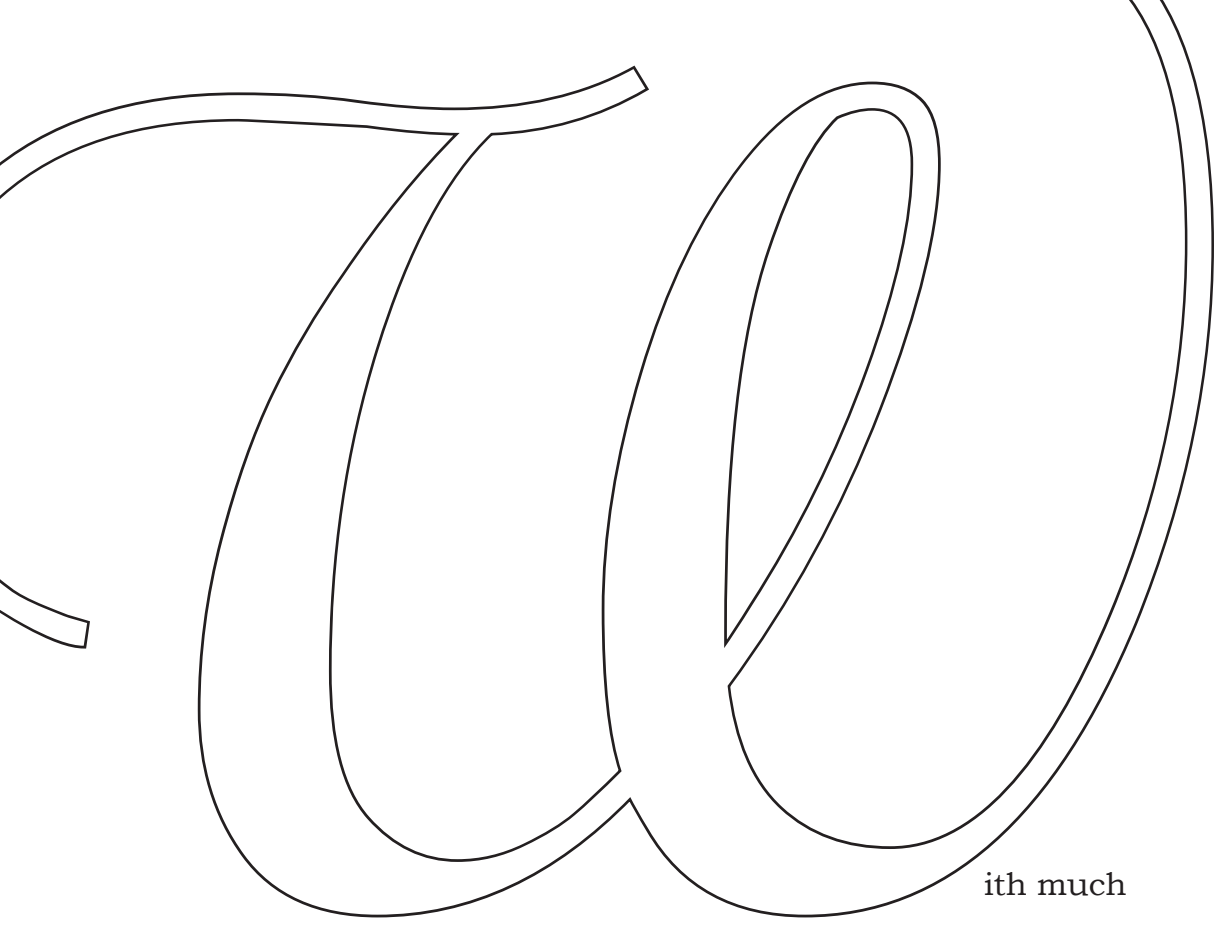




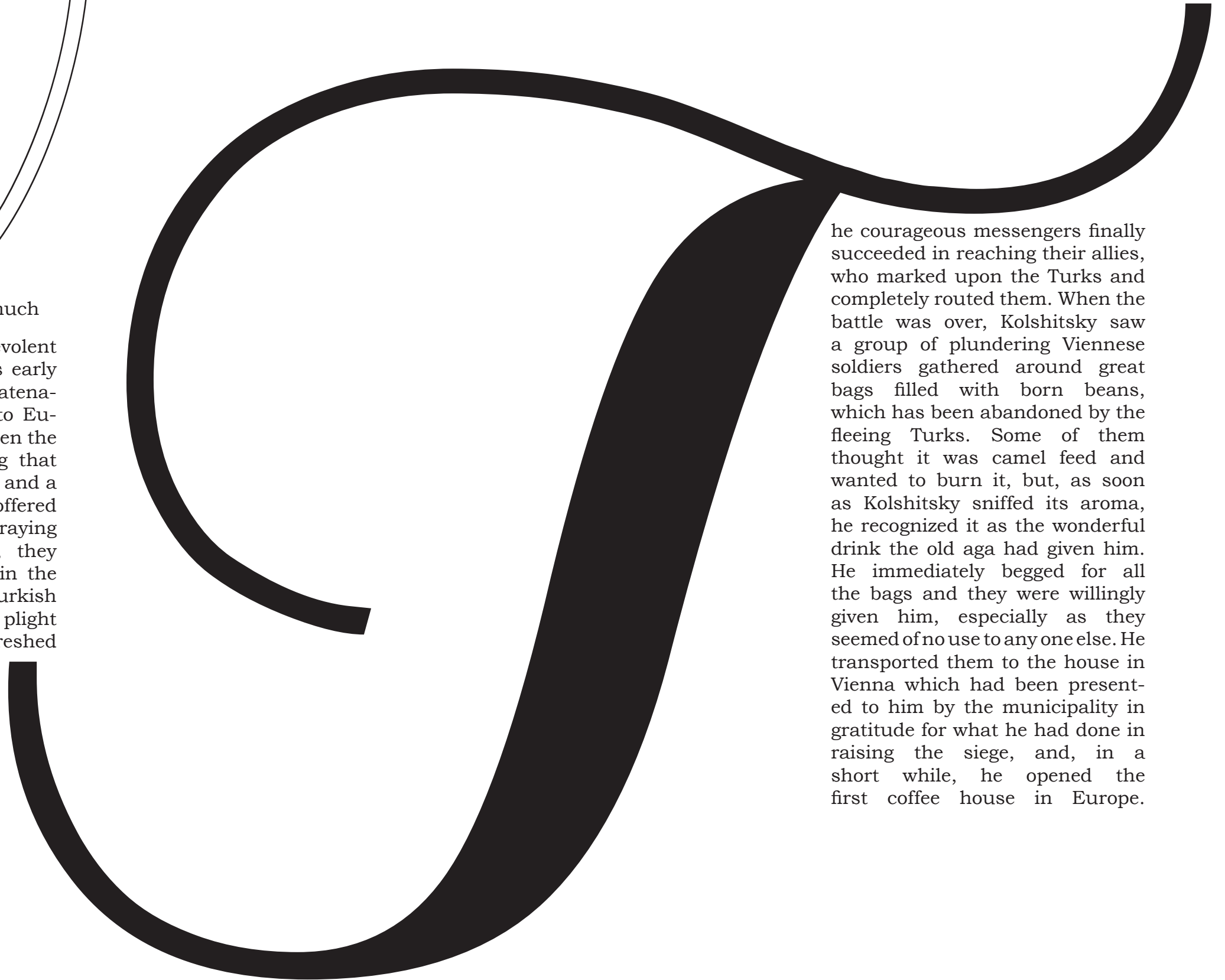


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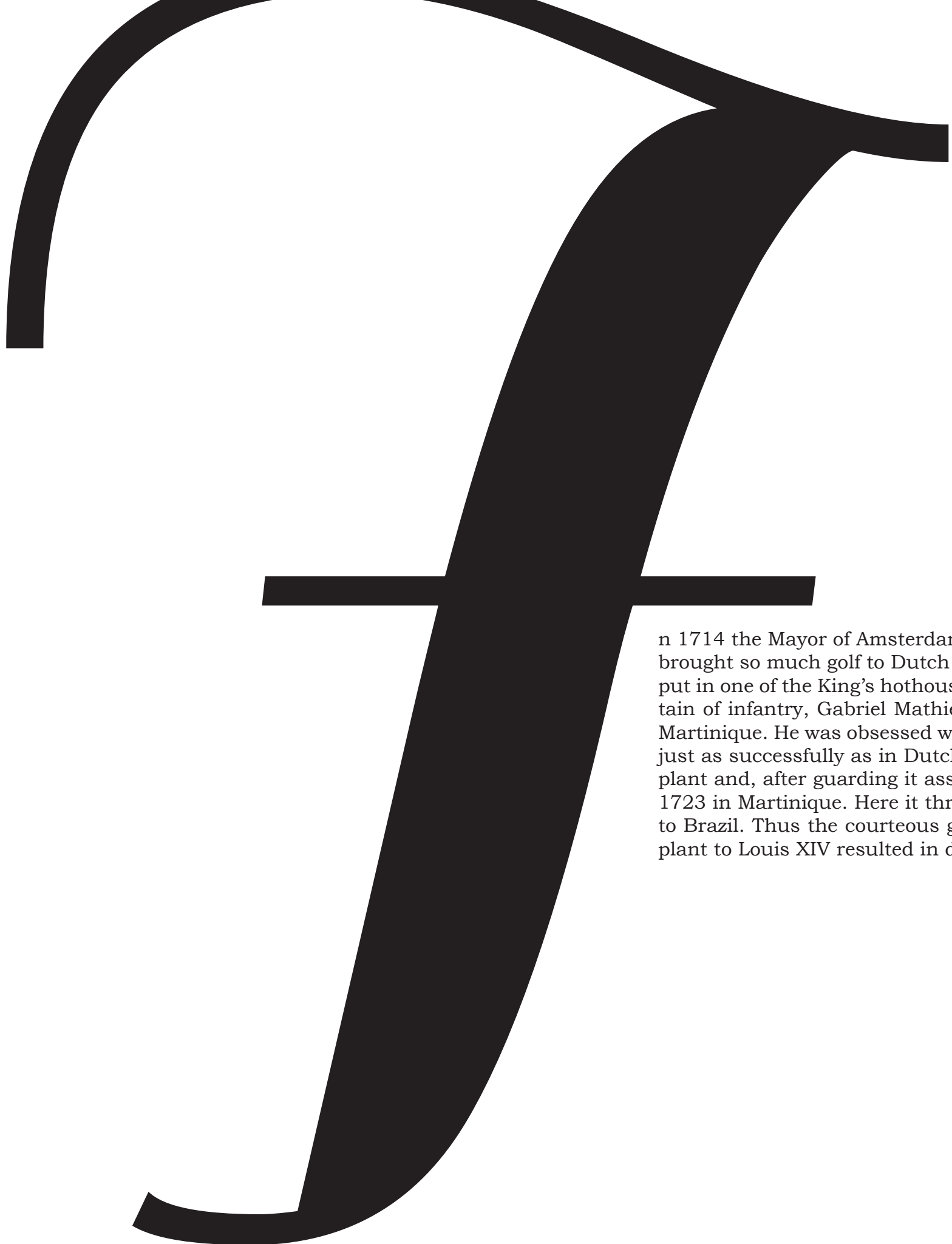
t is interesting to know the exciting history interwoven with the wanderings of that commonplace bean, coffee; the wars, the naval battles, the commercial struggles that were fought over it; its translation from drug store to coffee house and its bitter rivalry with beer, wine and hard liquor; the millionaires it has made and ruined. All this noble arras of adventure, this “epic of commodity” one reads in “Coffee”— far more a tale from the “Thousand and One Nights” than the sober account of a breakfast necessity.



