



A TOBACCO FACTORY.

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INCE Fairholt told the story of the tobacco plant and the process of its manufacture, the cigarette has taken its place as a leading feature in the English tobacco factory. The famous cockney confines his graphic chapter on the treatment of the golden leaf in England to its preparation for pipes and cigars, for chewing and for snuff. They did not make cigarettes in the factory where he was brought up in the shadow of St. Paul's. He missed therefore a picturesque phase of English tobacco manufacture of the present day, and with it certain attractive associations which belong to the light and airy "smoke" of the Continent and the East. He knew the *puros* and the *papelotos* of the Spaniards, and quotes the national proverb—"A paper cigarette, a glass of fresh water, and the kiss of a pretty girl will sustain a man for a day without eating;" but "Carmen," the heroine of the French librettist, and "Vjera," the heroine of the English novelist, are of these latter days, and they give a touch of romance to the atmosphere of the modern tobacco factory.

While the great Liverpool house of Cope has been growing up from small things to great, it has absorbed into its work all that is new in the taste and fashion of smoking; and it will have some remarkable chapters to add to Fairholt's famous book, upon a new edition of which its editors are now engaged. Not the least notable of these should be an account of the introduction of the cigarette into England. The psychologist would of course treat the subject in regard to its physical and moral influence on the race. He would see in it evidence of retrogression or progress, according as he was a smoker or the opposite, a pessimist who sees the world spinning down the grooves of change to everlasting perdition, or an optimist who can view all creation with calm content through the ethereal smoke of a mild cigar. To either or both of these gentlemen I venture to present a scene for reflection, an incident in the daily history of this Lancashire tobacco factory. A large well-lighted hall; long rows of desks. At the desks long rows of girls. In a corner near the door a small room of inspection. It is like a girls' college. The room of observation contains the desks of the professors. The students leave their seats and go to the sliding windows with their tasks. Their papers are duly registered, and fresh work handed out. There is a pleasant murmur of girlish voices, now and then a snatch of song or chorus, and once in a way something like a reminiscence of the American *siffleuse* who whistled her way through Europe with far more success than Goldsmith with his flute. In response to a remark which I make about the order of the place, the cheerful order, the order that does not chafe under restraint, my guide, philosopher and friend, who is at my elbow as I wander at will from room to room, remarks, "We find what strikes you as worthy of note quite easy to maintain, without either set rules or regulations." It occurs to me now to mention that the works are peculiarly free from Notices that you must do this or you may not do that; *Affiches* announcing fines for this and fines

for the other. "*The Lancet* in one of its semi-learned articles some time ago," says my friend, "declared 'That the employment of women clerks in Post and Telegraph Offices has conclusively demonstrated that it is impossible that any establishment in which females are brought together except under a discipline approximating to that of a prison in its severity can fail to be the scene of excitement, chatter and what is called chaff.' That is quite contrary to our experience;" and any one with half an eye can see this. "A little common sense, some consideration for the girls' regular work under conditions made as comfortable as is consistent with the duty of employer and employed," says my guide, "and we find that the unwritten law is strong enough to maintain a proper and healthy discipline—and that you know cannot always be said even for the greatest and most honourable assemblage of English gentlemen—the House of Commons." I discovered later in the day that the hands, in this typical factory of the North, are cared for in many other ways than what belongs to the mere discipline of the work-rooms. The girls who come to work from a distance are provided with



SPINNING TOBACCO.

fring and cooking free of charge; they bring their food; it is cooked and properly served in a large room at the appointed hours for meal-times; and further, ill-health and sickness are met by a Benevolent Fund which ensures, through a liberal administration, help in case of need, the arrangements including an endowed bed at the hospital, change of air by the sea, and in cases of pulmonary complaint, orders for the Devonshire hospital at Buxton. Cope's has many attractions for steady work-people. When the firm changed the concern into a Limited Liability Company it divided the shares among its employes and customers, and for many it is therefore a co-operative establishment, and of a very profitable kind. The original founders of the works, two brothers, are dead, but as it is with royalty so with the tobacco king: he never dies. "The king is dead—long live the king." Harking back to *A Cigarette-Maker's Romance*, one of the Cope brothers had even more than the physique of the Cossack who would pick up a leaf and cram it with the tobacco he was chopping and smoke it with gusto. This Liverpool manufacturer, who was one of the finest possible judges of tobacco, would take the fresh leaves of a new cargo, roll them up and smoke his extempore cigar without turning a hair, though such a "taster" would be calculated to stagger the strongest smoker. There are many old hands in the factory who carry on the fine traditions of the house in the matter of judging, tasting and blending of tobaccos; and the chief of the snuff department, hale, hearty and strong has literally lived in the dust of his delicate work for thirty years.

