OFFICINAL AND OTHER SYNONIMS OF TOBACCO.

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It was in the year 1492, during the first voyage of the celebrated Genoese adventurer, that dazzled with visions of gold and silver, and in the expectation of loading his three caravels with rare exotics, spices and diamonds, he landed on the Island of Cuba. There, on the first of November, he despatched into the interior two ambassadors, the one a Spaniard, Rodrigo de Jerez, and the other an Israelite, Luis de Torres,* familiar with Chaldaic and Arabic, which languages, however, he found of no service in addressing the aborigines of Cuba. These men returned to Columbus, from what he considered an unavailing tour, on the sixth of November.† It was on their way back that they witnessed the natives performing a ceremony to them unaccountable, and, as their apprehensions probably whispered, magical. They saw them roll dried herbs together, light the same at one end with fire-brands, which they held for the purpose in their hands, and putting the other end in their mouths, draw in the smoke and puff it out again like so many demons. Don Fernando Colon records this circumstance in the life he wrote of Christopher Columbus, his father.‡ Don Fernando was evidently not correctly conversant with the custom of which he speaks, as is plain from a literal translation of some of his words concerning it, where he tells us many of the people of Cuba “always bore a lighted fire-brand, to light, fire, and perfume themselves with certain herbs, which they carried along with them.” Tobacco, it is true, is not mentioned by name, but there can be no doubt it was none other than itself that was commemorated. The surprise of the ambassadors, as we may well suppose, was extreme, and not unmixed with fear, for never before, in all their travels, had they beheld a practice so strange, so loathsome, and, as they considered it, so dangerous. Yet this very habit were the Spaniards destined to be the first Europeans to adopt, for there did European eyes first witness the clouds of smoke that arise from the fumigation of tobacco. This was the weed, the use of which struck de Torres and de Jerez with so much astonishment, and which, in the language of Washington Irving,§ “the ingenious caprice of man has since converted into a universal luxury, in defiance of the opposition of the senses.”

Tobacco is a native of America, and was thus discovered. Its use was universal among the aborigines, from the Canadas to Brazil, and it had different designations in different localities and countries. In Virginia, which was afterwards so celebrated for its production, the Indians styled it *uppowoc*, as we are informed by Thomas Harriot. This gentleman, who was an ingenious scholar and an excellent mathematician, having in-

* Navarette's *Primer Viage de Colon*, tom. i., p. 51. Madrid, 1826.

† *Las Casas's Histor. Ind.*, lib. i. cap. xlv., p. 327. Madrid, 1753.

‡ *Histor. del Almirante*, cap. xxvii., in Barcia's *Historia de los Primitivos de las Indias Occidentales*, tom. i., p. 24. Madrid, 1749, fol.

§ *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, Vol. I., b. iv., c. iv., p. 179. New York, 1828.

vented a system of notation in modern algebra,* sailed with Sir Richard Greenville in the vessels sent on Sir Walter Raleigh's third expedition to Virginia, and wrote an account of the voyage, which was published soon after. He says,† when speaking of the plants in the country he visited: "There is an herbe which is sowed apart by itselfe, and is called by the inhabitants vppowoc: in the West Indies it has diuers names according to the seuerall places and countreys where it groweth and is vsed; the Spanyards generally call it Tabacco." The original inhabitants of the south-eastern West India isles called it *yoli*, and those of the neighboring continent termed it *pæturn*,‡ the latter title being the one by which it first became known among Europeans. Afterwards the English discarded this name for that of *tobacco*, imitating, or rather adopting, the designation of the Spaniards. Concerning this name much and very general error exists in the republic of letters, and by being copied from one writer by another without inquiry, it has been continued and diffused. Rapin says tobacco received its name "from Tobago, one of the Carribbee islands, where it plentifully grows."§ Richardson tells us it was so called "from an island in the West Indies, where it was found in abundance by the Spaniards."|| Webster says the word came "from *Tabaco*, a province of Yucatan in Spanish America, where it was *first found* by the Spaniards."¶ A French work, which aims at great exactness, speaks in the same manner.** The author of *The Smoker's, Chewer's, and Snuff-Taker's Companion*,†† repeats the assertion, and even Loudon, in his excellent *Encyclopædia of Agriculture*,‡‡ like the author just mentioned, speaks of the popular name of tobacco being derived "from the *island of TOBACCO* in the Gulph of Mexico!" This opinion, though so often expressed, is entirely incorrect, and is one of those errors arising from similarity of sound, into which etymologists and antiquarians so frequently fall, and which has in some instances been so ridiculously exemplified in the writings of persons seeking to find Hebrew and Phœnician roots in the dialects and languages of our aborigines.

