

imperfect partition, thus forming ten divisions, each of them containing a single seed. These seeds are oval in shape, flattened or plump, smooth and shining, of a brownish color externally, but sometimes white; always white internally: the seed-coat mucilaginous, and the kernel of the seed oily and farinaceous.

The flax plant was cultivated by the earliest of the civilized nations of antiquity, and is becoming every day of still greater importance. It may be seen from the paintings in the tombs of Egypt, that it was early cultivated in that country, and it has been proven that it was so, from a microscopic examination of mummy-cloth. We read in the book of "Exodus" of the flax and the barley being smitten by the plague of hail in Egypt, and in "Joshua" of the spies, who had been sent to report on the state of Jericho, being hid with stalks of flax. Subsequently, it was much cultivated both by the Greeks and Romans.

The flax plant is one of the humblest of those which are cultivated, and yet it is one of the most important, thought not particularly useful as an article of diet. Its slender stem, narrow leaves, and beautiful blue flowers, give it an elegant appearance. Its smooth and shining seeds have their external coating formed of much condensed mucilage, while the white kernel is gorged with oil, especially valued for its drying properties; and the refuse or oil-cake affords a nutritious diet for cattle. The fibre of flax separated from the stem may be made use of for cordage, for coarse fabrics, or for the finest cambrics and lawns. Hence it is a principal object of attention in Russia and Poland, a highly successful culture in Belgium, carried on also in Germany, France, and Italy, the object of frequent legislative enactment in England, and of recent most successful cultivation in Ireland. Hence, also, it was re-established by the late Pasha in Egypt. It has been frequently recommended for culture in India on account of its fibre, as it already is in almost every part of that country for its seed. As much attention, also, has been given to the husbandry of flax in the United States and Canada as to any other branch of rural economy.

The encouragement given by Government to the culture of flax in Ireland has been of considerable advantage. The quality of the flax has been so greatly improved that the Jury of Class IV. of the Exhibition of 1851, stated—"The entire collection shown by the Royal Society for Improving and Promoting the Growth of Flax in Ireland is so highly valuable, and so clearly illustrates the great advances which have been made and the important service which this society has rendered to the country, that they determine to mark their high appreciation of their labours by recommending them to have one of the Council Medals."

But, notwithstanding the endeavors of successive governments, the supply of home-grown flax has never reached the extent required by the manufacturers of the United Kingdom. At present, it is considered that the consumption is equal to 160,000 tons. About 70,000 tons were, for several years, annually imported; or more precisely, in the year 1831, 46,820 tons; in the year 1843, about 72,000 tons were imported, but in 1853 no less than 94,000 tons, or an increase of about 81 per cent. in the decennial period. If the 160,000 tons be valued at an average of forty, or, according to others, at fifty pounds a ton, the amount is enormous. To this must be added "£1,500,000, the value of 650,000 quarters of linseed, used as seed and for crushing purposes; and about £500,000, the cost of 70,000 tons of oil-cake,