

third and fourth leaf make the Pekoe Souchong (third quality) and the fifth leaf makes the Souchong (4th quality). These are about the leading varieties of tea, the stuff retailed here at 75 cents a pound will barely reach the dignity of 4th quality whatever name it may travel under.

The operation of picking is one of great nicety and importance, each leaf is picked separately from the twig, the hands of the gatherer are kept scrupulously clean for that purpose. In picking care is taken to pluck only about two-thirds of the leaf, one-third being left to protect the small bud. The tea is gathered while the leaves are small, young and juicy. The first collection of tender leaves makes the best tea. Women and children are usually employed at picking, in performing which a small basket is hung at the side of the picker, and a large one deposited near at hand for general use. When two of these baskets are filled a man carries them to the drying house. The process of curing varies in different countries. In Japan the leaves as they accumulate in the dry house (and no more are gathered than what can be cured the same day) are placed

in flat baskets 30 inches in diameter by 3 inches in depth, and deposited in a steam bath (Page 177) covered with a wooden lid for about 60 seconds; the leaves when taken out are then spread on a mat and cooled, the only apparent effect produced on them is a softening

and shrinkage of the leaf, and a slight diminution of freshness of color, while it causes the leaf to retain its green color in the dry state, thus making green tea. About five pounds of the steamed leaves are then carried to pans or furnaces which are made of stone

thrown. This tray has a wooden frame with a bottom of 5 to 6 thicknesses of tough paper which rest upon the grid-iron. As the heat acts upon the leaves, a man, there being one for each furnace, agitates and stirs them with his hands (page 178) then kneads the mass

very much like dough is worked, being careful to keep the whole mass in motion, this process continues for about an hour when the leaves are again cooled and those that have not yet assumed a distinct twist or curl are picked out carefully and again placed on the tray for additional drying. The alternate heating and cooling produces the color, as with each successive drying the leaf takes a darker shade. Bamboo baskets of about two and a half feet in diameter by three inches in depth are suspended from the ceiling by small cords, the bottom of these baskets are of fine bamboo, made with interstices varying according to the fineness desired, this grades the tea. Again the paper tray receives the leaves which are slightly agitated for about 15 minutes giving the leaf its smooth surface and brightening its color, the tea is now placed in bamboo scoops and by a dexterous tossing motion the dust is entirely fanned out, from this the tea is taken to long and low tables (page 180) where any remaining stems and uncurled leaves are carefully picked out by girls. Only the very best tea is placed in jars, the majority is placed in rough boxes covered



CHINESE MODE OF TEA CURING.

plastered outside, about three feet high three and a half long by two wide. (Page 177). In the interior and close to the ground is made a charcoal fire, upon the inside of this is placed a grid-iron as a supporter, over which is placed a paper tray, into which the leaf is