**preparation, it** is eſcorted by the ſuperintendant of the mountain and a ſtrong guard to the emperor’s court, and re­served for the uſe of the imperial family.

As the tea ſhrub grows often on the rugged banks of steep mountains, acceſs to which is dangerous, and sometimes impracticable, the Chineſe, in order to come at the leaves, make uſe of a singular ſtratagem ; Theſe ſteep places are generally frequented by great numbers of monkeys, which being irritated and provoked, to revenge themſelves tear off the branches, and ſhower them down upon thoſe who have insulted them. The Chineſe immediately collect theſe bran­ches, and ſtrip them of their leaves.

**w**hen the tea leaves have been collected, they are expoſed to the ſteam of boiling water ; after which they are put upon plates of copper, and held over the fire until they be­come dry and ſhrivelled, and appear ſuch as we have them in Europe. According to the teſtimony of Koempſer, tea is prepared in the same manner in the iſles of Japan. “ There are to be ſeen there (ſays this traveller) public buildings erected for the purpose of preparing the freſh gathered tea. Every private perſen who has not ſuitable conveniences, or who is unacquainted with the operation, may carry his leaves thither as they dry. Theſe buildings contain a great number of ſmall ſtoves raised about three feet high, each of which has a broad plate of iron fixed over its mouth. The workmen are ſeated round a large table covered with mats, and are employed in rolling the tea leaves which are ſpread **out** upon them. When the iron plates are heated to a cer­tain degree by the fire, they cover them with a few pounds **of** freſh gathered leaves, which being green and full of sap crackle as soon as they touch the plate. It is then the buſiness of the workman to ſtir them with his naked hands as quickly as poſſible, until they become ſo warm that he can­not easily endure the heat. He then takes off the leaves with a kind of ſhovel, and lays them upon mats. The peo­ple who are employed in mixing them, take a ſmall quanti­**ty** at a time, roll them in their hands always in the ſame di­rection ; while others keep continually ſtirring them, in or­der that they may cool ſooner, and preſerve their ſhrivelled figure the longer. This process is repeated two or three times, and even oftener, before the tea is depoſited in the warehouſes. Theſe precautions are neceſſary to extract all the moiſture from the leaves.”

The people of Japan and China generally keep their tea a year before uſing it, because, when quite freſh and newly gathered, it poſſeſſes a narcotic quality which hurts the brain. Imperial tea is generally preſerved in porcelain vales, or in leaden or tin caniſters covered with fine mats made of bam­boo. Common tea is kept in narrow-mouthed earthen pots; and coarſe tea, the flavour of which is not ſo eaſily injured, is packed up in baſkets of ſtraw.

An infuſion of tea is the common drink of the Chineſe ; and indeed when we consider one circumſtance in their situation, we must acknowledge that Providence has displayed much goodneſs in ſcattering this plant with ſo much profuſion in the empire of China. The water is ſaid to be unwholeſome and nauſeous, and would therefore perhaps, with­out ſome corrective, be unfit for the purpoſes of life. The Chineſe pour boiling water over their tea, and leave it to infuſe, as we do in Europe ; but they drink it without any mixture, and even without ſugar. The people of Japan re­duce theirs to a fine powder, which they dilute with warm water until it has acquired the conſiſtence of thin ſoup. Their manner of ſerving tea is as follows : They place be­fore the company the tea equipage, and the box in which this powder is contained ; they fill the cups with warm wa­ter, and taking from the box as much powder as the point of a knife can contain, throw it into each of the cups, and ſtir it with a tooth-pick until the liquor begins to foam ; it is then preſented to the company, who sip it while it is warm. According to F. du Halde, this method is not pe­culiar to the Japaneſe ; it is alſo used in ſome of the provin­ces of China.

The firſt European writer who mentions tea is Giovanni Botero, an eminent Italian author, who publiſhed a treatiſe about the year 1590, Of the Cauſes of the Magnificence and Greatneſs of Cities. He does not indeed mention its name, but deſcribes it in such a manner that it is impoſſible to miſtake it. “ The Chineſe (ſays he) have an herb out of which they preſs a delicate juice, which ſerves them for drink inſtead of wine : it alſo preſerves their health, and frees them from all thoſe evils which the immoderate uſe of wine produces among us@@\*.”

Tea was introduced into Europe in the year 1610 by the Dutch Eaſt India Company. It is generally ſaid, that it was firſt imported from Holland into England, in 1666, by the lords Arlington and Ossory, who brought it into faſhion among people of quality. But it was uſed in coffee- houſes before this period, as appears from an act of parlia­ment made in 1660, in which a duty of 8 d. was laid on every gallon of the infuſion sold in theſe places. In 1666 it was sold in London for 60s. *per* pound, though it did not coſt more than 2 s. 6 d. or 3s. 6 d. at Batavia. It continued at this price till 1707. In 1715 green tea be­gan to be uſed ; and as great quantities were then imported, the price was leſſened, and the practice of drinking tea deſcended to the lower ranks @@\*. In 1720 the French began to send it to us by a clandeſtine commerce. Since that period the demand has been increaſing yearly, and it has become almoſt a neceſſary of life in ſeveral parts of Europe, and among the loweſt as well as the higheſt ranks.

The following table will give an idea of the quantity of tea imported annually into Great Britain and Ireland since 1717 :

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| From 1717 to 1726 | | 700,000 lbs. |
| 1732 to 1742 | | 1,200,000 |
| 1755 near | | 4,000,000 |
| 1766 | | 6,000,000 |
| 1785 about | | 12,000,000 |
| 1704 from | | 16 to 20,000,000 |

Beſides theſe immenſe quantities imported into Britain and Ireland, much has been brought to Europe by other nations. In 1766 the whole tea imported into Europe from China amounted to 17 millions of pounds; in 1785 it was computed to be about 19 millions of pounds@@\*.

Several researches have been made in Europe to deter­mine whether the tea plant grows ſpontaneouſly ; but theſe reſearches have been hitherto in vain. When Captain Cook viſited Tenerisse in his laſt voyage, Mr Anderſon his ſurgeon was informed by a gentleman of acknowledged vera­city, that a ſhrub is common near Santa Cruz which agrees exactly with the deſcription given of the tea-plant by Lin­naeus. It is conſidered as a weed, and large quantities are rooted out of the vineyards every year: But the Spaniards who inhabit the iſland ſometimes make uſe of it, and aſcribe to it all the qualities of the tea imported from China.

Many attempts have been made to introduce this valuable plant into Europe; but from want of proper precautions most of theſe attempts have miscarried. The seeds, being of an oily nature, are apt to grow rancid during a long voyage, unleſs proper care is taken to preſerve them. There are two methods of preſerving theſe seeds : The firſt is, to incloſe them in wax after they have been dried in the ſun ; the ſecond is, to leave them in their huſks, and ſhut them up cloſely in a box made of tin : but neither of theſe me­thods has been attended with general ſucceſs, whatever

@@@[m]\* Anderson Commerce, vol. ii. p. 138.

@@@[m]\* Hanway Journal.

@@@[m]\* Raynal, vol. i. and Robertson's India.