It might, you see, at first blush have been a College for Girls, this great hall in the factory, but it is only the cigarette room—the room of the most expert workers it is true—the upper school, if we may so describe it, seeing that there are other rooms in which beginners are taught their business. The atmosphere is fragrant with the weed that "cheers the tar's labours or the Turkman's rest." It is a mixed perfume from Virginia, Persia, Manilla and "far Kathay." In most factories the noise of machinery is incessant. The rooms are full of flying wheels and snake-like bands that

perform endless gyrations all around you. Here in this great hall of the cigarette-makers, the sound of machinery is far away. It is more like the hum of a city, or the murmur of the sea. In that professorial-looking apartment in a corner of the room there are ladies engaged in weighing out certain quantities of tobacco, and receiving the weed back in due course made up into cigarettes. The tobacco is given out in numbered boxes; it is returned in the same vehicles transformed into cigarettes; it has been first debited to the maker, to whom the cigarettes are now duly credited; and so at the end of the week the balance is struck and it averages upwards of fifteen shillings per week each for the two hundred girls you see at their desks, not studying Euclid, but making cigarettes. I call the table a desk. It has sides and compartments such as desks have; and it is generally made for four, two on one side, two on the other. It is here that the box of tobacco is turned into the box of cigarettes which you see weighed and booked in the office that is part of the cigarette-makers' room. There is no machinery here, except the finest of human machinery, the deft and supple fingers, and the quick intelligence of the operator. She takes a pinch of tobacco, wraps it in her dainty bit of rice paper, and with a stick of starch-paste, imprisons the yellow weed, and by her side gradually grows a pile of cigarettes, each the same size, each the same weight to a mere sprig. As the tale goes on she chats quietly to her neighbour or hums a tune, or sings a snatch of song which others take up for a moment; and then all is silent again, except the murmur of voices and that distant hum of the vast machinery that is all about them, above and below.



PACKING CIGARETTES.

I have likened it to the murmur of the ocean, which it might well be seeing how near to the works is the busy Mersey river. There is a certain sombreness in the dresses of the girls which might easily be alleviated. Nearly all Lancashire operative women wear a shawl, and every Lancashire girl carries it with grace. These cigarette-makers have shawls; they work in them mostly, flinging the two ends away from their bosoms and over their shoulders so as to give their arms perfect freedom. If the shawls were not generally of a dark hue, the characteristic garment might give an artistic tone of colour to the scene. As it is, however, the living picture is striking enough. It does not perhaps recall the Carmen factory, nor does it realize the famous establishment of Christian Fischelowitz from South Russia in *A Cigarette-Maker's Romance*; but the material for such scenes and romances is no doubt all there. Examine each desk or table as you pass, and you will find ample notes for fanciful speculation. Glance first at the desk, and you will tell the character of the girl before you look at her. A slovenly desk, nothing there but the tobacco, the starch-stick and the tale of work, and you will find in the worker a dull face, and an uninteresting personality. Most of the tables however show efforts at decoration, many of them are furnished with bits of mirrors—not the hand-glass that Fildes gave to the

heroine of Reade's *Wandering Heir*, not the kind of mirror that Hetty Sorrel saw her fair face in ;—but strips of larger mirrors, bits of looking-glass, and once in a way a genuine complete article. Here and there on the dividing shelves of the compartments you will find pictures from ornamental bonbon-boxes, the lids of cigarette cases, or cuttings from illustrated magazines. Now it is a ship at sea, then a love-scene ; now it is the portrait of a beauty ; once in a way a bit of florid landscape ; and be sure that the desk or table most tastefully arranged will have for its mistress if not a pretty girl an interesting one, with bright eyes, clean, well-cut gown, and hair done up in the latest style of the *coiffeur's* art.

This is a typical room in the great tobacco factory, with, as I have said, the vast, complicated machinery of the entire place going on above, below, and on all sides. It is not my purpose to detain the reader with a mere detailed description of tobacco-



OPENING A TOBACCO HOGSHEAD.

