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What we do not Eat—Tobacco.

Man is a strange being—a compound of dirt and deity. In nothing, perhaps, is this more evident, than in his use of tobacco. It does not appear strange that a man should, by degrees, become accustomed to eat and relish a bitter plant, which at first he rejected with loathing, but that he should take some drug like tobacco, set it on fire, and make his mouth a fire pump, to draw in and force out the smoke, is indeed more than passing strange "'tis wonderful." It is no less fantastically droll, that he should grind up this same drug into powder and feed his nose with it, when reason and instinct require that organ to be kept profoundly clean, for the purpose of enjoying "nature's incense on the dewy morn," and for giving "utterance clear to vocal sounds." Perhaps there is a little more reason on the side of our universal national characteristic, "chewing the weed and spitting out the juice," but this habit, too, is no less strange than either of the other two. But strange as these things are, the surprise would not be great if its use was confined to a small number of the human family, but instead of this being the case, there is perhaps no other drug more universally and extensively used in one form or another, by both civilized and savage man.

The history—rise and progress—of the cultivation and use of tobacco is more like a romance than a plain unvarnished record of an inanimate, bitter vegetable production. It derives its name—*Nicotina Tobacum*—from Jean Nicot, an agent of the King of France, who sent some of its seeds from Florida to France in 1560, and from Tobacco in Yucatan, from which it was first sent to Spain. It is generally held to be a native of America—indigenous to its tropical regions. Some, however, have doubted this, and consider it to be a native of both Africa and Asia, as savages have been found using it far in the interior of these continents; hence some modern travellers say, "it is impossible to conceive that its use and cultivation could have spread over such an extent of the old world, as it has since the New World was discovered." Be this as it may, the fact is unquestionable that it was unknown in Europe prior to the discovery of our continent, and the inference is, that if it had been known to the inhabitants of Africa and Asia, it would surely, from the old established trade with these countries, have found its way at an earlier period—such as during the Roman Empire—into Europe. It was introduced into Spain and France from America in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and into England by Sir Francis Drake in 1586.

Since that time it has spread in the east into Turkey, Persia, India, China, Australia, the Phillipine Islands, and Japan. It has been raised with success also in nearly every country in Europe; it is cultivated in Egypt, Algeria, in the Canaries, and at the Cape of Good Hope. It is, indeed, among narcotics what the potato is among food plants—the most extensively cultivated, the most hardy, and the most tolerant of change in temperature, altitude, and general climate.

When it was first introduced into Europe its use was opposed by Pope, Kaiser, and King, but although the knout was threatened for the first offence in using it, and death for the second, in Russia, it has marched over these enactments, and established itself in the imperial Palace—Czar Nicholas being now an inveterate user of the *weed*. Pope Urban the VIII. thundered out a bull against it; James the I. —pragmatical Jamie—wrote a counterblast against it, and both priest and pastor denounced it from altar and pulpit. But what signified the opposition of king and priest, to tobacco—it has conquered them all. Larger quantities of it are now grown in France, than any other vegetable; the Dutchmen—high and low—seldom have the pipe out of their mouths, and in Persia and Turkey, where smoking was declared a sin against religion, the people have become the greatest smokers in the world. In India all classes smoke; in China the practice is so universal that "every female, from the age of eight or nine years, wears as an appendage to her dress, a small silken pocket to hold tobacco and pipe.

It has been calculated that no less than 2,000,000 tuns of tobacco are grown annually on our globe, and no less than 199,752,646 lbs., —83,232 tuns—by the census of 1850, of that in the United States.

In 1662, the quantity raised in Virginia was 60,000 lbs.; and the quantity exported in 1689 only 120,000 lbs., while now the whole product of the country is more than a thousand times greater, and from present indications its use and cultivation are becoming more general every day, for while it was cultivated in none of the Northern States, a few years ago, no less than 53,000,000 lbs. were raised in 1850. We do not really know what lesson we can learn from the extraordinary history of tobacco. Medical and other men have written against it, but seem to have urged nothing very specific, excepting this, that as *nicotine*, (C.10, H.7, O.5 the same elements as sugar but combined in different proportions) the active principle of tobacco, is poisonous in its isolated form, the use of tobacco must be injurious. The experience of mankind does not confirm this conclusion, excepting in cases of excessive use, which, like everything else, used immoderately, is injurious. And yet no later than last week we read in more than one of our cotemporaries, that there is now living somewhere in the State of Maine, an old lady 112 years of age, who, for half a century, has been a most immoderate nose-consumer of tobacco, the stimulating effects of which seem to have forced her on, alive and cheerful, far beyond the common years of mortals.

