

## The Time We Have to Tea

*In 1806, London bookbinders struck for a right the women binders already had: to take a half-hour tea break in the late afternoon. In a 13-hour day this doesn't seem remarkable to us--but at the time it was revolutionary, and heroic enough to warrant a song.*



Although so many years are gone  
Since Alston led our fathers on,  
A jingle I'll attempt upon  
    The Strike for time to Tea.  
Now Binders their half-hours enjoy  
In comfort, and themselves employ  
As suits them best, since none annoy  
    Them whilst they sit at Tea.  
(Chorus) Then let us all our voices raise  
    And loudly chant to night in praise  
    Of those who gained -- in bygone days --  
    The time we have to Tea.

It often sorely nettles one  
To think how much *our* mettle's gone  
Since Binders first put kettles on  
    With water for their Tea.  
Our Trade was then composed of 'BRICKS,'  
Now, many are the '*shickrey*' tricks  
Of *Things* who oft--as Binders, mix  
    With HONEST MEN at Tea  
(Chorus)

What we enjoy was dearly bought--  
And nobly they our battle fought  
Who--thought the Ladies' aid they sought,  
    Would--right or wrong, have tea.  
For as the boon was long refused  
In many shops--the Ladies used  
To help their shopmates, and infused  
    Their Souchong or Bohea.  
(Chorus)

At lunch-time most men relish beer,  
And--with our Friend, I'll sing, "same here--"  
"

But what can in the evenings cheer  
    Our spirits up like Tea?  
For whether working East or West,  
Each Binder doubtless can attest  
The virtues of his half-hour's rest  
    Indulged in whilst at Tea.  
(Chorus)

Need any Finisher be told  
That he can best work off his gold--  
In summer's heat or Winter's cold--  
    When he has had his Tea?  
In Winter through our shops we creep  
Half-starved--and in the Summer sleep,  
For who--when glaring-in can keep  
    Awake till after Tea?  
(Chorus)

Since Binders owe a heavy debt  
Og gratitude to those who met  
And planned the Strike, by which they get  
    The half-hour now to Tea.  
So let them ne'er forget the year  
(Although the Month is not so clear)  
When first their fathers--scorning fear  
    DEMANDED time for Tea.  
(Chorus)