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**FLAX: A STUDY FOR THE POLITICAL
ECONOMIST.**

(Continued from page 116.)

The history of flax is traced throughout the writings of the Old and New Testaments, linen and flax being there often mentioned. "Fine linen" appears to have been one of the marks of distinction of priests and princes. In the days of king Solomon it was an article of commerce, brought to him from Egypt. The Tyrians were skilled in it, for Hiram king of Tyre sent to Solomon "a cunning man," "skilled to work in fine linen." "The spindle," "the distaff," "the shuttle," and "the weaver's beam," are all mentioned in Scripture; and notwithstanding the simplicity of these primitive instruments of manufacture, they wove "garments without seam," and produced linen cloth which has survived to the present time, enwrapping the mummies of Egypt, some of which have been brought to England, and specimens of linen cloth taken from them may be seen in the British Museum in London. Some of these specimens are of exceeding fineness, 270 threads to an inch warp and 110 west or woof—whilst the finest production woven in India by the Deccan loom have only 100 threads to the inch of warp and 84 in the woof or west. The cultivation of flax, and the manufacture of linen, kept company with civilization as it marched westward and northward, through Europe, over Greece, Italy, Spain and France, and was brought to England by the Romans; but it is believed that they only brought the productions of flax, and that the cultivation of it was not introduced into that country for some centuries after; for as a modern author writes, "At the time of the Norman conquest flax was not enumerated amongst the titheable articles at that time." And he adds, "had it been discovered by the clergy, there is little doubt but that they would have had it in their tithe list."

It is thought that linen was introduced into Ireland by the Tyrian or Phœnician traders long before the Romans visited Britain. Be that as it may, it has been stated upon what is believed to be reliable authority, that flax was used A.D. 500,

and that at that time the Irish wrapped in linen the bodies of deceased persons of eminent rank. The linen "Cota" was an article of dress used by them three or four centuries after that, but it is thought that up to the eleventh century the flax used in Ireland was for the most part imported, and there are even some who do not date the introduction of the manufacture of linen into that country so far back. About the close of the fourteenth century "breeches of linen cloth" were worn by the kings. Through the fifteenth century linen was found amongst the productions of Ireland, and from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Irish had "plenty of linen."

It seems the Clergy in England did at last discover flax, for the Council of Westminster, in 1175, included it among the titheable productions of the land. (Macpherson's Annals of Commerce.) "Fine linen" was made in England, and "linen shirts" came into use, in 1223. The Flemings introduced the weaving of fine linen into that kingdom in 1253, and a company of linen weavers existed in London in 1388. But for some reason not known, the cultivation of flax received especial attention at the hands of the English government early in the 16th century. In 1531-2-3, laws were passed enacting that for every sixty acres of tillage land, one rood should be sown in each year with flax or hemp. (See Macpherson's Annals of Commerce.) This quantity was increased to an acre in 1662. (Elizabeth's reign.) In 1664, Abraham Hill registered a patent for a machine in England "for breaking and dressing flax." In 1677, a Mr. Andrew Yarranton published a book called "England's Improvement by Sea and Land, to outdo the Dutch without fighting; to pay the debts without money; and to set at work all the Poor of England with the growth of the land." The entire burthen of his song was "flax;" and were an author of the present day to substitute the names of "Canada" for England, and "United States" for Dutch, he would have a suitable title for an elaborate and useful work on the same subject at the present time.

In the reign of Henry VIII. in addition to the English acts of 1531-2-3 to compel the sowing of flax in England, an act was passed in Ireland, in 1542, forbidding merchants from "forestalling" linen and linen yarn; and in the 11th year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, 1569, that act was revived and a law made against watering flax or hemp in rivers, &c.; and in 1571, another act was passed prohibiting all persons "from exporting linen yarn, excepting merchants residing in cities and boroughs." In the same year, a further act was passed "for the employing the inhabitants and