

ESSAYS,  
L I T E R A R Y, M O R A L  
AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL.

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"He (Gen. Hugh Mercer) expired in the arms of  
Major Lewis on the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1778 in the 50<sup>th</sup>  
year of his age... Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was  
celebrated as a physician was with him when he  
died." Irving Account of the Battle of Princeton

## PREFACE.

**MOST** of the following Essays were published in the Museum, and Columbian Magazine, in this City, soon after the end of the revolutionary war in the United States. A few of them made their first appearance in pamphlets. They are now published in a single volume, at the request of several friends, and with a view of promoting the ends at first contemplated by them. Two of the Essays, viz: that upon the use of Tobacco, and the account of remarkable circumstances in the constitution and life of Ann Woods, are now submitted for the first time to the eye of the public. The author has omitted in this collection two pamphlets which he published in the year 1772, upon

## PREFACE.

the slavery of the Negroes, because he conceived the object of them had been in part accomplished, and because the Citizens of the United States have since that time been furnished from Great-Britain and other countries, with numerous tracts upon that subject, more calculated to complete the effect intended by the author, than his early publications.

BENJAMIN RUSH.

*Philadelphia, Jan. 9, 1798.*

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OBSERVATIONS UPON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HABITUAL  
USE OF TOBACCO UPON HEALTH, MORALS, AND PROPERTY.

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WERE it possible for a being who had resided upon our globe, to visit the inhabitants of a planet, where reason governed, and to tell them that a vile weed was in general use among the inhabitants of the globe it had left, which afforded no nourishment—that this weed was cultivated with immense care—that it was an important article of commerce—that the want of it produced real misery—that its taste was extremely nauseous, that it was unfriendly to health and morals, and that its use was attended with a considerable loss of time and property, the account would be thought incredible, and the author of it would probably be excluded from society, for relating a story of so improbable a nature. In no one view, is it possible to contemplate the creature man in a more absurd and ridiculous light, than in his attachment to TOBACCO.

This weed is of a stimulating nature whether it be used in smoking, chewing or in snuff. Like opium and spiritous liquors, it is sought for in all those cases where the body is debilitated *indirectly* by intemperance in eating, or by excessive application to study, or business, or *directly* by sedative passions of the mind, particularly by grief and fear. Persons after losing relations or friends by death, often resort to it. One of the greatest snuffers I ever knew, used it for the first time, in order to console her under a presentiment she entertained, that she should die in childbed. Fear creates a desire for Tobacco. Hence it is used in a greater quantity by sol-

diers and sailors than by other classes of people. It is used most profusely by soldiers when they act as picket guards, or centinels, and by sailors in stormy weather. Persons labouring under that state of madness which is accompanied with a sense of misery, are much devoted to it, hence the tenants of mad-houses often accost their attendants and visitors, with petitions for TOBACCO.

The progress of habit in the use of Tobacco is exactly the same as in the use of spiritous liquors. The slaves of it begin, by using it only after dinner—then during the whole afternoon and evening, afterwards before dinner, then before breakfast, and finally during the whole night. I knew a lady who had passed through all these stages, who used to wake regularly two or three times every night to compose her system with fresh doses of snuff. Again—the progress in the decay of the sensibility of the nose to the stimulus of snuff is analogous to the decay of the sensibility of the stomach, to the stimulus of spiritous liquors. It feels for a while the action of Rappee ; next it requires Scotch snuff, afterwards Irish-black-guard—and finally it is affected only by a composition of Tobacco and ground glass. This mixture is to the nose, what Cayenne pepper and Jamaica spirits are to the stomachs of habitual dram drinkers.

The appetite for Tobacco is wholly artificial. No person was ever born with a relish for it. Even in those persons who are much attached to it, nature frequently recovers her disrelish to it. It ceases to be agreeable in every feble indisposition. This is so invariably true, that a disrelish to it is often a sign of an approaching, and a return of the appetite for it, a sign of a departing fever.

In considering the pernicious effects of Tobacco, I shall begin agreeably to the order I have laid down, by taking notice of its influence upon health ; and here I shall mention its effects not only upon the body, but upon the mind.

1. It impairs the appetite. Where it does not produce this effect,

2. It prevents the early and complete digestion of the food, and thereby induces distressing, and incurable diseases not only of the stomach, but of the whole body. This effect of Tobacco is the result of the waste of the saliva in chewing, and smoking, or of the Tobacco insinuating itself into the stomach, when used in chewing, or snuffing.—I once lost a young man of 17 years of age, of a pulmonary consumption, whose disorder was brought on by the intemperate use of segars.

