The Consumption of Tea and Other Staple Drinks

Author(s): C. H. Denyer

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (Mar., 1893), pp. 33-51

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of the [Royal Economic Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2956036>

Accessed: 29-10-2015 05:21 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Royal Economic Society and Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Economic Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE CONSUMPTION OF TEA AND OTHER STAPLE DRINKS

OF English staple drinks, which are or have been taxed, there are two groups :—

(1) Alcoholic—brandy, rum, whisky, gin, and other distilled spirits ; wines ; beer, including ale, stout, porter, etc. ; cider and perry ; and the hydromels, mead and metheglin.

(2) Non-alcoholic—tea, coffee, and its adulterant chicory, cocoa and chocolate.

The first rank in this second group is, beyond all question, taken by tea. This has long been outstripping every rival, and it is very probable that we now drink even more tea than beer. In 1891 we used 5·35 lbs. of dry leaf tea per head, which, converted into a beverage at the rough average rate of 7 gallons per lb., represent an annual consumption of no less than 37 gallons per head, as against 29 gallons of beer, so that we are almost justified in calling tea the English national drink, the more so as we take as much of it as all the rest of Europe put together ; while the fact that our colonists in Victoria manage to consume per head $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as much as we do, points in the direction of great possibilities yet in store for tea in this country.

The literature of tea is interesting and extensive, and Pepys, Waller, Pope, Swift, Defoe, and Cowper all furnish apt references to the historian of its introduction. To confine ourselves as much as may be to its economic aspect, we find that the tea which was a new drink to Pepys in 1661, and of which the East India Company made the munificent gift of 2 lbs. 2 ozs. to Charles II. in 1664, was used as much as a drug as a beverage. However, the Company determined to push its sale, and either the tea, or the porcelain cups which were introduced to drink it from, became very fashionable by the end of the century ; and this notwithstanding the bitter complaints of such old-fashioned persons as Mr. Henry Savile, who complains of those ‘who

call for tea, instead of pipes and bottles, after dinner, a base unworthy Indian practice, and which I must ever admire your most Christian family for not admitting; . . . the truth is, all nations are growing so wicked as to have some of these filthy customs.'¹

On the other hand in the very same year (1678) a Dutchman, Cornelio Bontekoe, wrote his very popular and often translated *Tractaat van het excellenste Kruid Thee*. Tea, he said, was the infallible cause of health, and if mankind could be induced to drink a sufficient quantity of it, the innumerable ills to which man is subject would not only be diminished, but entirely unknown. Indeed 200 cups daily would not be too much.

In 1731 the import of tea already amounted to 1,793,000 lbs. weight, the duty on which produced a revenue of £358,000. Tea had been liable to a duty since 1660, when 8*d.* a gallon was charged on the infusion as sold in the coffee houses, which was, as Dr. Short² says, 'no small prejudice to the liquor, and inconvenience to its drinkers, for the excise officer was to survey it before any could be sold, and was not to survey it above once or twice a day.' This primitive method of levying the duty soon gave place to a tax on the dry leaf, but the excessive rate charged, while it hardly availed to check consumption, caused vast loss to the revenue. One of the chief values of tea was considered to lie 'in the fact that the great revenue it pays the crown lessens the general taxes to the poor,' who did not then drink it; a doctrine which sounds strange beside the statement of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer that tea is now the one article by which many of the poor contribute to the revenue. So absurdly high however was the duty fixed in 1732, that the duty-paid import fell from 1½ million lbs. in 1731 to ½ million in 1735, while even the revenue was reduced to one-third of its former level. Pelham took off half the duty in 1745, and the consumption of tea rapidly spread through the middle classes.

Smuggling and adulteration, however, render the official returns of consumption almost valueless till within quite a recent period. The proportion of tea smuggled into the country may be inferred from the fact that the reduction of duty in 1746 trebled in one year the number of pounds weight charged, and a similar rise took place between 1783 and 1785, when one of Pitt's greatest fiscal reforms increased the duty-paid import from 5,800,000 lbs. to 16,300,000 lbs. a year.

¹ Sir Henry Ellis, *Original Letters*, 2nd Ser. IV., 58.

² *Discourses on Tea, &c.*, 1750, p. 23.

Nor was adulteration much less rampant, for Dr. Short, after seriously discussing the question whether a dealer who bought his tea from smugglers was an honest man, gives a long list of chemical tests for different kinds of adulteration, both English and Chinese. He complains that so great was the demand of the Chinese for terra japonica wherewithal to dye teas green, that the price of the said japan earth had risen from 4*d.* to 18*s.* a pound.

When, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, tea became a regular drink even among farm labourers (*vide* Arthur Young's *Six Months' Tour* and Eden's *State of the Poor*), and at the same time the heavy duty kept the price high, a committee of the House of Commons discovered that 4 million lbs. of so-called tea were annually manufactured from sloe, liquorice, and ash leaves, and this at a time when the whole quantity imported duty-paid was only 6 million lbs.

