

The curing sheds are generally within close proximity of the tobacco fields, but, in certain cases, the tobacco has to be hauled one mile or more.

*Curing sheds.*—The curing is done in tight sheds built specially for the purpose and made of square logs. The cracks between the logs are filled with clay.

The roof of these sheds is slightly slanting. Small openings are left at the top for the excess of moisture to escape. The building is laid on a stone foundation, through which are left openings communicating with the fireplaces, built outside. Through the lower part of these curing houses pass two galvanized iron pipes, of 10 or 13 inches diameter, laid in such a way that the heated air produced by fuel (generally wood) burning in the outside fireplace may circulate twice in each pipe.

The smoke escapes on the side where the fireplaces are, the return pipe being slightly higher than the top part of the opening to the fireplaces.

Curing sheds are of various sizes. The average dimension is 24 feet square and 20 feet high at the wall plate. This is considered as a large shed; it would be hard to heat evenly a larger bulk of tobacco. Strong poles, several tiers high, are laid inside, at 4 feet intervals from pole to pole, and 3 feet from tier to tier. The laths holding the plants are placed upon these poles. The distance left between the laths varies from 7 to 10 inches according to the size of the products and their condition when put in the curing shed.

The number of stories or tiers of poles varies according to the height of the building. Each tier is placed 3 feet above the one below. The first or lower tier must be placed at such a height that the tobacco hung up will be at 6 or 8 feet from the floor of the shed. This space is necessary to allow for the examination of the products from time to time and to avoid the immediate contact of the lower leaves with the heated pipes, which would result in their being over-heated. There are two doors in the shed, opposite each other, in an axis perpendicular with the direction of the pipes.

The furnaces or fireplaces intended for the heating of the curing sheds are generally built of bricks. They start from the outside of the curing shed and run across the stone foundations. They are 12 inches square, inside, and 6 feet long as an average (length of the sticks of wood used as fuel). The pipes or flues through which the hot air generated circulates fit closely in the inside opening of the furnace. It is important that the fitting be very close, otherwise the tobacco might take a smoky taste.

*Curing.*—The curing shed should be filled as rapidly as possible so that all the plants which it contains may be exactly in the same condition as regards humidity and maturity.

Sometimes when the tobacco is not as ripe as desired, the doors of the curing shed are closed immediately after filling, before the fires are made, for 24 to 36 hours. A kind of wilting is thus secured, after which the light colour desired is more easily obtained.

The tobacco which is thus left for a rather long time in a close atmosphere, does not appear affected. The advanced stage of maturity probably prevents the pole burn or pole rot which would inevitably occur in other kinds of tobacco, cut less ripe for special uses, and holding therefore a larger proportion of water.