

**SILK-COTTON.** Under this name, various silky fibres are from time to time brought from tropical countries to Europe; they are all of the same general character, and are produced by the trees composing the genus *Bombax* and other genera recently separated from *Bombax*, of the natural order *Sterculiaceae*, known as silk-cotton trees. These trees are natives of the tropical parts of Asia, Africa, and America. The fibre fills their large woody capsules, enveloping the seeds, and is produced in great abundance; but is too short, too smooth, and too elastic to be spun by the machinery used for cotton; although attempts have been successfully made on a small scale in India to spin and weave it; and that of *Bombax villosum*, which is of a beautiful purple colour, is woven into cloth and made into articles of dress in New Spain. Silk-cotton is much used for stuffing pillows, mattresses, and sofas. Sir James Emerson Tennent says it 'makes the most luxurious stuffing' for them. It has the fault, however, of being easily broken and reduced to powder, but might probably be very useful in the manufacture of gun-cotton and collodion. The silk-cotton of the East Indies is imported into Britain under the name of *Moc-main*.—*Bombax ceiba*, the common silk-cotton tree of the West Indies and South America, attains a very great size, its trunk sometimes being so thick that it could not be encompassed by the outstretched arms of sixteen men, and canoes are hollowed out of it of an average burden of twenty-five tons. The wood is soft and spongy, but is used for many purposes, and when cut into planks, and saturated with lime-water, it bears exposure to the weather for many years.—*Bombax Malabaricum*, or *Salmalia Malabarica*, is the common Silk-cotton Tree of the East Indies. It is a tall tree, covered with formidable thorns. Although it is a tropical tree, its leaves fall annually; and just before the fresh leaves appear, it is covered with crimson tulip-like flowers, so abundant, that 'when they fall, the ground for many roods on all sides is a carpet of scarlet.'

The fibre of the capsules of *Chorisia speciosa* and *C. Pecholtiana* trees nearly allied to the genus *Bombax*, and natives of Brazil, is known as **VEGETABLE SILK**. It has a beautiful satiny lustre, and is very light, but no mode of spinning and weaving it has yet been invented.