

dry it will snap very short. I can hear it. A green cigar is soft, and makes no noise."  
"How old ought a cigar to be?"  
"In two or three weeks in this climate a cigar is dry enough—longer than that does not improve it."

## CIGARS.

### A Comparatively New Branch of Industry—Cuban Workmen—The Importance of the Trade—Effect of the American-Made Cigars on the Cuban Market—How Old a Cigar Should Be.

"Best imported cigars," on sign-board, on painted card, in show windows on Broadway, in the Bowery, in hotels, restaurants, bar-rooms, and at the regular tobacconists. A snare and a delusion! Everybody knows that nine-tenths of the cigars so ticketed and labeled are not imported; that they never saw Havana; that possibly even the leaf they are made of grew in Connecticut and not in Cuba. And yet it is so much the custom for people to be humbugged, that the word imported is understood to mean some pleasing technical term, by which the tobacco-seller can dispose of a cigar for fifteen to twenty-five cents, the real value of which is from five to eight cents. If the Edict of Nantes is notable in the history of trade for having been the main cause of bringing to perfection certain crafts in England brought there by expatriated Frenchmen, in the same way the United States are indebted to Cubans for a revolution made in the cigar trade. Some five years ago the most of us, if we were told by an honest vendor, "that this cigar was made here," would have turned up our noses at it. Possibly we were right, for generally they were execrable. Today, by the introduction of skilled Cuban labor, and by the demand which has arisen for their cigars, Cuban cigars made in New-York are greatly in demand, for if not superior to imported, they are, at least, on an average, quite as good as those made in Havana, and why should they not be? Some of the very best of the Cuban workmen have left the island, and the leaf used by them here is carefully selected by the first makers from the choicest stock for sale in Havana!

The number of Cuban cigar-makers in the United States we believe, from a somewhat careful examination, is full 5,000. These men have founded small factories in Key West, Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New-York and Boston. Mostly they are working fair and free together. The largest factory is in New-York, where some sixty find employment. The fast-increasing importance of the Cuban cigar trade in the United States is evident from the effect it is producing in Cuba. From the *Diario de la Marina*, a Spanish organ, we learn that this year the amount of tobacco exported to this country was sixty per cent. greater than in 1870, and that the decrease in the shipment of cigars, though not summed up, was very great. Aside from the commercial question, it assumes somewhat of a political importance. To a man, all Cuban cigar-makers in the United States are patriots, and bitterly opposed to Spain. From their wages they contribute largely to the cause of Cuban liberty. Every whiff, then, of cigar smoke blown in New-York from a Cuban cigar made here, means so much powder and ball to be sent to the island for its emancipation. It is rather difficult to explain in what lies the precise difference between a cigar made by an American or German and a Cuban. As shown to the writer, it seems that other nationalities than Cubans, in making a cigar, generally pick up what rough tobacco constitutes a bunch in a very helter-skelter way, whereas the Cuban is careful to lay his pieces of leaf in the bunch side by side, so as to assure the burning of it evenly. Then, again, the German uses a binder, which the Cuban discards. In the manipulation, the Cuban makes the cigar, all but putting on the wrapper, in his hand, while the German continually rolls and molds his cigar on his board. A Cuban cigar-maker generally avoids making a very close cigar at the butt, and mostly manages to make his work so exact to the size that very little trimming of the square end of the cigar is necessary. Nothing could exceed the skill of these workmen. Each finger had apparently a function of its own. The greatest nicety seemed to be necessary to make the point of the cigar. A more orderly, quiet set of workmen we never saw. One incident, which we are pleased to note, was that while working, a man was reading aloud to them in Spanish. On inquiry, we found he read to them two or three hours every day—that he was paid for his services. The book he was reading was the history of the United States. After the cigar is made, they are divided into firsts, seconds, thirds and fourths, according to excellence of shape and make, and are then reassorted as to colors. The workman who does this is called the *escojedor*, or selector. Of course, between a *Maduro* and a *Claro*, the difference is apparent, but a clever *escojedor* can make nearly a dozen intermediate shades. The price paid to good workmen is quite liberal. They work at so much a thousand, according to size. For *Regalias*, they get \$30 M; for *Colas*, \$20. About 250 *Regalias* is a very good day's work—about 175 to 200 is the average. The assorter of *Colas* can make \$5 to \$8 per diem. Wages are from \$4 to \$6 higher than in Havana.

Of course the skill of the workmen has much to do with the proper smoking of the cigar. The best tobacco put in a cigar, requiring a plaster to make it draw, would be worthless. The great improvement in the cigar business has arisen from the fact that the Cubans, with their knowledge of what tobacco crop or *vega* on the island produced such and such a cigar, or the mixtures of certain tobaccos other brands, have been enabled to make better selections of tobacco.

Some four years ago, before the Cuban revolution, but one-fiftieth, perhaps, of the tobacco sent here from the island was even of 1, 2, or 3 quality; today fully one-fourth is of good grade, and the demand for the finest leaf is on the increase. The old adage is found to be as applicable in cigars as to the making of puddings: "Put good things in and good things will come out." Gradually prejudice is being overcome in regard to Cuban cigars. Perhaps it would be better for the trade if they discarded entirely the imitation of the Havana brands. In regard to this, they assert their willingness to do so, but the consumers insist on keeping up the illusion. One of the largest Cuban cigar manufacturers in Water-street has emancipated himself from the plan of copying with Chinese accuracy the Havana marks, and brands of his own name find a ready demand in the market.

The question of how old a cigar should be before being smoked is often a disputed one. Cubans like a green cigar. The workmen, who ought to know, smoke the cigars as they make them. If you go to a certain well-known cigar-store in Nassau-street, already quite celebrated for its Cuban cigars made in the City, and buy a cigar there, before handing it to you the very courteous Cuban will with great deliberation first apply the clear to his ear. You ask, "What is that for?"

"To see, or rather hear, how dry it is. If too