**TEA** (Chinese *cha,* Amoy dialect *té),* the name given to the leaves of the tea bush (see below) prepared by decoction as a beverage The term is by analogy also used for an infusion or decoction of other leaves, *e g.* camomile tea; and similarly for the afternoon meal at which tea is served.

*Historical.—*The early history of tea as a beverage is mainly traditional. The lack of accurate knowledge regarding the past of the Chinese Empire may possibly some day be supplied, as European scholars become more able to explore the unstudied stores in the great Chinese libraries, or as Chinese students ran­sack the records of their country for the facts of earlier periods It may then be learnt who made the first cup of tea, who planted the earliest bushes, and how the primitive methods of manufacture were evolved. In the meantime knowledge on the subject is mingled with much that is obviously mythical and with gleanings from the casual references of travellers and authors.

According to Chinese legend, the virtues of tea were dis­covered by the Emperor Chinnung, 2737 B.c., to whom all agricultural and medicinal knowledge is traced. It is doubt­fully referred to in the book of ancient poems edited by Con­fucius, all of which are previous in date to 550 b.c. A tradition exists in China that a knowledge of tea travelled eastward to and in China, having been introduced 543 a.d. by Bodhidharma, an ascetic who came from India on a missionary expedition, but that legend is also mixed with supernatural details. But it is quite certain, from the historical narrative of Lo Yu, who lived in the Tang dynasty (618-906 a.d.), that tea was already used as a beverage in the 6th century, and that during the 8th century its use had become so common that a tax was levied on its consumption in the 14th year of Tih Tsung (793). The use of tea in China in the middle of the 9th century is known from Arab sources (Reinaud, *Relation des Voyages,* 1845, p. 40). From China a knowledge of tea was carried into Japan, and there the cultivation was established during the 9th century. Seed was brought from China by the priest Miyoye, and planted first in the south island, Kiushiu, whence the cultivation spread northwards till it reached the high limit of 39º N.

It is somewhat curious that although many of the products of China were known and used in Europe at much earlier times, no reference to tea has yet been traced in European literature prior to 1588. No mention of it is made by Marco Polo, and no knowledge of the substance appears to have reached Europe till after the establishment of intercourse between Portugal and China in 1517. The Portuguese, however, did little to­wards the introduction of it into Europe, and it was not till the Dutch established themselves at Bantam early in the 17th century that these adventurers learned from the Chinese the habit of tea drinking and brought it into Europe.

The earliest mention of tea by an Englishman is probably that contained in a letter from Mr Wickham, an agent of the East India Company, written from Firando in Japan, on the 27th June 1615, to Mr Eaton, another officer of the company, resident at Macao, and asking for “ a pot of the best sort of *chaw.”* How the commission was executed does not appear, but in Mr Eaton’s subsequent accounts of expenditure occurs this item—“ three silver porringers to drink chaw in.”

It was not till the middle of the century that the English began to use tea, and they also received their supplies from Java till in 1686 they were driven out of the island by the Dutch. At first the price of tea in England ranged from *£6* to £10 per lb. In the *Mercurius Politicus,* No. 435, of September 1658, the following advertisement occurs:— “ That excellent and by all Physitians approved China Drink called by the Chineans *Tcha,* by other nations *Tay, alias Tee,* is sold at the Sultaness Head, a cophee-house in Sweetings Rents, by the Royal Exchange, London.” Thomas Garway, the first English tea dealer, and founder of the well-known coffee-house, “ Garraway’s,” in a curious broadsheet, *An Exact Description of the Growth, Quality and Virtues of the Leaf Tea,* issued in 1659 or 1660, writes, “in respect of its scarceness and dearness, it hath been only used as a regalia in high treatments and entertainments, and presents made thereof to princes and grandees.” In that year he pur­chased a quantity of the rare and much-prized commodity, and offered it to the public, in the leaf, at fixed prices varying from 15s to 50s. the lb, according to quality, and also in the in­fusion, “made according to the directions of the most knowing merchants and travellers into those eastern countries.” In 1660 an Act of the first parliament of the Restoration imposed a tax on “ every gallon of chocolate, sherbet and tea, made and sold, to be paid by the maker thereof, eightpence ” (12 Car. II. c. 23).

Pepys’s often-quoted mention of the fact that on the 25th September 1660, “ I did send for a cup of tee, a China drink, of which I never had drunk before,” proves the novelty of tea in England at that date. In 1664 we find that the East India Company presented the king with 2 lb and 2 oz. of “ thea,” which cost 40s. per lb, and two years afterwards with another parcel containing 22¾ lb, for which the directors paid 50s per lb. Both parcels appear to have been purchased on the Continent. Not until 1677 is the Company recorded to have taken any steps for the importation of tea. The order then given to their agents was for “ teas of the best kind to the amount of 100 dollars.” But their instructions were con­siderably exceeded, for the quantity imported in 1678 was 4713 lb, a quantity which seems to have glutted the market for several years. The annals of the Company record that, in February 1684, the directors wrote thus to Madras:— “ In regard thea is grown to be a commodity here, and we have occasion to make presents therein to our great friends at court, we would have you to send us yearly five or six canisters of the very best and freshest thea.” Until the Revolution no duty was laid on tea other than that levied on the infusion as sold in the coffee-houses. By 1 William and Mary, c. 6, a duty of 5s. per lb and 5 per cent. on the value was imposed. For several years the quantities imported were very small, and consisted ex­clusively of the finer sorts. The first direct purchase in China was made at Amoy, the teas previously obtained by the Com­pany’s factors having been purchased in Madras and Surat, whither it was brought by Chinese junks after the expulsion of the British from Java. During the closing years of the century the amount brought over seems to have been, on the average, about 20,000 lb a year. The instructions of 1700 directed the supercargoes to send home 300 tubs of the finer green teas and 80 tubs of bohea. In 1703 orders were given for “75,000 lb Singlo (green), 10,000 lb imperial, and 20,000 lb bohea.” The average price of tea at this period was 16s. per lb.

As the 18th century progressed the use of tea in England rapidly increased, and by the close of the century the rate of consumption exceeded an average of 2 lb per person per annum, a rate in excess of that of to-day of all people except those of Mongol and Anglo-Saxon origin. The business being a mono­poly of the East India Company, and a very profitable one, the company at an early stage of its development endeavoured to ascertain whether tea could not be grown within its own dominions. Difficulties with China doubtless showed the ad­visability of having an independent source of supply. In 1788 Sir Joseph Banks, at the request of the directors, drew up a memoir on the cultivation of economic plants in Bengal, in which he gave special prominence to tea, pointing out the regions most favourable for its cultivation. About the year 1820 Mr David Scott, the first commissioner of Assam, sent to Calcutta from Kuch Behar and Rangpur—the very districts indicated by Sir Joseph Banks as favourable for tea-growing —certain leaves, with a statement that they were said to belong to the wild tea-plant. The leaves were submitted to Dr Wallich, government botanist at Calcutta, who pronounced them to belong to a species of *Camellia,* and no result followed on Mr Scott’s communication. These very leaves ultimately came into the herbarium of the Linnean Society of London, and have authoritatively been pronounced to belong to the indigenous Assam tea-plant. Dr Wallich’s attribution of this and other specimens subsequently sent in to the genus *Camellia,* although scientifically defensible, unfortunately