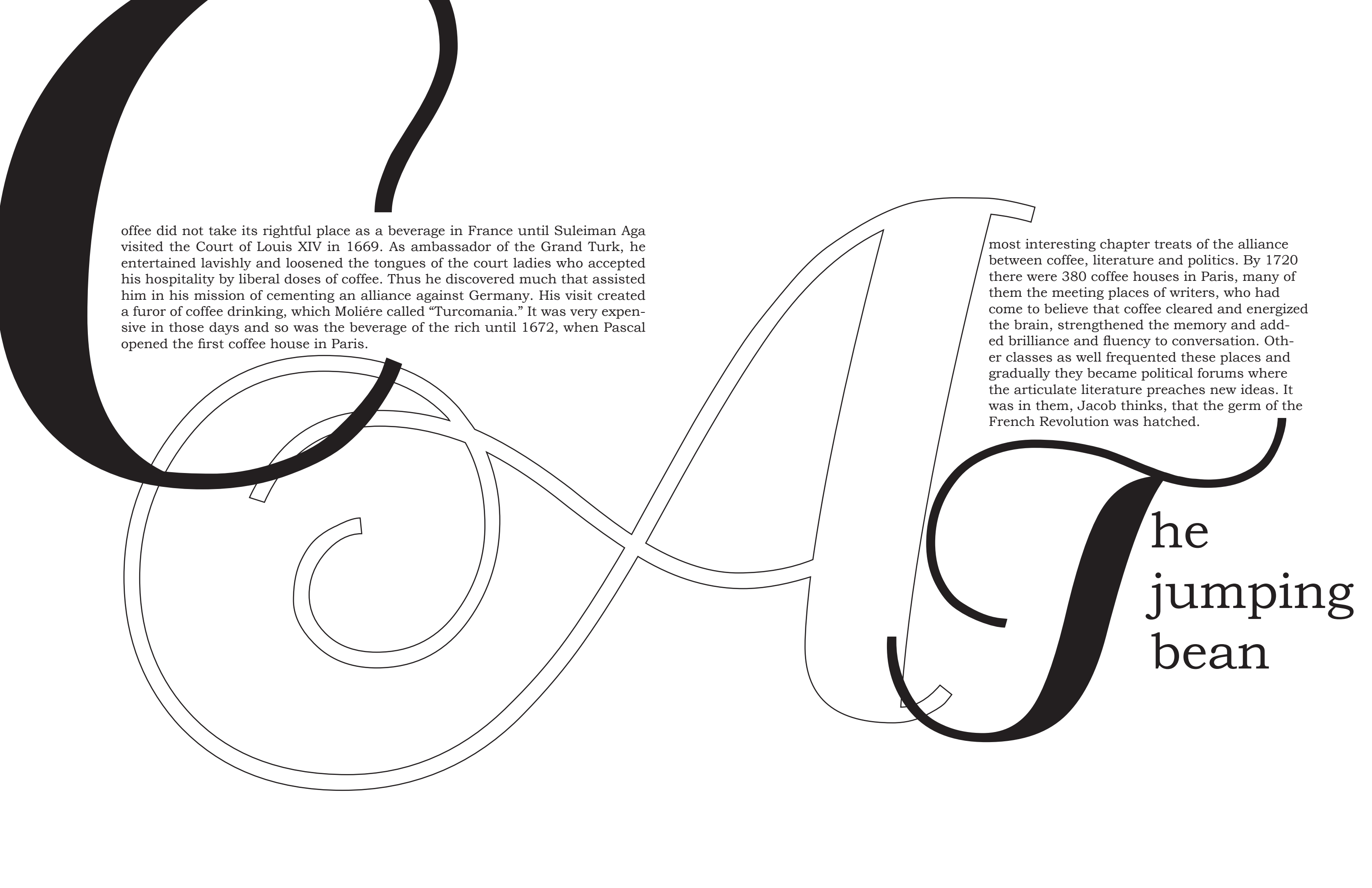
ith much colorful detail it explains how the benevolent bean whose good qualities were known as early as 1000 A.D., traveled by a strange concatenation from Ethiopia to Arabia and thence to Europe. This latter event occurred in 1683, when the Turks were surrounding Vienna. Knowing that the city was about to fall, Georg Kolshitsky and a companion— who spoke perfect Turkish— offered to carry a letter to the Duke of Lorraine praying for reinforcements. Disguised as Turks, they boldly passed through the enemy's lines in the rain. On the way they encountered an old Turkish aga, who was moved to pity at their sodden plight and invited them into his tent, where he refreshed them with a bowl of hot coffee.



