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THE CULTIVATION OF TEA.

The prevailing opinion is, in reference to the cultivation of tea, that the various qualities are derived from different species of that plant; but from the information contained in the subjoined article—from an American publication—it appears that such is not the case.

Tea is the peculiar product of China. Some experiments have been made in producing it in other places: but they have not amounted to much.

Tea has many wonderful properties.—It is highly social in its effects and influences. It sets people to talking, and keeps them talking. What volumes of gossip have been perpetrated over the tea-tables of the world—what wit! what fun! what scandal!

Tea does not grow wild all over the country, but is cultivated in plantations with great care and labor. The plants are set out in regular rows, and carefully pruned and trimmed, as they grow; the object being to make them bushy, and to present the largest possible surface of leaves. This pruning and cutting back is carried on for three years, without any attempt to use the leaves. After that they are fit for gathering. In seven years, the leaves begin to grow rank, and are so thick, hard, and tough as to be unfit for use. The stalk is then cut close to the ground, from which it shoots up anew, and produces more largely than ever a supply of the best leaves. In about thirty years the root is exhausted, when the shrubs are all rooted up, and the whole plantation is set anew.

Much labor and care are necessary to keep up and increase the productiveness of the plant, during the period of its culture. In spring and autumn the shrubs are liberally supplied with manure, and the ground is well weeded and turped

around the roots at least four times every season.

In their traffic in teas with the outer world, the Chinese do not manage as most of our farmers and large cultivators do, who send all their best crops, and the finest of every kind, to market, so as to realize the largest return in money. The Chinese use all the best qualities of tea at home, and think the refuse fit for "outside barbarians," as all the rest of the world are called.

The black teas of the best flavor are found in the Bohoa Mountains, and it is said that the teas diminish in goodness in proportion to their distance from that district. The finest Souchongs are produced here, the best of which are reserved for the emperor's court. Some of these are cultivated in little patches on the steep sides of the mountains, which are very difficult to get at; so that the laborers are often let down to them from above, by means of iron chains. This tea is supposed to have a peculiar and almost sacred value, the Buddhist priests having it under their special direction and superintendence.

The hyson, or finest green tea, has been greatly improved by transplanting the shrubs from certain hills to districts that are favorable to their growth in the plains. It was for a long time supposed that the green and black teas were obtained from different species of trees or shrubs. It is not so, however, as both kinds may be prepared from the same plant. There is no difference in the botanical character of the two. The whole difference results from the mode of cultivation and of preparation, or curing of the leaves; one part of the same plantation may grow highly flavored teas, and another part common teas. The finest description of green tea is cultivated in the plains, in a fertile soil and highly manured. The same plant growing in the hills, produces a very inferior tea.

The leaves of the tea plant, when newly gathered, do not in the least resemble the dry leaves, in either color or flavor. They have, when green, neither a sharp aromatic nor bitter taste. The highly

prized qualities of pleasant taste and delightful odor which they afterward exhibit, are the effects of roasting, and of manipulation. In this respect, there is a resemblance not usually known between tea and coffee, which owes all its desirable properties for common use to the effect of roasting.

The flower of the tea-shrub is white, composed of five leaves. Its shape is similar to the rose. The berry resembles a small moist nut. There are four gatherings of the black tea. The first is in early spring, when the young, delicate, and succulent leaves are plucked, from which the Pekoe tea is made. The second takes place about the 20th of April, when the leaves are large, which produces fragrant full flavored tea. The third is about the 6th of June, after the leaves shoot out anew. This tea is very dark and weak. The fourth is later in the summer, and the leaves are coarse, weak, and light colored.

When the leaves are plucked, they are spread on trays or exposed to the air. This is called leaching. They are then tossed with the hands, sifted, and carefully examined in a strong light, to see that there are no imperfect or diseased leaves: this is taching. They are then placed in small bamboo trays, and kept closely covered with a cloth, until a fragrant perfume is perceptible: this is called oc-ching. They are then roasted in a red-hot iron vessel. Five ounces are thrown in at a time, and swept out with a bamboo brush. They are then rolled, or curled, and then carried to the drying-house, to be perfectly dried.

Family Department.

Sago Pudding.—Rinse the sago in cold water; to one pint of milk put a half-pint of sago; stir it on a moderate fire until it thickens like starch; then take from the fire and mix with it three pints of milk, a small cup of sugar, four beaten eggs, nutmeg, teaspoonful of salt, and the grated rind of a lemon; add quarter of a pound of seeded raisins; bake three-quarters of an hour. Good hot, but best cold.