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EVERYTHING WAS EATEN RAW

TOASTED LEAVES

OR

“TUDOCES FRAGRANS”

AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF TEA

BY THE SHADE OF

CHARLES LAMB

HUMOROUSLY ILLUSTRATED BY W. G. R. BROWNE

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TOASTED LEAVES

(With an Apology to CHARLES LAMB)

I.

MANKIND, wrote CONFUCIUS—in a Manuscript unearthed from the tomb of LEE FUNG LI, the first Emperor—for the first thousand years lived on the fruits of the earth. Such a thing as a stew-pan was not invented. What was the use of such an invention, when everything was eaten raw?



HIS STAFF WAS SET ON FIRE.



II.

FIRE was first discovered in the volcano Tshinglo (now extinct), and it was then supposed to be the breath of a Genie of mighty size, who resided in the volcano. One winter, when it was so cold that the mercury froze in all the thermometers of the Empire, and many poor coolies perished, one CHANG FAT, a gardener, climbed the sides of the volcano to warm himself. He carried a staff, and walking on the crust of the lava, his staff went through, and was set on fire. CHANG FAT, finding it continued to burn, carried it like a torch to the village below, and thus was fire discovered.



THEY CRAWLED BACKWARDS.



III.

CHANG FAT—FAT was his first name, although it was written last, most things being top-side down in China—kept the fire burning by adding fagots, and the villagers thought the Genie was visiting CHANG FAT's bamboo hut, and they crawled on their hands and feet backwards, beating gongs and firing off shooting-crackers in token of reverence, so that CHANG FAT became an exceedingly high Mandarin.



"TUDOCES FRAGRANS."



IV.

CHANG FAT, being a gardener, had a great fondness for plants, and possessed some very beautiful ones, among them a shrub which a Mormon Missionary had given him, called "Tudoces Fragrans." It was covered with a very abundant foliage of glossy green leaves, and bore many thousands of beautifully-scented flowers, that CHANG FAT took great pride in. So he had planted it in a Peach-blow vase of rare workmanship, and kept it in his bamboo hut.



WOULD FALL ASLEEP



V.

CHANG FAT had a son, CHANG LIN, a careless fellow, who did nothing but eat and sleep; he would even fall asleep while his father's great friend, the Mormon Pilgrim, was talking; nothing appeared to keep him awake. So careless was he, that one day—it was the first day of the third moon, in the year 1018, about three o'clock in the afternoon—when he was left to watch the fire, and keep it from going out, he piled the fagots high up, and while he was asleep, as usual, the wind blew the fire towards his father's bamboo hut, which was soon in flames.



IT WAS SAVED.



VI.

WHEN CHANG LIN awoke, and saw what had happened, he was frightened, for he knew his father would be very angry, yet he had sense enough to know that the plant so much prized was of more value than all the rest. He rushed into the burning hut—his grandmother, who had been sick, in one corner, was burning, but he had not time to pull her out—he took the plant in his arms; its beautiful leaves were scorched with the heat, but at least it was saved.



THEY BURNT HIS FINGERS



VII.

WHILE he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the scorched leaves of the plant, an odor assailed his nostrils unlike any scent he had before experienced. What could it proceed from? It appeared to come from the plant, and he put his hand to the scorched leaves. They burnt his fingers, which he quickly put into his mouth to cool; but some of the leaves had stuck to his fingers, and when in his mouth a sensation of joy came to him. Again and again he caught at the plant, only to find joy, succeeding joy.



HE HEADED NOT



VIII.

THE truth at last broke into his slow understanding, that it was the scorched leaves of the plant that infused the exhilarating joy to his sluggish heart. He fell to tearing whole handfuls of the leaves from the bush and devouring them, when his sire entered amid the smoking hut, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the rogue's shoulders as thick as hailstones. CHANG LIN heeded them not; his father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his toasted leaves.



DO COME AND TASTE.



IX.

"YOU graceless whelp," cried CHANG FAT, "what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt down my house and your grandmother with your dog's tricks? and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what? What have you got there, I say?"

"O! father, the plant, the leaves, do come and taste."

The ears of CHANG FAT tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt leaves.

But CHANG LIN gathered a handful of the scorched leaves, and thrust them into his father's hand by main force, shouting out, "Eat, eat, eat, the toasted leaves, father; only taste. O, Buddah!"



X.