The lessons taught by Pitt's early reductions of taxation were forgotten amid the pressure of the French wars. High duties again encouraged adulteration, and a Treasury prosecution in 1828 revealed an extensive manufacture of green 'tea' from white and black thorn leaves dyed with white lead and verdigris. The Chinese, too, were not far behind in the arts of adulteration, for from an interesting paper read in 1839 by Dr. G. G. Sigmond before the Royal Botanical Society we learn that the remission of tea duties in the United States in 1832-3 caused a great and sudden demand for green tea at Canton; a demand which was met, in the absence of a supply of the genuine article, by refiring a great quantity of damaged black leaves, and dyeing them green with turmeric and prussian blue.¹

In spite however of adulteration and high prices the consumption increased rapidly, so that in the first five years of this century it reached nearly 25 million lbs., duty-paid, *i.e.* 1½ lbs. per head per annum. The annexed diagram (Appendix IV.) shows the relations between the consumption per head, the amount of duty, and the average price in bond from 1800 to the present time. It appears that the further increase of taxation due to Napoleon's victories probably checked the consumption, and certainly increased smuggling; so that it was not till 1835-9 that the average annual consumption for a quinquennium rose from a constant 20 or 21 ounces to 23 ounces per head.

¹ It is interesting to compare this incident with the effect of the reduction of duty in England three years ago; when, I am assured, the planters in India and Ceylon met an increased demand by plucking coarse old leaves and thus preparing a greater quantity at the expense of quality.

In 1834 the monopoly of the East India Company ceased, and an experiment was tried in the shape of differential duties of from 1s. 6d. to 3s. per lb. for various kinds of tea. The experiment failed, for the Custom House Officers were not skilled enough in tea-tasting, and a fixed duty was reimposed at the rate of 2s. 1d. per lb.

In 1840 came the war with China and 5 per cent. extra duty. The price rose greatly, and the import fell from 40½ millions in 1838 to 28 millions in 1840. The war, however, opened the treaty ports, and prices rapidly fell to a far lower level. In the quinquennium from 1840 to 1844 the annual consumption was still only 1 lb. 6 ozs. per head; but lowered prices, and the improving condition of the country after Peel's reforms, raised it between 1845 and 1850 to 1 lb. 11 ozs. The duty fell to 1s. 10d. in 1853 and to 1s. 6d. in 1854. Then the Crimean war raised it to 1s. 9d., but it fell again to 1s. 5d. in 1857 and to 1s. in 1863. This last reduction Mr. Gladstone declared to be a 'final measure,' yet two years later he again reduced it to 6d., while in 1890 it fell to 4d. Each reduction caused the consumption to leap up. From 2 lbs. per head in 1852 it rose to 2 lbs. 11 ozs. in 1862, to 4 lbs. in 1872, to 4 lbs. 11 ozs. in 1882, and to 5 lbs. 5 ozs. in 1891.

But we must now consider a new and most important factor in the tea supply. Just at the time when Dr. Sigmond wrote his paper on tea, a series of most interesting experiments in tea culture was being brought to a successful issue in Upper Assam.

In 1763 Linnæus received the first living tea-plant that had been brought to Europe, and recorded in his diary that he looked 'upon nothing to be of more importance than to shut the gate through which all the silver went out of Europe.'¹ Tea-planting was accordingly enthusiastically tried in Southern France, but hopelessly failed. In India, however, botanical explorers had discovered that the tea-plant, only found in a cultivated state in China, was indigenous to Upper Assam; the Indian Government did its best to encourage the production of British-grown tea, and in 1838 the first samples were sent home. Next year eight chests were sold in England; and, although the quality was not very good, the attraction of novelty made the tea sell at from 16s. to 34s. per lb. At about the same period the Dutch began tea-planting in Java, and the first crop fetched fancy prices in Amsterdam.

¹ Dr. G. G. Sigmond, *Tea: Its Effects*, 1839, p. 92.

In 1839 the Assam Company was formed, and in spite of heavy initial losses owing to difficulties encountered on every hand, the Company began to pay a dividend fourteen years later. In a few more years rival companies started in all suitable and many unsuitable parts of India. The fittest survived, production grew apace, and in the last twenty-five years Indian tea has largely driven its Chinese rival out of the market, and revolutionised the trade of the East. Presently came the collapse of the coffee-planting which had, since the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies, given prosperity to Ceylon. A parasite attacked the coffee-plant, and could not be extirpated. Many of the planters were absolutely ruined, but the rest grubbed up their coffee trees, and tried tea instead. Their success has been phenomenal; in 1875 they only exported 282 lbs.; in 1884 they supplied 1 per cent. of the import into England; in 1885, 2 per cent.; in 1886, 3 per cent.; in 1887, 6 per cent.; in 1888, 10 per cent.; in 1889, 15 per cent.; while in 1891 no less than 25 per cent. of our home consumption came from Ceylon, and for it probably more than £2,000,000 was paid to the planters in that island. In this year, 1891, it appears that, for the first time, the consumption in England of Ceylon tea even exceeded that of Chinese. Of course the Indian trade, though of slower growth, is much larger than that of Ceylon, supplying, in 1891, 49 per cent. of the total English consumption.

