

The fibre is that which gives to flax its greatest value. On cutting through a stem of this plant the centre is found to be occupied by pith, surrounding which is a layer of ordinary woody fibres, and outside of these the inner bark which is formed of very long and remarkably tough fibres; the whole being covered by a skin or epidermis. The object of the processes of retting and scutching of the flax plant is to separate these fibres composing the inner bark from all the other portions. The fibre of flax is very tough and is well adapted for spinning, and as compared with cotton, wool or silk, it is a good conductor of heat, linen clothing being proverbially cool.

THE FLAX CROP IN MANITOBA.

In Manitoba flax is grown for its seed only; no use has yet been made of the straw, and it is claimed by practical men that the fibre in it is too short, and is too limited in quantity and poor quality to be worked with profit. The area under flax in this province in 1894 is given as 30,000 acres, and the yield averaged 12 bushels per acre, a total of 360,000 bushels. In 1895 the area under flax was 82,500 acres, and the average yield, according to the estimate of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture, was 15½ bushels per acre, giving a total production in that province of 1,281,354 bushels.

ITS PRODUCTION AND VALUE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The crop of flax seed in the United States in 1894 was a poor one, amounting in all to only about 7,500,000 bushels; whereas the average crop is about 14,000,000 bushels. This shortage resulted in high prices and flax seed in Chicago, one of the chief markets for this product, commanded during the autumn of that year from \$1.40 to \$1.50 per bushel. The duty on flax seed entering the United States is 20 cents per bushel, and a considerable quantity of the Manitoba crop was bought by United States purchasers, who paid from \$1.15 to \$1.25 per bushel for it. As the quantity of flax seed grown in North America was not sufficient to supply the demand, the home product was supplemented by large importations from India and the Argentine Republic. The flax crop of 1895 in the United States was a very large one, the area under cultivation was much increased, and the total yield of seed is estimated at nearly 19,000,000 bushels. This abundant crop has brought down the price, which has ranged of late in the principal markets of the United States at from 90 cents to \$1 per bushel; and the value in Manitoba on the basis of these prices has fallen to about 70 cents. The flax crop of the United States is produced almost entirely in the North-western States, the greater part of it in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. As in Manitoba, this crop is grown in the Western States almost entirely for the seed; the efforts which have been repeatedly made to utilize the fibre have not met with much success. It is said that here also the dry climate reduces the quantity of fibre in the straw as well as its quality, so that it does not pay to work it. A small proportion of the straw is used in factories where upholsterers' tow is produced, and also in paper mills, at prices ranging from \$2.50 to \$4 per ton; but by far the larger part is disposed of by burning.