

THE STORY BEHIND YOUR CIGARETTE

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The Tobacco Plant.

The tobacco plant is a sort of Cinderella of the world of agriculture. When tobacco first became a commercial proposition, the planters of Virginia started frantically out-bidding each other for fertile plots of land. Then it was found that rich soil produces but poor tobacco. The light brown leaves that are the most popular because they contain the least nicotine flourish best in poor, sandy ground. So the planters found themselves struggling fiercely against one another for wastes of land that were so sterile that they had never even seen a plough.

The study and purchase of tobacco call for great skill and experience, and "Craven A" experts are constantly visiting the tobacco fields, so that, by seeing the tobacco as it is picked and cured, they can buy the most suitable types of leaf. Unmatured tobacco is harsh and scratchy, so the leaves are left to mature in large wooden hogsheads or "tierces". This maturing process takes two or three years, and at the end of this period the tobacco has become mellow and smooth. Tobacco can only be properly matured by natural means.

1,000 lbs. at a Time.

When the hogsheads arrive at the "Craven A" factory, girls take out the "hands" or bundles of leaves and separate them before the blending begins. Each hogshead contains 1,000 lbs. of tobacco. A duty of ^{OVER} £500 is paid to the Exchequer on every hogshead.

There is no such thing to-day as a cigarette containing only one kind of tobacco. Tastes in tobacco vary in the same way as tastes in food, and for that reason Carreras manufacture many kinds of cigarettes - some of them containing as many as sixty different types of tobacco. When a blend is being made up, the various types of leaf to be used are weighed with scrupulous care before undergoing a thorough mixing under the supervision of their chief blender. (A slight alteration in the proportions in which the leaves are mixed would be quite enough completely to alter the flavour of the finished cigarette).

Before the tobacco is ready for cutting the centre vein and stalk have to be removed, as the hard mid-rib would cause the cigarette to burn hot and harsh. Before the leaves are subjected to this "stripping", they are scattered in piles over a specially prepared floor, where a man sprays them lightly with water to moisten them and make them workable. This moistening enables the hard centre vein and stalk to be removed without breaking the leaf. This work of removing the hard centre vein and stalk is done not, as you might expect, by machines, but by girls whose fingers are specially trained to work with lightning speed.

Although the stalks cannot be used for making cigarettes or pipe tobacco they are not thrown away as rubbish, but are collected and returned to the Customs, who allow a rebate on the tax that was paid when the tobacco entered the factory.

Science Takes Over.

After the leaves have been stripped science takes over. Trucks carry the leaves into the cutting rooms, where they are fed into giant machines fitted with razor-edged knives that cut them into thin strands at the rate of 8 lbs. a minute. This cutting is no haphazard affair, for the slightest error would destroy pounds of leaf and irretrievably damage the

edge of the knife. The leaves have to be fed in lengthways so that they will be cut in fine, even strands. So great is the strain on the knives that they have to be changed every ten minutes and taken away to a special department for sharpening.

As the razor-sharp knives flash up and down the cut tobacco is drawn by suction into a dust-extracting machine inside which the tobacco is continually shaken up to free it of dust. It then passes through a sieve, to fall clean and dustless into large bins, where it is ready to be made into cigarettes.

80 Yards a Minute.

The cut tobacco passes into the care of a machine as nimble-fingered as any robot man. This machine holds over three miles of paper at a time - enough for 60,000 cigarettes. As the paper is unwound it passes beneath a small printing wheel that stamps the name "Craven A" at regular intervals. After the printing, mechanical scissors cut the cork tips from a spool of wafer-thin natural cork and these are fixed to the paper by a delicate patented device. The tobacco falls evenly on a continuous stream of paper, after passing through another dust extractor attached to the machine. One edge of the paper is turned up, and a small, rapidly revolving wheel puts a thin line of specially prepared paste along its edge. The paper is then drawn round the tobacco, and passes through an electrically heated chamber in which the adhesive is dried.

Eighty yards of paper-enclosed tobacco in the form of one long rod come out of this machine every minute. A rotary knife divides this giant cigarette into the correct lengths. The finished cigarettes are then ejected on to a moving belt at the rate of 1,000 a minute, and finally delivered into a trough all stacked the right way up.

