The ROMANCE of COFFEE

Enchanting berry! where may mortals find
Nectars divine that can with thee compare,
When having dined, we sip thy essence rare,
And feel towards wit and repartee inclined.
Introductory

Many things enter in such an intimate way into our lives that we come to accept them as a matter of course and to regard their occurrence almost as a commonplace. For example—there is coffee—the breakfast cup—and its daily preparation in the home. It would be hard to estimate the number of people who find enjoyment in their morning coffee, or who leisurely sip their demitasse in the evening after dinner. But you could count almost on your finger tips those who possess anything more than a superficial knowledge of a beverage that possesses so many social and companionable qualities. That coffee should have a “history,” a “romantic career,” has seemingly never occurred to most of us, if indeed, we have thought of the matter at all.

Yet the story of coffee is nothing less than a page of purest romance. It is a story that holds so much of interest and fascination that we have essayed the task of telling it, and as it unfolds within these pages the reader is especially asked to remember that truth has ever been stranger than fiction, and that the very fabric of romance may often be woven from historical fact.

To the lover of a good cup of coffee, to the lover of a romantic tale that yet bears close relation to the truth, this little volume, then, is respectfully dedicated.

CHASE & SANBORN
Tea and Coffee Importers
Boston Chicago Montreal
The Romance of Coffee

LONG centuries ago on the slopes of Jebel Haraz, the beautiful, star-like blossoms of the coffee tree mingled their fragrance with that of jasmine, thyme, and lavender, and other rare exotic perfumes of Arabia. Here in the zone of the tropical rains, ages and ages ago, the coffee tree thrived and flourished, literally wasting its sweetness on the desert air. And then a strange thing happened. Fleeing the persecution he perhaps deserved, outlawed from Mocha, a dervish, Hadji Omar by name, sought refuge and rest in the mountain fastnesses. Hungered and athirst, his glazed eyes fell on some small round berries. He ate some, but they were bitter. He roasted some and they were better. He steeped the roasted berries in a running brook's water held in the hollow of his hand, and they were as good as solid food. That was in the thirteenth century. And from that day to this, in the heart of every Arab coffee has been enthroned.

Arabian hospitality to the chance wayfarer is proverbial. It has furnished a theme for writers and a subject for favorable comment by travelers since time out of mind. Indelibly fixed in the memory of those who have traversed the country are the "kawahs," or coffee rooms, spread with mats, or in the dwellings of the well-to-do oftentimes with rare antique rugs and cushions, whereon the dusky sons of the desert at the appointed hour are wont to kneel and give praise to Allah. Those who know him best will tell you that your orthodox Arab swears alike by Allah and by Coffee. To these picturesque yet primitive people, the serving of coffee as a mark of special honor to a guest has ever been attended with much ceremony, and the ancient custom still prevails of washing and perfuming the hands after eating, preliminary to an indulgence in coffee, which is partaken never with milk or sugar, but always with an aromatic seed brought from India. Within a comparatively short time coffee attained prominence in the marts of trade and dominated all other merchandise in the shops of the market-place. It became a necessary part of the equipment of innumerable caravans that wended their precarious way now over precipitate mountain passes, now over waste places arid and desolate. When it could not be plundered it was avidly bought by wandering Nomads.
—those roving and predatory bands of Bedouins that roamed the desert country. Mohammedan pilgrims flocking annually to Mecca were made familiar with the new concoction, and carried back coffee beans in their saddlebags to all parts of the globe that embraced the faith of the Prophet. And so little by little, a knowledge of the virtues of the brown Arabian berry was brought to the very gates of the ancient cities of Medina, Damascus, and Aleppo. Public places for coffee drinking were soon established throughout Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. In the latter half of the sixteenth century (1554) it made its appearance in Constantinople, where, to the confusion of both Priests and Prophets, it proceeded to work havoc with the followers of the Moslem faith in the Turkish capital.

