

of native villages will be white with poppy blossoms, and the heavy, sweetish odor from these is as characteristic of the season as the smell of a hay-field is of June. The fields are prepared in December with the greatest care by the native and his family, and when the ground is so fine that not a lump the size of a walnut remains, they mark the surface off into oblong beds about six feet by four feet, and the ridges between these beds are trenched to allow of the free passage of water, for all opium is grown by irrigation. This irrigation is usually from surface wells.

The seed is sown broadcast early in January, and in three or four days comes up. When the plants are about two inches high, most of them are weeded out by hand, and only one plant to every square foot or so is left. The irrigation is continued every two or three days until the blossoms fade and the heads appear. When fully grown, the plant is about four feet high. The blossoms all come out nearly at the same time, so that a whole field, which was pale green one day, is white the next. The petals of the blossoms are collected by gently removing them by hand from the capsules, never plucking them off forcibly, as this would injure the latter. These petals are then handed over to the women of the family, who, seated in front of circular iron plates placed over a slow fire, dab the petals on one by one, pressing them with a damp roll of cloth. When fresh, the petals are gummy, the heat makes them stick together, and the moisture being driven out they form circular cakes, technically called "leaves," eight inches to fourteen inches in diameter and .5 to .3 inches thick, which are used in making the shells of the opium cakes at Patna.

Next the poppy juice must be collected, and this is a very critical operation, and all the native household is pressed into the service. Each person is armed with an instrument having two or three sharp points, so that one stroke of it makes two or three parallel scratches. Thus armed, they go into the fields in the afternoons, when the sap is rising best, and lightly scratch each poppy capsule on two or three sides in a vertical direction. This is a very tedious job when a man has several acres of poppy under cultivation, and all the village, from old men and women who can scarcely stand, to children who have barely learned to do so, are pressed into the work. The work is urgent, for a whole field becomes ready for the extraction about the same time, and it must be all accomplished in a very few days, or the capsules will dry up and much of the juice will be lost. When the capsule is lanced, a white juice about the consistency of glycerine slowly exudes, and this partially dries and turns brown.