



INDIGO MANUFACTURE IN TIRHOOT, LOWER BENGAL.—SEE PAGE 196.

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INDIGO  
CULTURE IN  
BENGAL.

During the last three years the planters in the districts of Tihoot and Chumparun have experienced much inconvenience, and often great loss, as well as trouble, from the disaffection of the "ryots," or native peasantry. There are frequent disputes 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 question in Ireland. The manufacture of indigo, or mahai, as it is called in the vernacular, commences about the first week in July, when the indigo is cut and eared into the factory. It is then steeped in vats from twelve to sixteen hours, the time which is calculated to be sufficient 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 process 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 toil and anxiety; and he is frequently obliged to appeal to the magistrates to enforce the due performance of the ryots' contracts.