The cigar seems to be conquering its way over all other modes and forms of using tobacco. Opposition to its use seems to promote its consumption, and it is now considered to be a common solace among all ranks and conditions —the poor pipe smokers only being prevented from using it from inability to buy.

While we are writing this, a Convention of Cigar Makers are in Assembly in Syracuse—the central city of this State—for the purpose of taking into consideration their own case—their remuneration for making cigars. We hope they will make no wordy war against their manufacture by machinery,—something which will be accomplished at no distant day, as a number of such machines have already been built, and further improvements will no doubt lead to their success. In the Crystal Palace there is a great variety of fine samples of tobacco from almost every State in the Union, but the finest quality of this plant is raised in Cuba, the cigars made from it selling for $150 per thousand. There can be no doubt but man could live cheerfully and well without using this plant in any form. Those who do not use it are as cheerful and healthy as those who do. Its effects upon many are very exciting to the nervous system, and as it is not pretended to afford any nutriment; it may in a great measure be considered an article of luxury merely, costing our country an enormous amount every year. As a voluntary tax it costs the people of Britain and Ireland every year more than $20,000,000, while it costs our people at least $10,000,000. We are glad, however, that tobacco, and not opium, is so extensively used by our people; still, if it is an evil, it forms no excuse for its use to say, "it is the substitute for a greater." Every man, however, in this respect, should be a judge for himself; it is the duty of every man to temper his appetites and passions, and bring them into calm subjection to judgment and sound reason. The conclusion at which we have arrived, in view of the use that is generally made of tobacco, the vast amount of it that is consumed, and the great expense of its cultivation and manufacture—is, that it affords a matter for the profound study of the philosopher, statesman, and man of science.

American Institute.

The Annual Election for Officers of this Institution took place on the evening of the 11th inst. The election was quite an exciting one. Robert L. Pell was elected President over J. Bullock, the opposing candidate, by a *very* large majority. A number of very excellent and able men, were elected for the other officers. We hope the Institute will go on and prosper in doing good—make it worthy of its name—something which it has not yet done.

The New Three Dollar Gold Piece.

The accompanying figures illustrate both sides of the new three dollar gold pieces recently issued. They are very beautiful in design, but while one side is very appropriately ornamented, the other is quite the reverse.—The encircling chaplet, composed of wheat, corn and oak leaves—our natural productions—harmonizes with our tastes, feelings, and associations, but the female head of the other side—which our cotemporaries say is that of an Indian—has a Grecian face, and looks like one of those Aztec Princesses with a *crown* of peacock's feathers, that we see in pictures.—What business has such a crowned head upon our republican coins? None whatever. If a head is to be placed on any of our coins, why not have that of the President during whose administration it was issued. This, like the old Roman medals, would make our gold coins historical.

Living Weather Prognosticators—The Eclipse.

It is said that the woodcock in New Jersey, is building its nest this year in open and moist places, hence some of our cotemporaries state that old hunters predict a warm dry summer. There are many prevalent opinions respecting the prophetic instinct of beasts, fowls, and insects, but we are of the opinion that their instincts lead them no further to prepare for changes of weather than the immediate premonitions of every such change. Beasts birds, and insects, living in the open air, are more sensitive to the indications of coming storms, just as the Indian is superior to the civilized man in this respect, but from the present month, we believe that neither man nor animal can indicate or tell what kind of weather we may have during the next month. If the changes of weather followed after one another, in continual and regular procession, then the signs of the opening of one year would be good for the whole year, but no meteorological record gives us any foundation, as yet, for supposing that there is any such regularity. The lesson we would learn from the change of habits in the woodcock this year, is simply this, that the spring, having been so wet and stormy, the swamps in the woods are too full of water for that bird at the present time to pursue the purposes of nature and rear its young.