The first discovery of the use of tobacco, as we have said, really took place as early as the very first voyage of Columbus, and on the island of Cuba, Tabasco, whether the province adjoining Yucatan, or the island at the mouth of the river Grijalon, not then being known. The word tobacco owes its origin to the island of St. Domingo, where the plant is indigenous, and was known from time immemorial to the natives. These islanders, according to Father Charlevoix,§§ called it *cohiba*, and the pipe with which they smoked it *tabaco*. Humboldt likewise confirms the

* Stith's History of Virginia, p. 20. Playfair's Dissertation, p. 1, s. 1.

† Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation, collected by Hakluyt, Vol. III., p. 330. London, 1810, 4to.

‡ Nic. Gavellus's Storia Distinta, e Curiosa del Tabacco, &c., p. 203. Pesaro, 1758, 8vo.

§ The History of England, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil, &c., Vol. II., p. 122, n. 5.

|| A New Dictionary of the English Language, Vol. II., p. 1942. London, 1839, 4to.

¶ An American Dictionary of the English Language, &c., Vol. II.

** "Cette plante (Tabac), acre et caustique, *trouvée en 1520 !* près de Tobasco dans le Golfo du Mexique." Précis sur l'Amerique, p. 116.

†† Philadelphia, 1841, p. 14.

‡‡ London, 1831, p. 936.

§§ Histoire de l'île Espagnole ou de S. Domingue, tom. I., p. 54. Amsterdam, 1785.

assertion.* By the Mexicans it was called *yelt*, and Garcillasso de la Vega, in his *Royal Commentaries of Peru*, says it was known among the natives of that country by the name of *sayri*.† The Spaniards were then possessors of all these countries, holding them by virtue of discovery, and by a bull of Pope Alexander VI., wherein the assignment was made “with the plenitude of apostolic power, by the authority of God Omnipotent granted to him through blessed Peter, and of the vicarship of Jesus Christ which he exercises upon earth.”§ They adopted the Haytian word *tabaco* to designate the new weed, applying it to the vegetable instead of the pipe. Although the herb had before been called *pæton*, as we have had occasion to observe, after the manner of the Brazilians, yet it singularly happened that the continental term was soon entirely superseded by the erroneous designation, the word in use at this time being much the same in all the languages of Europe. The Danes call it *tobak*; the Dutch, *tabak*; the French, *tabac*; the Germans, *taback*; the Italians, *tabacco*; the Polanders, *tobaka*; the Russians, *tabak*; the Portuguese, *tabacco*; the Spaniards, *tabaco*; and the English, *tobacco*.|| The Tartars and Japanese likewise give it a similar name, but those people who use the Arabic language term it “*dokhan*, id est fumus,” according to that most magnificent work on Egypt, “publié par les Ordres de sa Majesté l’Empereur Napoléon le Grand,” as the title page informs us.¶

In old works it is not uncommon to meet the term *pæton*, and some writers, ignorant of its derivation, gravely trace it to the Greek word *πετών*,** thus seriously committing a folly, which old Joshua Sylvester, in his curious poem, does in jest, in regard to the word *tobacco*:

“Which of their weapons has the conquest got
Over their wits—the pipe or else the pot?
For even the derivation of the name
Seems to allude and to include the same:
Tobacco, τῷ βακχῷ one would say;
To cup-god Bacchus dedicated aye.”††

Some of the other early names by which tobacco was distinguished, besides *pæton*, *yoli*, *yell*, *sayri* and *uppowoc*, were‡‡ *picielt*, *cozobba*, *gioia*, *dunkol*, *herba sanctæ crucis*, *herba reginæ*, *herbe a la reine*, *herbe a l’ambassadeur*, *herbe au grand prieur*, *herba medica*, *la buglose*,§§ and some others. Linnæus afterwards bestowed the title of *nicotiana*||| on the genus to which tobacco belongs, and as not only this designation,

* *Essai Politique sur le Royaume de la Nouvelle-Espagne*, tom. II., p. 444. Paris, 1811, 4to.

