

as over plucking will render it weak and sickly.

The most advantageous method of plucking is to divide the coolies into three gangs, in number according to the flush to be gathered. The pekoe gang should be composed solely of women and children, as their hands being more delicate, are better adapted for nipping off the convoluted bud and its two expanded leaves, from which pekoe is made.* This gang should be followed by the "Souchong" pluckers, who gather the next two leaves, and then again succeeded by the coarse tea or Congou gatherers.† The object of this division of labour is to keep the leaves separate for the manufacture of each class of tea, when brought into the factory for manipulation. Another advantage gained by this careful classification of the raw leaf, is that it prevents the coarser and harder leaves from breaking the leaves of the finer teas during the process of rolling, and furthermore obviates the necessity of so much sifting as would be required if all the teas were manufactured together.

The gatherers carry a small basket in front of them, fastened round the body; thus they are enabled to gather the leaves with both hands, and to throw them quickly into the basket. They must not be kept long in the hand, nor in large parcels, lest they should heat and turn sour. After the fourth gathering the shrubs will once more exhibit an abundant display of foliage, but these leaves must be kept to restore the exhausted energy of the plant.

When a sufficient quantity of leaf has been collected by the pluckers, it is brought indoors and spread out on a table to the depth of five or six inches, covered over with a cloth, and sometimes on flat bamboo trays in the open air, to undergo what is called the "withering" process. During this stage the tea must be carefully examined from time to time by the manager of the plantation or some other competent person, and when the leaves have become soft and flaccid—the color having assumed a rich brown hue, and the general appearance being similar to the out-turn of the leaf after infusion—they may be taken up and rolled in the

hand. In effecting this latter operation some skill is required to preserve the leaves in the form of a ball; and it is the proof of a good workman to keep the leaves well collected together under the hand, and not allow them to stray and spread themselves over the tray, for on this depends the leaves being well or badly twisted; and the viscous juices expressed in the process of rolling are sufficient to keep the leaves in the twisted form.

They are now roasted over a charcoal fire, made in a hole in the ground, over which is placed the *Hazar* (called in China a *Poey Long*), an instrument of rather curious construction, about two and a half feet in height and one and a half in diameter, open at both ends; formed of basket-work, and having a slight inclination from the ends to the centre or neck. In the inner part, a little above the centre, are placed two cross wires for the purpose of receiving the sieve (a shallow iron pan) which contains the tea, and which is placed about fourteen inches above the fire. A certain degree of watchfulness is requisite to see that none of the leaves accidentally fall through the interstices of the sieve, which would occasion smoke, and thereby injure the tea.

The roaster all this time is constantly turning the leaves over, taking care that none of them lodge about the bottom of the *Kerrai*, for this being the part most heated, they soon begin to burn, and if not attended to, might communicate a smoky or burnt flavor to the tea.

The leaves are then sifted, and again undergo the process of drying, twisting, and turning as before; which is repeated once or twice more, until they become quite black, well twisted, and perfectly dry and crisp. In separating the different kinds of tea, sieves are used of various sizes, the numbers ranging from eight to twelve; number eight is employed for the finer sorts of Pekoe, the next in rotation is used in sifting the Souchong leaf, while for the coarser kinds of Congou and Bohea the higher numbers up to twelve are appropriated.

Much stress is laid, by experienced planters, on the importance of a final 'firing' before packing the tea for shipment, because, unless this be done, it frequently happens that the leaves will become mouldy and sometimes turn sour; the latter evil is the most to be dreaded, as it can never be entirely eradicated.

In the preceding remarks we have not alluded to the method of manufacture in the North West Provinces of India, because, in all essential points, it is identical with that of Assam and the Eastern portion of the Bengal Presidency. We cannot however refrain from mentioning the exquisite skill displayed in the manipulation of leaf cultivated in some of the

gardens in Kumaon and the Kangra Valley; though these teas, being mostly derived from China stock, are never likely to compete successfully with Assam teas in the English market. The flavor is extremely delicate, but of a peculiar character, significantly termed *malty* by the London brokers. In strength and astringency they cannot approach the Assam product.

The teas are packed in parcels or *breaks* of about 300 chests, each chest containing about 80 lbs. of tea. The quantity put into each chest is previously weighed, and the packing is performed by men with their bare feet.

A few words as to the different classes of tea prepared for market, (which, by the way, are not nearly so numerous in India as in China,) may not be out of place here. Beginning then with Pekoe, which consists of the unexpanded terminal leaf bud, in which state the convoluted part is covered with a white hair or down, whence its name, *Pe-hao* (white hair.) *Pac-ho*, or *Pekoe*, as corrupted by us, is derived. The white hairy appearance of the leaves found in this tea is termed *flower* by the dealers in England; which term, as well as that of *Fleur de The*, appears to have originated in a supposition, that these white downy leaves were the blossom of the tea.* The next in value is Pekoe Souchong, so called, because it contains a few Pekoe endo, which greatly improve the flavor of the tea, thereby enhancing its value. The third quality, namely, Souchong, being entirely free from the young leaves of the Pekoe gathering, yet consists of the earliest expanded leaf. The coarse leaves, which form the Congou, still retain a degree of strength and flavor, but far inferior to the unexpanded leaf-bud forming Pekoe.

We need only add, in conclusion, that, considering the rapid progress which has hitherto been made in Eastern Bengal, and with annually increasing exports, India possesses an undoubted power of competing with China in the European and American markets in the cultivation of tea. Moreover there is every probability of the present somewhat limited area being extended to other districts, where the culture of the tea tree has not as yet been attempted.

* Mr. Jacobson states that Pekoe tea requires much exposure to the sun previously to roasting; it should also be placed in close rooms, and not exposed to the air, but kept warm; because it is advisable to hasten and promote the withering of the leaves.

MR. MECHE ON GRASS LAND AND PERMANENT PASTURE.

[We commend the following suggestive article to the thoughtful consider-

* This is also practised in China: the superior kind of Souchong or Caper tea being nipped off by women, leaving no part of the stalk.

† It will be understood that all the various denominations of tea, known as Pekoe, Souchong, Congou, and so on, are derived from one and the same tree. The Pekoe leaf (or 'tip,' as it is sometimes called,) growing at the end of the stem—a few inches below this the Souchong leaf, constituting the second quality; and nearest to the brown wood of the stalk, the Congou leaf. The leaves of this latter tea, all consist as before observed, of the old and coarse leaves left on the shrubs after the gathering of the usual harvest. In China they are gathered by bending down the branches of the shrubs, stripping them in the rudest manner, by passing the hand along the branch, as described by Mr. Fortune, and sometimes with a bamboo knife held between the fore-finger and the thumb.