MANUFACTURE OF KASHMIR SHAWLS.

All the thread used in making a large pair of shawls does not weigh more than fifteen or twenty pounds English, and may be purchased for 120 to 150 small rupees. After the thread is dyed, it is dipped in rice-water, a process which makes it stronger, and fits it to be more safely moved by the shuttle, and the stiffness is removed by washing. The undyed shawl-stuff, which sells at five rupees the yard, is called ubrh, from urh (a cloud), or abman-i-nadsh (without colour), if white; and if a border be worked on it, the remaining white is called mutum. Abmaan, as the shawl stuff is called when free from ornament, is not often, if ever, made up by the Kashmiri weavers of the natural colour of the poshum, and may be, of course, dyed of any colour, red, blue, green, yellow, &c. When made with coloured stripes or flowers on it, the chograh of the Afghans, or al-khalek, the long undercoat of the Persian, is made from it. If the pattern be worked with the needle, the shawl is far inferior, in every respect, to those in which the pattern is woven in. An excellent pair of the former description may be purchased in Kashmir for 150 rupees (about 10L.), whereas an equally good pair of the
means of sulphur fumes. A hole is made in the floor about a foot in diameter, and six inches in depth. Over this is placed a small square chimney of poplar-wood, open on one side. Some lighted charcoal is put into the hole, and over it is sprinkled a small handful of brusht sulphur. Around the chimney, and about two feet distance from it, is placed the framework, about five feet six inches in height, upon which four shawls are suspended, and the external air is further excluded by another framework over the top. When the sulphur is consumed, the shawls are withdrawn, and others are subjected to the fumes of fresh sulphur. They are kept until the next day, then washed again in water, dried and pressed, several times, together, between two boards. The mokym, or broker, who transacts the business and sets the shawl manufacturer and the merchant, is a person of great importance in the city, and the manner in which their transactions are carried on is rather singular. They have correspondents in most of the large cities of Hindustan, whose business is to collect and forward every species of information connected with their trade. By their means they seldom fail to hear of any saugdagar, or merchant, who is about to sell new shawls, notice is given to the inspector, and none can be cut from the loom but in his presence. It is then taken to the custom-house and stamped, a tax is put upon it by the proper officer, and 35 per cent. on the price is demanded. When it is purchased, and about to leave the valley with its owner, the latter has to pay another four rupees for permit duty, and another seal, which enables him to pass with his property; he is also subjected to further duties at Jammu and Urmriter. It becomes necessary to wash the shawls, in order to deprive them of the stiffness of the rice-starch remaining in the thread, and for the purpose of softening them generally. The best water for this use is found in the channel between the lake and the floodgates at the Drogum. Some ruins, in large limestones blocks, are lying on the washing-place, and in one of these is a round hole, about a foot and a half in diameter, and a foot in depth; in this the shawl is placed, and water being poured over it, it is stumped by the naked feet for about five minutes, and then taken into the canal, by a boy standing in the water; one end is gathered up in his hand, and the shawl swung round and beaten with great force upon a flat stone, being dipped into the canal between every three or four strokes. This occupies about five minutes. They are then dried in the shade, as the hot sun spoils the colours; and, in many cases, afterwards, the coloured shawls undergo a similar process, but occupying less time. The white ones, after being submitted to the process, on the first day are spread in the sun, and bleached by water sprinkled over them; they then are again treated in the same process as the coloured shawls, being stamped upon and beaten a second time, and then bleached again till they are dry, and then for a third time beaten, stamped upon, and finally dried in the sun. In the second time of stamping, soap is sometimes used, but is not good generally, and is never used for the coloured shawls, as the alkali might affect the colours. There is something in the water of the canal which certainly commences to the shawl a softness which cannot be given to them manufactured at any place in the plains of Hindustan. At the same time, those made in Paris or at Norwich would be, I think, as soft, were it not for the greater closeness of texture, consequent upon their being made by a machine instead of the hand. For the same reason it is well known that the calico made in India is much softer, and is much more durable, than that made in England. There are plenty of wells in the city, and in every case where there is a bath on the premises, as water is found by digging only five or six yards below the surface. It is not good, but often, if I mistook not, brackish, and in some instances is preferred for the washing of the red shawls. Old shawls that require cleaning, and in some instances, new ones, are washed upon it as for the purpose, and the fresh-coloured root of a parasitical plant called kritis. A pound of it is bruised and mixed with about three pints of water, and to this is added a mixture of pigeon’s dung (a piece equal in size to a turkey’s egg) mixed and beaten up with about the same quantity of water, and the ashes are saturated with the liquor, and then stumped upon, washed with the hand, and then well steeped in the canal. In the plains, the berries of the ranyad fruit, stirred up with water, yet not so as to form a lather, are used for washing a soiled shawl. A smaller root, known also by the name of kritis, is often used for cotton clothes. The colours of a shawl, after it has been washed, are often renewed as well as deceive any but the initiated, by pricking them in again with a wooden pin dipped in the requisite tints. The fine pale yellow colour of a new shawl is given by