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CATHOLIC HERALD

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**For All the
Tea in China**
by Sarah
Rose (Arrow,
£8.99)

972

The great British drink, the civilising liquid of Empire, tea has for a long time played an important part in our self-definition and sense of ourselves as Englishmen.

Yet until the late 1840s tea was a closely guarded secret of the Chinese, as hard to penetrate and as jealously held as the recipe for Coca-Cola is today.

Written in an engaging and lively tone, Sarah Rose's book is as much an adventure story as a piece of history, populated as it is by brigands, pirates and soothsayers aplenty. But it all begins with Robert Fortune, a Scottish gardener, botanist, plant-hunter and industrial spy. In 1848 the East India Company hired Fortune to make a secret trip into the heartland of China to steal the closely guarded secrets of tea-making.

Of course he succeeded and Britain was never quite the same again.

Stav Sherez