

occasional Robert Sherwood or Charles Brackett here relieves himself of certain keen, if facetious, observations on the current screen fare. But save in the instance of two well-known sheets, the trade and fan magazines, naturally enough, expend themselves in indiscriminate admiration

of their advertisers, or print verbatim the material sent them by the publicity men of the picture companies. And the journals of opinion, only now beginning to exhibit an interest in the vulgarest of the arts, have as yet no departments committed to screen criticism.

Ethnology

TOBACCO AMONG THE INDIANS

BY CORNELIA H. DAM

The people take the smoke both by the mouth and by the nose for pleasure when they desire to see the future in their dreams. For just as the devil is an impostor and knows the virtue of herbs, he has posted them on the power of this plant, for by the illusion of their dreams he deceives the people miserably.

—*Monardes*

THAT tobacco, unknown outside of America before the voyage of Columbus, had been widely used by the Indians from time immemorial is evidenced by the frequent discovery of pipes in very ancient graves, and by the apparent antiquity of many of the myths, beliefs and ceremonies connected with its use which prevailed throughout the continent at the time of the discovery.

For the Indian everywhere it had a sacred and highly mystical character, and in the many myths about its origin it was invariably represented to be divinely created and revealed to man, or first obtained through some miraculous adventure of a legendary hero of the tribe. The Red man's conception of its power is well illustrated in the following Winnebago myth:

After Earthmaker created all things he created man. Man was the last of the created objects. Those created before were spirits, and He put them all in charge of something. Even the smallest insects are able to foresee things four days ahead. The human beings were the least of all Earthmaker's creations. They were put in charge of nothing, and they could not even foresee one day ahead. They were the last created and they were the poorest. Then Earthmaker created a weed with a pleasant odor and all the spirits wanted it. They would each think to themselves, "I am going to be put in charge of that, for I am

one of the greatest spirits in the world." Then the Creator said, "To all of you spirits I have given something valuable. Now you all like this weed and I myself like it. Now this is the way it is going to be used." Then he took one of the leaves and mashed it up. Then, making a pipe, he smoked it, and the odor was pleasant to smell. All of the spirits longed for it. Then he gave each one of them a puff. "Now, whatever the human beings ask from Me, and for which they offer tobacco, I will not be able to refuse it. I Myself will not be in control of this weed. If they give Me a pipeful of this and make a request I will not be able to refuse it. This weed will be called tobacco. The human beings are the only ones of My creation who are poor. I did not give them anything, so therefore this will be their foremost possession and from them we will have to obtain it. If a human being gives a pipeful and makes a request We will always grant it." Thus spoke Earthmaker.¹

The Indian, psychically sensitive, ever conscious of the mysteries of the physical world in which he moved, felt the presence of unseen powers everywhere about him, in animals, the wind, the water, and in the multitudinous operations of nature which he realized himself so pitifully unable to influence or control. He imagined himself in the midst of a vast spirit world, in which "even the smallest insect could see four days ahead," and in which he alone was powerless. But under the narcotic effect of inhaling deep draughts of tobacco smoke, he felt, in the pleasant dizziness that overcame him, a sense of supernatural power, a magic means of entering that spirit world, and a feeling of gentle exaltation and well-being that even the spirits themselves must covet. He came to regard tobacco as a bridge to the spirit world, and the plant itself as a magic weed that in its death, by burning, released a spirit, the smoke, which carried his prayers to the unseen world above.

¹Radin; "The Winnebago Tribe"; 1923.

No wonder, then, that tobacco came to be his most precious possession; he used it daily in his private prayers, and no ceremony was conducted without it. Regularly he offered it to the sun, to bless him with long life and prosperity. At the end of his life, so he believed, it would be impossible, without abundant offerings of tobacco and ceremonial smoking at his funeral, for his spirit to leave the lodge and start out on the long road that all ghosts must travel before they at last reach the land where there is rest.