It is not enough to say that coffee drinking became instantly the vogue. Such was its allure that the Mosques were promptly deserted for the coffee houses, causing edicts to be issued against the use of a beverage so delicious and so captivating as to make the sons of the faithful unmindful of the call to prayer. Finding fruitless all their efforts to stem the tide of its rising popularity, the chief Priests seized on the only alternative and levied so high a tax upon the berry that for a time, at least, life went hard with the solemn-faced, coffee-loving, fate-worshiping Turk. But the protests of the Priests availed nothing. Coffee was launched on a career of conquest and destined to rise superior to its foes. It smoked in the bazaars. It flourished in the coffee houses. Its steaming fragrance invaded even the dim seraglios of the Sultans. It reached the perfumed and richly-appointed apartments of the royal palace itself, where priceless rugs, ottomans and divans be-tokened the luxurious ease and opulence of the rulers of those times, and costly mirrors reflected the sumptuous splendor of a barbaric age.
The Romance of Coffee

"Whene'er I breathe thy fumes, mid summer stars,
The Orient's splendid pomps my vision greet.
Damascus, with its myriad minarets, gleams!
I see thee smoking in immense bazaars,
Or yet, in dim seraglios, at the feet
Of pale Sultanas, all languorous with dreams."

And then it came to pass under the reign of Mohammed IV, Sublime Porte and Sultan of all Turkey, that one Solomon Aga, a distinguished and polished ambassador, was dispatched to the gay and frivolous court of Louis XIV of France to introduce to a Western civilization the mysteries of this new, black and bitter liquor, brewed from the little brown berry of Arabia. As early as 1658 the good people of Marseilles enjoyed a casual acquaintance with coffee, for merchants of that city returning from Eastern travels are said to have regaled their guests with coffee after dinner. But it was not until the arrival of the embassy in 1669, with Aga at its head, that coffee in any extraordinary or striking way was brought to the attention of the nobility of France. The entertainments provided by the ambassador were conducted on the most lavish scale, and coffee was served according to the custom of his country. The very atmosphere of these occasions was invested with the glamour of the Orient. Costly Eastern stuffs, at that time seldom seen either in Paris or Marseilles, displayed the rich and harmonious colorings of which the Turks are masters. Divans and cushions of embroidered velvet, prayer rugs of every kind and pattern, vestments of many hues bedecked with jewels and precious stones—all these contributed to the pomp and ceremony with which the wily and diplomatic Mohammed IV established his functionaries in foreign lands.

What particularly fascinated the gay French world were the napkins, gorgeously fringed with gold, and the brilliant cups of eggshell porcelain into which the coffee was poured, hot, strong and fragrant. On bended knees the slaves of the ambassador presented the choicest Mocha to these "grandes dames," who fluttered their fans and with many grimaces bent their piquant faces, patched, powdered and rouged, over the steaming cups. Such were the half-barbaric occasions which marked the introduction of coffee into France. If proof were necessary to show that no less a personage than Louis XIV himself regarded the beverage as one truly fit for kings, it is found in this monarch's royal command to undertake the cultivation of coffee within the boundaries of his own realm. This was subsequently done in 1720 in the French West Indies, and from the first few coffee trees planted on the Island of Martinique have sprung all the present rich and prolific plantations of the West Indies and of Central and South America.
THE BIRTH OF THE CAFÉ

In France, coffee found the grape in full possession of the popular heart. Madame de Sévigné is credited with the remark that there were two things Frenchmen would never swallow, “Racine’s poetry and coffee.” But she lived long enough to see her prophecy fail in both instances, for Racine’s poetry was swallowed, and coffee was drunk by the gallon long before she died. It was Pascal, an Armenian, who in 1672 came all the way from Constantinople to open at the Fair of St. Germain the first coffee house in Paris. And that, mark you, was the first café. Today cafés are world-wide institutions—and coffee made cafés. It was this same Pascal who, as business improved, sent his waiter boys throughout the city with coffee pots heated by lamps, and little side dishes of nougat, made of almonds and honey, and other Oriental sweets. He tempted the Parisian at his door and window, knowing at that early day that no Parisian could resist temptation. He made a fortune, and for years nobody ever dreamed that coffee could be made except by a little chap from Turkey. Then in 1689 came the celebrated François Procope, who opened the Café Procope near the theatre of the Comédie Française. This was the most famous café of them all. It was to the Procope that the great Voltaire came to sip his black coffee and give utterance to his deathless philosophy. At the ripe age of eighty-four this master dramatist and man of letters found in coffee a prop to his herculean literary labors, a constant spur to his ever trenchant pen. It was in the Café Procope that the first red hat was donned. It was in this same café that those sinister figures of the revolution, Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, harangued the crowds and in passionate appeal urged them on through that orgy of blood. And so the café had its romantic, even tragic beginnings, and no public whim or popular fickleness was ever to destroy it. To this day it is an endless and fascinating study for the foreigner to observe the life in the cafés of Paris. The café is indispensable to the Frenchman and especially to the Parisian. At almost any hour of the day or night he will take his seat at one of the tempting little tables to indulge his “café au lait” or “café noir.” If he meets a friend, it is the best place to converse; if the weather is fine and crowds throng the boulevards, it is the best point of observation.

