

**TOBACCO: ITS  
INFLUENCES,  
PHYSICAL, MORAL, AND  
RELIGIOUS; A LECTURE**

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Tobacco: Its Influences, Physical, Moral, and Religious; A Lecture by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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RELIGIOUS; A LECTURE**



Francis Colver

TOBACCO:

ITS INFLUENCES, PHYSICAL, MORAL, AND  
RELIGIOUS.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE ATHENÆUM, CARLISLE, ON THURSDAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 27TH, 1859.

BY  
THE DEAN OF CARLISLE.

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## TOBACCO, &c.

"Ignoble theme! trivial, vulgar,—unworthy the attention of men of science, and altogether beneath the notice of a grave divine! Why turn aside from your proper work? Why descend from the pulpit to the lecture room—from the high and holy subjects more especially entrusted to you—to discuss such a topic as this?"

Such objections can arise only from those who have not looked into the question, and are consequently wholly ignorant of its importance. There is no page in the common-place book of social science in which a larger number of our fellow creatures are interested, none which more directly and urgently affects their temporal and eternal interests; and few, if any, whose references extend over so vast a surface of the habitable globe. I speak, indeed, of a small plant in the vegetable world, not much more stately than a cabbage or a cauliflower, yet in some form or other its mystic influence is felt over a fourth part of the human race!

"The moral influence of tobacco is not a light matter," says one of its most vehement advocates. "That principle within it which imparts electric action to the brain, and therefore to the whole system by the nerves, must necessarily be a moral agent for good or evil."\*

On this ground I take my stand. Had no moral evils been traceable to the immoderate use of this powerful weed I might have left the discussion of its properties to the chemist, the physician, or the natural philosopher; but inasmuch as every person who is in the least degree acquainted with the subject knows that it does, and must exercise a powerful influence over the moral man through his nervous system and by the brain, I conceive that this is a matter of debate which not only lies within the proper province of the divine, but loudly demands his serious attention. If tobacco be a moral agent, its use must either impede or promote

\* Steinmetz on Tobacco, p. 158.

our direct religious labours—it must be our handmaid, assisting us in our spiritual and pastoral duties, or it must be a hinderance. Its real character is the point at issue. Let us first briefly trace the history of the introduction of this herb into common use—let us next hear competent witnesses on the subject—and then we shall be prepared to consider the conclusions at which we should arrive.

TOBACCO was unknown in Europe until Columbus, in 1492, first beheld, in Cuba, the custom of smoking cigars. Some years after a Spanish Monk discovered the plant in a province of St. Domingo, called Tabacca, which, according to some, appears the most probable origin of the name. It was not until 1559 that Hernandez De Toledo introduced it into Spain and Portugal. Its progress was not rapid. In 1560 Jean Nicot, French Ambassador at the Court of Portugal, reported to his Sovereign that scarcely anything was known about this “foreign vegetable.” Sir Walter Raleigh does not seem to have used the pipe until after the return of Sir Francis Drake, in 1586, so that nearly one hundred years elapsed from the period of its first discovery before the custom took any hold upon the English people.\*

To the American savage we undoubtedly owe this strange custom; and it is a fact almost without parallel in history, that civilized and cultivated nations borrowed a habit which they found prevalent among barbarians, and adopted it to such an extent as this practice has prevailed. When it had once laid hold of the people of this country, a fashion and rage for it sprung up and spread itself, extending in all ranks and classes, and threatened to become almost universal. It is probable that the violent opposition, and even actual persecution which arose at the same time tended greatly to further its progress. KING JAMES I. had a perfect horror of it, and said and wrote many unwise things about it. He complained that “some of the gentry bestow £300 or £400 per annum on this precious stinke:”—a sum, according to the value of money at that time, far larger than any person in the present day expends on “the weed.” In 1624, the Pope excommunicated anyone who took snuff in church; ten years after this, “smoking tobacco was forbidden in Russia, under the pain of having the nose cut off.”† In many Continental States, pains and penalties were inflicted on smokers. The French statesmen were wiser—they contented themselves with laying such a tax on tobacco as brought into the royal

\* Lizarz, p. 9.

† Steinmetz, pp. 13—15.



coffers enormous sums. How it was that the custom of smoking tobacco fell into comparative desuetude during the latter part of the seventeenth century, and still more so in the eighteenth, does not appear from any information I can obtain. Certain it is that at the opening of the present century the custom was almost confined to soldiers and sailors, and the working classes. As forming a striking contrast with the present revival of this custom, I may state that I took my degree at Cambridge in 1820, I had rather a large acquaintance of men of my own standing, and I certainly do not recollect that I knew of one who smoked! If it was practised, it must have been in private—as a fashion, or custom among the young men, it did not exist. Neither does it appear certain how the present rage for it was excited. It seems more than probable that the British armies employed on the Continent had acquired the habit, and that when they were disbanded and dispersed all over the land, they propagated the custom, which now prevails to a degree perfectly surprising.