Before starting on a hunt, the Indian offered tobacco to the spirits of the animals he wished to kill, and it was said among the Plains Tribes that the spirits of the buffaloes warned the young ones among them against the power of the Indian's tobacco smoke, lest they be compelled, having smelled it, to go down to earth in carnal form and be killed as the Indian willed. Similarly, the Indian offered tobacco to the spirits of the animals whose aid he wished in making medicine, and among the magic medicine bundles, each under the patronage of a spirit animal, of the Sac and Fox and kindred tribes, tobacco was an invariable ingredient. If fetishes seemed sluggish in performing their magic functions they were refreshed by smoke or tobacco powder blown over them, and the magic bundles themselves were solemnly revived and stimulated by ceremonial smoking at stated intervals during the year.

No medicine-man went out to practice without his pipe and tobacco. With it he was able to summon beneficent spirits to his aid, and to purify his patient from the charms of bad ones. The Pima, I think, above all other tribes, recognize the inspirational power of tobacco smoke, for the Pima doctor begins his treatment by puffing thick clouds of smoke over the patient, in which he soon "sees" the nature of the disease. The Pima also say that they can see the position and condition of the enemy in clouds of tobacco smoke if they blow them toward the east.

As the ceremonies and taboos surrounding the innumerable magic uses of tobacco grew with time, it became increasingly important to distinguish between the properties of sacred and profane plants, and the power of the various species. Needless to say, after the coming of the white man his trade tobacco was considered worthless for ceremonial purposes, and most tribes continued to grow their own according to tribal ritual. The Yuki used wild tobacco, but their neighbors the Yurok would not, for fear that it might be from a graveyard, or from seed produced on a graveyard. The Southwestern and some California Indians valued plants or seeds in proportion to the distance they had been brought, saying that those which came from farthest away were most powerful.

Among the Crow the ceremony of growing tobacco reached its most elaborate form in the development of a Tobacco Society with a most elaborate organization and no end of rules and regulations. Visions or dreams in which spirit animals imparted secrets for successful mixing or planting the seeds gave a Crow man or woman the necessary authority for starting a chapter, and candidates for membership, after a long term of probation, were adopted in ceremonies that lasted several days. In the early days of the society only old men and women could join, but later it became the custom to pledge oneself to membership in acknowledgment of a recovery from illness, or any other benefit obtained from Above, just as white men and women pledge themselves to religious orders, so that eventually the majority of the tribe belonged to one chapter or another.

At the time of planting, the official mixers of the various chapters met to discuss the site for planting and the formulæ for mixing the seed, which had been revealed to them in visions during the year. The recipes usually included various flowers and roots, wild onions and specially prepared manure. Every member paid a fee to the mixer for his share of seed. On the day chosen for planting, a procession of

the officials and members of the society proceeded to the chosen site and planted the seed with great ceremony and elaborate ritual. Periodic inspection of the field, according to formula, and more ceremonies at the harvest, assured the maximum quantity and magic quality of the crop.

The use of tobacco among the Indians was by no means confined to ritual and ceremony, as every self-respecting Indian possessed his well-made pipe and often elegantly worked pouch, and relied upon the precious weed to refresh him after labor, and to ameliorate the pangs of hunger and thirst. According to Calvigo, the Mexican Indians always "used to compose themselves to sleep with smoke," and Montezuma smoked tobacco perfumed with liquid-amber in cigarettes which must have closely resembled the noxious "amber" cigarettes manufactured today.

But in spite of its universal use tobacco never lost its mystical and supernatural character in the Indian's mind. The Yuki believed that if a man smoked while earnestly pondering a question, and at the same time entertained malice in his heart, he would die. On one occasion they say, a famous chief had to entertain a certain man who he had reason to believe was a murderer and a liar, so the wise old chief blew a cloud of his sacred tobacco into his visitor's face, and the culprit immediately died.

The sacred character of tobacco made the act of smoking, even on ordinary occasions, a pledge of mutual confidence among the Indians, as taking salt together is among the Arabs, and the pledge of the peace pipe was seldom broken by individuals or tribes until the white man came to teach the Indian the material advantages of perfidy. This stranger profited no end from the exploitation of the Indian's most valued possession, and in a short time the cultiva-

tion and use of tobacco had spread around the world.

