

The Plattsburgh Weekly Herald

KNOTTS BROS., Publishers & Proprietors.

CHEWING TOBACCO.

A Bad American Habit Fast Becoming Obsolete.

From the New York Commercial Advertiser. When Charles Dickens was first in America there was nothing that seemed to him so worthy of ridicule as the way Americans used tobacco. He never got tired of ringing the changes upon this theme. One who had never been in England and knew nothing of English habits would have supposed that Americans were the only people in the world who chewed tobacco. Times change and national habits change with them. We are no longer a nation of tobacco chewers. That manner of using the weed is gradually passing away. The habit will be as rare in a few years as snuff taking is now.

Common observation shows this. Within the memory of very young men it used to be necessary to decorate every public place that was desired to be kept clean with admonitions to the tobacco chewer not to trespass on the floor. There used to be a splendid opportunity in those admonitions for caustic references to the bad habits of some people. "Gentlemen will, and others must, use the spittoons," with the "must" in all the emphasis of six-line letters, was a common legend. "If your early training has not taught you that it is bad manners to spit on the floor, an officer of the boat will show you the use of the spittoon." was the elaborate text that once ornamented the gorgeous cabin of a Mississippi river steambot. Brief plaintive appeals of the same general tenor were as frequent to be seen as the warnings about smoking on the elevated platforms now.

But in spite of warnings and exhortation the bad practice went on. Perhaps the corridors of the national Capitol at Washington were about as bad in that respect as any place in the country. Citizens who were showing off the wonders of the place to foreign guests used to hurry through that portion of their excursion as fast as they could. Their haste, however, did not enable them to escape from many a shamefaced apology for a practise that, to foreign eyes, was absolutely disgusting. For, although we were not the only nation in the world, by any means, which chewed tobacco we were only ones that permitted evidences of the habit to be seen in every public place.

We are getting over that now, however. Every tobaccoist recognizes the great change that is taking place in what may be called in a rather new sense, the public taste. Any voracious tobaccoist, whose trade is not chiefly among sailors and truckmen, will tell you he does not sell one half as much chewing tobacco as he did ten years ago, and not one third as much as he did twenty years ago. Very few are unable to guess why it is; but he can't deny the fact. I asked one about it the other day. He said:

"The change is due to a variety of causes. It is a great deal more apparent here in the East than in the South and West, but it is going on all over the country. One thing is undoubtedly the strength of public opinion that it is an uncleanly habit. It is hard for a man who chews to keep evidences of it from his clothes. That fact makes it inevitable that the habit should go down before the increasing attention to dress, that is a feature of modern life. Then a great many refined and well-intentioned persons have waged war against it for years. It was inevitable that some effect should follow their crusade.

"But the principal causes are right here. There is a great deal more dyspepsia and stomach trouble in the country now than there used to be. And no person can chew tobacco who has a weak stomach. James Parton says in his famous pamphlet against rum and tobacco, that 'stomach will hold out longer than the lungs.'

"Then the cigarette has done a great deal to put a end to the habit of chewing tobacco. The growth of the cigarette practice in this country is, as they say of western towns, has doubled many times over in the last fifteen years. About seven out of every ten boys who are growing up now smoked a cigarette a few years ago, but he not only has no taste for tobacco in any other form, but he has no constitution left to stand chewing tobacco. It is curious how boys take to cigarettes. I believe it is very largely on account of the fuss that is made about them. It has got to be the common opinion that cigarette smoking is the most injurious practice known. That is just why boys adopt it. It makes them an object of awful interest to other boys and to girls. It is soothing to a boy's foolish pride to know that people have marked him out as one who is making with frightful fortuity to early destruction. Whether that is the cause of it or not, it is perfectly certain that more and more cigarettes are used every year and less and less chewing tobacco.

In the old days 'fo fo the wah,' when the south of the fashion for the whole country, nearly every statesman used to chew. The smokers in congress are rare now. With the exception of Speaker Carlisle and bluff old Philanus Sawyer, there is scarcely a well known man on either side of the house who is confirmed in the habit. When Belford, the gentleman from Florida who rejoiced in the alliterative title of the 'Red-headed Rooster of the Rockies,' and who could make more noise than any other three men in Washington, was in congress, he used to chew incessantly. It is said that he did not cease the practice even when he died. An astonishing report comes from Florida that even Mr. Belford has been caught by the wave of reformation, and has abjured the weed. In a recent letter to a friend in New York, he writes that for six weeks he has sojourned himself with arrow-root and gum. People who have for years preached a crusade against the tobacco habit may reflect upon this case and take heart.

The sufficiency which an inveterate tobacco chewer endures when he first deprives himself of his accustomed weed are popularly supposed to be something dreadful. Some of the smokers say they are nothing that a moderate use of a clear head cannot easily stand. They all agree, however, that to have something in the mouth to get the jumping veins, deprived of their usual tranquilizer, is desirable and pleasant. To supply this want somebody invented a plug of stuff to be chewed looking much like tobacco, and warranted to supply its place in every particular without injurious effects. When it appeared the enemies of the chewing practice declared that there was now no reason why the most confirmed chewer in the world should not stop, since he had here the long looked-for substitute. This seemed reasonable, and a good many persons acted upon the suggestion, until it was found by an inquiring chemist one day that the remedy is worse than the disease. The substitute for chewing tobacco consisted of some harmless looking vegetable matter, and then dressed with a tincture of opium.

A Revolution in Navigation.

