INDIGO MANUFACTURE IN TIRHOOT, LOWER BENGAL—SEE PAGE 296.
INDIGO
CULTURE IN
BENGAL.

During the last three
years the planters in
the districts of Tinhoot
and Chumparan have
experienced much in-
convenience, and often
great loss, as well as
trouble, from the dis-
affection of the "ryots,"
or native peasantry.
There are frequent dis-
putes about the terms
of the agreements made
between these people
and the capitalists who
advance the money for
the sowing of indigo.
This question in Bengal
is almost as difficult as
the land-tenure ques-
tion in Ireland. The
manufacture of indigo,
or mahai, as it is called
in the vernacular, com-
mences about the first
week in July, when the
indigo is cut and carried
into the factory. It is
then steeped in vats
from twelve to sixteen
hours, the time which
is calculated to be suf-
ficient to extract the
virtue of the plant.
The water in which the
plant has been steeped
is next let off into a
lower or "beating vat,"
where it is left to settle.
The vat is now beaten
off by eight or ten
men, as shown in the
Illustration. The pro-
cess of "beating off"
(by which the grain
is separated from the
water) having been
completed, the vat is left a sufficient time for the grain to
sink to the bottom, when the water is gradually drawn off.
The indigo settled at the bottom of the vat is transported to
the "boiling-house," whence it is poured on to what is called the
"table," where it is well strained; it is carried thence and placed
in presses of about 6 ft. square. All moisture having been extracted,
the indigo is cut into square cakes and placed on shelves to dry,
and at the end of the season it is packed and sent down to Calcutta
for sale. The life of a resident indigo planter or manager is full of
toll and anxiety; and he is frequently obliged to appeal to the
magistrates to enforce the due performance of the ryots' contracts.