What beverage is comparable with coffee in its intimate association with the mighty and illustrious figures of the past? How coffee conjures up and visualizes their several striking personalities. Balzac, the great novelist, was a confirmed coffee drinker. When he was poor and lived in an attic, he made it himself. When he could afford it, the best chef in Paris made it for him. Alfred de
Musset, Hugo, Zola, Bernhardt, the great musicians, the great thinkers, writers, players, all found solace and inspiration in coffee, and were, in turn, cheered, soothed and sustained by it.

THE OLD ENGLISH COFFEE HOUSE

The first public coffee house in London was opened in 1652 and antedated that of Paris by just a score of years. Having acquired the coffee-drinking habit in Turkey, an English merchant, Edwards by name, prepared the beverage for a coterie of friends in his London home. The company, however, grew to such proportions that the servant, Pasqua Rosee, was set up as a vendor of the drink and prospered amazingly. As an institution, the coffee house had an important part in the making of English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for it was at the coffee houses of the period—that at the height of their popularity—that the great geniuses of the time met and mingled to discuss art, literature, science, philosophy and matters of state.

“You that delight in wit and mirth,
    And love to hear such news
That comes from all parts of the earth,
    Turks, Dutch, and Danes and Jews,
I'll send you to the rendezvous
    Where it is smoking new!
Go hear it at a coffee house,
    It cannot but be true.”

HARVESTING THE COFFEE BERRY
Among the names that have come down to us as frequenters of the coffee house are Doctor Samuel Johnson, Addison, Swift, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, and Garrick. Great souls all—and great coffee drinkers. It was to the coffee house that the great Garrick came after the play, calling for his pipe and coffee and holding forth with boon companions no less celebrated than himself. The imagination readily frames the picture: outside the penetrating chill and damp of a winter’s day, with the proverbial fog settling down over London; while within, the crackling hearth, the steaming pots and the curling smoke, all to the accompaniment of thrust and parry of scholar and wit.

The Cheshire Cheese was a favorite haunt for these celebrities, and the Johnson room, with its rude tables and sawdust-sprinkled floor, was its chief glory. Some idea of the flavor and romance of those days is gained from the following poem penned in praise of this far-famed public house:

“I know a house of antique ease
Within the smoky city’s pale,
A spot wherein the spirit sees
Old London through a thinner veil.
The modern world so stiff and stale,
You leave behind you when you please,
For long clay pipes and great old ale
And beefsteaks in the 'Cheshire Cheese.'
The Romance of Coffee

"Beneath this board Burke's, Goldsmith's knees
Were often thrust—so runs the tale;
'Twas here the Doctor took his ease
And wielded speech that like a flail
Threshed out the golden truth. All hail,
Great Souls! that met on nights like these
Till morning made the candles pale
And revelers left the 'Cheshire Cheese.'

"By kindly sense and old decrees
Of England's use they set the sail;
We press to never-furrowed seas
For vision-worlds we breast the gale,
And still we seek and still we fail,
For still the 'glorious phantom' flees.
Ah well! no phantom are the ale
And beefsteaks of the 'Cheshire Cheese.'

"If doubts or debts thy soul assail
If Fashion's forms its current freeze,
Try a long pipe, a glass of ale,
And supper at the 'Cheshire Cheese.'"

