

sloping roof, and to support the ropes which are to keep down the thatch.

When this breadth of, say, two feet, of the thatch is laid, its surface is smoothed down with a *comb*, i. e. a bar of wood of about 3 feet long, with teeth of wood, or preferably of iron, about 4 inches apart, and then a rope is thrown across the stack at its end, and another parallel to it at about 10 inches apart, and made fast at both ends to the sides of the stack. Other ropes, at right angles to the first, are fastened, 18 inches apart, to the end of the stack, and each of the horizontal ropes is twisted once round every perpendicular rope it meets, so that, when finished, the roping has the appearance of a square-meshed net, (v. eng. 2). The eaves are completed by laying a stout rope horizontally along the line where the drawing-in of the roof was begun, and twisting it round each perpendicular it meets; the perpendicular ropes are then broken off and fastened firmly to the hay immediately under the eaves.



Fig. 5.

Round haystacks I object to on this account: if you begin to cut them to take the hay into the barn, a strong blast of wind will very likely strip the thatch, and blow half the hay all over the country. When a stack of hay is properly trimmed, the strongest man cannot pull a handful of it out—no, not the *Girt Jan Ridd* himself; v. "*Laura Doone*." A stack of well made hay, carried in proper season, and well tramped down in the building, should, if 15 feet in the stem when finished, subside to 12 feet.

**BUNCHED STRAW FOR THATCHING.**—In Somerset, and in the West of England and South Wales, the thatching of stacks is carried to perfection. The ears of wheat are drawn together



Fig. 6.

by means of a comb, with teeth pretty close-set, and cut off: the straw, then called *reed*, is unbroken by threshing, and keeps the stacks under its care free from all danger of wet. This practice is too much of fine art for us; we must take the straw as it comes from the machine, and do the best we can with it. Some preparation, however, it must undergo, or else our work will be very ragged; let us take Mr. Stephens' plan:

"The man takes a wisp from the mow, and places it across his body, and after making the straws straight, first with one hand and then with the other, he takes hold of each end of the

wisp, and spreading out his arms, separates the wisp into two portions. Bringing both hands together, he lays hold of the severed wisp with the left hand, and taking hold of its other end with the right, draws the straws as under as before. Bringing again both hands together, he goes through the same process, and as often, until he sees that the straws are parallel and straight, when he lays down the now drawn wisp carefully

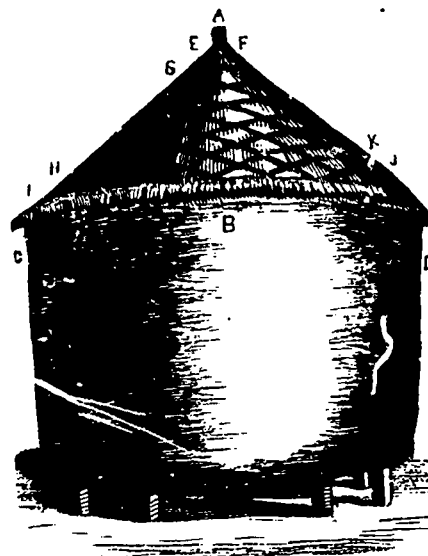


Fig. 7.

on the ground. When as much has been drawn as to make a bunch of about 15 inches in diameter, the man makes a *thumb rope*, by twisting a little undrawn straw round the thumb of his right hand, drawing it out with his left and twisting it with his right alternately, until a short rope is made, with which he ties up the bunch of drawn straw as a sheaf of wheat is tied": (v. eng. 3).

**STRAW ROPES**—are made by the bow or crook. This simple tool (v. eng. 4) is made of a piece of tough ash, about 3½ feet long, bent into a curve, and retained in that position by

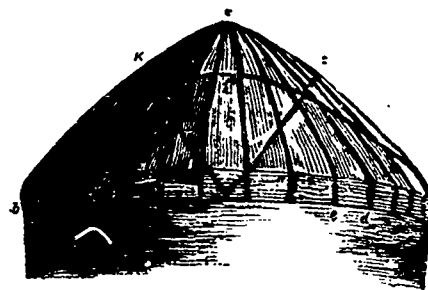


Fig. 8.

a stout string. In using this implement, the rope-maker sits near the straw (v. eng. 5), and the spinner with the bow moves backward as the rope grows in length. It is quick work, and easy enough for an old man and a small child, as in the illustration but a little practice is required or the rope will be too tightly twisted or too slack—in both cases it will break.

Straw is twisted into ropes in this manner: the left hand of the twister holds by the end of the shank of the bow, and the right hand by the middle of the shank: on the spinner placing a little drawn straw in the angle b of the bow and cord