he courageous messengers finally succeeded in reaching their allies, who marked upon the Turks and completely routed them. When the battle was over, Kolshitsky saw a group of plundering Viennese soldiers gathered around great bags filled with born beans, which has been abandoned by the fleeing Turks. Some of them thought it was camel feed and wanted to burn it, but, as soon as Kolshitsky sniffed its aroma, he recognized it as the wonderful drink the old aga had given him. He immediately begged for all the bags and they were willingly given him, especially as they seemed of no use to any one else. He transported them to the house in Vienna which had been presented to him by the municipality in gratitude for what he had done in raising the siege, and, in a short while, he opened the first coffee house in Europe.



n 1714 the Mayor of Amsterdam, thinking to achieve a little publicity for coffee, which had brought so much gold to Dutch coffers, sent to Louis XIV a coffee plant as a present. It was put in one of the King's hothouses and there remained, a mere curiosity until a certain captain of infantry, Gabriel Mathieu Desclieux, returned to France on furlough from duty in Martinique. He was obsessed with the idea that coffee could be grown in French Martinique just as successfully as in Dutch Java. He managed to obtain a tiny green shoot of the royal plant and, after guarding it assiduously throughout the long voyage, he landed it safely in 1723 in Martinique. Here it thrived and soon spread to the other Isles sous le Vent and on to Brazil. Thus the courteous gesture of the Mayor of Amsterdam in giving the tiny coffee plant to Louis XIV resulted in destroying the Dutch monopoly.



offee did not take its rightful place as a beverage in France until Suleiman Aga visited the Court of Louis XIV in 1669. As ambassador of the Grand Turk, he entertained lavishly and loosened the tongues of the court ladies who accepted his hospitality by liberal doses of coffee. Thus he discovered much that assisted him in his mission of cementing an alliance against Germany. His visit created a furor of coffee drinking, which Molière called “Turcomania.” It was very expensive in those days and so was the beverage of the rich until 1672, when Pascal opened the first coffee house in Paris.

most interesting chapter treats of the alliance between coffee, literature and politics. By 1720 there were 380 coffee houses in Paris, many of them the meeting places of writers, who had come to believe that coffee cleared and energized the brain, strengthened the memory and added brilliance and fluency to conversation. Other classes as well frequented these places and gradually they became political forums where the articulate literature preaches new ideas. It was in them, Jacob thinks, that the germ of the French Revolution was hatched.

he
jumping
bean

of Mexico is perfectly quiescent in comparison with the coffee bean and its oceanside wanderings. The cost of importation from Abssinia and Arabia was so high that some other way of getting it inevitably would be found. The Dutch were the first to solve the problem. Their East India Company traded in the Malay Archipelago for cloves and black pepper until Willem von Outburn at the end of the seventeenth century, planted coffee in Java and Sumatra. The bush grew luxuriantly i its new home and the Dutch enslaved the native population to care for the plants and soon were able to dictate the price of coffee throughout Europe. This lasted but for a few years— the restless bean was ever on the move.

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Mr.

Jacob has integrate the story of his brown bean “hero” with the history of the world and has brilliantly epitomized whole periods to explain the success or failure of his commodity in different countries and at different times. He has done it in such a readable and delightful manner that even a non-coffee drinker will be fascinated by the book. For those who wish to go more deeply into the subject, William H. Ukers’s “All About Coffee” still remains unexcelled in scholarly completeness, documentation and illustration.

