

# PAXTON & GALLAGHER,

## LARGEST IMPORTERS OF

# TEAS WEST OF NEW YORK CITY

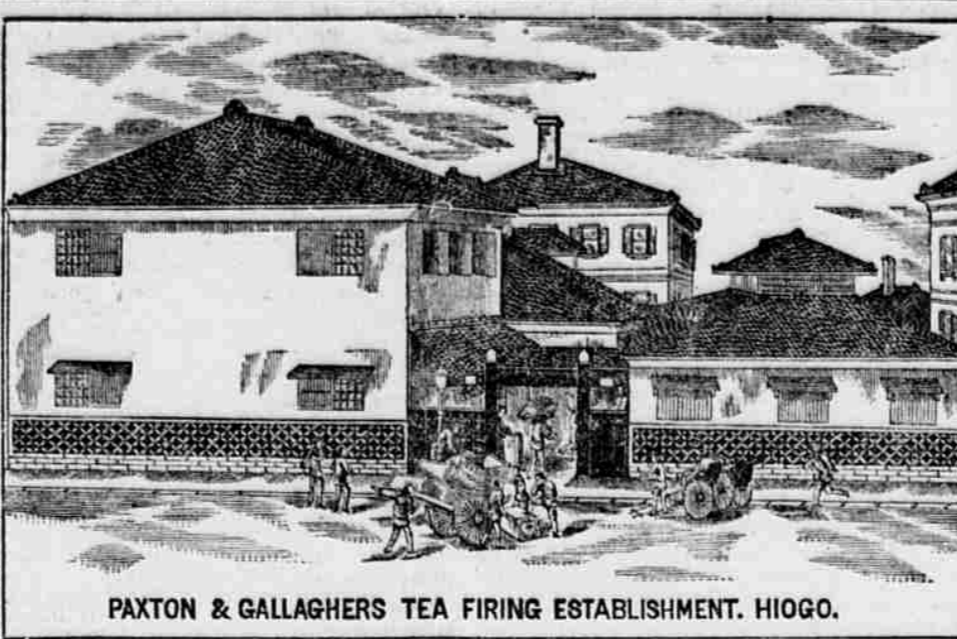
### A CUP OF TEA.

The Preparation of Japan Tea, Showing the Natives Picking, Steaming and Firing.

A description of Japan Tea cannot be complete without a reference to the origin of the plant which we all know by name, some of us by sight, and all of us by the means of the refreshing beverage it supplies to our wants. A stimulant to some, a sedative to others, and to all a household drink. A beverage, too, with strong medicinal qualities and of active counter-irritant power to food, which by itself might be injurious to life. For does not Kaempfer quote, upon the authority of Chinese physicians, the case of a woman who, being weary of a passionate and scolding husband, took advice as to the best way of getting rid of him and was instructed to allow for his

