INDIGO, n. f. [indicum, Latin.] A plant, by the Americans called anil. In the middle of the flower is the style, which afterward becomes a jointed pod, containing one cylindrical seed in one partition, from which indigo is made, which is used in dyeing for a blue colour. Miller.

(2) Indigo is a dye prepared from the leaves and small branches of the Indigofera Taccifolia. (See the next article.) Indigo is of two kinds, made from two different plants, the true and the bastard. (See No. 3.) Though the first is sold at a higher price on account of its superiority, it is usually advantageous to cultivate the other, because it is cheaper. The first will grow in many different soils; the second succeeds best in those which are not exposed to the rain. Both are liable to great accidents. Sometimes the plant becomes dry, and is destroyed by an insect frequently found on it; at other times, the leaves which are the valuable part of the plant, are devoured in the space of 24 hours by caterpillars. This production ought to be gathered in with great precaution, for fear of making the faima that lies on the leaves, and is very valuable, fall off by shaking it. The plants, when gathered are thrown into the steeping vat, which is a large tub filled with water, wherein they undergo a fermentation, which in 24 hours at most is completed. A cock is then turned, to let the water run into the mortar or pounding tub. The steeping vat is then cleansed out, that fresh plants may be thrown in; and thus the work is continued without interruption. The water which has run into the pounding tub is found impregnated with a very soluble earth, which constitutes the dye or blue substance that is the object of this process, and which must be separated from the uduflet of the plant, because this makes the dregs form on the surface. To effect this, the water is forcibly agitated with wooden buckets, full of holes and fixed to a long handle. This part of the process requires great caution. If the agitation be discontinued too soon, the part that is used in dyeing, not being sufficiently separated from the felt, would be lost. If, on the other hand, the dye were to be agitated too long after the complete separation, the parts would be brought together again, and form a new combination; and the felt re-acting on the dregs would excite a 2d fermentation, that would alter the dye, spoil its colour, and make what is called burnt indigo. These accidents are prevented by a close attention to the leaf alterations, the dye undergoes, and by the precaution which the workmen take to draw out a little of it from time to time in a clean vessel. When they perceive that the coloured particles collect by separating from the rest of the liquor, they leave off shaking the buckets, to allow time to the blue dregs to precipitate to the bottom of the tub, where they are left to settle till the water is quite clear. Holes made in the tub, at different heights, are then opened one after another, and this uduflet water is let out. The blue dregs remaining at the bottom having acquired the confidence of a thick, muddy liquid, rocks are then opened; which draw it off into the settler. After it is still more cleared of much superfluous water in this 3d and last tub, it is drained into pails; from whence, when water no longer filters through the cloth, this matter, now become of a thicker consistence, is put into chests, where it entirely loses its moisture. In three months the indigo is fit for sale. It is used, in washing, to give a bluish colour to linen; painters also employ it in their water colours; and dyers cannot make fine blue without it. The ancients procured it from the East Indies; in modern times, it has been transplanted into America. The cultivation of it, successfully attempted at different places, appears to be fixed at Carolina, St Domingo, and Mexico. That which is known under the name of Guatimala indigo, from the place whence it comes, is the most perfect. There are two kinds of indigo prepared in the East Indies, particularly on the coast of Coromandel, at Pondicherry, &c. Of these the worst kind is used for giving the body of colour to the dyed substance, the other being employed only to give it a gloss afterwards. The finest is prepared on the coast of Agra, Malipatam, and Ayanam, but especially in the island of Java; but this last, being extremely dear, is very little used by the dyers. The best floats on the surface of water; its colour is a very dark blue inclining to violet, bright and sparkling, especially when broken. It may be tried by dissolving a little in a glafs of water; if pure, it will mix equally with the liquor; but if otherwise, will separate and fall to the bottom. Another method of trying the goodness of this substance is by fire; for the pure indigo will be entirely consumed, while the extraneous particles will remain. The powdered indigo is much more subject to adulteration than such as is sold in cakes or tablets; as the ashes or dirt with which it is mixed are very apt to separate.
rate from the pure colouring substance when standing in a liquid state, as it must always do before the moisture is evaporated: whence, on breaking a bit of indigo so adulterated, the extraneous matter will be perceived in strata of a different colour.