On the whole, we find that China and Japan tea has shrunk from 97 per cent. of the total in 1865, to 49 per cent. in 1887, and 27 per cent. in 1891, showing a great actual as well as proportional decline. Now the principal reason for this substitution of Indian for China tea is the greater strength of the former, a fact which has much exercised the mind of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for, previous to the last reduction of duty, the revenue from tea had lost all its elasticity. The Commissioners of Customs in their Report for the year ending March, 1889, went fully into the matter, and assign several reasons for the decline of the Chinese tea in public favour. There are heavy export taxes in China. Chinese tea, forced down in price, has deteriorated in quality. Its sale has not been pushed with the extraordinary energy put forth on behalf of its rival, and much of it has been diverted to other countries where it is more appreciated. But by far the chief reason is that it is not nearly so strong as either Indian or Ceylon teas, for while 1 lb. of Chinese gives, say, 5 gallons of infusion, 1 lb. of Indian gives $7\frac{1}{2}$ gallons. This proportion, given by the Commissioners in the Report referred to,

is accepted in the trade as practically correct, and corresponds with the results of my own experiments.

When we add this consideration of increased strength per pound to the vastly increased weight consumed, some idea may be gained of the quite wonderful way in which tea is gaining ground in this country.

Tea and sugar won their way to our homes even when duties were excessive and the price enormous; but of late years, not only have duties all but disappeared, but the decline in first cost has been most marked. In 1887 the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that whereas the average wholesale cost (apart from duties) of a pound of tea *and* a pound of sugar was 1s. 10½*d.* in 1866, it was only 1s. 7¾*d.* in 1876, and 1s. 1½*d.* in 1886, and since then the price has still more rapidly fallen.

A large tea dealer tells me that some forty years ago, when he went to gain retail experience in a Tottenham Court Road shop, one of his regular weekly occupations was to make up 500 ¼ lbs. of brown sugar, and 500 ¼ ozs. of tea, these being the quantities sold for 1*d.* Now, a pennyworth of sugar is ½ lb. of lump sugar, and a pennyworth of tea is 1 oz. of strong Indian tea. My informant states that in Whitechapel and similar districts the demand for 'pen'orths' of tea and sugar is enormous. The factory girls have the teapot by the fire all day, and it is very common for the same girl to come in five or six times a day for a 'pen'orth' of tea and a 'pen'orth' of sugar. They insist on having the strongest Indian tea, notwithstanding the serious nervous and digestive evils which medical experience shows to result from such excessive tea drinking.

Of Indian teas 'Darjeeling' is the finest. It commands a high price, and having a very marked and delicious flavour is used for mixing with the less tasty China teas to retail as a high quality 'blend.' 'Assam' is very strong, has a marked and peculiar flavour, and is used for commoner blends. South Indian and Ceylon teas are strong, but less marked in flavour, and are largely sold unblended.

It is to be feared that the average Englishman is a very bad judge of tea. His sole criterion of its quality is its colour and strength; its delicate flavour he drowns in sugar and milk. These latter are not to be despised, for they constitute no inconsiderable portion of his food; but they certainly help to put him at the mercy of the tea dealer. Strong cheap teas (and cheap teas are now as a rule the strongest) have taken the place of the older and weaker Chinese blends. The consumer gets plenty of flavour

for his money, but of real quality and price he is a bad judge. I hear, on good authority, that one of our largest firms of tea retailers, who, before the reduction of the duty were selling a certain brand of tea for 1s. 6d., are now retailing the same article, though it costs less than before, at 1s. 9d., and the public is delighted with it. Yet there are some connoisseurs, and the best Chinese teas would, I am assured, easily command 3s. per lb. in the wholesale market, not to mention the sale in August, 1891, of a special consignment of 'Golden Tip' Ceylon tea at 35 guineas per lb. This ridiculous price was merely the result of a vulgar advertising trick.

Without for the moment considering the merits of tea as a national drink, we may note that there is no doubt that the chief reason why tea has supplanted coffee in this country is our English impatience of the arts of cooking, coupled with the comparative ease with which tea can be prepared for use. Yet, easy as the process is, it is rarely properly carried out. Our favourite beverage is left far too long on the leaves, with the consequence that not only is there extracted its aromatic essential oil, 'theine,' but also that other and distinctly harmful ingredient, 'tannin.' This latter is present in very large quantities in Indian and Ceylon teas, and many doctors have spoken strongly as to its effects on the nervous and digestive systems. Sir Andrew Clark, in a recent lecture to the students of the London Hospital, speaks thus:—'Indian tea has become so powerful in its effect upon the nervous system, that a cup of it taken early in the morning, as many people do, so disorders the nervous system that those who take it actually get into a state of tea intoxication, and it produces a form of nerve disturbance which is most painful to witness.'

Sir Andrew's attack on Indian tea created quite a stir in the 'West End,' and a friend tells me there were for a time so many applications for pure China tea that he had to keep a special canister at hand for it. In a few weeks, however, came the reaction; the Chinese product had not flavour enough, and all his customers returned to their old love.

