

and it requires but little labour to convert it to useful purposes. Pliny mentions this production as applied in his time to various uses, for which in the present day substances better adapted are employed. It was at that time used by the poor for beds, by the shepherds for garments, and by the fishermen for nets; but hemp and flax have now superseded its use in the manufacture of those articles. An attempt was made lately to spin and weave it into cloth, and at first it promised success, but was afterwards found ill adapted for that purpose; and notwithstanding encouragement was given by government, the whole scheme was relinquished.

Another plant of great importance in the husbandry of Spain is the Aloe, called here Pita, which makes excellent fences at a very trifling expence; the sharpness of the leaves renders these hedges impenetrable; and it is only necessary to stick the point of the leaves in the ground, when, without farther care, they will soon grow up, and afford secure protection; endeavours have also been made to convert the aloe into cloth, but the fibres being thick and twisted, the attempts have not succeeded. In some parts, however, where Esparto is scarce, it is used for ropes. Bowles, the best Spanish writer on natural history, says, "As it is well known that all those plants which contain a quantity of tasteless mucilage, produce by fermentation strong liquors; and as no vegetable produces a greater quantity of that mucilage than the pita, it might be made into brandy, if wine were not so plentiful in Spain as to render such a process unnecessary."

The opuntia, or tuna, is likewise a plant very common in all this