making or a technical account of the latest mechanism of the trade ; but rather to give the *raison d'être* for the charming drawings which adorn these pages. Fairholt has told us how tobacco is grown ; how the planter's stock is received in England ; how the hogsheads are unpacked ; how at the manufacturers it goes through the several processes of stripping, sorting, cutting, drying, curing, and working up into its several forms of smoking preparations. There are few changes in all this to-day, except such as belong to the extra care in handling and the more rapid production that has been brought about by labour-saving machinery. The author of *Tobacco : its History and Associations*, had no experience of the cigarette-maker as you see her here, and several of the pictures that illustrate these pages are incidental to the newer order of things. One is struck every now and then in all parts of the factory with the picturesque side of the work, and the artistic suggestiveness of the workers. There is hardly a room that does not offer to the artist a good subject for brush or pencil. The introduction of the cigarette into the English manufacture of tobacco has not only given us a new industry but it has stimulated a new development of the graphic arts. The traditions of the cigarette brought to us by poet and romancer from Cuba and Seville, from Turkey and Persia, have lifted even the public show-card of the various brands upon a higher platform than that of mere tobacco. The lithographic work—the picture boards, the decorations of the cigarette boxes—occupy many skilled artists and workpeople. What the firm

calls its "Stone Library" is an apartment packed with lithographic stones that number several hundreds, many of which are in constant use in their own printing offices, the machines of which find their motive power in common with the tobacco-cutter and the packer.

If you are interested in the mechanical aids which the tobacco manufacturer has brought to bear upon his work of supplying the enormous demand for the prepared leaf, let us dive from the higher school of the cigarette-girl graduates down into the basement where the tobacco is brought in from the bonded store at the docks and after due sorting, stripping, and other preparations has come to the cutter. You have probably seen the primitive knife of the tobacco cutter in a small way of business. Marion Crawford's good-natured giant Schmidt the Cossack worked with a knife and cutting block, and laboured as the Count did in the same room with Vjera and the other girls;



MAKING CAVENDISH.

but they manage affairs differently at this factory, where no interesting melancholy nobleman in distress could be earning his living by making cigarettes in the hall of the girl graduates. All the same, I dare say a Vjera might be found here if the Count was there and willing. Schmidt, you know, sweated at that knife, and took his rests almost panting, but still with a roughly made cigarette for thought and reflection during his ten minutes of meditation. His was the one knife in the little room at the back of Fischelowitz' shop. Here the cutting-room has I don't know how many knives at work, driven by more persistent giants than the Cossack in the story. They are connected with that enormous belt that comes from the adjacent engine-house, and the guillotine-knife rises and falls with dreadful regularity, fed by watchful servitors with the well-pressed leaves. It does not simply cut, it literally shaves the yellow mass giving as the result a sort of packed network of tobacco that is gathered into handy receptacles for the cigarette-maker and the other departments where the various classes of tobaccos are put up in packets, such as "Bird's Eye," "Golden Cloud," and "Smoking Mixture." And here the vast machine thunders and roars; pants and gives token of the stress of labour; and close by is a monster of tremendous and patient power. This is the great hydraulic pump which works the presses that compress the weed chiefly for chewing tobacco, or the Cavendish that sailors and soldiers and hardy working men like to cut off in chumps or detach from twisted rolls which they smoke with the zest of strong palates.

While we are here in presence of great piles of twist tobacco, and round discs of black compounds that look like tarry quoits, or new designs for the shuffle-boards that are familiar to ocean voyagers, let us follow our noses through the sweet perfumes of the place to the sample room. This is on the ground floor. It will remind you of the warehouse of a herbalist in a large way of business. Well, the Cope business is somewhat in that direction. The room is packed with examples of one of the most profitable of plants. When the great ships come into Liverpool with their fragrant freights, the tobacco is placed in a bonded warehouse by Her Majesty's Customs. The officers in charge sample the tobacco. The samples are then given to the



SIFTING SNUFF.

merchant or broker who in turn hands them to the buyer. They are as various in colour as in smell. The most attractive to the eye and to the olfactory nerves are the light-coloured leaves, chiefly from Virginia. Every day a certain number of these samples are selected for release from the bonded store to fill the great machines that incessantly devour the stock on every floor of the factory; and each working day Copes pay the revenue officers for the release of such tobacco from twelve to fifteen hundred pounds sterling. Rather a large herbalist's place the specimen room of this Lancashire factory!

The departments of the establishment that half fills one side of Lord Nelson Street and dominates the Lime Street railway station are very numerous, the entire business of tobacco making, packing and delivering being carried on under one roof. They are

their own carpenters, printers and engravers. Apart from their house of business in London, and their storage at the docks, which give employment to a considerable number of hands, they regularly employ at the factory about 1500 persons, a large majority being girls. They have minimized labour in every possible way, supplemented living fingers with steel ones, human machines with invented imitations. It is an interesting study, for example, the machine that fills and folds the packets of tobacco now so familiar in the shops. Like many another combination for superseding labour it has grown out of single to complex operations, doing all that the human hand can do when no guiding thought or intelligence is required. Here is the machine: at one end several girls are occupied in weighing out the tobacco. They drop the parcels into scoops that travel on an endless band. At the other end of the machine there is a long table with a travelling series of apertures, each of which is fed with the printed tobacco paper and a sheet of tinfoil. These papers and tinfoil start off to meet the scoops of tobacco. Somewhere in the middle of the machine they are turned into round receptacles into which the tobacco is emptied, and then straightway the packet is turned off upon another travelling band which delivers the