We have heard some predicting a wet and stormy summer on account of the influence of the approaching eclipse of the sun. We do not know whether this will be so or not, but if we have a wet season, it will afford some evidence of a regular successsion in the changes of weather, when like influences are in operation. Thus in 1836, when an eclipse of the sun took place on the last Sunday of May—if we recollect aright—we had a very wet summer, as we had a previous severe winter—the one of the great fire and heavy snows in this city. The crops, especially the corn, failed throughout most of the States, and as a consequence, the food was very high during the succeeding winter—the one when the flour riots took place in New York. Instead of the United States exporting wheat to Europe that year, we imported it, and poor stuff the most of it was. But although we may have a very wet summer this year, and the crops fail in many States, in all reason we would not anticipate the inability of our country to raise enough food—and to spare—for ourselves. The fact is, that Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, which are now great surplus-producing States, were then unable to provide food for their new settlers—these States being then in their infancy. At any rate, the present year will afford a good opportunity for observing the effects of the eclipse upon the weather, and of making a comparison with the wet and cold summer season of 1836.

Yankee Lumbermen in Canada.

Since the close of the Baltic to a valuable timber trade, a great impetus has been given to that on the American side of the Atlantic; great quantities have been shipped from the Potomac during the past winter, for France, and the Maine Lumbermennever were so busy as they have been during the past season.—But the greatest scene of lumber activity on our continent, for the past two years, we understand, has been in Canada. About two years ago the Canadian Government threw open to competition an immense tract of timber land, lying on the bank of the St. Maurice, midway between Montreal and Quebec. The Government of Canada was liberal in the terms which it offered. A tract of territory consisting of two thousand square miles, covered with red and white pine, was divided into portions of fifty square miles, and the right to cut for a given number of years was sold at auction in Quebec in the month of July of each of the last two years. And a number of our Eastern lumber merchants availing themselves of the advantages then held out, bought tracts, and began operation on a grand scale. Messrs. Norcross, Philips, & Co., of Lowell, we understand, have now one of the largest lumber establishments in Canada. They have extensive saw mills at the junction of the St. Maurice with the St. Lawrence, and it is said had a thous. and men employed by them in cutting logs the last winter. There were employed last winter in the timber territory named, six hundred pair of horses, and five thousand men.—and never before did such activity exist in the North American timber trade. The old saying "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good," may be aptly applied to wars in Europe: although they do immense evil to the people in those countries which are the scenes of strife, they benefit us in America, by increasing our commerce, and calling forth greater industrial effort.

Reaping Machine.

It was our intention to have published a series of articles on reaping machines in this volume of the "Scientfic American," but we are compelled to delay them until we commence our next volume. The reason of this is, that these articles are to be illustrated with excellent engravings of the various reaping machines, starting from the rudest implements of ancient days, to the most improved of our own, giving the history of each, and describing its construction, and the number of these is so great, that we could not furnish them in this volume. As we desire every volume to be complete in itself, it would not be prudent to commence any series of articles that would require to be extended to another volume.

The History of Reaping Machines, which we intend to present, will be of great importance, and the only one of the kind ever set before the public through a periodical.

A Good Law for Philadelphia.

"From and after the first July it shall not be lawful to erect a house in Philadelphia—for a dwelling—without a yard in its rear covering at least 30 square feet of an area, and with a separate well-built cesspool. Such a law should be enacted for every city in the land. In New York the houses occupy less space than in London. This cannot be healthy. The want of cesspool conveniences in connection with hundreds of buildings in this city, where females are employed, is the cause of a great amount of suffering and disease. A law like that of Philadelphia is much needed here.

Cure for Corns.

Mr. Cooper, in his "Dictionary of Surgery," has the following infallible cure for corns: Take two ounces of gum ammoniac, two ounces of yellow wax, and six drachms of verdigris; melt them together, and spread the composition on soft leather; cut away as much of the corn as you can, then apply the plaster, and renew it every fortnight till the corn is away.