



IMBIBING

Winston Churchill did not initially drink whiskey. "I had never been able to," he later wrote, "... I disliked the flavour intensely." In India, however, he learned to—finding himself with nothing to drink in the terrific heat but tea, or tepid water mixed with lime juice, or whiskey. By the end of his tour, he would "completely overcome my repugnance to the taste of whiskey . . . Once one got the knack of it, the very repulsion from the flavour developed an attraction of its own."



Subaltern Winston Churchill, age twenty-one, Bangalore, India, 1896.

IMBIBING



Churchill and Roosevelt on the road to Marrakech, February 1943.

Churchill briefly rendezvoused with Roosevelt after Yalta on the USS *Quincy* off the coast of Alexandria. Two days later he was driven across the desert to lunch with King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud at the Hotel du Lac at the Fayyum oasis. Before their luncheon Churchill was informed that ibn Saud could not tolerate smoking or the drinking of alcohol in his presence. Churchill replied that he was the host and that his religion "prescribed as an absolute sacred rite smoking cigars and drinking alcohol before, after and if need be during all meals and the intervals between them."

Churchill's favorite whiskey was Johnnie Walker Red Label or Black Label, with Hine his favorite cognac. Christopher Soames maintained that Churchill, in fact, cared little about the caliber of the cognac he drank. At Chartwell, Soames decanted the excellent vintages his father-in-law was regularly sent by a Cuban admirer named Antonio Giraudier (who also kept Churchill supplied with cigars) and replaced them with lesser-quality brandy. Churchill never objected.



Decanter barrel at Chartwell.