

**LINEN** (from *linum*, flax.) In commerce, a well-known kind of cloth chiefly made of flax.—Linen was not worn by the Jews, Greeks, or Romans, as any part of their ordinary dress. Under tunics of a finer texture supplied the place of shirts; hence the occasion for frequent bathing. Alexander Severus was the first emperor who wore a shirt; but the use of so necessary a garment did not become common till long after him.

The linen manufacture was probably introduced into Britain with the first settlements of the Romans. The flax was certainly first planted by that nation in the British soil. The plant itself indeed appears to have been originally a native of the East. The woollen drapery would naturally be prior in its origin to the linen; and the

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fibrous plants from which the threads of the latter are produced seem to have been first noticed and worked by the inhabitants of Egypt. In Egypt, indeed, the linen manufacture appears to have been very early; for even in Joseph's time it had risen to a considerable height. From the Egyptians the knowledge of it proceeded probably to the Greeks, and from them to the Romans. Even at this day the flax is imported among us from the eastern nations; the western kind being merely a degenerate species of it.

The principal and almost only linen manufacture in the British dominions is in Ireland, whence prodigious quantities of linens are exported. It is of great importance, however, in order to succeed in the linen manufacture, that one set of people should be confined to the ploughing and preparing the soil, sowing and covering the seed, to the weeding, pulling, rippling, and taking care of the new seed, and watering and dressing the flax till it is lodged at home; others should be employed in the drying, breaking, scutching, and heckling the flax, to fit it for the spinners; and others in spinning and reeling it, to fit it for the weaver: others should be concerned in taking due care of the weaving, bleaching, beetling, and finishing the cloth for the market. It is reasonable to believe, that if these several branches of the manufacture were carried on by distinct dealers in those places, where our home-made linens are manufactured, the several parts would be better executed, and the whole would be afforded cheaper, and with greater profit to the manufacturer. See BLEACHING, WEAVING, &c.

Spinning flax has been brought to such perfection in Ulster, that, according to Dr. Stephenson, twenty hanks, and sometimes thirty, weigh only one pound. He also assures us that a young woman of Comber, in the county of Down, spins so fine that sixty-four hanks weigh only one pound; each thread round the reel is two yards and a half long, one hundred threads in each cut, twelve

cuts in each hank. Thus the aggregate length of the thread contained in the 64 hanks amounts to more than 74 miles!

For a very long period the linen manufacture was principally confined to Ulster; and it was not till the year 1791 that the regulations of the trade which had been hitherto confined to that province were extended to the provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught: particular bounties having been given to them for a few years previously to 1791. The importance and extent of the trade may be estimated, therefore, by attending to the following statement of the exports from Ireland between the years 1700 and 1778, and by considering that during that period the manufacture of linen was almost entirely confined to the province of Ulster.

The annual average quantity of linen cloth exported from Ireland from 1700 to 1750 was not four million yards; from 1750 to 1758, the number of yards exported annually was 11,796,361; from 1757 to 1763, 14,511,973; from 1764 to 1770, 17,776,862. The average quantity of yarn exported annually, in the first of the foregoing periods, was 15,000 cwt.; in the second, it was 24,328 cwt.; in the third, 33,114 cwt.; in the fourth, 32,311 cwt.; in the last, 31,471 cwt.

From 1770 to 1777, the average quantity of cloth exported annually was 20,252,239 yards: and the annual average quantity of yarn exported, during the same seven years, was 31,475 cwt.

From the year 1756 to 1773, England was the market for nearly nine-tenths of the whole Irish exportation.

The foregoing statement is taken from Mr. Arthur Young. The following account will give our readers an opportunity of estimating the annual state of the linen trade, since the year 1777.

An account of the quantity of linen cloth exported from Ireland, from the 25th of March, 1776, to the 5th of January, 1809, inclusive.