

Flax-cot'ton. A process was invented by Chevalier Claussen for cottonizing flax, to render it suitable for manufacture, the objects being to expedite the processes of separating the fiber from the cellular and glutinous matters, and then reducing the fiber to a staple which can be readily treated by machinery. The flax-straw is boiled for four hours in a solution of caustic alkali in a stone vessel, by which the extraneous matters are loosened; it is then placed for two hours in a bath slightly acidulated with sulphuric acid. It is then dried and scutched to remove the cellulose. The cottonizing is performed by steeping the fiber in a bath of dilute bicarbonate of soda, and subsequently in an acidulated liquid. The action of the acid and alkali within the flax fiber generates carbonic-acid gas, and has the effect of bursting apart the fibers, which assume a cottony appearance. It is then bleached and spun, either mixed or otherwise.

In the first volume of the "Transactions of the Society of Arts" is a paper detailing the experience of Lady Moira, about 1770, in attempting to introduce flax cotton. She states that tow and refuse flax of all kinds, boiled with an alkaline solution, and afterwards soured, is converted into a sort of cotton which takes dye better than flax. Her comments are really noteworthy, and illustrate the oft-told tale of the difficulties which inventors and discoverers have to struggle against in the preconceived opinions of others.