complete article ready for the great boxes that await them in the packing rooms. Several of these silent labourers are at work in one room; and in the great halls above are companies of men and women filling cigarette boxes and packing snuff and twist and plug tobacco. There is no hurry anywhere. Everybody knows exactly what she or he has to do, and they do it, almost as quietly as the hydraulic pump I mentioned just now—the quietest, most powerful, most unostentatious of all machines; always at your command; you have only, as it were, to touch a lever, and it will squeeze you a mountain of tobacco into a molehill. It has a most deadly gift of power; so slow, so sure, so steady. One of the engines, by the way, that supplies the mechanical power is a gas-engine, probably the largest that has yet been made, having a hundred and twenty horse-power. In another part of the works steam is used; and they call the engine "Uncle Sam." One of the men spoke quite pathetically of it as of an old servant superseded, though Uncle Sam still does his share of the factory labour. I mentioned snuff earlier in my notes. The chief of that department spoke of the first mill of the house, and pointed it out, and seemed almost to caress it in his imagination, though he pointed with pride to the present row of mills that were grinding up tons and tons of tobacco leaf into black rappee and brown rappee, high toast and Welsh toast and Prince's mixture, and I don't know how many other kinds of snuff. One came out of the dust thereof with sneezing and with reminiscences upon one's clothes like gold-dust; but never a sneeze or cough troubled the rubicund master of the mills. Outside the boxed-up grinders were ranged snuff-boxes of more than Brobdingnagian size, great wooden jars that might have hidden the Forty Thieves over and over again, hidden and smothered them to boot; and the master of the mills handled the black and golden product, and spoke of its soft and silky character with the love of an artist.

Right away from this weird-like company of mills that grind on and on without the necessity, as it seems, of inspection, we stand in a gallery that branches off into wide apartments right and left, and separates the upper floor tier upon tier below us; and we are in presence of the industry of cigar-making. Here are some four hundred women at work, very much on the system of the cigarette-makers. The tobacco, "filling" and "wrappers," is weighed to the hands. The body of the weed is formed by practised and flexible fingers and is carried aside to be pressed and dried. Brought back to the worker it is then wrapped in its covering of leaf, held together with the slightest touch of "gum tragacanth," and is then passed on to the office, as the



MAKING CIGARS.

cigarettes are, for examination and record. A remarkable example of the perfection of touch and sense of weight and proportion that may come from practice of an art is the manipulation of the cigar to a particular weight and form with the exactness of a machine. The leaf and filling are given out with instructions that they are to be of a certain weight, so many to the pound, or to a fractional part of a pound, or a pound and a quarter, and they are returned invariably perfect to the draught of the scale. It is a busy, interesting scene, this series of floor upon floor of active workers, and everywhere the cigar is growing and multiplying in stacks that break up as if by magic into boxes, that go down continually by lift to the printer who embosses them with the trade-mark of the firm. But these galleries, these lifts, are only typical of the factory as a whole. From that sample room in the basement, to the great piles of



STRIPPING THE LEAVES.

unpacked leaf close by, the story of treatment goes on: the sorting, the stripping, the blending, the cutting and the gradual development into packets of tobacco, boxes of cigars and cigarettes, and cases of snuff, which make their way to the order rooms, and being duly invoiced are presently carried off by carts and waggons to rail and river *en route* for the shops and taverns of Great Britain and Ireland and sundry colonies and dependencies thereof, to be a solace and a comfort to rich and poor, to the latter sometimes meat and drink and to the former "a luxury beyond price."

In the manufacture of tobacco there is nothing that might deter a smoker. Every process through which it passes is cleanly; it goes through a course of purification which, in itself, might justify much of the eulogium of its lovers, the blackest plug the sailor cuts to chew or smoke being as sweet and pure as the finest golden leaf as it emerges from knife and press a golden network of imprisoned dreams. I don't know whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a smoker; but, whether or not he agrees with Carlyle in pronouncing tobacco as "one of the divinest benefits that has ever come to the human race," he must be more or less in sympathy with an industry that adds to the right side of his annual budget, something like nine millions a year, £400,000 of which comes from one firm alone, the owners of Cope's Tobacco Factory.