

TRANSCRIPTION

Selected Excerpts from

TOBACCO COUNTERBLAST¹

By King James I of England, VI of Scotland

SECTION I:

The root of tobacco usage among the English

For Tobacco being a common herb, which...grows almost every where, was first found out by some of the barbarous Indians, to be a Preservative, or Antidote against the Pox ...

...so from them likewise was brought this use of Tobacco, as a stinking and unsavory Antidote...

Why do we not as well imitate them in walking naked as they do? In preferring glasses, feathers, and such toys, to gold and precious stones, as they do? yea why do we not deny God and adore the Devil, as they do?

SECTION II:

Arguments against tobacco based on medical knowledge of the operations and function of the body

First...that the brains of all men being naturally cold and wet, all dry and hot things should be good for them of which nature this stinking suffumigation is...Of this argument both the proposition and assumption are false...

For as to the proposition that because the brains are cold and moist, therefore things that are hot and dry are best for them; it is an inept consequence.

The second argument grounded on a show of reason is that this filthy smoke...is able and fit to purge both the head and stomach of rheums and distillations as experience teaches by the spitting and avoiding phlegm immediately after the taking of it....

So this stinking smoke being sucked up by the nose and imprisoned in the cold and moist brains is...cast forth again in watery distillations, and so are you made free and purged of nothing...

SECTION III:

The reason people really smoke tobacco is not to receive any benefit to their health, but instead because it is "savory and good" to them

...the whole people would not have taken for general a good liking thereof if they had not by experience found it very savoring and good for them.

SECTION IV:

The danger of adopting "foreign" practices

...and so from hand to hand it spreads until it be practiced by all; not for any commodity that is in it, but only because it is come to be the fashion...

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SECTION V:

Dismissing the use of tobacco as a folk remedy

...pray what foolish boy, what silly wench, what old doting wife, or ignorant country clown is not physician for the toothache, cholic, and divers such common diseases...and yet I hope no man is so foolish to believe them...

It cures gout in the feet...it makes a man sober that was drunk; it refreshes a weary man, and yet makes a man hungry; being taken when they go to bed, it makes one sleep soundly and yet being taken when a man is sleepy and drowsy, it will, as they say, awaken his brain and quicken his understanding....

SECTION VI:

The addictive qualities of tobacco

...it a branch of the sin of drunkenness, which is the root of all sins...

So is not this the very case of all the great takers of tobacco which therefore they themselves do attribute to a bewitching quality in it?

SECTION VII:

Tobacco as a frivolous expense

...some of them bestowing three, some four hundred pounds a year upon this precious stink, which I am sure might be bestowed upon many far better uses...

SECTION VIII:

The uncleanness of tobacco use

[H]erein is not only a great vanity but a great contempt for God's good gifts that sweetens a man's breath being a good gift of God should be willfully corrupted by this stinking smoke ...

...a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof nearest resembling the horrible stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless.

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