Professional tea-tasting is now partly carried on by smell instead of taste, yet a tea-taster tells me that he and his craft suffer acutely from weakness and nervous affections, and are for the most part strongly tempted to keep out the winter's cold by liberal alcoholic potations. Would it not seem then that there is some possibility of danger, if English people take too much tea, and take it too strong? Yet it is in these directions that the

tide seems to be running; we may therefore well question the wisdom of any further reduction in the tea duty. It was not long since asserted in the House of Commons that the fact that the consumption increased $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., when the duty was reduced to 4d., tended to show that there were still many persons kept from tea by its high price. It is urged too that every increase of tea drinking means a decrease of alcoholic intoxication. These statements require further proof. My own experience tends to show that tea, and sometimes strong tea, has largely been substituted for the gruel or milk and water which an old labourer assures me used thirty years ago to form the staple drink of workmen's children. Of course the added sugar and milk make this tea to some extent nourishing, but nevertheless the medical profession is strongly and rightly opposed to the growing practice of rearing infants on a drink so utterly unsuitable as tea.

One hundred and twenty years ago Arthur Young complained bitterly of 'the custom coming in of *men* making tea an article of their food almost as much as *women*; labourers losing their time to go and come to the tea table; nay, farmers' servants demanding tea for their breakfast with the maids! which has actually been the case in East Kent.' (*The Farmer's Tour*, vol. iv. pp. 350—2.) One may contrast with the above the story my father tells of the consternation caused nearly fifty years ago in the then little village of Leyton, Essex, by the advent of a new groom from Suffolk, who actually asked to be allowed to drink beer instead of tea for breakfast, this being the custom of his home. The squire's wife would not hear of a man wanting beer for breakfast; so completely had the customs of the country changed, and that, though you could not then buy tea much under 5s. a lb.!

So far as I have been able to ascertain, it is the usual opinion both of doctors and laymen that tea is by no means the thing to aid in the digestion of a heavy meal; yet the so-called 'meat teas' have become in many parts quite a social institution. Our stomachs are hardly like those of the 'Cannibal Tartars' of whom Dr. Short says:—'Their delicate dish is raw horseflesh, and when their dinner sits uneasy upon their stomachs, they drink of this (coarse green tea), and it rarely fails to restore their appetite and digestion.'

William Cobbett, writing in 1821 (*Cottage Economy*, p. 13 *et seq.*), and vehemently urging a reduction in the tax on malt, so that the labourer might be encouraged to brew and drink his own beer, draws a highly-coloured picture of the ruin brought

into the homes of the poor by tea. He says:—‘The drink which has come to supply the place of beer has in general been tea. It is notorious that tea has no useful strength in it. . . . that besides being good for nothing, it has badness in it, because it is well known to shake and weaken the nerves.’ He maintains that an average labourer’s family would save £4 a year by brewing their own beer and giving up ‘the troublesome and pernicious habit of drinking tea,’ and he goes even further:—‘I view the tea drinking as a destroyer of health, an enfeeblor of the frame, an engenderer of effeminacy and laziness, a debaucher of youth, and a maker of misery for old age. If you fed a lean hog on tea messes instead of malt, he would starve,’ and the effect is as bad on men as it would be on hogs. Again, ‘Is it in the power of any man who has attained the age of fifty to look back upon the last thirty years of his life without cursing the day in which tea was introduced into England?’ Cobbett’s argument as to expense has long since fallen through, for the relative prices of tea and beer have now, largely owing to legislative interference, completely changed in favour of tea; and so, curse or no curse, we drink four times as much tea per head as in 1821, while to-day tea is hailed by the advocates of temperance as having already done much to save the country from the curse of drunkenness.

We can perhaps adopt a *via media*. We may agree with the writer of a paper in vol. xv. of the Statistical Society’s Journal, that ‘the consumption of tea and coffee has contributed materially to the sobriety, decency, and even morality of the inhabitants of this country;’ but we must also remember that, as is maintained by the writer of the article ‘Tea’ in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ‘the large quantity of strong tea taken by the poor, though it blunts the edge of hunger, works sad havoc with the digestive and nervous systems,’ and we can fairly claim careful consideration of the whole question before further legislative steps are taken in favour of tea as against beer.

Having discussed our tea at such length, and indeed, the garrulity connected with this beverage is one of Cobbett’s serious objections to it, I do not propose to do more than glance at the other items in my list of staple drinks.

Among non-alcoholic beverages Coffee takes the second place; but comes, in this country, a long way after its great rival, the annual consumption in 1890 being only $\frac{3}{4}$ -lb per head.

In the Mohammedan world, and in most continental countries, especially France, coffee is beyond question more popular than tea;

but Mr. S. Dowell (*History of Taxation*, vol. iv. p. 231) assigns the three following causes for its secondary importance here :—(1) The incompetence, want of attention, and laziness of our servants in preparing the drink; (2) a belief that coffee is heating and more suited to a dry than a moist climate; (3) the heavy taxation to which it was subjected in former years, to which must be added in late years the cheapness and excellence of tea and white sugar.

