

unately the custom is gaining ground of taking beverages almost boiling hot. The extreme folly of such conduct is proved by the violent indigestion and disturbance of the system sometimes following one cup of very hot tea or coffee—and besides, pepsin—the active principle of the gastric juice—becomes inert when hot drinks are taken into the stomach, a temperature of 120° to 130° Fahr. appearing to destroy its digestive properties.

The chief action of tea is due to the theine present, of which there is sometimes 5 or even 6 per cent. In coffee there is from 1 or 2 per cent of caffeine, and in cocoa the same proportion of theobromine. Cocoa also contains a large percentage of fat, sometimes amounting to half its weight; and therefore, unlike the other members of the same class, is a valuable and wholesome food.

That a good deal remains to be made out of the actions of these important beverages, is clear. Taken with moderate caution, they are generally of marked service. At the present day, however, these infusions are swallowed in such quantities and so strong that they do incalculable injury and occasion serious disease. Having regard to the nervousness and irritability often following the use of large quantities of *strong* tea, we should restrict any one over whom we have influence to two cups of *moderately weak* coffee or tea at meals. Twice a day is quite often enough to take them, and they should never be taken too strong.

The Chinese take their tea weak, believing the very strong infusion is injurious. The tea-tasters of the Celestial Empire are even more particular and do not swallow the weak infusions they make. But in this, as in so many other matters, our countrymen go to extreme lengths and drink beverages of dangerous strength and in immoderate quantities.

There are few who really know how to make a cup of tea, and still fewer how to economise their tea. In the first place the water must be neither too hard nor too soft. The water should never be permitted to boil furiously before being used, nor should the infusion be allowed to boil, as that spoils the flavour. The best plan is to pour on water that has just boiled, and then to