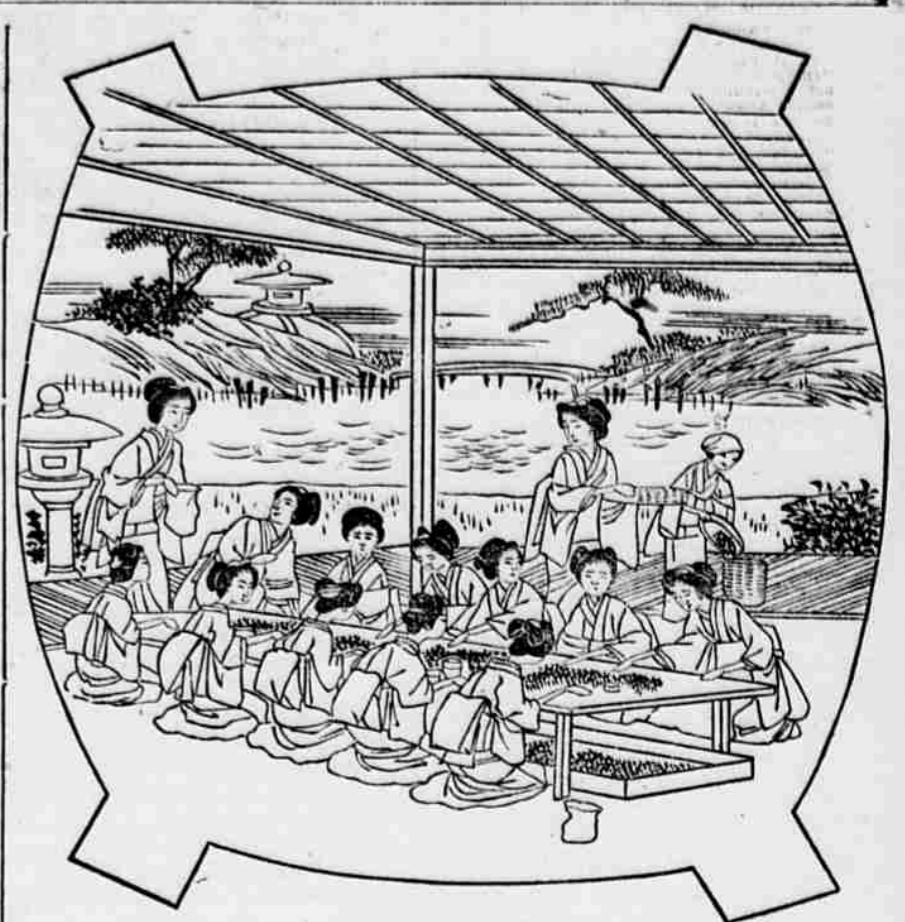
time to cool. Who with tea amused the evening, with tea solaced the midnight and with tea welcomed the morning. For ourselves it is amusing to record the imagined danger felt by our forefathers for the beverage which cheers us all, for the innocent drink which gives occasion for an afternoon gossip, for the refreshing cup which renews the energies of a midnight student. All writers agree that the Tea Plant was introduced into Japan from China and most of them fix the ninth century as the date of its importation. For a long time, Tea was too expensive a luxury, even to the Japanese themselves, to be indulged in by any but the nobles, and Kaempfer, writing in 1692, describes how the Tea used at the imperial court was then grown and prepared under the care of the Chief Purveyor of Tea. How, for at least two or three weeks before the gathering of the leaves, the persons who were to pick them were prohibited from eating fish or any unclean food, lest their breath should contaminate the leaves. How, during the gathering season, they had to wash themselves two or three times a day, nor were they allowed to touch the

leaves about thirty seeds and its center is placed at a distance of about five feet from its neighbor. **GROWING.**—The circle of seed develops into a compact bush, some shoots of which will be found to bear leaves of darker color and harder texture than the others and also much smaller. This difference in the leaf on the same tea bush is one of the difficulties of the tea farmers and tea pickers. In the third year of the growth the tea plant bears leaves ready for picking, and it is considered at its best from the fifth to the tenth year. Its age does not deteriorate the plant, the only difference being that with years it requires more manure. The shrub is not allowed to grow beyond a height of three to four feet, necessary both for the convenience of picking and for the strength of the new shoots. **PICKING.**—As the season is early or late, the first picking commences the latter end of April or beginning of May and lasts about twenty days or a month. The second crop is gathered in June and July and sometimes a third one later on. This work is performed almost entirely by girls, who deftly pick off the new leaves but very often also the whole of a new shoot, so that long stems are frequently met with in their baskets where leaves only should be seen. The shrub being evergreen has still many of its last year's leaves, so that some skill is necessary to fill a basket quickly without also including some of the old growth. As a rule the tea belongs to very small proprietors, who fire their few catties a day, generally in the entrance of their only apartment, and then sell the fired leaf to the larger dealers as principals or go-betweens, who mix their various purchases together and then send twenty or more boxes of similar tea for sale at the treaty posts. But the process of preparing the green leaf is the same, whether done in a small shanty or in the godowns of a well-to-do merchant. It is as follows: **STEAMING.**—As soon as possible after the leaves have been picked, they are steamed by being placed in a round wooden tray with a brass wire bottom over boiling water, the tray filling up the mouth of an iron cauldron set in plaster over a wood fire. The tray is about eighteen inches in diameter and receives about a couple of handfuls of green leaf. The leaf is put on to continue the steaming and the process is complete in about half a minute, the attendant taking one look at the leaves and stirring before removing them. The water in the cauldron should show 210° Fahrenheit and the bottom of the tray 185°. The moist leaves with their natural oil now brought to the surface are tumbled on a wooden table for a few minutes and then taken into the firing room, where the principal manipulation has now to be performed. **FIRING.**—A box shaped wooden frame, four feet long by two and a half broad, coated with plaster forms the oven. Charcoal (well covered with charcoal ashes) is alight in the bottom of the oven and about a foot and a half above the charcoal rests the wooden frame with tough Japanese paper stretched across it. This paper gets darkly tanned by the oil from the leaves, but below, it shows no sign of getting burned and also such tray will often do more than a whole season's work without being removed. The heat of the paper at the time of firing is about 120°. About six and a quarter pounds of green leaves are thrown on to one of these paper trays and a man (for the work can only be done by a man) now proceeds to fire this quantity, which by the time it is finished becomes reduced to about two and a half pounds. At first he throws up the soft, moist leaves in quick succession and keeps the whole mass moving without any attempt at rolling or twisting. Gradually the leaves assume a darker color, and gradually he makes them up into balls, rolling the balls between his hands, separating the leaves again, rolling them on the hot surface of the paper, again collecting them into balls which he will roll backward and forward on the paper and finally do so with