Too much weight must certainly not be assigned to the last two points; for tea was always, and is still, more heavily taxed than coffee, and it was not till 1847, when the taxes on coffee had already been much reduced, that the consumption first began to decline, a decline that has continued ever since, in spite of further reductions in the duty, which is now only 14s. per cwt.

Coffee is largely adulterated with the root of a plant which grows freely in Europe, viz. the wild endive, or chicory. It is possible that on the Continent chicory was used as a drink before the introduction of coffee; certainly it has been freely imported into England since 1833 to be mixed with coffee. Soon after this date its cultivation became popular in England; but by 1860, when duty was first levied on it, the home production had all but died away again under the stress of foreign competition. It has often been stated that the decline of coffee in public favour is due to the all but invariable presence of this bitter-tasting adulterant, but it must be remembered that the latter is no less used in Belgium and Denmark without causing any apparent decline in the consumption of coffee.

In their report for 1888, the Customs Commissioners note that some coffee mixtures sold by retailers contain as much as 90 per cent. of chicory, and discuss the opinion of the trade that the sale of such mixtures injuriously affects that of pure coffee. This they admit to some extent, but urge that the growing preference for tea and cocoa is chiefly due to the small amount of time and trouble required in the preparation of these latter.

The duty on chicory is slightly less than that on coffee, and the receipts therefrom vary from 32 to 38 per cent. of those from the latter. In 1882 a tax of $\frac{1}{2}d.$ was imposed, by means of a stamp on the label, on every $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of coffee mixture containing any vegetable matter other than coffee or chicory. There were 2,242,739 such labels issued in 1882, but the number rapidly declined to 887,753 in 1889, though it rose slightly in 1890. The British public probably think chicory is bad enough, and as it only costs about 2d. per lb. in bond, one would hardly have

thought other adulterants necessary, and the Merchandise Marks Act appears to have given the death blow to these mixtures.

The Customs Commissioners would probably not be sorry to lose the modest £200,000 or less yielded by coffee and chicory, seeing that whereas we consume 72 per cent. of the cocoa we import, and 87 per cent. of the tea, we only keep 29 per cent. of the coffee, the duty on which is thus necessarily collected at a high comparative cost.

Cocoa is generally classed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what is called the 'coffee group,' and thus undeservedly comes in for a share of the annual sigh heaved over the want of elasticity shown by the group.

Cocoa and chocolate are manufactured from the exceedingly nutritious fruit of the *cacao theobroma*. Since 1832, when the previously heavy duty was reduced, the drinks prepared from cocoa have been rapidly and deservedly rising in public favour. The consumption was only .018 lbs. per head in 1831; in 1852 it was .121; in 1872 .244; and in 1891 .571. In 1888 the Customs Commissioners noted that the consumption of cocoa had increased 75 per cent. in eight years, owing to its nutritiousness, its ease of preparation, and its cheapness in public cocoa rooms, of which the number was rapidly growing. They held that it was 'largely displacing coffee, and no doubt also alcoholic drinks.'

ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS.

Though non-alcoholic beverages, even if we exclude water, certainly form the major part of the nation's drink, it is also certain that their less innocent rivals cause a far larger drain on the people's purse. In the *Times* of February 17th, 1892, appeared Dr. Dawson Burn's annual letter on the National Drink Bill. He points out that our expenditure per head in 1891 on alcoholic beverages amounted to £3 15s. as against £3 14s. 4d. in 1890, the grand total for the United Kingdom being £141,250,000—the largest since 1878—a vast sum which, he goes on to say, 'though equal to one-fifth of the National Debt, not far from twice as large as the annual National Revenue, and compared with which all our boasted contributions to benevolence, science, and education are insignificant, was poured last year down the throats of a part of the people in the form of liquors, which made them neither wiser, nor richer, nor stronger; but on the contrary placed fresh burdens on the national shoulders, added fresh stains

to the national conscience, and embittered with fresh miseries and troubles the national life.'

We need not plead guilty to the whole of this tremendous indictment, but it is undoubtedly a serious and regrettable fact that every period of increased national prosperity should, in spite of fifty years of temperance agitation, still bring with it a great increase in the consumption of alcohol. Nevertheless even last year we were still far from having reached the gigantic total of 1876, which marked the climax of our last period of industrial prosperity. In that year the grand total, and also the cost per head, reached the highest figures on record, £147,000,000 being the total, and £4 8s. 9d. the 'per caput.' In this respect the position of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is peculiar, for if the revenue from alcohol falls, he heaves indeed an inward sigh, but congratulates the country on its increasing temperance, as did Sir William Harcourt in 1887, and Mr. Goschen in 1889. On the other hand, when this branch of the revenue is more productive, the Chancellor laments our tippling habits, but recovers his equanimity at the thought of national prosperity and a surplus in the Budget.

