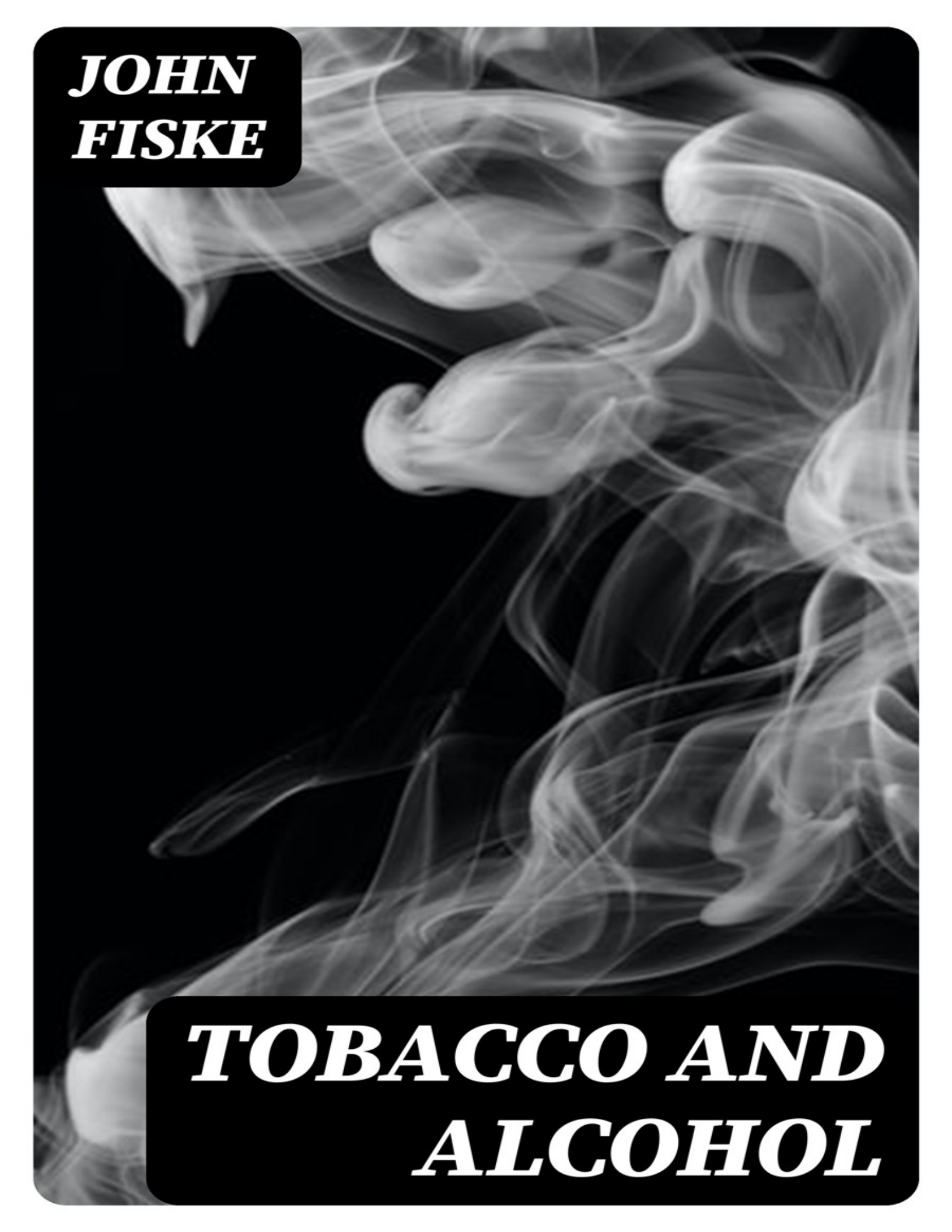




***JOHN  
FISKE***

***TOBACCO AND  
ALCOHOL***

**John Fiske**

# **Tobacco and Alcohol**

**I. It Does Pay to Smoke. II. The Coming Man Will Drink Wine**

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# **PREFACE.**

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Five weeks ago to-day the idea of writing an essay upon the physiological effects of Tobacco and Alcohol had never occurred to us. Nevertheless, the study of physiology and pathology—especially as relating to the action of narcotic-stimulants upon nutrition—has for several years afforded us, from time to time, agreeable recreation. And being called upon, in the discharge of a regularly-recurring duty, to review Mr. Parton's book entitled "Smoking and Drinking," it seemed worth while, in justice to the subject, to go on writing,—until the present volume was the result.