Appropos of the agitation of the revival of water transit via the Mississippi, Missouri and other great rivers of the continent, Mr. Arthur H. Lucas has just secured a patent for a new and novel improvement in steam vessels, by which it is claimed that one steamer is suitable for either high sea or inland navigation can be converted into the other. The chief feature of the invention consists of an adjustable keel and a double hull, which, while giving the vessel a light draught for inland waters, furnishes also a deep draught suitable for the high seas.

A joint stock company with a capital of \$5,000,000 has been organized in St. Louis whose members are chiefly citizens of this country and Mexico, and arrangements for the construction of the vessels has been made. It is announced that the first vessel will be constructed upon the Atlantic coast sail to Europe on her first trip, loaded with cotton and sugar, and will thereupon sail up the Mississippi to St. Louis, leave a portion of the goods at that port and thence sail up the Missouri river as far as Omaha where she will deliver foreign merchandise in bulk. It is claimed that the vessel will be able to make the first trip next spring, and it is confidently predicted that it will inaugurate a revolution in the traffic not only of this country but of the entire world. At the present time statistics show the commercial traffic of the North American continent to be \$920,000,000 of which the United States represents but 20 per cent, or \$205,000,000 and the Mississippi and Missouri valleys only about \$7,000,000, although they produce nearly three-fifths of the products of the country. This disparity is solely attributed to the almost total neglect of the people and the government to maritime interests and the improvement of the navigable inland waters, which permits railroads to extend so largely for transportation as to render competition with the outside world impossible.—Omaha World.

The International Prison Congress

Year after year the international prison congress meets, and the result is the bringing together of an unequalled collection of experimental facts, carefully collated statistics and thoroughly studied conclusions. The good already effected through the various prison reform associations represented at these meetings is enough to prove the value of the work, and though it is found by experience that custom and conservatism are the most formidable barriers in the way of improve, the changes for the better are important enough to justify hope for the future. At the meeting at the prison congress at Toronto yesterday an interesting address was delivered by ex-President R. E. Hayes. In it he gave a succinct account of the various reforms sought by the congress, and pointed out some of the difficulties in the way. So far as this and, indeed, most other countries are concerned, the lack of system

in the county jails has proved most embarrassing to the reformers. It may, indeed, be said that the penal question and the educational question are affected by kindred obstacles. In all endeavors to improve our higher education, and to raise the standard of our colleges to the university grade, we are hindered by the prevailing inferiority of the primary school courses. In like manner all attempts to make the penitentiaries places of reform and probation are interfered with by the defective methods which make the county jails training schools for criminals.

In a well ordered penal system no places of confinement would be left out of the plan. Discipline and regulation would begin at the county jail and proceed through all intermediate stages to the state prison. So only is it possible fairly to test the doctrines of penologists. So only is it possible to make penal confinement reformatory. Under the existing loose and unsystematic arrangements most county jails remain little better than the common prisons of half a century ago. Some of them, and these too often in the largest cities, are simply boarding-houses for criminals, where all but those charged with capital offences can associate freely together, exchange confidences and enlarge their criminal knowledge. In many cases there is not even care taken to separate the young law-breakers from the mature, and in far too many so-called Houses of Correction an unintelligent severe discipline contrasts with a freedom of associations productive of the most depraving effects. One consequence of this want of system and harmony is that by the time a criminal reaches the penitentiary he is generally so hardened and habituated to the criminal life as to be very difficult of treatment. In not a few cases he is, in fact, irremediable, and thus the most puzzling problem encountered by reformers.

But the state of the county jails is not the only hindrance to reform. A more serious one (because it cannot be cured by legislation) is the position held by society toward the discharged convict. This position is one of inveterate distrust and antipathy, and despite all argument and appeal it does not appear to undergo any modification. Of course such an attitude neutralizes the efforts of reformers, for it is of little use to fit criminals for honest living, to give them a handicraft, to incline them to uprightiness, if the moment they are free they are made to realize that society has not hardened and never will pardon them; that wherever they go they must drag their disgrace and forever be liable to ruinous exposure; that men of their own class will be the first to demand their discharge; and that those who most condemn their past faults will so act as to drive them back to criminal ways. This is the most terrible hindrance to reform, and it is so formidable and so intractable that sometimes it compels a doubt as to the usefulness of all the philanthropic labor so nobly bestowed upon prison reform. Perhaps an active propaganda is needed to stir up public thought, to make the people as a whole realize and reflect upon the cruelty of the prevailing attitude toward discharged prisoners. But until some change can be wrought in the situation at this point, the work of penal reform must continue to be exceedingly laborious and disappointingly slow, even if or when a more comprehensive disciplinary method is applied to all prisons.—New York Tribune.

Two Definitions.

CHICAGO ILL., Sept. 12, 1887.—To the Editor:—Will the Daily News kindly define a mugwump and oblige.

ANSWER.—A mugwump is a republican with a conscience.—Chicago News.

Oh, no. A mugwump is an ex-republican who kicked out of the traces because his giant intellect is so far-reaching as to make him ambitious to own, traverse and spread himself over this broad universe as the gilded-god of pure politics.—Omaha Republican.

Fisherman.

It seems strange that a man should not honor his profession with his influence. Grover C. is a fisherman, but he has almost ignored the calls from his professional brethren. P. M.—You are mistaken sir. Mr. Cleveland fishes in the water only as a pastime; his profession is for another office; he has honored the call of nearly 30,000 of us fellows.

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