3. It produces many of those diseases which are supposed to be seated in the nerves. The late Sir John Pringle was subject in the evening of his life to tremors in his hands. In his last visit to France, a few years before he died, in company with Dr. Franklin, he was requested by the Doctor to observe, that the same disorder was very common among those people of fashion who were great snuffers. Sir John was led by this remark to suspect that his tremors were occasioned by snuff which he took in large quantities. He immediately left off taking it, and soon afterwards recovered the perfect use of his hands. I have seen head-ache, vertigo, and epilepsy produced by the use of Tobacco. A Physician in Connecticut has remarked that it has in several instances produced palsy and apoplexy ; and Dr. Tissot ascribes sudden death in one instance, to the excessive use of it in smoking.

4. A citizen of Philadelphia lost all his teeth by drawing the hot smoke of Tobacco into his mouth by means of a short pipe, and I have been informed of a cancer on the lip, which terminated fatally from the same cause, in a farmer in Northumberland county in this state. The acrid nature of the matter which is mixed with the smoke of the Tobacco may easily be discovered by the taste or smell of a pipe stem that has been in use for two or three weeks.

5. Tobacco when used in the form of snuff seldom fails of impairing the voice by obstructing the nose. It moreover imparts to the complexion a disagreeable dusky colour.

I have thus briefly enumerated the morbid effects of Tobacco upon the human body. It remains under this head to mention, that the want of it is a source of uneasiness *more* distressing than many bodily disorders. This uneasiness in persons who have long been accustomed to the use of Tobacco has in some instances produced an agitation of mind that has bordered upon distraction. Colonel Burr informed me that the greatest complaints, dissatisfaction and suffering that he heard the soldiers who accompanied General Arnold in his march from Boston to Quebec through the wilderness, in the year 1775, were from the want of Tobacco. This was the more remarkable, as they were so destitute of provisions as to be obliged to kill, and eat their dogs. The Persians, we are told by travellers, expatriate themselves, when they are forbidden the use of Tobacco, in order to enjoy it in a foreign country. These facts will not surprise those persons who have been accustomed to view our appetites when perverted to such things as artificial and disagreeable, to be much *more* ungovernable than the appetite for things that are originally natural and agreeable.

But the use of Tobacco has been known to produce a more serious effect upon the mind than the distress that has been mentioned. Sir John Pringle's memory was impaired by snuff. This was proved by his recovering the perfect exercise of it after he left off taking snuff agreeably to the advice of his friend Dr. Franklin. Dr. Masillac informed me that his father lost his memory at forty years of age by the excessive use of snuff. He took for several years two ounces of it every day.

In answer to these observations upon the morbid effects of Tobacco it has been said,

1. That it possesses many medical virtues. I grant it, and the facts which establish its utility in medicine furnish us with additional arguments against the *habitual* use of it. How feeble would be the effects of opium and bark upon the body, if they constituted a part of the condiments of our daily food ;—While I admit the efficacy of tobacco as a medicine, I cannot help adding, that some of the diseases, or symptoms of diseases which it relieves, are evidently induced by the habit of using it. Thus a dram of ardent spirits suspends, for a while, a vomiting and tremors of the hands, but who does not know that those complaints, are the effects of the intemperate and habitual use of spiritous liquors?

2. The advocates for Tobacco, tell us that smoking and snuff relieve that uneasiness which succeeds a plentiful meal. I admit that the stimulators of the Tobacco restores the system from the indirect weakness which is induced by intemperance in eating, but the relief which is thus obtained, illy compensates for the waste of the saliva in smoking, at a time

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when it is most wanted, or for the mixtre of a portion of the tobacco with the aliment in the stomach by means of snuffing. But why should we cure one evil by producing another? Would it not be much better to obviate the necessity of using Tobacco by always eating a moderate meal? The recollection of the remedy probably disposes to that intemperance in eating which produces the uneasiness that has been mentioned.

3. We are sometimes told that Tobacco is a preservative from contagious diseases. But many facts contradict this assertion. Mr. Howard informs us that it had no efficacy in checking the contagion of the plague, and repeated experience in Philadelphia has proved, that it is equally ineffectual in preserving those who use it, from the Influenza and Yellow Fever.

4. It has been further said that chewing and smoking Tobacco assist the intellectual operations. So do wine, and distilled spirits, but shall we upon that account, have recourse to those liquors when we wish to stimulate our thinking faculties? Tea and Coffee are to be preferred, when we wish to stimulate the mind. Mr. Pope recommends a trotting horse for the same purpose. Rousseau excited his invention by walking backwards and forwards in his room. I suspect that Tobacco is often used, rather to supply the *want* of ideas than to *collect*, or excite them. The absence of sensation, whether of external impressions upon the body, or of the reaction of the mind in thought, is always accompanied with misery. The Indians afford a striking proof of this remark—hence they spend whole days and even weeks in smoking, in order to relieve themselves from the anguish which attends the inactivity and vacuum of their minds.

We proceed next to mention the influence of the habitual use of Tobacco upon morals.