CHANG FAT trembled in every joint, while he held the hot leaves in his hand, wondering whether he should put his unnatural son to death, when the leaves burnt his fingers, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of the flavor, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion both father and son finally sat down and never left off till not a leaf was left on that plant.



NOT A LEAF LEFT.



XI.

CHANG FAT strictly enjoined CHANG LIN not to let the secret escape, for the neighbors would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving on God's plants by cooking them with fire. Nevertheless strange stories got about. It was observed that CHANG FAT's hut was burnt down now very frequently; nothing but fires from this time forward. As often as a new plant was brought in so sure was the house of CHANG FAT to be in a blaze; and CHANG FAT, which was remarkable, instead of chastising his son, grew more indulgent.



THE FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONDED.



XIV.

WHEN the firemen entered the house and approached the caldron, their nostrils were assailed with that same indescribable aroma that had so bewitched CHANG FAT. One, more bold than the rest, dipped his helmet into the amber liquid, and first sipping it, finally drank to his fill. Then the others followed his example, with such an exhilarating effect that they were soon dancing and singing college glees; so came the whole populace, and loud cries were made for CHANG FAT, for they now knew that the toasted leaves that he discovered were the cause of this joy.



DRANK TO HIS FILL.



XV.

THE next day the Judge was giving orders to have the house immediately rebuilt, that it might again be set on fire, when a sage arose, like our BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, who made the discovery that leaves could be toasted in an ordinary tin-pan, and that water could be boiled in another tin-pan, and that if the toasted leaves were then put in the boiling-water, the magic infusion was produced of a quality far exceeding that obtained by burning down the houses. Then again came loud cries for "CHANG FAT," the great discoverer.



A SAGE AROSE



XVI.

WHEN CHANG FAT appeared, the people cried out for the name of the inspiring plant, for, as yet, no one knew what to call it, and dropping all subterfuges, he related the truth, and how the devout Missionary had said its name was "Tudoces Fragrans," which, being interpreted into the Yansin dialect, was "HE-NO."



STORIES GOT ABOUT.



XII.

AT length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Peking. Evidence was given, the obnoxious plant itself produced, the verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the toasted leaves, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled them, they all handled them, and burning their fingers, they applied the natural remedy. Against the evidence, and the clearest charge the Judge had ever given, without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a verdict of "Not Guilty."



TRIAL AT PEKIN.

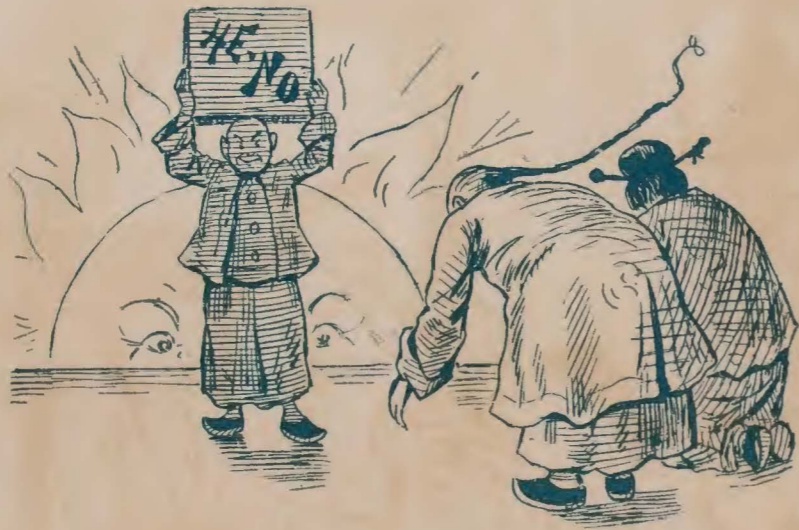


XIII.

THE Judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the iniquity of the decision, and went privily and bought up all the plants that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town-house was observed to be on fire; a general alarm was sounded, and the entire fire department responded. It so happened that his Lordship had his plants surrounding a huge caldron of brass that the children used as a bath-tub. The fire scorching the leaves of the plants, they fell off into the caldron, which began to boil from the great heat, yet the firemen worked hard and subdued the flames.



"IT IS HE-NO."



XVII.

(NOTE BY THE EDITOR.)

WITHOUT placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire could be assigned in favor of any dietary article, that pretext and excuse ought to be found in HE-NO Tea.



THE WORTHY PRETEXT

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MVF
GT
2907
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