil for several years. Any portion of Virginia adapted to cotton would grow the jute plant successfully; it has succeeded wherever it has been tried in Virginia, North Carolina, and further South. It can be raised with less labor than is required for corn, and the time for harvesting comes when the planter can harvest it with very little interference with other crops. We hope to see our farmers give it a fair test. Mr. F. M. Elphinstone, of West Point, Va., has given considerable attention to jute culture, and proposes to engage in it extensively in the future.