

very apt to do), and also to make it heat slightly; for which purpose it is sometimes even wetted a little, after thrashing, and subjected to the same granary treatment as is practised on rape and colza seeds, to cause them to mature their oil. There are many ways of thrashing the seed, or rather of removing it from off the stalk. In some places, large cloths are spread in the field, and the heads are laid on a bench standing on the cloth, and are beaten with sticks; in others, the heads are beaten over a tub with its head staved in. Nowhere is the flail employed, least it should crush the seed.

Hemp seed is winnowed like wheat, and put in the granary in small heaps, which should be shifted occasionally to dry it thoroughly.

In large towns, the consumption of hemp seed for cage birds is very considerable. Hemp seed oil is excellent for burning in lamps; it is used in painting and the manufacture of soft soap. The oil-cake left after the crushing process is eaten with avidity by many domestic animals, and is often employed as manure.

The thrashing over, the hemp is ready to undergo the important operation of steeping. When hemp is of the tallest kind, the plan of pulling it ought to be rejected, and it should be cut by a scythe, or reaping machine.

HEMP STEEPING, &c.

The importance which the culture of hemp has attained in the north of Italy is well known; and a detailed account of the mode of steeping which the hand-working peasants make use of there, will be interesting to lay before the reader. The translation is from the French of M. de Crud, who has described them in his "*Economie de l'Agriculture*."

"Hemp ponds, or *routoirs*, are usually dug in the earth, sufficiently deep beneath the surface of the soil to keep them always full of water. These ponds are provided, over their whole extent, with stakes driven into the earth to the depth of seven or eight feet, to prevent their being pulled up by the effort which the hemp makes to rise to the surface of the water. They are also fixed in regular rows, about six feet apart; and as they support, not far from their top, wooden cross-bars, about six inches broad, and an inch and a half thick, which stretch from one to the other in the same direction, they form a sort of alleys in the water. These stakes ought not to rise higher than just a trifle below the usual level of the water, to prevent them decaying from the alternate action of dryness and moisture. The pond is ordinarily about five feet deep, except near the edge, where there is made a sort of bank of planks. On this bank the workmen walk, up to their waste in water, for the purpose of washing the hemp before taking it out of the *routoir*.

"To steep the hemp, they place in these alleys the bundles, as carefully sorted as possible. The bundles are laid *lengthwise* in the alleys, and as many are brought in as will fill the whole breadth of the alley a couple of bundles deep. They then take pieces of wood, of the same dimensions as the cross bars, and about a foot longer than the breadth of the alleys. One of the ends of the piece of wood is introduced beneath one of the ends of the cross-bars which enclose the alley, passing over the bundles of hemp; then, by pressing the other end down, they force the hemp to sink in the water, till the other end can be slipped under the cross-bar which is nearest to it. It is evident that the cross-bar obliges the hemp, in spite of its buoyancy, to sink in the water and to remain submerged. Each end of the bundles of hemp must be held down by one of these pieces of wood. Up to this point, all the operations connected with the steeping are performed by men, who walk upon the tops of the stakes, on the cross-bars, and on the hemp itself, without going into the water. These men make use of poles, furnished with iron hooks at their end, to lay hold of the bundles and arrange them in the water according to their convenience.

"There are a few ponds on a different plan: instead of driving in stakes, and making wooden benches, no more is done than to pave the bottom, or to line it with bricks and