Here the cigarettes receive the first of many examinations, for every few minutes a quantity of cigarettes is selected at random, closely inspected for even the most minute imperfection, carefully weighed, and any adjustments to the machine necessitated by the inspection carried out immediately. In this way the closest possible check is kept on the standard of production.

Each tray of cigarettes must be minutely examined before being packed, and rows of girls specially trained to detect the slightest imperfection sit examining tray after tray of cigarettes - an almost imperceptible tear here, a loose end there - no matter how small the defect, the cigarette must be rejected. Still another examination is made by a second lot of girls before the cigarettes are ready for packing, for the unvarying aim is - perfect cigarettes.

The cigarette-making machines in use at the "Craven A" Factory are all modelled on the original Baron machine which was invented in 1894 and which was the forerunner of all cigarette-making machines as they are known to-day.

The Cork Tips.

The cork used for tipping "Craven A" cigarettes comes from the querqus tree of Southern Spain. It arrives at the factory wound on spools.

Cork tips used to be a luxury in smoking, but to-day they are within the reach of every smoker. The object of cork tips, by the way, is not, as many people think, merely to prevent the cigarette from sticking to the lips. Moistened tobacco burns hot, and the cork tip keeps the tobacco dry.

"Superhuman" Packing Machines.

The packing of the cigarettes is carried out by a machine no less ingenious than the one that makes them. It sorts the cigarettes into tens or twenties, wraps them in foil, and encloses them in the cartons. This machine is absolutely fool-

proof, and signals any mistakes, such as a wrong number of cigarettes or inadequate foiling, by ringing a bell or showing a light and ejecting the faulty packet. It is thus impossible for incorrectly packed cigarettes to get out of the factory.

Though complex in their working, these machines are easily run, and are worked by girls. Trained mechanics, however, are constantly present to see that the machines are in perfect running order.

"Craven A" for Export.

Each day huge liners leave England carrying with them cases of "Craven A" marked for all parts of the world - consignments of perfectly manufactured cigarettes on their way to every port of call between Borneo and Iceland, for the quality of Carreras' brands is known and appreciated throughout the whole world.

In order to keep them fresh "Craven A" for export are packed in Tru-Vac airtight tins. These tins are sealed by a very ingenious process. After the cigarettes have been put into them the tins are placed in a vacuumizing machine, where all the air is removed, the lids being sealed down by the vacuum created inside. (A rubber band between the lid and the top of the tin ensures that there can be no leakage). The tins are then left standing for a considerable period, during which time each one is frequently tested to see that it is airtight.

This testing is certainly one of the world's curious jobs. Each tin has to be tapped with a light wooden rod, and the tone emitted is the evidence upon which the vacuumizing is judged. Properly sealed tins give a high-pitched tone when tapped, but a dull, flat note is a sure sign that the tin is leaking. Although the testing of the tins is carried out at incredible speed, hardly ever is a tin returned after it has once left the factory. After the final testing, the tins are labelled and

wrapped by machine, ready to be packed into cases for shipment.

Weather to Order.

For testing "Craven A" for export, a special room has been built in the Company's modern and well-equipped laboratory where atmospheric conditions ranging from the Arctic to the tropics can be reproduced as desired. A certain number of wrapped packets of "Craven A" are placed in this room, and the temperature altered to correspond with that of the market to which the cigarettes are being sent. These packets are then examined by the laboratory assistants to make quite certain that they will reach the smoker in an absolutely factory-fresh condition.

Welfare Department.

Just as no effort is spared in making a perfect product, so too every attempt is made to care for the well-being of the workers who play such a prominent part in the success of Carreras. A doctor and qualified nurses are present every day in what is virtually a miniature hospital in efficiency, cleanliness and equipment, ready to look after the welfare of the employees. Any employee who is ill or run-down is sent, entirely at the Company's expense and with pay, to a Convalescent Home by the sea to be looked after by nurses and doctors who are their friends. Every person has an annual holiday with full pay and the wage rates throughout the building are higher than those fixed by statute. Pension schemes are in force for both male and female employees, eliminating the fear of an impoverished old age.

A large sports ground is maintained by Carreras a few miles from London and here at week-ends healthy, happy people are enjoying well-earned recreation playing every imaginable game. Many other social activities are organised throughout

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the year, including an annual outing to a seaside resort. Transport in both directions, luncheon and tea in a huge marquee, as well as other attractions, are provided.
