

## WHAT NICOTINE REALLY IS.

A Colorless Fluid That Becomes Dark When Exposed to Air and Light.

In a communication about tobacco, in the Scientific American, Prof. John W. Mancet, of the University of Virginia, says among other things:

"Ignorance of easily ascertainable scientific facts is, however, common enough, as often illustrated by the brown, oily material formed in the nicotine, though in reality this is merely the tar produced by the action of heat on the woody fibre of the leaf. "Nicotine when pure is a colorless fluid of somewhat oily consistency and strong, peculiar, penetrating odor, but it darkens on exposure to air and light, becoming first yellow and then brown, so that it looks, in this-darkened condition, something like the tarry matter which soils a smoker's fingers or a handkerchief through which tobacco smoke is exhaled, or is often noticed as deposited in the stem of a pipe. This tarry deposit has nothing essential in common with nicotine, and contains but traces of this alkaloid, when at all. A part, but only a small part (about one-seventh of the experiments of Nelsens), of the real nicotine of tobacco is volatilized without decomposition; the remainder is burned and destroyed in the process of smoking."

The sensational statements occasionally made in regard to arsenic, copper, etc., as present in the paper wrappers, would be at once seen to be grossly improbable if it were but remembered that the wrapper is a single cigarette weight little more than half a grain, and that in such minute quantity of thin, delicate white paper there could be introduced but infinitesimal amounts of such foreign adulterants without the presence becoming perceptible to common observation by the senses, aside from the positive scientific evidence that they are not present."

## RENT FLOWERS FOR HOUSES.

Hothouse Proprietors Suffer Loss in Business Through the Advent of Summer Months.

This is the season of the year when keepers of hothouse flowers, who thrive in winter, are practically without employment. There are more than 20 concerns in Chicago that make a business of renting potted plants, palms and other interior decorations to restaurants, cafes, saloons, and to families. These plants are changed as often as wanted. One day there may be one of the waving pampas plumes, and in the same place the day following may appear a blooming geranium. The uninitiated would imagine that the owner of the room was also proprietor of a hothouse, when he isn't anything of the sort. These plants may be rented for one dollar per month apiece, says the Chicago Times-Herald.

In summer they are taken out and fresh flowers, born of rain and sunshine, placed in their stead. Chrysanthemums do not like the looks of hothouse flowers when the weather is warm and natural blossoms are cheap. Bushes of fresh hollyhocks grown wild in the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee may now be seen in many places. Violets are coming in abundance. There may occasionally be found magnolia blossoms, for they are plentiful on the bayous of the south this season. Then there are the native roses and daffodils and dandelions that give fragrance and take the rooms of the potted plants, which do very well in winter, but look out of place when the air is soft and balmy and the trees are clothed in green.

HEADS OF GREAT BRITONS.

Gladstone Had a Larger Cranium Than Beaconsfield, Bright or Russell.

Mr. Gladstone's head was, it is well known, of exceptional size. The story he told at Lord Eton's once about the man who could not get a hat large enough till at last the hatter called in desperation for an Aberdeen hat may well enough have been his own experience, says the London Daily News. The compliment to Aberdeen was no doubt relished in the granite city. Dr. Collins once gave to the world the result of a special study in hats, in the course of which it was mentioned that Mr. Gladstone's number in hats was 7%. The hatters' number is arrived at by taking the mean of the length and breadth. Thus a hat 17x24 is 1% 7/16, which is the average English size. John Bright's 7 1/4, Lord John Russell's 7 1/4, all smaller than Mr. Gladstone's. But the Gladstone hat was exceeded in size by that of Dr. Charles' 7 1/4, and Joseph Hume's was emphatically abnormal—8 1/2. Dr. Collins had 120 hats measured at a meeting of Convocation of London university, and found that between 40 and 41 percent were above the British average. No. 7, between 25 and 26 percent, were just the average size, and 34 per cent were under the average.

Keep Tab on the Ministers. Every time a Russian minister leaves town his colleagues are notified of the journey, besides the council of the empire, the cabinet of the emperor, the empire's comptroller and secretary, the sacred synod, the emperor's military secretary, the empress, the governors of Moscow, Voronezh, Kiev, etc., ad infinitum to all appearance. When he returns the same minute notification performance is gone through.

Vaccination Before Marriage. In Sweden and Norway a legal marriage is not allowed to be solemnized till both parties produce certificates attesting that they bear genuine vaccination marks.

## KILLING THE PIASA BIRD.

The Order of Red Men from Springfield Repeat the Curious Indian Ceremony.

