

to the dew and rain; and, finally, that before you put them to the brake, when the root should be separated from the stalk, the root drags off with it some of the lint. The objection to cutting is, that you lose two or three inches of the best part of the plant nearest the root. Pulling, being the most ancient method, is most generally practised. I prefer, upon the whole, cutting, and I believe the number who prefer it is yearly increasing. When pulled it is done with the hand, which should be protected by an old leather glove. The laborer catches twenty or thirty plants together with both hands, and with a sudden jerk draws them without much difficulty. The operation of cutting is performed with a knife, often made out of an old scythe, resembling a sickle, though not so long but broader. This knife is applied much in the same way as the sickle, except that the laborer stoops more.

Whether pulled or cut, the plants are carefully laid on the ground, the easier the better, to cure, which they do in two or three days, in dry weather. A light rain falling on them whilst lying down is by some thought to be beneficial, inasmuch as the leaves, of which they should be deprived, may be easier shaken off or detached. When cured, the plants are set up in the field, in which they were produced, in shocks of convenient size, the roots or but ends resting on the ground, and the tops united by a band made of the plants themselves. Previous to putting them up in shocks, most cultivators tie the plants in small hand bundles of such a size that each can conveniently be held in one hand. Before the shocks are formed, the leaves of the plants should be rapidly knocked off with a rough paddle or hooked stick. Some suffer the plants to remain in these shocks until the plants are spread down to be rotted. Others, again, collect the shocks together as soon as they can command leisure, (and it is clearly best,) and form them into stacks to remain over a whole year, before the plants are exposed to be rotted. I have frequently done it with advantage, and have at this time two crops in stalks. By remaining that period in stalks, the plants go through a sweat, or some other process, that improves very much the appearance, and, I believe, the quality of the lint, and this improvement fully compensates the loss of time in bringing it to market. The lint has a soft texture and a lively hue, resembling water rotted hemp; and I once sold a box of it in Baltimore market at the price of Russia. In every other respect the plants are treated as if they were not kept over a year.

The method of dew rotting is that which is generally practised in Kentucky. The lint so spread, is not so good for many purposes, and especially for rigging and ships, as when the plants have been rotted by immersion in water, or, as it is generally termed, water rotted. The greater value, and, consequently, higher price of the article prepared in the latter way, has induced more and more of our farmers every year to adopt it; and if that prejudice were subdued, which every American production unfortunately encounters when it is first introduced, and comes in contact with a rival European commodity, I think it probable, that in a few years we should be able to dispense altogether with foreign hemp. The obstacles which prevent the general practice of water rotting are the want of water at the best season for the operation, which is the month of September; a repugnance to the change of an old habit, and a persuasion, which has some foundation, that handling the plants after their submersion in water during that month is injurious to health. The first and last of

these obstacles would be removed by water rotting early in the winter, or in the spring. The only difference in the operation performed at those seasons, and in the month of September, would be, that the plants would have to remain longer in soak before they were sufficiently rotted. The plants are usually spread down to be dew rotted from the middle of October to the middle of December. A farmer who has a large crop on hand, puts them down at different times, for his convenience in handling and dressing them. Autumnal rotting is more apt to give the lint a dark and unsightly color than winter rotting. The best ground to expose the plants upon is meadow or grass land, but they are not unfrequently spread over the same field on which they grow. The length of time they ought to remain exposed, depends upon the degree of moisture and the temperature of the weather that prevail. In a very wet and warm spell, five or six weeks may be long enough. Whether they have been sufficiently rotted or not, is determined by experiment. A handful is taken and broken by the hand, or applied to the brake, when it can easily be ascertained, by the facility with which the lint can be detached from the stalk, if it be properly rotted. If the plants remain on the ground too long, the fibres lose some of their strength, though a few days longer than necessary, in cold weather, will not do any injury. If they are taken up too soon, that is, before the lint can be easily separated from the woody part of the stalk, it is harsh, and the process of breaking is difficult and troublesome. Snow rotting, that is, when the plants being spread out remain long enough to rot, (which, however, requires a greater length of time,) bleaches the lint, improves the quality, and makes it nearly as valuable as if it had been water rotted.

After the operation of rotting is performed, the plants are again collected together, put into shocks or stacks, or, which is still better, put under a shed or some covering. When it is designed to break and dress them immediately, they are frequently set up against some neighboring fence. The best period for breaking and dressing is in the months of February and March, and the best sort of weather, frosty nights and clear thawing days. The brake cannot be used advantageously in wet or moist. It is almost invariably used in this state out of doors, and without any cover; and to assist its operations, the laborer often makes a large fire near it, which serves the double purpose of drying the plants and warming himself. It could not be used in damp weather in a house without a kiln, or some other means of drying the stalks. The brake in general use, is the same hand brake which was originally introduced, and has been always employed here, resembling, though longer than, the common flax brake. It is so well known, as to render a particular description of it, perhaps, unnecessary. It is a rough contrivance, set upon four legs, about two and a half feet high. The brake consists of two jaws, with slits on each, the lower jaw fixed and immovable, and the upper one movable, so that it may be lifted by means of a handle inserted into a head or block at the front end of it. The lower jaw has three slats or teeth, made of tough white oak, and the upper two arranged approaching to about two inches in front, and in such a manner that the slats of the upper jaw play between those of the lower. These slats are about six or seven feet in length, six inches in depth, and about two inches in thickness in their lower edges; they are placed edge wise, rounded a little on their upper edges, which are sharper than those below. The