1. One of the usual effects of smoaking and chewing is thirst. This thirst cannot be allayed by water, for no sedative or even insipid liquor will be relished after the mouth and throat have been exposed to the stimulus of the smoke, or juice of Tobacco. A desire of course is excited for strong drinks, and these when taken between meals soon lead to intemperance and drunkenness. One of the greatest sots I ever knew, acquired a love for ardent spirits by swallowing cuds of Tobacco, which he did, to escape detection in the use of it, for he had contracted the habit of chewing, contrary to the advice and commands of his father. He died of a Dropsy under my care in the year 1780.

2. The use of Tobacco, more especially in smoking, disposes to idleness, and idleness has been considered as the root of all evil. "An idle man's brain, (says the celebrated and original Mr. Banyan) is the Devil's work shop."

3. The use of Tobacco is necessarily connected with the neglect of cleanliness. The influence of this neglect upon morals has been happily pointed out in an extract from captain Cook's journal, which is published by Sir John Pringle in one of his Orations before the Royal Society of London.

4. Tobacco, more especially when used in smoking, is generally *offensive* to those people who do not use it. To smoke in company under such circumstances, is a breach of good manners; now, manners have an influence upon morals. They may be considered as the out post of virtue. A habit of offending the senses of friends or strangers, by the use of

Tobacco, cannot therefore be indulged with innocence. It produces a want of respect for our fellow creatures, and this always disposes to unkind and unjust behaviour towards them. Who ever knew a rude man compleatly, or uniformly moral?

The methodists forbad the use of Tobacco in the infancy of their society. The prohibition discovered a high and just sense of the self-denial, decency, and universal civility which are required by the gospel. What reception may we suppose would the apostles have met with, had they carried into the cities and houses to which they were sent, snuff-boxes, pipes, segars, and bundles of cut, or rolls of hog, or pigtail Tobacco? Such a costly and offensive apparatus for gratifying their appetites, would have furnished solid objections to their persons and doctrines, and would have been a just cause for the clamours and contempt which were excited against them. It is agreeable to observe that a regard to good manners, upon this subject, has at last awakened in some parts of the world. In England smoking is not permitted in taverns and coffee-houses until after 10 o'clock at night, and in France snuffing is becoming unfashionable and vulgar. How much is it to be lamented that while the use of Tobacco is declining in two of the most enlightned countries in Europe, it is becoming more general in America. Who can see groups of boys of six or eight years old in our streets smoking segars, without anticipating such a depreciation of our posterity in health and character, as can scarcely be contemplated at this distance of time without pain and horror!

It remains now that I briefly point out the influence of the use of tobacco upon time and property. Snuffing makes a great inroad upon time. A man who takes a pinch of snuff every twenty minutes, (which most habitual snuffers do) and snuffs

fifteen hours in four and twenty, (allowing him to consume not quite half a minute every time he uses his box,) will waste about five whole days of every year of his life in this useless, and unwholesome practice. But when we add to the profitable use to which this time might have been applied, the expences of Tobacco, pipes, snuff and spitting boxes—and of the injuries which are done to the cloathing, during a whole life, the aggregate sum would probably amount to several hundred dollars. To a labouring man this would be a decent portion for a son or daughter, while the same sum, saved by a man in affluent circumstances, would have enabled him by a contribution to a public charity to have lessened a large portion of the ignorance, or misery of mankind.

In reviewing the account that has been given of the disagreeable and mischievous effects of Tobacco, we are led to enquire, what are its uses upon our globe,—for we are assured that nothing, exists in vain. Poison is a relative term, and the most noxious plants have been discovered to afford sustenance to certain animals. But what animal besides man, will take Tobacco into its mouth? Horses, Cows, Sheep, Cats, Dogs, and even Hogs refuse to taste it. Flies, Musquetoes, and the Moth are chased from our cloaths by the smell of it. But let us not arraign the wisdom and economy of nature in the production of this plant. Modern Travellers have at last discovered that it constitutes the food of a solitary and filthy wild beast, well known in the deserts of Africa, by the name of the **ROCK GOAT**.

I shall conclude these observations by relating an Anecdote of the late Dr. Franklin. A few months before his death, he declared to one of his friends that he had never used Tobacco in any way in the course of his long life, and that he was dis-

posed to believe there was not much advantage to be derived from it, for that he had never met with a man who used it, who advised him to follow his example.

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AN ACCOUNT OF THE SUGAR MAPLE-TREE OF THE UNITED STATES: IN A LETTER TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, ESQ. THEN SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES, AND ONE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

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DEAR SIR,

IN obedience to your request, I have sat down to communicate to our society, through the medium of a letter to you, a short account of the *Sugar Maple-Tree* of the United States, together with such facts and remarks as I have been able to collect, upon the methods of obtaining sugar from it, and upon the advantages both public and private, of this Sugar.

The *Acer Sacharinum* of Linnæus, or the Sugar Maple-tree, grows in great quantities in the western counties of all the Middle States of the American Union. Those which grow in New-York and Pennsylvania yield the sugar in a greater quantity than those which grow on the waters of the Ohio.—