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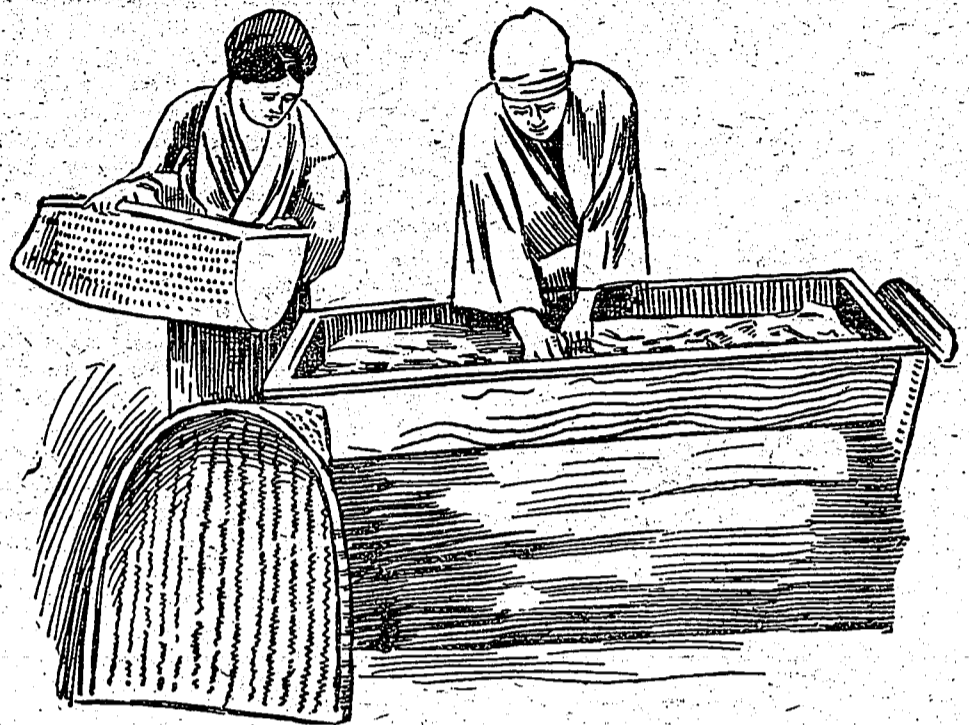
## The Moral Value of Tea-Drinking.

(By Amelia E. Barr, in the 'Christian Herald'.)

The singular connection between coffee and the growth of liberal ideas, is not more remarkable than that between tea and theology, and also tea and taxation. This curious union between tea and taxation extends even to the pagan records, for the first notice of it in Chinese literature is that of its taxation A. D. 780.

The Dutch East India Company sent their first embassy to the Grand Tartar Cham in 1655, and three years later tea was being sold at the Sultan's head coffee house; but its real history begins with its taxation in 1670, during the reign of Charles II. The tax was then eighteen pence on every gallon made and sold. But inconvenient as it must have been for an excise officer to stand watching the preparation of a gallon of tea, in order to get eighteen pence, this tax continued for seventeen years; then heavy custom dues were substituted, and from 1688 to 1745 was an epoch of excessive taxation on tea. Yet it forced itself into domestic use even when it was sold for 30 shillings a pound. In 1745, the last year of this epoch, England drank only 730,000 pounds of tea; but the duty being then lowered, the next year the consumption reached 2,358,589 pounds. As late as 1806, tea paid an excise of 90 percent, and yet tea drinking had become so fixed a habit that washerwomen and laborers refused to give it up for any duty.

There is reason for this apparent obstinacy. The laborer did not often buy through the government. Tea which sold in England at twelve shillings a pound, could be bought in Hamburg for twenty



SIFTING THE NEWLY PICKED TEA.

pennies a pound, or even less. Smuggling tea was then a profitable business. It was not in human nature to resist 600 percent, and the smuggler, the seller and the buyer made a three-fold cord of interest not easily managed by the law.

The progress of tea in America was fettered by the same bonds of taxation; and yet it was only a tax of six cents a pound which caused the memorable infusion in Boston harbor. Any other commodity would have done as well "to make room for liberty" but there was a singular fitness in this much-taxed article brewing the cup of retribution.

During its two centuries or more of Amer-

ican life, tea has not found the favor that coffee has done. In the north-eastern states it is perhaps the favorite beverage, but in the West it is much less drunk than coffee, and as we go south its use constantly diminishes. Still it requires nearly 100,000,000 of pounds yearly to supply the national tea-pot.

The virtues of a plant which has won such universal favor in spite of crushing taxation are not by any means negative ones. Liebig proves scientifically that the taste of whole nations for tea and coffee is an infinitely wise instinct, as both supply a principle of vital importance in the easiest and cheapest form for our complex modern life.

The Chinese extol tea as 'the reliever of weariness and soother of sorrow.' Bishop Huet in 1670 says it 'sweeps the brain' and calls it a 'brusher to the understanding.' Dr. Kane speaks gratefully of its unspeakable comfort among Arctic ice, and one of Sydney Smith's charms against melancholy is 'to keep always a tea-kettle simmering on the hob.' This genial soul discovered another merit in a boiling tea-kettle, for one evening when taking tea with Mrs. Austin a servant entered the crowded drawing-room with a boiling tea-kettle in his hand. From the steaming kettle the crowd receded on all sides, Mr. Smith among the rest, though he carefully watched the man's progress to the table.

'I declare,' he said, 'a man who wishes to make his way in life, could do nothing better than go through the world with a boiling tea-kettle in his hand.'

It may be safely said that tea has contributed more to the sobriety of nations than the severest laws, or the best moral treatises; and it is certain, that the alliance between coffee and literature is not more close than that between tea and theology. The progress of dissent, especially of Methodism, has been blended with the tea-cup; and though there is no intention in this paper to trace the connec-



TEA-WEIGHING IN JAPAN.