Literary men, scientific men, medical men,—all gathered in the coffee house. Politicians without number assembled there and hatched their plots for the overthrow of government. It was King Charles II who in 1675, fearful of the unrest and treason of the times, by royal proclamation closed them all, about three thousand in number, as places of sedition; but only a few days later
COFFEE CHERRIES IN SACKS AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY’S WORK

was obliged to withdraw the royal edict, so firm a hold had coffee upon the people. The coffee house was assailed from many quarters, but neither pamphlets, nor poems, nor petitions, nor proclamations had any effect. They were the favorite haunts of the most famous men of the time, and are associated in history with an age rich in achievement in all lines of endeavor. And who shall say that these intellectual giants did not find their stimulus to clear thinking in copious draughts of the little brown berry—Coffee.

THE EARLY AMERICAN COFFEE HOUSE

No chronicle of the coffee house would be complete that omitted mention of the early American coffee house, which naturally enough was fashioned and conducted along lines not dissimilar to that of its English prototype. In Revolutionary days, Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts boasted these gathering places, half tavern, half coffee house, for it is to be confessed that stronger stimulants than coffee were not infrequently dispensed within these old-time hostelries. Burn’s coffee house, northwest of Bowling Green, was the first in New York. Here “The Liberty Boys” met and brewed dark plots for the overthrow of George the Third. Boston had its Crown, its Exchange and numerous other coffee houses, patronized liberally by Whig and Tory alike. Never by any chance, however, would you find them under the same roof. There were coffee houses, indeed, where cold welcome awaited the appearance of the Tory sympathizer or the wearer of scarlet regimentals. These were obliged to form cliques of their own and to assemble at other houses where the talk and toasts were more to their liking and
The Romance of Coffee

where they could abuse the Yankee rebels over their port to their hearts’ content. At the Sign of the Green Dragon was the rallying place of many bold and adventurous spirits, for the men who gathered here and over their coffee cups plotted revolution were among the country’s most ardent patriots. Doctor Joseph Warren, Samuel Adams and Paul Revere met nightly with their friends at the Green Dragon and exchanged tidings of the movements of the British troops. These were the men who spread the alarm “through every Middlesex village and farm,” and who spirited the cannon away under the very nose of General Gage. But it was not until the close of the great Civil War, when the reconstruction period had paved the way to permanent and lasting peace, that the consumption of coffee increased by leaps and bounds, keeping pace with the increasing greatness of the country. It was about this time that several of the country’s pioneer coffee firms were established—mercantile institutions that were destined to be the trail blazers of the industry, whose tireless zeal inaugurated ever new and better methods of cultivation and manufacture which, in large measure, explains the excellence and popularity of the beverage today.

COFFEE, THE TROPIC’S BEST GIFT

Arabia, Brazil, Central America, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, and the East and West Indies are the chief producing countries that today send the rich harvest of their fields to the waiting markets of the world. We may well take a fleeting glimpse of an industry that bulks so large in the commerce of every civilized nation on the earth. On the gently sloping hillsides of the coffee country are literally millions upon millions of coffee trees. Miles and miles of them stretch away up and down the rolling topography often as far as the eye can see, great broad waves of green, with the narrow lines of the rich soil showing in marked contrast with the green of the leaves. It is a sight not soon to be forgotten. Here and there on the lower slopes of the hills are the white buildings of the “fazendas,” great stone and stucco manor houses with broad verandas and large windows, surrounded by gardens filled with palm, banana, orange, and mango trees. To the eye of the traveler these “fazendas” have a peculiar charm and picturesqueness, presenting as they do an appearance of comfort, peace, and prosperity. Harvesting begins in May and lasts well into August and September. This is what is known as the dry season, when weather conditions are favorable not only for the harvest itself, but for drying and transporting the crop after it is gathered. In picking the coffee, the boughs are pulled down with the left hand and held at the outer end while the right hand is run along the bough from the base to
The Romance of Coffee

The tip, thus stripping off the berries as well as many leaves and twigs. In this work of harvesting all the laborers on the “fazenda” take part—men, women, and children. Several hundred or even thousand pairs of hands on each large plantation are thus busily employed in gathering the season’s crop. In one day a laborer may gather enough coffee berries to make fifty pounds of dried coffee.