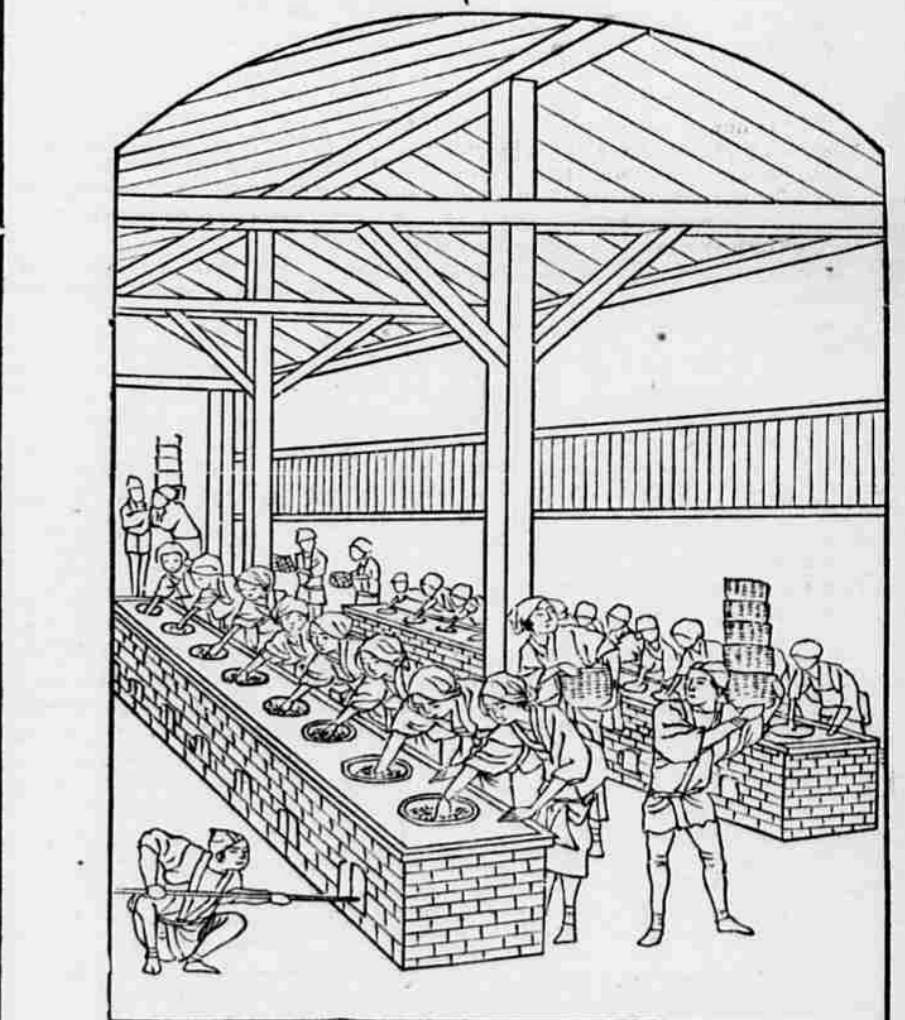
PAXTON & GALLAGHERS TEA FIRING ESTABLISHMENT. HIOGO.

thin leaves to collect in a heap on the ground and retaining the large and coarser ones to be thrown in a separate heap. **HAND PICKING.**—The completing process of the country preparation is to distribute the tea to girls seated on mats in front of a picking table, who sort out all the seed, stalks and rubbish that may still be mixed with the tea. The tea, thus finished as far as the country process is concerned, is packed in wooden boxes, nailed, corded and marked and then sent to the treaty port for sale, each box containing about half a picul. There are two systems of finally firing Japan tea before it can be exported to America or Canada, viz.: **PAN FIRING and Basket Firing.** **PAN FIRING.**—This is done in rows of iron pans (21 inches in diameter by 13 inches deep) set in brick work and heated by charcoal. The tea which has been bought probably in small lots of different qualities, has been bulked into large enough quantities of the same description and is then carried by the women in baskets to the firing godown. At a given signal all the baskets are emptied into the pans (about 5 pounds into each) and the fires being well lit, and afterwards constantly attended to. The stirring of the leaves continues until the overseer (generally a Chinaman) considers the tea sufficiently fired. When the signal is given to take out the tea, it is either carried back to the

