

but new regulations for the inspection of saffron were passed in 1613.

The true saffron crocus is that which grows and blossoms in the autumn, of a purplish colour and a pleasant scent. At the proper season the owner of the fields collects a number of hands, who commence gathering the flowers early in the morning, and throw them by handfuls into baskets; the pistil shrinks when the sun becomes powerful, therefore the gathering is discontinued about eleven o'clock; and the flowers are carried to a building, where the stigma and a portion of the style are carefully picked out, and the rest of the flower is thrown away. A mass of these stigmata, some inches in thickness, is placed in sheets of paper over a hair-sieve; other sheets of paper and weights are placed on the top, and the whole is roasted over a small kiln. This produces a cake of saffron, but that which is not so prepared, but merely dried in the sun, is the finest, and is called *hay saffron*. The gathering takes place in fine bright weather, and used not to be stopped even on the Sabbath day, the infraction of the day of rest being permitted in this occupation. It is grown in Essex and Cambridgeshire. Saffron is also brought from Sicily, France, and Spain: the English is, however, the best. In France the flowers are collected at the end of September or in the beginning of October. The stigmas are quickly taken out, and immediately dried on sieves over a gentle fire, to which they are exposed for only half an hour. According to one of the chief authorities it requires 7,000 to 8,000 flowers to yield 500 grammes ( $17\frac{1}{2}$  ounces) of fresh saffron, which by drying is reduced to 100 grammes. Notwithstanding the high prices of saffron, its cultivation is by no means always profitable, from the many difficulties by which it is attended. Besides occasional injury from weather, the bulbs are often damaged by parasitic fungi. The most considerable quantity is now produced in Lower Arragon, Murcia, and La Mancha, in Spain, and brought into commerce as Alicante and Valencia saffron. The quantity of saffron exported from Spain in 1864 was valued at 190,062*l.*; in 1865, 135,316*l.*; in 1866, 47,083*l.* The drug was chiefly exported to France. French saffron, which enjoys a better reputation for purity than the Spanish, is cultivated in the arrondissement of Pithiviers-on-Gatmais, in the department of the Loiret, which district annually furnishes a quantity valued at 1,500,000 (60,000*l.*) to 1,800,000 francs. The cultivation is carried on by small peasant-proprietors.

In Austria, Maissau, northeast of Kreuss-on-the-Danube, still produces excellent saffron, though only to a very small extent: the district was formerly celebrated for the drug. Saffron is produced in considerable quantity in Ghayn, an elevated mountain region separating Western Afghanistan from Persia. A very little is collected at Pampur, in Kashmir, under heavy imposts of the Maharaja. It is also cultivated in some districts of China. Finally, the culti-