

BLANKET (Fr. *blanchet*; originally, a kind of white woolen stuff, dimin. of *blanc*, white; cf. Eng. *blank*). A sheet of heavy woolen or partly woolen cloth, which is used for beds, for horse coverings, and to wrap around the person. In the early years of the last century, especially from 1812 to 1815, the manufacture of blankets in the United States was confined to the production of coarse qualities, chiefly for the military and naval forces. The War of 1812 gave a great impetus to woolen manufactures, and factories sprang up everywhere; but with the restoration of peace these enterprises met with disaster because of the superior goods that were imported at much lower prices. In 1831 a large mill for the manufacture of cotton-warp blankets for the use of slaves was erected near Pendleton, S. C. It is said that in the same year a factory was built near Buffalo, N. Y., for the manufacture of Mackinaw or Indian blankets. In 1860 the census reports stated that the manufacture of blankets was carried on in 19 different States, and that the total output was 616,400 blankets, which were produced chiefly in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and California. The manufacture of blankets increased largely during the Civil War and in the years immediately following, and the importations decreased proportionally. Since that time the values of the finer grades of white bed blankets have become much reduced, and the production of the poorer qualities discontinued. Since about 1880 great advances have been made in the manufacture of blankets, and those of lighter weight, but more fleecy finish, are preferred to the heavy grades of former years. Superior grades were formerly manufactured in California and Oregon, costing over \$20 per pair, or more than \$2 per pound. All-wool blankets can be obtained from \$5 upward, while cheap blankets can be bought as low as \$2 a pair.

The best blankets are made wholly of wool, but those of medium or inferior qualities are formed of cotton warp and woolen filling threads, the aim of the manufacturer being to raise the fibres of the woolen yarn into a loose, soft mat on the face of the blanket so as to hide the threads below. Extraordinarily fine woolen blankets have been made in Mysore in India, some of which, it is said, are so delicate that, though 18 feet long, they can be rolled inside a hollow bamboo. Such fancy blankets

cost about \$150. The blankets made by the Navajo (q.v.) Indians of northern Arizona and New Mexico are much sought after where durability and warmth are desired. The Navajos occupy a reservation of 8,000,000 acres in northern Arizona and New Mexico; they are the most civilized of the Indian tribes, and number about 16,000. They possess about 1,000,000 sheep, which they raise for their wool to make into blankets. The wool which comes from their flocks is rudely carded and spun on a spindle resembling a boy's top. The loom consists of two horizontal beams, one hung above the other and the warp stretched between. The shuttle is a stick. The colors most used are black, red, blue, and yellow; the patterns are geometrical designs. The value of a Navajo blanket depends upon its weight. The average weight is 20 pounds, and the value in 1913 was from \$1 to \$2 per pound. They were much sought after by tourists as well as for decoration, on account of the rich coloring. Blankets are also made by other Indian tribes of the Southwest, and specimens are shown in the accompanying Colored Plate. Consult Hollister, *The Navajo and his Blanket* (Denver, 1903).