The alcoholic consumption rose nearly steadily from 1860 to 1876 in the proportion of 4 to 7, then it fell rapidly till 1880, again rose slightly and again declined till 1886. In 1887 the decline was arrested, probably, according to Mr. Goschen, on account of the Jubilee festivities. In 1888, although trade was good, it again fell, and the temperance party were naturally jubilant. However, in 1889 to every one's astonishment it leapt up to the highest point since 1878. In 1890 came another upward bound, though the duties had been slightly raised. And 1891 had the same story to tell, of increase though at a decreasing rate. I think there is no doubt that the severe cold of the winters of those two years and the alarming epidemic of the so-called 'influenza,' for the prevention and cure of which spirits and beer were largely invoked, have had something to do with our increased use of alcohol, and the rest must I suppose be accounted for by the increased earnings of the working classes.

It is interesting to note that the first Total Abstinence Society was started in 1826 at Boston, Mass.; and the idea spread for many years with astonishing rapidity, so that, by 1835, 4000 distilleries were closed in the United States, and of 186 whaling ships leaving that country 168 took no spirits on board. The movement spread across the Atlantic, the Temperance Society of New Ross, Ireland, being the first in Europe. Then came

the crusade of Father Mathew, whose success though short-lived was phenomenal. In 1838 he started his total abstinence society at Cork, and in nine months, such was his eloquence and moral power, he obtained 150,000 members. He is said to have taken 20,000 pledges in one day. His influence may be inferred from the following figures showing the total yearly amounts of spirits consumed in Ireland between 1838 and 1845, after which year a great part of the effect seems to have slowly passed away.

CONSUMPTION OF SPIRITS IN IRELAND.

	Gallons.
1838	12,334,000
1839	10,848,000
1840	7,427,000
1841	6,515,000
1842	5,320,000
1843	5,574,000
1844	6,481,000
1845	7,638,000

Some part of this reduction was of course due to the Potato Famine in 1843.

Taking the whole of the United Kingdom, the consumption of spirits fell, largely owing to Father Mathew, from 1·17 gallons per head in 1838 to '80 gallons in 1842 and '79 in 1843, though it rose again in 1846 to '99 through the demand of the railway navvies. In 1891 it was 1·037, so that in this respect we have not changed much in fifty years, a period during which we trebled our consumption of tea.

The 'long period' variations in the demand for three of our staple drinks are shown by a striking table from the Excise Report for 1884-5.

ANNUAL CONSUMPTION PER HEAD.

	Beer. 1 barrel.	Tea. 1 oz.	Spirits. $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon.
1722			
1830	$\frac{1}{2}$ "	36 ozs.	$\frac{3}{4}$ "
1880	$\frac{7}{8}$ "	73 "	1 $\frac{1}{10}$ "

Turning for a moment to Wines, we find Mr. Goschen stating in 1889 that more than half the wine now consumed belongs to the lighter kinds, which formerly constituted only one third of the whole. The Chancellor doubted whether this decrease in heavy wines was due to increasing temperance or to the use of the fashionable cigarette after dinner, but surely we must also allow for the cumulative effects of the reductions of the duty on light wines. It is to be feared that much of the beverage imported as French

wine is either wine that has simply passed through France, and there been labelled and 'doctored,' or else is not wine at all, but merely plain spirit diluted and flavoured. Nevertheless it is, I think, distinctly a good sign that the public taste is now strongly in favour of light and natural clarets, whether French, Italian, or Hungarian, instead of the heavy and highly fortified port and sherry. Australian products are being vigorously pushed, and one may hope that the purity of these wines will make them increasingly popular, and that greater care and skill in viticulture will gradually improve their quality. The total imports of wine from all other countries are still very small as compared with those from France, Spain, and Portugal.

Of Foreign Spirits the most progressive (as may be seen from the interesting diagrams published by order of Mr. Goschen in 1889) is Rum, the drink of the working classes. Brandy has given way to whiskey, for the latter is much cheaper than genuine *wine* brandy, and when fully matured, is often preferred by the medical profession. There has however been, since 1889, a renewed rise in the demand for brandy.

In the class of 'Geneva and other foreign spirits,' the principal item is plain German potato spirit, which has largely taken the place of English plain grain-distilled spirit as the basis of *English* brandy, gin, &c. In 1888 especially a great quantity of this crude spirit was imported, the price having fallen to 9½*d.* per gallon, but in 1891 the Russian famine greatly raised its price, and largely diminished the import.

As to rum, Mr. Goschen stated in 1890 that increased prosperity had caused its consumption to increase 12 per cent. in the preceding year; and, by way of illustration of the magnitude of this increase, he said he had ascertained that rum was probably drunk in some 245 million separate 'drams,' so that 12 per cent. meant 30 million more glasses of grog.

Last, but certainly not least, come Ale and Beer, the time-honoured national drinks of England, to the strength-giving properties of which our forefathers attributed in no small measure their victories at Crecy and Agincourt, and on which last year we spent the enormous sum of £85,000,000, as against £41,000,000 for spirits, and certainly less than £18,000,000 for tea.