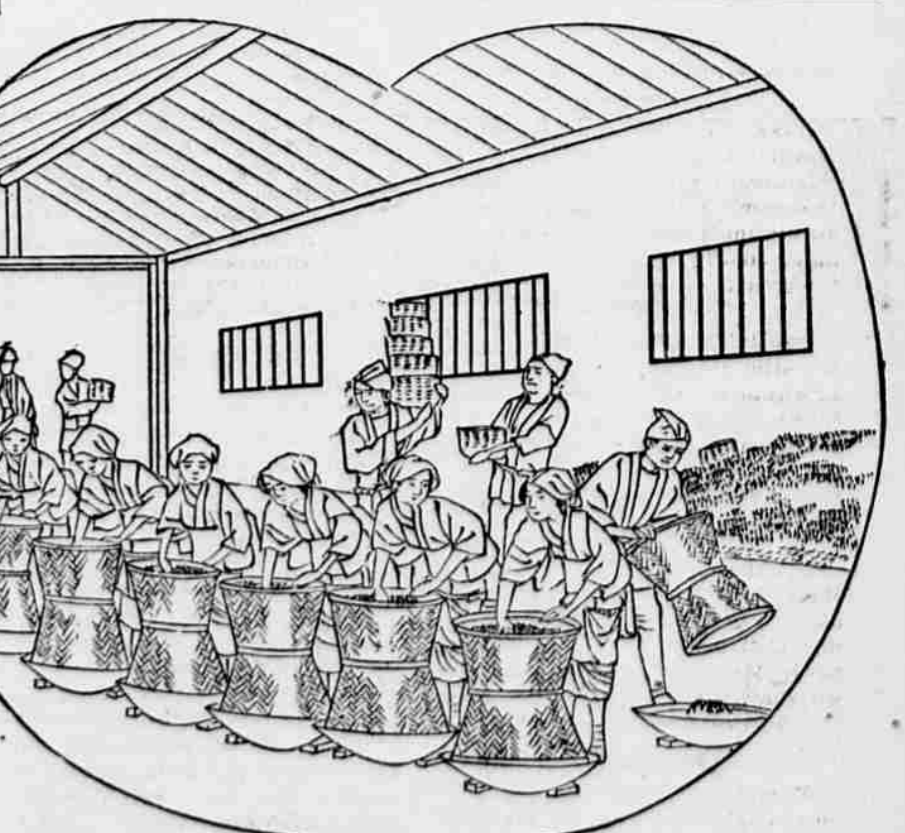


HAND PICKING

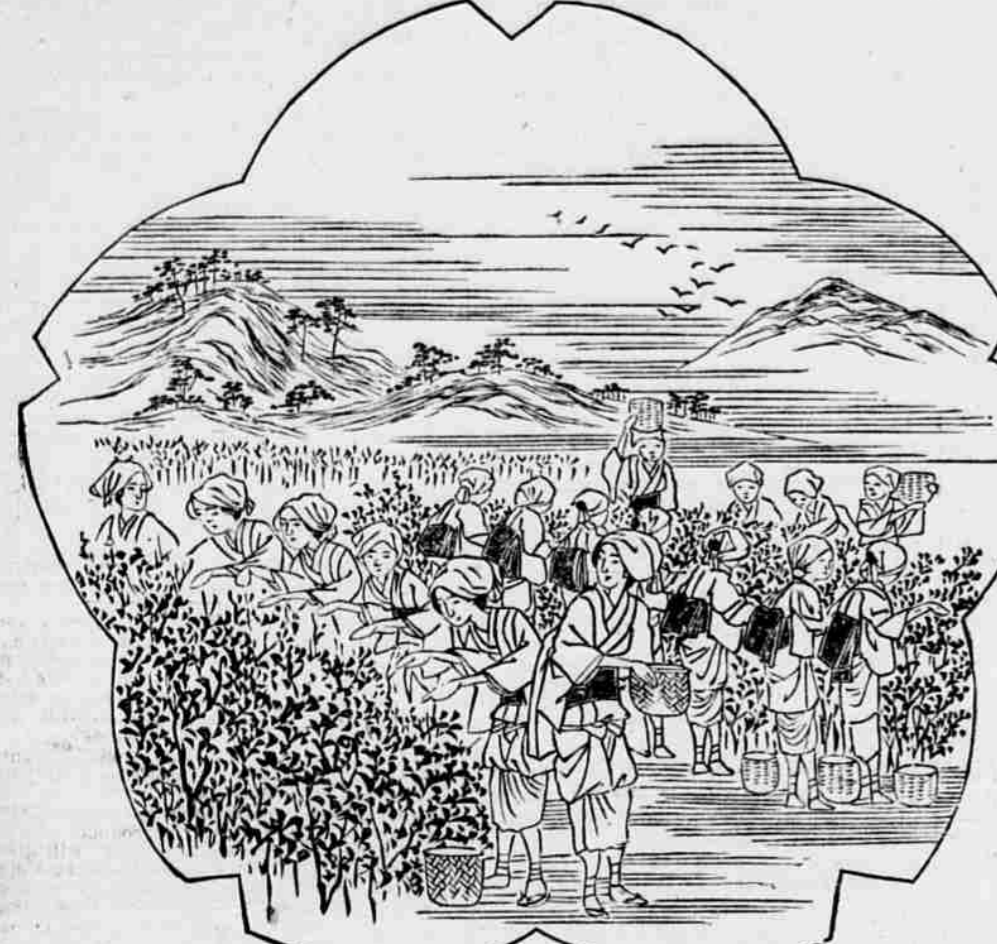
lined with lead, which are to convey it to the grocers and tea drinkers of America. **BASKET FIRING.**—Basket Firing consists of simply roasting the tea without any of the stirring process as gone through in the pans. A bamboo basket shaped like a dice box, but open at both ends, is placed over a large iron brazier containing lighted charcoal, (well covered with ashes) and the tea is strewn, about an inch in thickness on a close woven bamboo tray which fits the neck of the dice box. The baskets are occasionally removed from the brazier, and the tea turned over by hand in order that at any all be equally fired; they are then carefully replaced on the brazier, without allowing any dust or leaves to fall through the tray on to the charcoal, and in the course of forty to sixty minutes the tea is ready for packing.



PAN FIRING.



BASKET FIRING.



PICKING.

daily food only "swine's flesh" and all manner of fat things, which would undoubtedly kill him in a year's time. But this good woman, not content with waiting the prescribed time, took other advice, and was bid give her husband, who was then almost reduced to a skeleton, constant drinks of a strong infusion of tea leaves, which should without fail do her business quickly, but alas! to her great grief she found that by the joint use of these two contraries, her husband instead of declining, soon got better, recovered his strength and was at last restored to perfect health. Even Dr. Johnson wrote as apologetically of his love for tea as ever an opium smoker could pen his penitent confession. The learned doctor drew his own portrait as "A hardened and shameless tea-drinker who for twenty years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant, whose kettle had scarcely

leaves excepting with gloved hands. When finally prepared, the tea was sent up to court under a good guard, sometimes a simple pot of this tea, containing no more than 3 or 4 Catties, being attended by nearly two hundred people. The imperial tea costs thirty or forty taels for one Catty. **PLANTING.**—The Tea Plant requires a well drained soil. It grows well on level ground with well kept drains, but is more often seen on gentle hill slopes and again on steep inclines where terraces are cut to maintain small level patches and to prevent the rush of water during heavy rains. These terraces on the hill side when covered with plants, look very picturesque, but they are only selected as being the cheapest ground procurable and not because the tea requires any such elevation. A new plantation is started from seed planted in circles of about two feet diameter, each circle ro-

