

Holland. Friesland flax is possessed of hygroscopic properties in a more marked degree than any other flax, and absorbs and retains moisture so readily as to be easily injured. This peculiarity is said to be due to the flax being impregnated with saline matter, taken from the brackish water in which it is steeped.

The mills get their supplies of fiber either direct from the market or through a commission house. The larger firms employ their own buyers both at home and on the Continent. At home the buyers visit the various markets, where the farmers usually sell their own flax, or they visit the scutch mills and pick up any good lots which the scutchers are authorized to sell on behalf of the farmers. In Courtrai the flax is bought from the factors at their mills, but all the Belgian towns have their weekly markets. When in the market the buyers buy for a couple of hours, while the market is in progress, and then proceeding to the store, take the flax in. When the buyer is bargaining with the farmer, there are certain men who frequent the market and "put in an oar" to help the buyer. For this service they expect a "thrum," or 3d per stone on the flax. The buyer, if he has not time to fight the farmer out, may give the man leave to buy the flax at a certain figure, promising him the usual "thrum." The buyer usually has his own store, for which he pays so much per week or per stone. He has also to pay so much for baling, cartage, etc. When taking the flax into the store, it is necessary to count the stones, test their weight, and examine them, to make sure that they are up to the average quality at which they were bought. Sometimes the farmer may have two sorts of flax in his cart; perhaps it may be grown in the same field, but watered in different water, and for this reason not equal in quality. If the buyer bought the flax by the better sample, and was not told about the other, he must object to take the inferior flax at the same price. In every load there are generally some stones of "thatch" or flax which has been used as the outside covering of the rick, and which from exposure to the weather has become "blashed" and rotten. These stones the buyer must get at a lower price. If the "taking in" has been satisfactorily accomplished, the farmer awaits payment at a place agreed upon, usually a hotel. The buyer makes out the cost of all his buyings, and draws a sufficient sum from the bank to cover. His firm usually has an agreement with the bank to let him have any amount up to a certain figure on that day. Having got the money, he goes to the place agreed upon and pays the farmer, receiving as a receipt the ticket which he gave when purchasing the flax. In some places, such as Strabane, there is a very small open market; for the dealers go round the country, buy the flax from the farmer, and bring it into their own stores, where they sell it at a profit to the buyers at the next market. In some markets the buyer must exercise vigilance, lest the dealers mix the flax, veneering

over poor flax with some of good quality; also that the flax has been grown in the district, and is what it is represented to be, since occasionally dealers buy Strabane or some inferior flax and put it up as Cookstown, etc., sending it to that market to be sold as a genuine farmer's lot. The buyer, having completed his market, makes out an invoice of the flax bought, the quantity of each lot, the number with which it is ticketed, and its price. This invoice, when received at the mill, is entered in the "flax invoice book," under a certain lot number, which commences at the beginning of the season. One or more days' buying in the same market constitutes a "lot," the result of which is made up by itself in a manner to be described. When the flax arrives at the mill, it is examined by the manager or whoever has that duty, and reported upon in a book kept for that purpose. This book, which also records the number of the lot and buying (or in the case of Courtrai, Flemish, or Dutch, the bale number), is invaluable to the foreman hackler, who, when the flax is stored away, is able to ascertain what lot would suit best to lay out and weigh off to give the numbers which he requires. When the flax is "sorted," every farmer's lot should be kept separate and weighed off into separate parcels, in order that the sorter may not have too many sorts upon his table at one time. Where the flax is to be "spread" direct from the "tipple," which is done in some of the best mills, it is advisable to mix suitable buyings before weighing off, in order that the average quality may be as uniform as possible. The flax stores should be large and roomy, and, above all, dry. Asphalt makes a very good floor. Semi-darkness should prevail, except where a good light is required for examining flax. The bright rays of the sun, say, through a glass roof, are apt to evaporate the volatile oil of the fiber, rendering it dry and "hasky," if it does not change the color in some degree. The flax should always be weighed off to the roughers in 2 cwt. parcels, with the exception of the "odds" of a farmer's lot, which, if the flax is to be sorted, should be weighed off separately. The ticket which is given to the rougher with each parcel accompanies the flax right through the roughing, hackling, and sorting processes, until as "dressed line," it is "weighed in" from the sorters. This parcel ticket has spaces in which to enter the weight weighed off, the tow, shorts, and waste made in the roughing, the machine tow and waste made in the hackling, the "tipples" to sorter, and the tow and waste which he makes, together with the "dressed line" weighed in. The latter item, added to the sum of all the tows and wastes, should, of course, equal the weight of rough flax originally weighed off to the rougher, thus proving the correctness of the details. The roughing shop should be lofty and well ventilated, as there is a considerable quantity of dust or "stour" given off by the flax while it is being worked. The "Special Rules" relating to flax spinning mills, issued some time ago by the