Spanish, French and English all claimed to have been the first to introduce it into Europe. Jean Nicot, French ambassador to the Portuguese court, sent seeds to Catherine de Medici, in acknowledgment of which the plant was named *Nicotiana*. The French called it *herbe sainte*, and the Spanish *yerba sancta*, influenced no doubt by the sacred and medicinal character ascribed to it by the Indians. No Indian, however, ever claimed more extraordinary properties for tobacco than those ascribed to it by the first Europeans who became addicted to its use, as is illustrated by this eloquent exposition of its quality by Hariot, in 1585:

They [the Indians] vse to take the fume or smoke thereof by sucking it through pipes made of claie into their stomacke and heade; from whence it purgeth superfluous fleame & other grosse humors, openeth all the pores & passages of the body: by which meanes the vse thereof not only preserueth the body from obstructions; but also if any be, so that they have not bene of too long continuance, in short time breaketh them; wherby their bodies are notably preserued in health, know not many greuous diseases wherewithall wee in England are oftentimes afflicted.

These supposed medicinal properties contributed largely to the popularity which the plant immediately attained in Europe, and physicians commonly prescribed it for almost every known complaint. By 1682, however, it had been well tried as a medicine and found wanting, and Peter Heylyn wrote that "tobacco is by few now taken as a medicine, and it is of late times grown a good fellow, and fallen from a physician to a complaint." But its value as a good fellow was by that time too widely appreciated to allow its general use to decline and men continued to succumb willingly to the complaint, agreeing with the wise old Seneca chief who said, "Good thoughts come with smoking."

I INVESTIGATE LYNCHINGS

BY WALTER WHITE

NOTHING contributes so much to the continued life of an investigator of lynchings and his tranquil possession of all his limbs as the obtuseness of the lynchers themselves. Like most boastful people who practice direct action when it involves no personal risk, they just can't help talk about their deeds to any person who manifests even the slightest interest in them.

Most lynchings take place in small towns and rural regions where the natives know practically nothing of what is going on outside their own immediate neighborhoods. Newspapers, books, magazines, theatres, visitors and other vehicles for the transmission of information and ideas are usually as strange among them as dry-point etchings. But those who live in so sterile an atmosphere usually esteem their own perspicacity in about the same degree as they are isolated from the world of ideas. They gabble on *ad infinitum*, apparently unable to keep from talking.

In any American village, North or South, East or West, there is no problem which cannot be solved in half an hour by the morons who lounge about the village store. World peace, or the lack of it, the tariff, sex, religion, the settlement of the war debts, short skirts, Prohibition, the carryings-on of the younger generation, the superior moral rectitude of country people over city dwellers (with a wistful eye on urban sins)—all these controversial subjects are disposed of quickly and finally by the bucolic wise men. When to their isolation is added an emotional fixation such as the rural South has on the Negro, one can sense the atmosphere from which

spring the Heflins, the Ku Kluxers, the two-gun Bible-beaters, the lynchers and the anti-evolutionists. And one can see why no great amount of cleverness or courage is needed to acquire information in such a forlorn place about the latest lynching.

Professor Earle Fiske Young of the University of Southern California recently analyzed the lynching returns from fourteen Southern States for thirty years. He found that in counties of less than 10,000 people there was a lynching rate of 3.2 per 100,000 of population; that in those of from 10,000 to 20,000 the rate dropped to 2.4; that in those of from 20,000 to 30,000, it was 2.1 per cent; that in those of from 30,000 to 40,000, it was 1.7, and that thereafter it kept on going down until in counties with from 300,000 to 800,000 population it was only 0.05.

Of the forty-one lynchings and eight race riots I have investigated for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People during the past ten years all of the lynchings and seven of the riots occurred in rural or semi-rural communities. The towns ranged in population from around one hundred to ten thousand or so. The lynchings were not difficult to inquire into because of the fact already noted that those who perpetrated them were in nearly every instance simple-minded and easily fooled individuals. On but three occasions were suspicions aroused by my too definite questions or by informers who had seen me in other places. These three times I found it rather desirable to disappear slightly in advance of reception committees imbued with the desire to make an