Early in the present century heavy duties were imposed both on the malt before brewing, and on the beer when brewed. It has already been mentioned that Cobbett urged the remission of the malt duty, as being oppressive to the poor, and preventing a

poor man from malting his own barley, and brewing his own beer. He was probably mistaken, for malting cannot be properly carried out except on a large scale, hence the number of maltster's licenses fell from 10,000 in 1831 to 6,000 in 1861. Moreover when the duty on malt was reduced in 1823 from 4*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* 7*d.*, the consumption was not materially increased, but when in 1830 the beer tax was taken off, the consumption of malt sprang up to the high level of 1799, and the revenue from this source rose from 3 to 4½ million pounds. In 1862 the tax on hops was remitted, and in 1880, the practice of private brewing having almost ceased, Mr. Gladstone was enabled to change the objectionable tax on malt to an equivalent charge on the beer brewed. The number of licences issued for private brewing fell from 110,000 in 1881 to 23,000 in 1890; and similarly the number of small brewers for sale fell from 49,000 in 1838 to 22,000 in 1879 and to 14,000 in 1885; both sets of figures showing that brewing steadily tends to fall into the hands of the large brewers.

The consumption of beer and spirits as shown in Appendices II. and III. suggests that tea has hardly so much taken the place of beer and spirits as that it has been a net addition to the comforts of the people. The consumption of beer has increased during the last three years, and there seems little reason to hope or fear that England will soon lose its pre-eminence in manufacturing and drinking its ancient national beverage.

C. H. DENYER

NOTE.—In Appendix III. the importance of the extraordinary increase per cent. per head in the use of cocoa must be discounted by the very small consumption in the early part of the period under review.

APPENDIX I.

RETURN compiled from replies furnished by twenty-two working men belonging to Stanhope Street Working Men's Institute, showing number of family, weekly consumption of tea, and price paid per lb.

Serial No.	No. in family.	No. who drink tea.	No. of ozs. consumed weekly.	Price paid per lb.	Amount spent on tea at coffee shop, &c., weekly.	Total family expenditure in tea weekly.
				<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
1	6	6	24	2 0	—	3 0
2	4	4	12	1 10	4	1 8½
3	8	8	13	2 0	1 0	2 7½
4	7	6	16	2 0	3	2 3
5	2	2	12	1 6	—	1 1½
6	6	6	12	1 4	—	1 0
7	2	2	8	2 0	6	1 6
8	4	3	6	2 0	3	1 0
9	10	10	8	1 6	1 0	1 9
10	6	6	8	2 0	6	1 6
11	5	4	8	1 6	—	9
12	8	8	14	1 4	—	1 2
13	3	3	12	1 6	—	1 1½
14	2	2	8	1 4	4	1 0
15	6	5	8	1 4	6	1 2
16	7	7	12	1 9	6	1 10
17	2	2	8	2 0	—	1 0
18	7	7	9	2 0	1 0	2 1½
19	3	3	12	2 0	9	2 3
20	2	2	12	1 6	9	1 10½
21	4	4	8	2 0	6	1 6
22	2	2	7	1 4	7	1 2
TOTAL	106	102	237	—	8 9	34 5

AVERAGES.

Average No. of family, 4·63.

Persons not drinking tea, 4 out of 106.

Average price paid per lb., 22·77*d.*

Ozs. consumed weekly each family, 10·77.

„ „ „ „ person, 2·32.

Lbs. consumed yearly each family, 35·00.

„ „ „ „ person, 7·55.

Cost of tea consumed yearly each family at home, £3 0*s.* 7*d.*

Cost of tea consumed yearly each person at home, 13*s.* 1*d.*

Cost of tea consumed yearly each family in and out, £4 1*s.* 4*d.*

Cost of tea consumed yearly each person in and out, 17*s.* 6*d.*

APPENDIX II.—(a).

Percentage Consumption of Taxed Beverages in the U.K. from 1855 to 1891 as compared with average consumption of 1852, 1853, and 1854 = 100. Appendix III. shows the same facts in graphic form.

Year.	Spirits 1·11 gals. = 100.	Wines 24 gals. = 100.	Beer 22 gals. = 100.	Tea 2·12 lbs. = 100.	Coffee. 1·32 lbs. = 100.	Cocoa. 143 lbs. = 100.
1855	86·5	95·8	86·4	107·5	97·7	111·6
6	91·0	104·2	102·7	106·6	94·7	90·7
7	92·8	95·8	107·3	115·6	92·4	62·8
8	88·3	91·7	107·3	121·7	93·9	69·8
9	91·0	100·0	112·7	125·9	90·9	76·7
1860	83·8	95·8	108·2	125·9	93·2	76·7
1	77·5	154·2	110·5	126·9	91·7	83·7
2	73·9	137·5	109·5	126·9	89·4	83·7
3	76·6	145·8	115·9	136·8	84·1	90·7
4	81·1	162·5	121·4	141·5	80·3	90·7
5	84·7	166·7	135·5	155·2	77·3	90·7
6	91·0	183·3	134·1	161·3	77·3	97·7
7	89·2	187·5	128·2	173·6	78·8	97·7
8	88·3	208·3	128·2	166·0	75·8	118·6
9	88·3	200·0	132·7	171·2	71·2	132·6
1870	91·0	204·2	137·3	179·7	74·2	139·5
1	95·5	212·5	133·2	184·9	73·5	160·5
2	103·6	220·8	146·8	189·2	74·2	174·4
3	110·8	233·3	151·4	193·9	75·	181·4
4	114·4	220·8	155·0	199·5	72·7	188·4
5	117·1	220·8	151·8	209·4	74·2	209·3
6	112·6	233·3	153·6	212·3	75·	216·3
7	109·0	216·7	147·3	213·2	72·7	209·3
8	105·4	200·0	146·4	219·8	73·5	202·3
9	98·2	179·2	126·8	221·7	75·8	209·3
1880	96·4	187·5	122·7	216·5	69·7	216·3
1	95·5	187·5	126·3	216·0	67·4	216·3
2	94·6	170·8	125·6	221·2	67·4	237·2
3	93·7	166·7	123·9	227·4	67·4	251·2
4	91·0	162·5	126·4	231·1	68·2	272·1
5	86·5	158·3	123·2	239·2	68·9	286·0
6	84·7	150·0	122·2	232·5	65·9	293·0
7	82·9	154·2	124·0	236·8	60·6	307·0
8	83·8	150·0	123·7	237·3	62·9	341·9
9	86·5	158·3	131·4	235·4	57·6	348·8
1890	91·9	166·7	136·5	244·3	56·8	376·7
1	92·8	162·5	137·0	252·4	57·6	398·6

