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The Cultivation and Preparation of Flax.

Flax-culture is a subject that has already received attention in the pages of this Journal, particularly in the volumes of the last and preceding years. As the matter is daily acquiring more importance in Canada, and has already assumed a practical character in more than one locality, we shall proceed, in accordance with instructions received from the Board of Agriculture, at its last meeting, to throw together some plain and practical observations on the most approved methods of the culture and treatment of flax; to which both soil and climate of Canada are generally well adapted.

Flax of one kind or another has been cultivated and employed for textile purposes from remote antiquity. It is several times mentioned in the Bible. The Greeks were well acquainted with the uses of the plant; and most of the writers on Roman husbandry distinctly refer to it, sometimes with considerable detail, particularly Pliny, who treats with great minuteness of its culture, and subsequent preparation. After the fall of the Roman Empire, but little can be learnt respecting it till the twelfth century, when we learn from documents that have come down to us, that flax has been regularly cultivated both in the British Islands, and the continent of Europe. Much curious legislation took place in reference to the culture and manufacture of

this plant during several centuries, some of which would be both amusing and suggestive to our readers, if space would permit us to descend to particulars.

There are several species of flax, some of which are to be found either cultivated or indigenous in countries in each of the four quarters of the world; and also in Australia and New Zealand. Most of these possess fibres more or less suitable for textile purposes; but only a few have attained to any agricultural or commercial importance. The only species that can be said to have any claim on the farmer's attention for general cultivation, is the *Linum usita tissinum*, or common flax; "which is an annual plant, with delicate branching, round stem, from 18 to 24 inches, covered thinly with narrow glaucous, thin ribbed leaves, and bearing at the ends, pale, blue, shining flowers. The flower heads possess four, or more commonly five sepals; the petals are always equal in number with the sepals; the stamens are also equal in number, and alternated with them. The flowers are succeeded by a seed-pod, or ovarium, agriculturally known as the "boll" or "capsule," with ten divisions, or rather five perfect cells, which are again separated by an imperfect partition, extending from its outward wall. In each of these cells is found a single seed, of a flattened oval shape, of a more or less dark brown colour, mucilaginous to the taste, and containing a large proportion of a brown-