This essay is therefore to be regarded as a review article, rewritten and separately published. It is nothing more, as regards either the time and thought directly bestowed upon it, or the completeness with which it treats the subject. Bearing this in mind, the reader will understand the somewhat fantastic sub-titles of the book, and the presence of a number of citations and comments which would ordinarily be neither essential nor desirable in a serious discussion. Had we been writing a systematic treatise, with the object of stating exhaustively our theory of the action of Tobacco and Alcohol, we should have found it needful to be far more abstruse and technical; and we should certainly have had no occasion whatever to mention Mr. Parton's name. As it is, the ideal requirements of a complete statement have been subordinated—though by no means sacrificed—to the obvious desideratum of making a

summary at once generally intelligible and briefly conclusive.

The materials used especially in the preparation of this volume were the following:

Anstie: Stimulants and Narcotics. Philadelphia, 1865.

Lallemand, Duroy, et Perrin: Du Rôle de l'Alcool et des Anesthésiques. Paris, 1860.

Baudot: De la Destruction de l'Alcool dans l'Organisme. Union Médicale, Nov. et Déc., 1863.

Bouchardat et Sandras: De la Digestion des Boissons Alcooliques. Annales de Chimie et de Physique, 1847, tom. XXI.

Duchek: Ueber das Verhalten des Alkohols im thierischen Organismus. Vierteljahrschrift für die praktische Heilkunde. Prague, 1833.

Von Bibra: Die Narkotischen Genussmittel und der Mensch. Nürnberg, 1855.

And the works of Taylor, Orfila, Christison, and Pereira, on Materia Medica and Poisons; of Flint, Dalton, Dunglison, Draper, Carpenter, Liebig, Lehmann, and Moleschott, on general Physiology; several of the special works on Tobacco mentioned in the Appendix; and the current medical journals.

Oxford Street, Cambridge, *November 23, 1868.*

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TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

# I.

## It does Pay to Smoke.

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Mr. James Parton having abandoned the habit of smoking, has lately entered upon the task of persuading the rest of mankind to abandon it also.<sup>[1]</sup> His "victory over himself"—to use the favourite expression—would be incomplete unless followed up by a victory over others; and he therefore desists for a season from his congenial labours in panegyriizing Aaron Burr, B. + F. Butler, and other popular heroes, in order that he may briefly descant upon the evil characters of tobacco and its kindred stimulants. Some of the sophisms and exaggerations which he has brought into play while doing so, invite attention before we attempt what he did not attempt at all—to state squarely and honestly the latest conclusions of science on the subject.

According to Mr. Parton, tobacco is responsible for nearly all the ills which in modern times have afflicted humanity. As will be seen, he makes no half-way work of the matter. He must have the whole loaf, or he will not touch a crumb. He scorns all carefully-limited, compromising, philosophical statements of the case. Whatever the verdict of science may turn out to be, he *knows* that no good ever did come, ever does come, or ever will come, from the use of tobacco. All bad things which tobacco can do, as well as all bad things which it cannot do—all probable, possible, improbable, impossible, inconceivable, and nonsensical evil results—are by Mr. Parton indiscriminately lumped together and laid at its door. It is simply a diabolical poison which,

since he has happily eschewed the use of it, had better be at once extirpated from the face of the earth. Of all this, Mr. Parton is so very sure that he evidently thinks any reasoning on the subject quite superfluous and out of place.

The paucity of his arguments is, however, compensated by the multitude and hardihood of his assertions. A sailor, he says, should not smoke; for "why should he go round this beautiful world drugged?" Note the *petitio principii* in the use of the word "drugged." That the smoker is, in the bad sense of the word, drugging himself, is the very point to be determined; but Mr. Parton feels so sure that he substitutes a sly question-begging participle for a conscientious course of investigation. With nine readers out of ten this takes just as well; and then it is so much easier and safer, you know. Neither should soldiers smoke, for the glare of their pipes may enable some hostile picket to take deadly aim at them. Moreover, a "forward car," in which a crowd of smoking veterans are returning from the seat of war, is a disgusting place. And "that two and two make four is not a truth more unquestionably certain than that smoking does diminish a soldier's power of endurance, and does make him more susceptible to imaginary dangers." (p. 17.) This statement, by the way, is an excellent specimen of Mr. Parton's favourite style of assertion. He does not say that his private opinion on this complex question in nervous physiology is well supported by observation, experiment and deduction. He does not say that there is at least a preponderance of evidence in its favour. He does not call it as probable as any opinion on such an intricate matter can ever be. But he says "it is as unquestionably certain as that two and two make

four." Nothing less will satisfy him. Let it no longer be said that, in the difficult science of physiology, absolute certainty is not attainable!

