

*Extracts on the Culture and Preparation of Hemp.
From the Complete Farmer's Dictionary.*

The soil which is best adapted to the cultivation of Hemp, is that of the deep black putrid vegetable kind, which has a low situation, and inclined to moisture, as well as the deep mellow loamy or sandy sorts; but the quantity of produce is in general much greater on the former than the latter, though it is said to be of an inferior quality. The land should be reduced to a fine mellow soil, and perfectly cleared from weeds by repeated ploughing and harrowing. In the ploughing, before sowing, well rotted manure, in the proportion of about twenty one-horse cart loads should be turned into the land. Hemp is an excellent cleaner of the ground, and is said to have the property of preserving from insects any crop that is within a belt of it. The surface of the ground should be as flat as possible, that the moisture may be more effectually preserved, and the support of the plants more fully secured in consequence of it.

In the growth of Hemp Crops it is of much consequence to have good fresh seed, which may be known by its having considerable weight and a high degree of brightness in the colour. The quantity of seed sown should be from two to two and a half bushels per acre. In general the sowing is performed in *broadcast*, being evenly distributed over the surface of the land, and lightly covered by means of harrowing. The period of sowing should be when the ground is neither too dry nor too moist for the purpose.

Hemp is a crop of great utility, being used for almost every other kind, and very well adapted to the soil and climate of the

that is properly performed by the skin coulter plough, and it is frequently cultivated on the same piece of ground for many years, without any other kind intervening. When the crop is put in, the greatest care should always be taken to keep birds from devouring the seeds, which they are very fond of. In the cultivation of this crop, it is necessary that the field contain both male and female plants; it is the latter sort that affords the seed.

As soon as the crop is ripe, which is shown by its having a whitish yellow colour, and the leaves beginning to fall from the stems, it should be pulled. The male kind ripens four or five weeks before the female. The female is ripe when the flowers fade, and the stalk turns yellow, and the male when the stems become pale. Both are less injured by being pulled too soon than too late. When the one is pulled, care must be taken that as little injury as possible may be done to the other. The operation of pulling is performed by taking small parcels at a time out of the ground with the hand, shaking off the mould well from them before the handfuls are laid down; it is usually done 13 or 14 weeks after sowing. After being pulled it is tied up in small parcels. But where crops are intended for seeding they are of course to stand till the seed becomes in a perfect state of maturity, which is easily known by its appearance. The stems or stalks are then pulled and bound up into bundles, being set up in the same manner as grain, until the seed becomes so dry and firm as to shed freely; it is then either directly thrashed out upon large cloths spread for the purpose in the field, or preserved, to have it done at some future period when more convenient. In the execution of this sort of business, great care should be taken in pulling not to shake the stalks rashly, otherwise much of the seed may be lost. It is advised that after pulling the seed, hemp may be set up in shocks of five sheaves to dry the seed; but in order to prevent any delay in watering, the seed pods may be cut off with a chopping knife and dried on canvas exposed to the air under some shed or cover. The last method of drying the seed will prove of great advantage to the hemp, as the seed and pods when green are of such a gummy nature that the stems might suffer much by sun burning or rain which will discolour and injure the hemp before the seed can be sufficiently dried upon the stalks; besides, the thrashing out the seed would damage the hemp in a considerable degree.

In the preparation of hemp for the uses of the manufacturer there are two modes adopted, termed *bleaching* and *watering*. In the latter mode, which is more general and expeditious, the hemp is all taken up and bound in small bundles with bands at each end to such a bigness as can be grasped with both hands, and conveyed to a pond of standing water (if a clay

pit the better) where it is laid bundle upon bundle, direct and across thus; which is termed a bed of hemp; and after it is

piled to such a thickness as to answer the depth of the water, which is usually five or six feet, it is loaded with blocks and logs of wood until all of it is totally immersed; after remaining in this state four or five days as the weather shall direct, it is taken out and carried to a mown grass field, or any other grass land that is clean and free from stock; the bundles being untied, it is spread out thin, stalk by stalk; in this state it must be turned every other day, especially in moist weather, lest the worms should injure it. Thus it remains for six weeks, or more, then it is gathered together, tied in large bundles, and kept dry in a house or stack till wanted for use. It is known to have enough of the water by the rind separating easily from the stalk. It is better the time should be too long than too short; the slenderest requires the longest time. When the quantity is small, the bark may be separated from the reed by pulling out the reed from every stalk by the hand; when large, by drying and breaking it like flax. After it is reeded, it must be separated from the mucilaginous matter by pouring water upon it, and squeezing it several times; taking care not to let the threads entangle in each other, as this produces waste.

The business of preparing hemp for the heckle, is by having recourse, first to a coarse, then to a fine break. When the hemp happens not to be properly watered, it is often necessary to peel off the rind from the boon with the hand. The hemp-mill used in America is also a good instrument. It consists of a large heavy stone shaped like a sugar-loaf, with the small end cut off; a body of that form will go round in a circle if it be moved on a plane; the hemp being laid on the floor in its way, is bruised by the weight of the stone passing over it.

After the hemp has been broken, it undergoes a second operation, which is termed swingling or scutching. The intention of which is to separate the reed from the hemp, and this is done by one or other of the following ways:—In the first, the workman takes a handful of hemp in his left hand, and holding it over the edge of a board, strikes it with the sharpened edge of a long, flat, and straight piece of wood, commonly called a swingle-hand or scutcher. But as this method is very tedious, water-mills have been erected, in which several scutches fixed in the same axle-tree, are moved with great velocity. Here the work is performed with great expedition, and with much less fatigue to the workmen; but a greater waste is made of the hemp, owing to the velocity with which the engine is turned. Before the hemp thus prepared is heckled, it undergoes a third operation

called beetling, the design of which is to loosen and thereby more thoroughly separate its fibres. The beetles used for this purpose are moved either by hand or by water.

It may be observed that hemp crops afford an excellent preparation for the culture of wheat, &c.

Note.—The produce of hemp, in fibre, varies from 3 to 5 cwt. per acre; in seed, from 11 to 12 bushels. The price of St. Petersburg hemp in the London market, by the latest Prices Current, is from £41 to £45 per ton, or about 5 pence per pound.