

fine as those of flax, if not finer, it has also the additional advantage of possessing, in a remarkable degree, a silky lustre. Jute, the only other fibre which can compete with it in this respect, is far inferior to it in strength and durability, as well as in its capability for bleaching and dyeing. It has been tried as a substitute for cotton, hemp, flax, wool, and silk. During the scarcity of cotton in England, cottonized rhea was spun, and the yarn woven into different fabrics, and dyed and printed. In some cases it was mixed with Egyptian, and in others with India cotton. The fabrics acquired a gloss which gave them the appearance of linen. Though the experiment was to a certain extent successful, the cost and other considerations precluded the possibility of its use as a substitute for cotton. It may, however, become a formidable rival to flax, in the finer varieties. It has also been successfully used as a substitute for longer-stapled wools; and, since the Exhibition of 1851, many attempts have been made, both in England and France, to test its suitability as a substitute for silk, or as an admixture with it, but in this respect it has a formidable rival in jute, on account of its greater cheapness. The superiority of rhea to hemp as regards strength and resistance to water may make it an advantageous substitute, and it may be possible to replace hempen cordage by lighter rhea ones. Should the prices of the raw material become reduced, and the means of its preparation be improved, rhea can scarcely fail to take a high place among fibres and to come into more extensive use. Indeed, there hardly exists a fibre which, on account of its own inherent properties, can be applied to so many different purposes. It is capable of entering largely into textile manufactures, and, as compared with flax,—which possesses the most extended range of applications, from the roughest canvas and cordage to the finest lace,—rhea has a range even greater still, owing partly to the superlative degree in which it is endowed with the qualities of fineness, strength, and lustre, seldom found in the same perfection in any single fibre, and partly to the singular position which it holds between the usual vegetable and the animal fibres. Although a vegetable fibre, its hairiness assimilates it to wool, and its gloss and fineness to silk. Thus it appears that rhea is capable of as wide a range of applications as hemp, to which it is superior in almost every respect, and as flax also, with the exception perhaps of its use for body linen, while it is capable of certain other uses for which only the animal fibres, wool and silk, have hitherto been employed. The cost of the raw material alone may be said to prevent its extensive introduction into manufactures. Any slight technical difficulties experienced in spinning and weaving which may remain