

INDIGO is a drug of a dark blue colour, used in dyeing, and prepared from the leaves and small branches of a low shrub, indigenous in the warmer parts of Asia and Africa, and now cultivated in those of America. The indigo is cut when in flower, the tips of the branches only being taken, and several cuttings made during the season.

In bringing in the slips, care is taken not to lose more of the pollen, or farina-fecundans, than necessity compels; this part of the plant being peculiarly valuable. The slips are thrown into a steeping vat, or large tub, filled with water. There it undergoes a fermentation, which is completed in twenty-four hours. The water is then drawn into another tub, called the mortar, and the vat being cleansed, is ready to receive a second supply of slips. The water that has run into the pounding-

tub, is found impregnated with a subtle earth, which alone constitutes the substance, which is the object of the labour, and which must be separated from the salts of the plant, which are here useless. To effect this, the water is forcibly agitated with wooden buckets. These buckets are pierced full of holes, and fixed to a long handle. When it is perceived that the coloured particles collect together, by separating from the water, the agitation is discontinued, in order to allow them to precipitate to the bottom of the tub, where they are left to settle till the water is quite clear. Vents in the tub, pierced at different heights, are then successively opened, to let out the water. The particles, with the water that remains, having acquired the consistence of a syrup, this thick liquid is afterward drawn off into a settler. The superfluous water is here more completely drained away, and still, subsequently, filtered through a sacking cloth. The indigo is then put into chests, where it is gradually freed from all moisture; and, at the end of three months becomes fit for sale. Genuine indigo ought to be of a rich dark blue colour approaching to black; and, when broken, to display the lustre of copper. It should not sink in water, or leave behind any sediment after being dissolved. The purest indigo is brought from Guatimala in South America.

[*Blue colour from Indigo.*—Take 1 part of very fine indigo, powder it very accurately, and sift it through muslin. Dissolve it in 8 parts of strong oil of vitriol: the colour will be bad if the oil of vitriol is not very strong.—T.C.]