The hemp plant of the Philippines is harvested in one year, and it has a value in the United States that is unparalleled in the world. In a fair year, with good prices, the hemp industry furnishes the United States with one of the most important industries. In a fair year, with good prices, the hemp industry furnishes the United States with one of the most important industries.

The hemp industry of the Philippines is a profitable one. Hemp is a valuable crop and is grown on many of the islands. The prospectors seeking for investment need not dig for treasure in the Philippine islands. The culture and harvesting of hemp is the biggest gold mine he will find. The English capitalist discovered the fact nearly half a century ago. In 1872 over thirty thousand tons were exported. In 1892 five times that amount. Favorable conditions with American enterprise the expert will double in the next five years. The Philippines should produce from three hundred thousand to four hundred thousand tons. The profits on hemp-growing is 100 per cent, provided labor is obtainable at the former rates.

Of course, this rosy picture will not materialize in several years. The war has devoured thousands of acres of the best hemp districts of the islands, and it will take some time to restore the crop to a profitable condition. At present the great "godown" in the hemp ports in Manila, in London, Breston, and New York are practically empty, and hemp has gone up to a prohibitive price. A jump from four cents to ten cents per pound, and even fifteen cents per pound, singly occurs that the supply is exhausted. No one could buy at such a price. Hemp grows in India, Russia, and Mexico, and also parts of the world, but the Manila brand is the best in the market, and no other will take its place.

Hemp made the Philippine Islands worth something to Spain. England stepped in and gloved up the trade, and in the future, the Americans, if they be wise, will put their money in hemp cultivation and let the alleged god and devil do the work. The islands seem to have been especially made for the benefit of the hemp plant. The soil, though not swampy country to the south of Mindanao, the Camarines, Samar, Leyte, and Cebu, would produce a solid overgrowth of the hemp tree if left to take its own course.

The tree itself resembles closely the banana-palm, but differs essentially in the density of its fiber and its blemishes of fruit. The natives, too, seem to have been especially provided for the hemp country. Tending to improvidence and idleness, the hemp industry furnishes them employment whenever they run short of rice and tobacco. In hemp can be harvested almost at any time except during the short rainy season. Attempts have been made to transplant the hemp to Europe, taking them only to the west on the plains, but the hemp, as Bismarck, but the hemp rotting refused to produce anything but Philippine soil. The Pacific region of the volcanic region of the islands produces the best hemp. Although the dura trees tend to thin soil and rather dry, quickly drained localities, the trunk and leaves can be planted in any place where water is abundant and the climate is suitable. The hemp is raised as a common crop in many places. 

The crop is not gathered as if it were a cornfield, but the trees are cut down at their height. The forage is then harvested with a forage combine. With his ax in hand and a bamboo reaper full of rice stalks over his shoulder, he hies himself to the uplands. After feeling the plants, which at the age of three years are about ten feet high, he proceeds to clip off a shoot and replant it. After a number of trees are cut, the stripping process begins. All the leaves are torn off and the outer skin of the stalk is peeled off. Inside of the stalk is a pithy substance, and around this are layers of fiber interwoven in a soft, juicy substance. The fiber must be separated from the stalk at once, but it rot. Many Americans have cherished the idea of ex


DIEYING HEMP ON A MANILA WHARF.

Drying hemp requires a skill of an old hand, and the experienced eye of a buyer who knows all the tricks of the trade. The native will bring his hemp down from the plantation in a most sanitary and offer it for sale at night. Hoping thus to be able to sell the middle-man as to weight and quality, but as the post of the business is mostly in the hands of the Chinese, there is little danger that they will be deceived or cheated. The Chinaman is the sharpest bargainer in the world, and whether it is hemp, silk or old junk, he is fully capable of looking after his interests. Fineness of fibre, color, strength, and length determine the value and grade of hemp. If it is care fully stripped over a smooth knife, immediately and thoroughly dried, and of good length, it will bring the highest price. If it be carelessly stripped, into long strips left in the fibre, it loses its color and becomes coarse. It is then considered of a second and third grade quality and brings a smaller price. The native welfare is the market, and if he feels that the demand is heavy it takes advantage of the middle-man and compels him to pay first-grade prices for second and third grade products. Formerly hemp brought in Manila from $2 to $15 per ton, always fluctuating according to the supply, at times going up to $30 per ton, but at present the price is practically prohibitive, and it looks as if it would remain so for the next two years.

A half-dozen large English firms in Manila control the bulk of the trade. These firms are old and established, and have associated with them steamers running to Hong-kong and Singapore, where they usually tranship to London and New York. There are also a few American firms which handle the hemp direct, in some cases sending out sailing ships and taking on cargo at Manila or Cebu.

Hemp-culture offers a large field for American capital. The field is practically unlimited. Vast tracts of land suitable for hemp growing could be secured at a nominal price. The plant, practically grows wild, and with a little encouragement and preservation could be cultivated.

There is little probability of over-supplying the market and possibly no danger of over supply. The English, French, and Dutch have not made a successful attempt at transplanting in the Philippine plantations. Hemp is grown in India, Japan, and Australia, but the experiments have been largely unsuccessful so far. While less plants have taken root than were expected, however, the fibre looks finer and of better quality than the Philippine plantations. The favorable and stable conditions of the climate and the volcanic soil seem to be essential in producing, and as the hemp does not ripen in the southern Philippines, there is no reason why the vast waste-lands of the Camarines, Sorsogon, and Camarines could not be planted to hemp. This would not only supply local hemp for that province, but the rest of the country as well.

The development of hemp is still worked by primitive methods and with simple con success. The native, though unshaven himself, is jealous of the Chinaman and is averse to the Christian getting control of the plantations or contracts, while the Chinese is over-bearing methods himself.

The "Chino," however, has made strides in this industry, as well as in others in the Philippines. Had he not, the development would not have been as rapid as it has.

BALING HEMP.