† F. Hernandez’s *Nova Plantarum, Animalium et Mineralium Mexicanorum, Historia*, &c. lib. v. cap. 51, p. 173. Rome, 1651, fol.

‡ *Commentarios Reales que tratan de el Origin de los Incas*, &c., p. 64. Madrid, 1723, fol.

§ *Memoir of Columbus*, &c. By D. G. B. Spotorno, p. 173, Doc. xxxvii.

|| J. R. McCulloch’s *Dictionary of Commerce*, p. 1161. London, 1835.

¶ *Description de l’Egypte*, &c., tom. ii. p. 55. Paris, 1812, fol.

** Charlevoix’s *Histoire de l’Isle Espagnole*, tom. i., p. 54.

†† *Tobacco Battered and the Pipes Shattered* (about their ears who idly idolize so base and barbarous a weed; or at leastwise overlove so lonesome a vanitie), by a volley of holy shot thundered from Mount Helicon, p. 56. London, 1614, 12mo.

‡‡ *Asiatic Journal*, August, 1826, Vol. XXII., p. 137. London.

§§ *Dictionnaire Botanique*. Par le Citoyen Lamarck. Paris, L’An iv. de la Republique, tom. iv., p. 477, 4to.

||| *Genera Plantarum eorumque Characteres Naturales*, n. 248. Lugd. Bat., 1737, 8vo.

but also several of the foregoing, are connected with curious incidents, I will consider them in a future No. of the Medical and Surgical Journal. I am aware that neither the present or the promised article will enable their readers to percuss like Piorry, or distinguish rhonchi like Louis; but to those who wish a moment's relaxation from treatises on diagnosis and prognosis, I hope they may not prove unacceptable.

EPIDEMIC ERYSIPELATOUS FEVER.—NO. VII.

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MEDICATION.—From the preceding nosological and pathological observations, it may have been apparent that, at least, epidemic erysipelatous fever naturally belongs to the class of "*self-limited diseases*"; that it possesses the essential character of an exanthem; that when the complaint has become established, all attempts to shorten or abridge its duration are of little or no consequence. In this particular, it is allied to its associates rubeola, rosalia, pestis, variola and typhus fever. However humiliating this conclusion may be, its truth, it must be admitted, is in accordance with the experience of the most observant practitioners. Its truth has been sanctioned and sustained by our distinguished and learned American writer, Dr. J. Bigelow, in his valuable discourse on "*self-limited diseases*." His views upon this subject have since been given in Vols. XII. and XIII. of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal; and more recently, in his notes to Marshall Hall's Practice of Medicine.

At first, the admission of this principle may appear somewhat appalling, but it does not in the least diminish the value of well-directed efforts to mitigate and control the morbid phenomena. On the contrary, it enhances their appreciable utility by restraining undue expectations and by the prevention of the adoption of unjustifiable measures; and in rendering anticipations more likely to be realized. As the well-directed efforts of the firemen have often saved a whole city from conflagration by the extinguishment of the devouring element as it bursts out at different points, so in the disease which is the subject of these remarks, the judicious adaptation of therapeutic measures has often prevented much pain and distress, and saved even life itself. The skill of the mariner, also, may cause his vessel to outride the storm, though his agency cannot shorten its duration or mitigate its violence. Nor, in fact, is the importance and honor of the medical profession in any measure diminished by the admission of this position. The profession will always be elevated, exactly in proportion as it understands its own powers, and professes simply what it can accomplish. It is no derogation from its importance that its professors cannot control the events of life, health, sickness and death.

In the whole catalogue of human ailments, not one probably demands more sagacity and tact of the physician, or requires a more multifarious medication, than erysipelatous fever. The pathological condition of the