An unique spectacular programme was lately carried out on the grounds of the Piasa Bluffs, Chautauqua, by the organization of Red Men from Springfield. The exhibition was a pantomime portrayal of the old Indian legend of the original Piasa bird, which is supposed to have once lived in this region. The story told is of a huge bird so great that its wings gave the air vibrations like the tones of thunder, its talons and beak and powerful body foamed the river, dashing the waves against the rocky bluffs like the modern dynamite of the American navy—an enemy so furious and destructive and ready to devour that the Indian tribes suffered the loss of many of its bravest. At last in council a sacrifice was agreed upon to save the tribe. The son of the chief was to offer himself. In great sorrow the Indians assembled to witness the sacrifice, and as soon as they find them youthful chief. In the final struggle the bird was pierced by arrows, and the boy delivered. For centuries, it is said, many tribes came from distant hunting grounds to feast and return.

Everything on this recent occasion was as like as could be to the story. A huge bird of monstrous dimensions, of fearful form, its tail that of a great serpent, its face slightly human, with horns like an antelope, body like both bird and beast, its wings black and widespread. Its limbs and talons the exaggeration of any and everything large and strong and cruel was started across the valley from the highest rock on one of the adjacent bluffs, suspended on wire. The Red Men, with their war whoop rushed to attack this enemy in the upper air. And sure enough, as though loud shouts added to the skill of the arrow, this monster fell enveloped in a cloud of feathers. The braves completely encircled him with the circular war dance of noisy triumph.

SHIP'S RANGE IN ACTION.

The Huge Destroyers Rarely Seek an Engagement at Less Than Two Miles.

"The pictures in some of the burnt-orange newspapers of battleships in action are about as funny as the Japanese idea of perspective," said a naval officer to a Washington Star reporter. "These pictures represent the opposing ships blazing away at each other with 13-inch rifles at a range of about 100 feet, and the artists certainly work up the thing to make it look terrible enough, in all conscience. It's a wonder to me they don't represent the crews of the opposing ships in the act of using grappling irons, as they did in engagements at close quarters in the days of the old foggin frigates."

"As a matter of fact, if either battleship in an engagement between vessels of to-day goes within such range of each other, or anything like it, it would simply be a matter of the first shot. One big shell delivered at such a range would leave only debris of the struck ship floating on the surface of the water."

"Modern ships of war are not devised to get within any such range of each other. The nearest that any of the opposing ships in the great naval battle on the Yalu got to each other was a trifle under two miles, and what one battleship can do to another at that range is something beyond calculation."

## GROWTH OF FLAX IN INDIA.

The Plant Is Raised Exclusively for the Seed and Not for Fiber.

Consul-General Patterson, at Calcutta, in a report to the department of state, notes a curious fact about flax growing reports the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. He writes: "In answer to an inquiry from a Chicago firm relative to the quantity of flax produced and exported from India, I would say that flax is grown in India exclusively for the seed. In no part of the country is the fiber produced. Experiments have been made for many years with the same result, viz., that it is no proof that plant can be made to yield a fiber because it can be grown in a country. Flax, hemp and china grass are admirable samples of this fact. The possible area of fiber production of any of these in India is extremely narrow. Hemp yields fiber in Russia and other countries and cannot be made to produce the narcotic. In India the very reverse is the case, except in a small portion of the Himalayas, where it yields admirable fiber and no narcotic to speak of. While large areas of flax are cultivated in almost every part of India and Burmah, it is grown only for the seed, of which large quantities are exported, and not for fiber, and there is no flax exported from India."

A Puerto Rico Custom.

William E. Curtis, who has been a good deal of a globe trotter, writes from Washington to the Chicago Record: "I observed phenomena at San Juan, and the same at Ponce de Leon, for which I have never been able to obtain a satisfactory explanation. The old negroes who sit around the market place and the shady street corners selling dates from large bunches are habitually smoking long black cigars, and they put the lighted-ends in their mouths. Why they do so God how they can endure it are mysteries that could not be solved, but it is nevertheless a fact and a custom that is unique in Puerto Rico."

The English Bittern.

The statement having been made that the bittern is one of the lost birds in England, a correspondent writes to the Daily News that so far from being exterminated, they are still so abundant in one locality that sleep is hard for strangers because of the loud noise they make, like a bull bellowing, and that in this region they are shot and eaten.

Chinamen's Brains Are Heavy.

The average weight of the brain of the Chinaman is greater than that of any other race on the globe except the Scotch.

## Ignorant Spanish.

It is said that two-thirds of the male population of the world use tobacco.

Scandinavians.

Among the foreign sailors in the British merchant marine 9,000 are Scandinavians, 5,000 Germans and 2,000 Russians.

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It is said that two-thirds of Spain's population can neither read nor write.

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