LINEN AND LINEN MANUFACTURE.

Fabrics manufactured wholly from flax or linen. The manufacture of linen has reached its greatest perfection in France and the Netherlands, where the stimulus to produce fine yarn (see Spinning) for the lacemakers has given rise to such care and attention in the cultivation and preparation of flax, that in point of fineness of fibre they have been unequalled. Consequently the linens of France, Belgium, and Holland have long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation, and in the article of lawn, which is the finest kind of linen-cloth made, the French are unrivalled. In its ordinary kinds of linen, our own manufacture is rapidly improving, and will soon equal in quality the productions of continental competitors. Thus of Ireland, especially, are remarkable for their excellence, and this trade has become a very important one in that country; whilst in Scotland a large trade in the coarser and inferior kinds has leased itself. The export of linen manufactures and fine yarns from the United Kingdom, in 1876, was a value of £7,950,149; and the amount produced for home-consumption may be reckoned at £10,000,000.

The chief kinds of linen manufactures, both yarn and thread, which will be described under Spinning, are: Lawn (or Lawn), the finest of all the manufactures, formerly exclusively a French production, but very fine lawns are now made in Belfast, Armagh, and Warrington: Cambric (q.v.); Damask (q.v.); Diaper (q.v.). Of the finer plain fabrics, Sheetings are the most important in this country. The chief places of their manufacture are Belfast, Armagh, and Leeds. Combed Sheetings and Towelling are very extensively manufactured in Scotland, particularly at Dundee, Kirkaldy, Forfar, and Ayrshire. Duck, Duckcloth, Osnaburg, Crash, and Tick (corrupted from Tick and Decken, Dutch for cover), are very coarse and heavy materials, some fully bleached, others unbleached, or nearly so. They are chiefly made in Scotland, the great seat of the manufacture being at the towns just mentioned, although much is made in the smaller towns and villages, also at Leeds and Barnsley in England. Some few varieties of velvet and velveteen are also made of flax at Manchester, and much linen-yarn is used as warp for other materials.

Linen is one of the most ancient of all textile manufactures, at least it is one of the earliest mentioned. The cerecloth, in which the most ancient mummies are wrapped, proves its early and very extensive use among the Egyptians. It formed also parts of the garments of the Hebrews as well as the Egyptian priests. Panoptopolis was the centre of this manufacture in Egypt. From the time of these ancient Egyptians up to the present period, the use of linen for clothing and other purposes has been continuous; although the introduction and vast development of the cotton manufacture checked its consumption for a time, it has fully regained, and has indeed exceeded, its former proportions as one of our.grow staples.