The fruit of the coffee tree when ripe resembles a crimson cherry or cranberry in general appearance. This coffee berry, as it is called, contains two seeds, flat on one side and convex on the other, the flat sides being together. These seeds are embedded in a sticky, whitish pulp, which is removed by what is known as the pulping process, and this in turn is subsequently followed by the various other processes of drying, hulling, cleaning and sorting. Along the roads deep in dust, sturdy oxen draw the wagons loaded with the precious sacks to the nearest railway station. Over the mountains the trains take them to the nearest port for shipment abroad.

The world-wide consumption of the beverage has enabled many coffee-producing countries to make marvelous strides in the development of their railroads and in their general commercial and industrial activities. Small wonder they possess such abounding life and energy; that their ports have become world famous; that their docks and railways attract so many visitors. Coffee is the mainspring of all this development. Coffee is the prevailing topic of conversation, Coffee is the key to the financial situation. Coffee is King. In the more famous shipping ports the visitor finds coffee everywhere—on the streets, in the warehouses, on the trains. The docks are lined with two or three miles of steamers, often lying two or three abreast, all waiting to load—Coffee.
COFFEE, EFFICIENCY AND HEALTH

Using upwards of one billion pounds annually, the United States of America ranks first among the great coffee-consuming countries of the world. We are a nation of coffee drinkers. As a beverage it is forever established in popular esteem and favor. There is no occasion to remind sensible, right-thinking persons of the fallacy of the specious arguments advanced in certain quarters against the use of coffee as a beverage. There is a lot of commercial buncombe about its alleged injurious effects, and some of it is very impressive too, if you are of a neurotic temperament. There are no doubt many good people who deny themselves coffee because of some fancied or educated fear that it isn’t good for them. In this connection it might be mentioned that the recent world conflict brought home certain indisputable facts to which the eyes of many good people were often closed before “grim-visaged war” held the stage. There is hardly a more salutary lesson or one with closer relation to the welfare of the human race than that to be drawn from the unexampled use of coffee with the expeditionary forces overseas. The frequency and size of the contracts let by the United States Government during the period of the war emphasized the importance that was placed upon keeping the fighting men well supplied with coffee. There is a definite food value attached to coffee; there is a wholesome, stimulating effect, without harmful reaction; there is a certain psychological value that coffee has among the soldiers at the front not shared by other beverages. Co-ordination of mind and body (and that’s human efficiency) is superinduced by coffee. That is why in the commissary, in the

LOADING COFFEE AT THE DOCK FOR SHIPMENT ABROAD
cantonment and in the army kitchens behind the lines, it had a leading role in the rationing of vast armies. A boon in time of Peace, coffee proved nothing less than a benefaction to the men engaged in the great struggle on the battlefields of France.

By any other name coffee still would hold us captive—thrall to its subtle charm. Consider for a moment how it was variously known in the different countries. Back through the centuries we find that the wild, untamed Arab tribes knew it as “kahwah”; to the fierce head-hunter of the Malay Archipelago it was “kopi”; to the Persians it was “kahwa” or “karweh”; to the Turks the beans were “chaube” and the drink “quahwe”; to the Russian it is “kofe”; to the German “kaffee”; to the Danes and Swedes it is “kaffe”; to the Italian it is “caffe”; a Spaniard or Portuguese will call for his “cafe”; a Frenchman cries and gesticulates for his “cafe”; in old English it was “kawphy,” but in twentieth century Websterian it is just plain—coffee.

But call it what we will, drink it where we will, under tropical skies or within the frigid confines of the Land of the Midnight Sun, on this one beverage the whole wide world is agreed. On the arid sands of the desert; in the heart of the trackless jungle; in the shadows of the Mosques and the Minarets of the Sultan; in gay Paree, or in our own, our native land, the most precious of all Earth’s gifts to Man is the little brown berry of the coffee tree.
COFFEE
IN THE MAKING
GLIMPSED THROUGH THE CHASE & SANBORN CAMERA
Buy the Best
The Finest Grown