Few persons who have not studied the subject have any adequate conception of the amount of time and money spent in this indulgence, as well in this country as on the Continent. In 1856, thirty-three millions of pounds of tobacco were consumed here at an expense of eight millions of money; five millions two hundred and twenty thousand pounds of which went in duty to Government. To say nothing of vast quantities smuggled into the country. There is a steady increase upon this consumption, far exceeding the contemporaneous increase of population. In 1821 the average was 11.70 oz. per head per annum; in 1851 it had risen to 16.36; and in 1853 to 19 oz., or at least at the rate of one-fourth increase in ten years.

We hear of 20,000 hogsheads of tobacco in the bonding houses in London at one time. There are twelve city brokers in London expressly devoted to tobacco sales, 90 manufacturers, 1,569 tobacco shops, 82 clay pipe makers, 7,380 workmen engaged in the different branches of the business; and no less than 252,048 tobacco shops in the United Kingdom.

And if we turn to the Continent, the consumption and expenditure assume proportions perfectly gigantic. In France much more is consumed in proportion to the population than in England. In 1854 Paris consumed 3,800,000 pounds of tobacco, costing 17,725,263 francs. The Emperor clears a yearly profit of 100,000,000 of

francs by his monopoly. At St. Omer 11,000 tons of clay are used in making 45 millions of tobacco pipes. In the city of Hamburg 40,000 cigars are consumed daily, although the population is not much over 45,000; 10,000 persons, many of them women and children, are engaged in their manufacture. One hundred and fifty millions of cigars are supplied annually; a printing press is entirely occupied in printing labels for the boxes of cigars, &c.; and the business represents four millions sterling!\* In Denmark the annual consumption reaches the enormous average of 70 oz. per head of the whole population; and in Belgium even more—to 73 oz., or four pounds and 3-5ths of a pound per head.

In America the average is vastly higher. It is calculated that the entire world of smokers, snuffers, and chewers, consume two millions of tons of tobacco annually, or 4,480 millions of pounds weight—as much in tonnage as the corn consumed by ten millions of Englishmen, and actually at a cost sufficient to pay for all the bread-corn eaten in Great Britain! Five millions and a half of acres are occupied in its growth, chiefly cultivated by slave labour, the product of which, at twopence per pound, would yield thirty seven millions of pounds sterling.

The time would fail to tell of the vast amount of smoking in Turkey and Persia—in India all classes and both sexes indulge in this practice; the Siamese both chew and smoke—in Burmah, all ages practice it—children of three years old, and of both sexes—China equally contributes to the general mania—and the advocates of the habit boast that about one-fourth of the human race are their clients, or that there certainly are one hundred millions of smokers!

Are not these statistics perfectly astounding? Is not this a wanton waste of money upon an idle custom, admitted by its warmest advocates to be only a luxury, seldom beneficial, always dangerous?

This financial view of the question ought to arrest our attention. Every working man who consumes only one ounce of "SHAG," "RETURNS," or "BIRD'S EYE" per week, or the very moderate quantity of 4 lbs. per annum, pays out of the fruit of his labours, twelve shillings and eightpence to Government in the shape of a tax on his luxury! Let the working men look to this. The amount of money which they annually expend in beer, spirits, and tobacco, would place them all in easy circumstances, and in a very

\* *Statistics*, pp. 48-50.

few years obtain for them the franchise as electors! My friends, believe me that if you would break your tobacco pipes and never again drink a drop of intoxicating drinks, you would rise in the world with a rapidity you little dream of. I for one would cheerfully vote for manhood suffrage if all men were sober and well informed.

And let the scions of our wealthy families reflect on the prodigious waste of money incurred by their cigar and tobacco smoking. Here are nearly nine millions sterling thus annually consumed, and diverted from channels of utility or beneficence, or from the works of taste and cultivation of the arts, and puffed away in a selfish indulgence, useless if not injurious, and to the larger portion of society offensive, to many disgusting.

But, turning from the financial view of the subject, let us enquire into the physical, moral, and religious influences of tobacco smoking. And here I would first cite the opinions of a great many distinguished members of the medical profession, more than forty of whom have publicly recorded their judgment relative to this practice. And having submitted these records to the consideration of the reader, some general conclusions may be satisfactorily arrived at.

Mr. SOLLY, whose name stands high in the medical world, had briefly referred to the evils of tobacco smoking in a learned lecture on paralysis which appeared in the *Lancet*.\* Alarm was taken at this assault upon their favourite habit by some inveterate devotees, and so the controversy was awakened in the pages of that leading journal of medical science, and was continued through successive numbers. The opinions of many distinguished members of the faculty have thus been recorded. I shall endeavour to cull from them the mass of evidence which is here to be obtained against the practice in question. It is no part of my present object to adduce the opposite testimony; but if it were so, the task would be easy, as the advocates of the practice are as few as their arguments are feeble.

My references must be brief, but they shall be honest. I take them in the order in which I find them in the *Lancet*.

Dr. DAVID JOHNSON, M.R.C.S., &c., of Dudley—

“There can be no doubt that the moral evils occasioned in this country by the use of this plant, are of the most extensive and frightful kind.”

T. HAROLD FENN, M.R.C.S., Nayland, gives no opinion as to the

\* All the following quotations are from Vol. I. of the *Lancet* for 1857.