

## **CHAPTER XXI. - ENGLISH-GROWN TOBACCO.**

Pettigrew asked me to come to his house one evening and test some tobacco that had been grown in his brother's Devonshire garden. I had so far had no opportunity of judging for myself whether this attempt to grow tobacco on English soil was to succeed. Very complimentary was Pettigrew's assertion that he had restrained himself from trying the tobacco until we could test it in company. At the dinner-table while Mrs. Pettigrew was present we managed to talk for a time of other matters; but the tobacco was on our minds, and I was glad to see that, despite her raillery, my hostess had a genuine interest in the coming experiment. She drew an amusing picture, no doubt a little exaggerated, of her husband's difficulty in refraining from testing the tobacco until my arrival, declaring that every time she entered the smoking-room she found him staring at it. Pettigrew took this in good part, and informed me that she had carried the tobacco several times into the drawing-room to show it proudly to her friends. He was very delighted, he said, that I was to remain over night, as that would give us a long evening to test the tobacco thoroughly. A neighbor of his had also been experimenting; and Pettigrew, who has a considerable sense of humor, told me a diverting story about this gentleman and his friends having passed judgment on home-grown tobacco after smoking one pipe of it! We were laughing over the ridiculously unsatisfactory character of this test (so called) when we adjourned to the smoking-room. Before we did so Mrs. Pettigrew bade me good-night. She had also left strict orders with the servants that we were on no account to be disturbed.

As soon as we were comfortably seated in our smoking-chairs, which takes longer than some people think, Pettigrew offered me a Cabana. I would have preferred to begin at once with the tobacco; but of course he was my host, and I put myself entirely in his hands. I noticed that, from the moment his wife left us, he was a little excited, talking more than is his wont. He seemed to think that he was not doing his duty as a host if the conversation flagged for a moment, and what was still more curious, he spoke of everything except his garden tobacco. I emphasize this here at starting, lest any one should think that I was in any way responsible for the manner in which our experiment was conducted. If fault there was, it lies at Pettigrew's door. I remember distinctly asking him--not in a half-hearted way, but boldly--to produce his tobacco. I did this at an

early hour of the proceedings, immediately after I had lighted a second cigar. The reason I took that cigar will be obvious to every gentleman who smokes. Had I declined it, Pettigrew might have thought that I disliked the brand, which would have been painful to him. However, he did not at once bring out the tobacco; indeed, his precise words, I remember, were that we had lots of time. As his guest I could not press him further.

Pettigrew smokes more quickly than I do, and he had reached the end of his second cigar when there was still five minutes of mine left. It distresses me to have to say what followed. He hastily lighted a third cigar, and then, unlocking a cupboard, produced about two ounces of his garden tobacco. His object was only too plain. Having just begun a third cigar he could not be expected to try the tobacco at present, but there was nothing to prevent my trying it. I regarded Pettigrew rather contemptuously, and then I looked with much interest at the tobacco. It was of an inky color. When I looked up I caught Pettigrew's eye on me. He withdrew it hurriedly, but soon afterward I saw him looking in the same sly way again. There was a rather painful silence for a time, and then he asked me if I had anything to say. I replied firmly that I was looking forward to trying the tobacco with very great interest. By this time my cigar was reduced to a stump, but, for reasons that Pettigrew misunderstood, I continued to smoke it. Somehow our chairs had got out of position now, and we were sitting with our backs to each other. I felt that Pettigrew was looking at me covertly over his shoulder, and took a side glance to make sure of this. Our eyes met, and I bit my lip. If there is one thing I loathe, it is to be looked at in this shame-faced manner.

I continued to smoke the stump of my cigar until it scorched my underlip, and at intervals Pettigrew said, without looking round, that my cigar seemed everlasting. I treated his innuendo with contempt; but at last I had to let the cigar-end go. Not to make a fuss, I dropped it very quietly; but Pettigrew must have been listening for the sound. He wheeled round at once, and pushed the garden tobacco toward me. Never, perhaps, have I thought so little of him as at that moment. My indignation probably showed in my face, for he drew back, saying that he thought I "wanted to try it." Now I had never said that I did not want to try it. The reader has seen that I went to Pettigrew's house solely with the object of trying the tobacco. Had Pettigrew, then, any ground for insinuating that I did not mean to try it? Restraining my passion, I lighted a third cigar, and then put the question to him bluntly. Did he, or did he not, mean to try that

tobacco? I dare say I was a little brusque; but it must be remembered that I had come all the way from the inn, at considerable inconvenience, to give the tobacco a thorough trial.

As is the way with men of Pettigrew's type, when you corner them, he attempted to put the blame on me. "Why had I not tried the tobacco," he asked, "instead of taking a third cigar?" For reply, I asked bitingly if that was not his third cigar. He admitted it was, but said that he smoked more quickly than I did, as if that put his behavior in a more favorable light. I smoked my third cigar very slowly, not because I wanted to put off the experiment; for, as every one must have noted, I was most anxious to try it, but just to see what would happen. When Pettigrew had finished his cigar--and I thought he would never be done with it--he gazed at the garden tobacco for a time, and then took a pipe from the mantelpiece. He held it first in one hand, then in the other, and then he brightened up and said he would clean his pipes. This he did very slowly. When he had cleaned all his pipes he again looked at the garden tobacco, which I pushed toward him. He glared at me as if I had not been doing a friendly thing, and then said, in an apologetic manner, that he would smoke a pipe until my cigar was finished. I said "All right" cordially, thinking that he now meant to begin the experiment; but conceive my feelings when he produced a jar of the Arcadia Mixture. He filled his pipe with this and proceeded to light it, looking at me defiantly. His excuse about waiting till I had finished was too pitiful to take notice of. I finished my cigar in a few minutes, and now was the time when I would have liked to begin the experiment. As Pettigrew's guest, however, I could not take that liberty, though he impudently pushed the garden tobacco toward me. I produced my pipe, my intention being only to half fill it with Arcadia, so that Pettigrew and I might finish our pipes at the same time. Custom, however, got the better of me, and inadvertently I filled my pipe, only noticing this when it was too late to remedy the mistake. Pettigrew thus finished before me; and though I advised him to begin on the garden tobacco without waiting for me, he insisted on smoking half a pipeful of Arcadia, just to keep me company. It was an extraordinary thing that, try as we might, we could not finish our pipes at the same time.

About 2 A.M. Pettigrew said something about going to bed; and I rose and put down my pipe. We stood looking at the fireplace for a time, and he expressed regret that I had to leave so early in the morning. Then he put out two of the lights, and after that we both looked at the garden

tobacco. He seemed to have a sudden idea; for rather briskly he tied the tobacco up into a neat paper parcel and handed it to me, saying that I would perhaps give it a trial at the inn. I took it without a word, but opening my hand suddenly I let it fall. My first impulse was to pick it up; but then it struck me that Pettigrew had not noticed what had happened, and that, were he to see me pick it up, he might think that I had not taken sufficient care of it. So I let it lie, and, bidding him good-night, went off to bed. I was at the foot of the stair when I thought that, after all, I should like the tobacco, so I returned. I could not see the package anywhere, but something was fizzing up the chimney, and Pettigrew had the tongs in his hand. He muttered something about his wife taking up wrong notions. Next morning that lady was very satirical about our having smoked the whole two ounces.