

masonry. All round it the sides are kept up by walls, also of masonry, and the hemp is sunk in the water by means of great stones laid on the top of it. This is the plan adopted in Spain.

"When the hemp-grower has no pond, of either one sort or the other, he steeps his crop in runs of water, and in the bed of rivers, fastening it with ropes, for fear any sudden flood should carry his property away with it; or sometimes in ponds that have been dug for the purpose, in which the bundles of hemp are made to sink by loading them with earth, which has been taken from the bottom of the pond itself. Hemp which has been steeped in this last mentioned way is always much more dark-coloured, and its fibre is often sold for one-sixth less than the other sort. In those ponds which are not fitted up with stakes, the workmen who set the hemp to steep are obliged to work in the water.

"Four days after steeping has commenced, it is necessary to inspect the hemp, and to try if the fibre comes away easily from the woody part. It is very essential to seize the moment when that change takes place; for twelve hours passed in the *rouissoir* beyond the necessary time, would considerably injure the quality and the strength of the fibre. About the sixth day the steeping is generally complete; but that depends greatly upon the weather and the temperature. If a very strong fibre is required, in preference to a very slightly sample, the hemp ought to be taken out of the water as soon as the fibre begins to detach itself, when the hemp-stalk is broken. If, on the contrary, good-looking rather than strong hemp is required, it is left in the pond for twelve or eighteen hours longer.

"The next step to be taken is the washing. A party of women, dressed in wretched rags, step into the pond, and stand upon the bank which has been purposely built: there they are up to the middle in water. Men (if the pond is staked, but if not, the women themselves) then unfasten the bundles of hemp by breaking the bands with which they are tied, in order to separate the bunches from each other. The women then, seizing these smaller bunches with their two hands, and raising them several times as high as their arms can conveniently reach, dash them horizontally with their whole strength upon the water, turning them round a little each time, in order that every part of the bunch may feel the effects of the blow. This operation detaches almost the whole of the fibre from the woody part of the hemp, and at the same time cleanses it from the mould and filth which hang to it. After having repeated these knockings of the hemp on the water for three or four times, the workwoman seizes the bunch by the little end, and driving it through the water in the opposite direction, thereby causes the fibre to be detached from the lower extremity of the stem; then, rolling the bunch in the water, she causes the separated fibre to twist itself round the bunch, with the object that when the hemp is set out to drain and dry, the fibre may not come in contact with the soil. All the steeping ponds are surrounded by pasture land, to serve at the proper season as drying grounds for the hemp. After having washed each bunch in the way we have just described, the workwoman throws it on the green turf; a workman seizes it and sets it on its big end. It supports itself by leaning against the other bundles. In that position the hemp drains. About one o'clock in the afternoon the women come out of the *rouissoir*, dress themselves in dry clothes, eat their dinner, and then proceed to drying the hemp.

"The women now, if they have not done so before, push to the upper end of each bunch the band with which it was tied round the middle; and opening every bunch at the bottom, they spread the stalks that are standing on the grass with their heads aloft and leaning together, almost in the same way as a pile of muskets. The hemp is thus perfectly exposed to the sun and air; nevertheless, even when no rain happens to fall—a circumstance greatly to be desired, especially to preserve the beauty of the fibre—it takes two days at the very least to dry it completely. If high wind comes on, the bunches out drying are often blown down, and must be set up again as quickly as possible. Towards evening, the hemp which has attained the necessary degree of dryness is loaded on carts, and carried to the hemp barn.

"It will be remembered that the hemp is often four yards long, and more, even after the top is cut off, because the fibre which that part would give is nearly worthless. This great length is necessarily accompanied by a certain degree of thickness, which makes it impossible to clean the stems by means of ordinary scutches, like those used for flax, unless they were made of such a size and weight as would render their use impracticable in any other hands than those of a giant. Recourse is therefore had to the following method:—An upright wooden block is fixed in the earth, about a foot broad,