APPENDIX II.—(b).

Consumption of Taxed Beverages (per head) in the U.K. from 1852 to 1891.

Year.	Spirits, gallons.	Wine s, gallons.	Beer, gallons.	Tea, lbs.	Coffee, lbs.	Cocoa, lbs.	Population corrected (calculated to middle of year).
1852	1·09	·23	23	1·99	1·27	·12	27,448,000
3	1·10	·25	23	2·14	1·34	·15	27,542,000
4	1·13	·24	20	2·24	1·35	·16	27,658,000
5	·96	·23	19	2·28	1·29	·16	27,821,000
6	1·01	·25	22·6	2·26	1·25	·13	28,011,000
7	1·03	·23	23·6	2·45	1·22	·09	28,188,000
8	·98	·22	23·6	2·58	1·24	·10	28,389,000
9	1·01	·24	24·8	2·67	1·20	·11	28,590,000
1860	·93	·23	23·8	2·67	1·23	·11	28,778,000
1	·86	·37	24·3	2·69	1·21	·12	28,977,000
2	·82	·33	24·1	2·69	1·18	·12	29,243,000
3	·85	·35	25·5	2·90	1·11	·13	29,470,000
4	·90	·39	26·7	3·00	1·06	·13	29,680,000
5	·94	·40	29·8	3·29	1·02	·13	29,925,000
6	1·01	·44	29·5	3·42	1·02	·14	30,147,000
7	·99	·45	28·2	3·68	1·04	·14	30,409,000
8	·98	·50	28·2	3·52	1·00	·17	30,689,000
9	·98	·48	29·2	3·63	·94	·19	30,978,000
1870	1·01	·49	30·2	3·81	·98	·20	31,256,000
1	1·06	·51	29·3	3·92	·97	·23	31,555,000
2	1·15	·53	32·3	4·01	·98	·25	31,874,000
3	1·23	·56	33·3	4·11	·99	·26	32,177,000
4	1·27	·53	34·1	4·23	·96	·27	32,501,000
5	1·30	·53	33·4	4·44	·98	·30	32,838,000
6	1·25	·56	33·8	4·50	·99	·31	33,199,000
7	1·21	·52	32·4	4·52	·96	·30	33,575,000
8	1·17	·48	32·2	4·66	·97	·29	33,943,000
9	1·09	·43	27·9	4·70	1·00	·30	34,302,000
1880	1·07	·45	27·0	4·59	·92	·31	34,622,000
1	1·06	·45	27·79	4·58	·89	·31	34,934,000
2	1·05	·41	27·63	4·69	·89	·34	35,208,000
3	1·04	·40	27·25	4·82	·89	·36	35,449,000
4	1·01	·39	27·80	4·90	·90	·39	35,724,000
5	·96	·38	27·11	5·07	·91	·41	36,016,000
6	·94	·36	26·89	4·93	·87	·42	36,316,000
7	·92	·37	27·29	5·02	·80	·44	36,602,000
8	·93	·36	27·22	5·03	·83	·49	36,884,000
9	·96	·38	28·91	4·99	·76	·50	37,182,000
90	1·02	·40	30·02	5·18	·75	·54	37,489,000
1891	1·03	·39	30·13	5·35	·76	·57	37,740,000

NOTE.—The figures for 1852, 1862, 1872, 1882, and from 1885 to date have been obtained from the table furnished by the Inland Revenue Commissioners, for the remaining years from the Statistical Abstracts.

Diagram showing the Average Annual Price (in bond, but with duty added) of Tea from 1801

IX IV

in the United Kingdom, with the rate of Duty, and the Consumption per head to 1891.

APPENDIX III

Diagram showing the quantities of Taxed Beverages consumed per head of the population of the United Kingdom from 1855 to 1891, expressed as percentages of the average consumption per head of the three years 1852, 1853, 1854, this average being taken as 100.