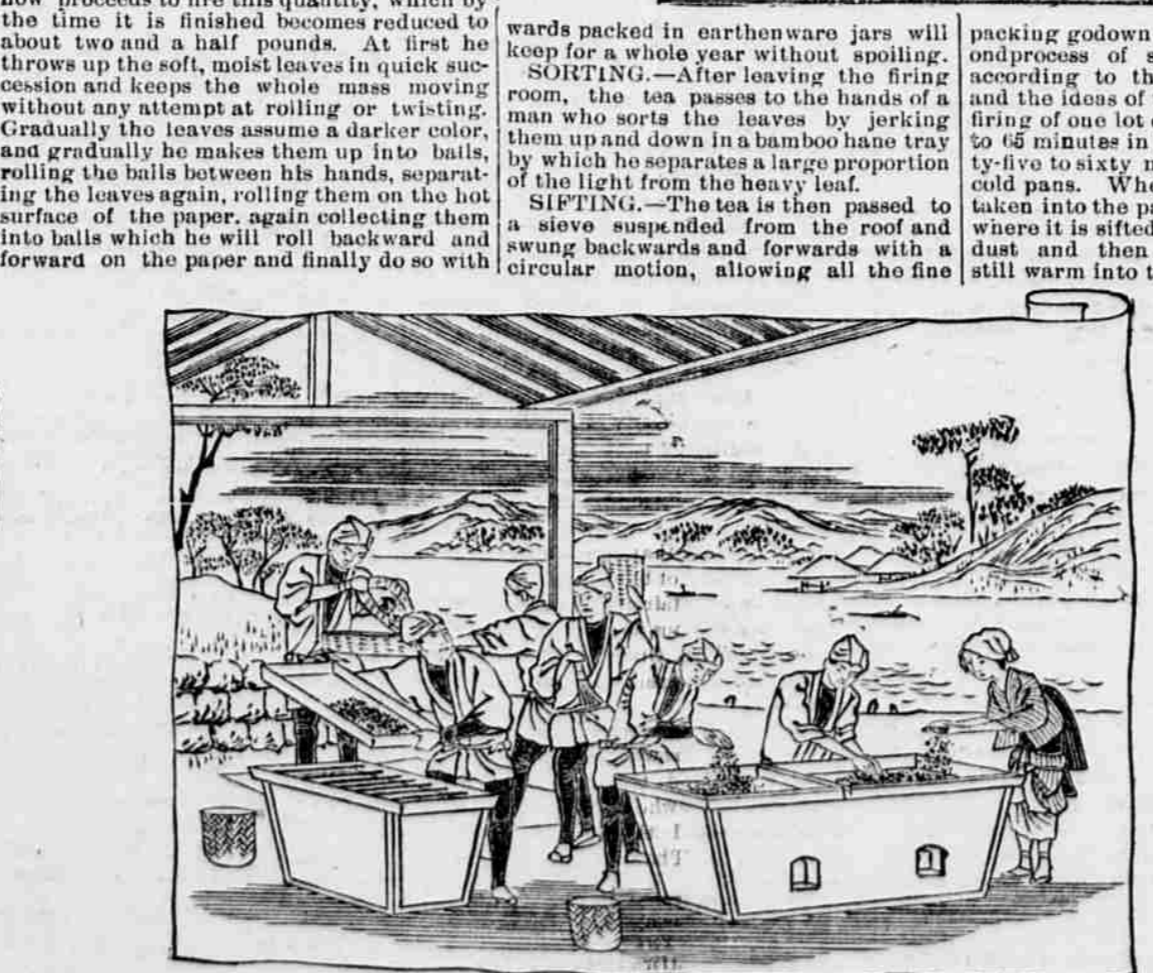
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wards packed in earthenware jars will keep for a whole year without spoiling. **SORTING.**—After leaving the firing room, the tea passes to the hands of a man who sorts the leaves by jerking them up and down in a bamboo hane tray by which he separates a large proportion of the light from the heavy leaf. **SIFTING.**—The tea is then passed to a sieve suspended from the roof and swung backwards and forwards with a circular motion, allowing all the fine

packing godown or put through a second process of stirring in cold pans, according to the quality of the tea and the idiosyncrasies of the tea taster. The pan firing of one lot of tea may last from 40 to 65 minutes in the hot and from twenty-five to sixty minutes in the cold pans. When finished it is taken into the packing godown, where it is sifted to remove the dust and then packed while still warm into the half chests,



STEAMING.



NATIVE FIRING.

The above illustrations are reproductions from photographs taken on the ground while our Mr. Weaver was in Japan during the tea picking season of the present year. While in Japan Mr. Weaver established our own firing and curing house in Hiogo, which will enable us to give our customers a uniform grade of goods from one season to another. Mr. Weaver also spent several weeks in the best tea districts in China and established a branch at Shanghai. By having our own tea expert on the ground during the season when the finest leaf is procured, and by doing our own firing and curing, we are able to give our customers better teas and lower prices than any exclusive tea house in America. Samples and prices cheerfully submitted to dealers upon request.

Yours respectfully,

PAXTON & GALLAGHER, OMAHA, NEB.