

rice is a very prolific crop, yet it is subject to many casualties, from the locusts and other insects that devour it; the drought at other times affects it, particularly the aquatic varieties. There is a use to which the rice is applied here, which was new to us, namely, as a substitute for razors; by using two grains of it between the fingers, they nip the beard, or extract it from the chin and face.

Among the important productions of these islands, I have mentioned hemp, although the article called Manilla hemp must not be understood to be derived from the plant which produces the common hemp (*Cannabis*), being obtained from a species of plantain (*Musa textilis*), called in the Philippines "abaca." This is a native of these islands, and was formerly believed to be found only on Mindanao; but this is not the case, for it is cultivated on the south part of Luzon, and all the islands south of it. It grows on high ground, in rich soil, and is propagated by seeds. It resembles the other plants of the tribe of plantains, but its fruit is much smaller, although edible. The fibre is derived from the stem, and the plant attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet. The usual mode of preparing the hemp is to cut off the stem near the ground, before the time or just when the fruit is ripe. The stem is then eight or ten feet long below the leaves, where it is again cut. The outer coating of the herbaceous stem is then stripped off, until the fibres or cellular parts are seen, when it undergoes the process of rotting, and after being well dried in houses and sheds, is prepared for market by assorting it, a task which is performed by the women and children. That which is intended for cloth is soaked for an hour or two in weak lime-water prepared from sea-shells, again dried, and put up in bundles. From all the districts in which it grows, it is sent to Manilla, which is the only port whence it can legally be exported. It arrives in large bundles, and is packed there, by means of a screw-press, in compact bales, for shipping, secured by rattan, each weighing two piculs.

The best Manilla hemp ought to be white, dry, and of a long and fine fibre. This is known at Manilla by the name of lupis; the second quality they call bandala.

The exportation has much increased within the last few years, in consequence of the demand for it in the United States; and the whole crop is now monopolized by the two American houses of Sturges & Co., and T. N. Peale & Co., of Manilla, who buy all of good quality that comes to market. This is divided between the two houses, and the price they pay is from four to five dollars the picul. The entire quantity raised in 1840 was eighty-three thousand seven hundred and ninety piculs; in 1841, eighty-seven thousand.

The quantity exported to the United States in 1840, was sixty-eight