Then again, the soldier should not smoke, because he ought always to be in training; and no Harvard oarsman needs to be told "that smoking reduces the tone of the system and diminishes all the forces of the body—he *knows* it." The profound physiological knowledge of the average Harvard under-graduate it would perhaps seem ungracious to question; but upon this point, be it said with due reverence, doctors disagree. We have known athletes who told a different story. Waiving argument for the present, however, we go on presenting Mr. Parton's "certainties." One of these is that every man should be kept all his life in what prizefighters call "condition," which term Mr. Parton supposes to mean "the natural state of the body, uncontaminated by poison, and unimpaired by indolence or excess." Awhile ago we had "drugs," now we have "poison," but not a syllable of argument to show that either term is properly applicable to tobacco. But Mr. Parton's romantic idea of the state of the body which accompanies training is one which is likely to amuse, if it does not edify, the physiologist. So far from "condition" being the "natural (i.e. healthy) state of the body," it is an extremely unnatural state. It is a condition which generally exhausts a man by the time he is thirty-five years old, rendering him what prizefighters call "stale." It is not "natural," or normal, for the powers either of the muscular or of the nervous system to be kept constantly at the maximum. What our minds and bodies need is intermittent, rhythmical activity. "In books

and work and healthful play," not "in work and work and work alway," should our earlier and later years be passed; and a man who is always training for a boatrace is no more likely to hold out in the plenitude of his powers than a man who is always studying sixteen hours a day. The only reason why our boys at Yale and Harvard are sometimes permanently benefited by their extravagant athleticism is that they usually leave off before it is too late, and begin to live more normally. For the blood to be continually determined toward the muscles, and for the stomach to be continually digesting none but concentrated food, is a state of things by no means favourable to a normal rate and distribution of nutritive action; and it is upon this normal rate and distribution of nutrition that life, health and strength depend. It is as assisting this process that we shall presently show the temperate use of tobacco to be beneficial. Mr. Parton's idea well illustrates the spirit of that species of "radical" philosophy which holds its own opinions as absolutely and universally, not as relatively and partially, true; which, consequently, is incapable of seeing that one man's meat may be another man's poison, and which is unable to steer safely by Scylla without turning the helm so far as to pitch head foremost into Charybdis. Mr. Parton sees that athletic exercise is healthful, and he jumps at once to the conclusion that every man should always and in all circumstances keep himself in training. Such was not the theory of the ancient Athenians: μηδεν ἄγαν was their principle of life,—the principle by virtue of which they made themselves competent to instruct mankind.

Having thus said his say about muscular men, Mr. Parton goes on to declare that smoking is a barbarism. "There is something in the practice that allies a man with barbarians, and constantly tends to make him think and talk like a barbarian." We suppose Mr. Parton must *know* this; for he does not attempt to prove it, unless indeed he considers a rather stupid anecdote to be proof. He tells us how he listened for an hour or so to half a dozen Yale students in one of the public rooms of a New-Haven hotel, talking with a stable-keeper about boat-racing. They swore horribly; and of course Mr. Parton believes that if they had not been smokers they would neither have used profane language nor have condescended to talk with stable-keepers. *Sancta simplicitas!*

"We must admit, too, I think, that smoking dulls a man's sense of the rights of others. Horace Greeley is accustomed to sum up his opinions upon this branch of the subject by saying: 'When a man begins to smoke, he immediately becomes a hog.'" Our keen enjoyment of Mr. Greeley's lightness of touch and refined delicacy of expression should not be allowed to blind us to the possible incompleteness of his generalization. What! Milton a hog? Locke, Addison, Scott, Thackeray, Robert Hall, Christopher North—hogs?

And then smoking is an expensive habit. If a man smoke ten cigars daily, at twenty cents each, his smoking will cost him from seven to eight hundred dollars a year. This dark view of the case needs to be enlivened by a little contrast. "While at Cambridge the other day, looking about among the ancient barracks in which the students live, I had the curiosity to ask concerning the salaries of the professors in

Harvard College." Probably he inquired of a *Goody*, or of one of the *Pocos* who are to be found earning bread by the sweat of their brows in the neighbourhood of these venerable shanties, for it seems they told him that the professors were paid fifteen or eighteen hundred dollars a year. Had he taken the trouble to step into the steward's office, he might have learned that they are paid three thousand dollars a year. Such is the truly artistic way in which Mr. Parton makes contrasts—\$1500 *per annum* for a professor, \$800 for cigars! Therefore, it does not pay to smoke.

Smoking, moreover, makes men slaves. The Turks and Persians are great smokers, and they live under a despotic form of government. Q.E.D. The extreme liberality of Oriental institutions *before* the introduction of tobacco Mr. Parton probably thinks so well known as not to require mention. But still worse, the Turks and Persians are great despisers of women; and this is evidently because they smoke. For woman and tobacco are natural enemies. The most perfect of men, the "highly-groomed" Goethe—as Mr. Parton elegantly calls him—loved women and hated tobacco. This aspect of the question is really a serious one. Tobacco, says our reformer, is woman's rival,—and her successful rival; therefore she hates it. For as Mr. Parton, with profound insight into the mysteries of the feminine character, gravely observes, "women do not disapprove their rivals; they hate them." This "ridiculous brown leaf," then, is not only in general the cause of all evil, but in particular it is the foe of woman. "It takes off the edge of virility"!!<sup>[2]</sup> It makes us regard woman from the Black Crook