

JAMES I, ENGLAND

A COUNTER-BLASTE TO
TOBACCO

James I, King of England
A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco

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King James I

A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco

To The Reader

As euery humane body (*deare Countrey men*) how wholesome soeuer, be notwithstanding subiect, or at least naturally inclined to some sorts of diseases, or infirmities: so is there no Common-wealth, or Body-politicke, how well gouerned, or peaceable soeuer it bee, that lacks the owne popular errors, and naturally enclined corruptions: and therefore is it no wonder, although this our Countrey and Common-wealth, though peaceable, though wealthy, though long flourishing in both, be amongst the rest, subiect to the owne naturall infirmities. We are of all Nations the people most louing and most reuerently obedient to our Prince, yet are wee (as time has often borne witnesse) too easie to be seduced to make Rebellion, vpon very slight grounds. Our fortunate and off prooued valour in warres abroad, our heartie and reuerent obedience to our Princes at home, hath bred vs a long, and a thrice happy peace: Our Peace hath bred wealth: And Peace and wealth hath brought foorth a generall sluggishnesse, which makes vs wallow in all sorts of idle delights, and soft delicacies, The first seedes of the subuersion of all great Monarchies. Our Cleargie are become negligent and lazie, our Nobilitie and Gentrye prodigall,

and solde to their priuate delights, Our Lawyers couetous, our Common-people prodigall and curious; and generally all sorts of people more carefull for their priuate ends, then for their mother the Common-wealth. For remedie whereof, it is the Kings (as the proper Phisician of his Politicke-body) to purge it of all those diseases, by Medicines meete for the same: as by a certaine milde, and yet iust form of gouernment, to maintaine the Publicke quietnesse, and preuent all occasions of Commotion: by the example of his owne Person and Court, to make vs all ashamed of our sluggish delicacie, and to stirre vs up to the practise againe of all honest exercises, and Martiall shadowes of VVarre; As likewise by his, and his Courts moderatenesse in Apparell, to make vs ashamed of our prodigalitie: By his quicke admonitions and carefull overseeing of the Cleargie to waken them vp againe, to be more diligent in their Offices: By the sharpe triall, and seuer punishment of the partiall, couetous and bribing Lawyers, to reforme their corruptions: And generally by the example of his owne Person, and by the due execution of good Lawes, to reform and abolish, piece and piece, these old and euill grounded abuses. For this will not bee Opus vnius diei, but as euery one of these diseases, must from the King receiue the owne cure proper for it, so are there some sorts of abuses in Common-wealths, that though they be of so base and contemptible a condition, as they are too low for the Law to looke on, and too meane for a King to interpone his authoritie, or bend his eye vpon: yet are they corruptions, as well as the greatest of them. So is an Ant an

Animal, as well as an Elephant: so is a VVrenne Auis, as well as a Swanne, and so is a small dint of the Toothake, a disease as well as the fearefull Plague is. But for these base sorts of corruption in Common-wealthes, not onely the King, or any inferior Magistrate, but Quilibet è populo may serve to be a Phisician, by discovering and impugning the error, and by perswading reformation thereof.

And surely in my opinion, there cannot be a more base, and yet hurtfull corruption in a Countrey, then is the vile vse (or other abuse) of taking Tobacco in this Kingdome, which hath moued me, shortly to discover the abuses thereof in this following little Pamphlet.

If any thinke it a light Argument, so it is but a toy that is bestowed upon it. And since the Subiect is but of Smoke, I thinke the fume of an idle braine, may serue for a sufficient battery against so fumous and feeble an enemy. If my grounds be found true, it is all I looke for; but if they cary the force of perswasion with them, it is all I can wish, and more than I can expect. My onely care is, that you, my deare Countrey-men, may rightly conceiue euen by this smallest trifle, of the sinceritie of my meaning in great matters, never to spare any

*paine that may tend to the
procuring of your weale
and prosperitie.*

A Covnter-Blaste To Tobacco

That the manifold abuses of this vile custome of *Tobacco* taking, may the better be espied, it is fit, that first you enter into consideration both of the first originall thereof, and likewise of the reasons of the first entry thereof into this Countrey. For certainly as such customes, that haue their first institution either from a godly, necessary, or honorable ground, and are first brought in, by the meanes of some worthy, vertuous, and great Personage, are euer, and most iustly, holden in great and reuerent estimation and account, by all wise, vertuous, and temperate spirits: So should it by the contrary, iustly bring a great disgrace into that sort of customes, which hauing their originall from base corruption and barbarity, doe in like sort, make their first entry into a Countrey, by an inconsiderate and childish affectation of Noueltie, as is the true case of the first inuention of *Tobacco* taking, and of the first entry thereof among vs. For *Tobacco* being a common herbe, which (though vnder diuers names) growes almost euerywhere, was first found out by some of the barbarous *Indians*, to be a Preseruative, or Antidot against the Pockes, a filthy disease, whereunto these barbarous people are (as all men know) very much subiect, what through the vncleanly and adust constitution of their bodies, and what through the intemperate heate of their Climate: so that as from them was first brought into Christendome, that most detestable disease, so from

them likewise was brought this vse of *Tobacco*, as a stinking and vnsauorie Antidot, for so corrupted and execrable a Maladie, the stinking Suffumigation whereof they yet vse against that disease, making so one canker or venime to eate out another.

And now good Countrey men let vs (I pray you) consider, what honour or policie can moou vs to imitate the barbarous and beastly maners of the wilde, godlesse, and slauish *Indians*, especially in so vile and stinking a custome? Shall wee disdain to imitate the maners of our neighbour *France* (hauing the stile of the first Christian Kingdom) and that cannot endure the spirit of the Spaniards (their King being now comparable in largenes of Dominions to the great Emperor of *Turkie*). Shall wee, I say, that haue bene so long ciuill and wealthy in Peace, famous and inuincible in Warre, fortunate in both, we that haue bene euer able to aide any of our neighbours (but neuer deafed any of their eares with any of our supplications for assistance) shall we, I say, without blushing, abase our selues so farre, as to imitate these beastly *Indians*, slaves to the *Spaniards*, refuse to the world, and as yet aliens from the holy Couenant of God? Why doe we not as well imitate them in walking naked as they doe? in preferring glasses, feathers, and such toyes, to golde and precious stones, as they do? yea why do we not denie God and adore the Deuill, as they doe?¹

Now to the corrupted basenesse of the first vse of this

¹ This argument is merely that because an inferior race has made a discovery, a superior one would be debasing itself by making use of it.

Tobacco, doeth very well agree the foolish and groundlesse first entry thereof into this Kingdome. It is not so long since the first entry of this abuse amongst vs here, as this present age cannot yet very well remember, both the first Author,² and the forme of the first introduction of it amongst vs. It was neither brought in by King, great Conquerour, nor learned Doctor of Phisicke.

With the report of a great discouery for a Conquest, some two or three Sauage men, were brought in, together with this Sauage custome. But the pitie is, the poore wilde barbarous men died, but that vile barbarous custome is yet aliue,³ yea in fresh vigor: so as it seemes a miracle to me, how a custome springing from so vile a ground, and brought in by a father so generally hated, should be welcomed vpon so slender a warrant. For if they that first put it in practise heere, had remembred for what respect it was vsed by them from whence it came, I am sure they would haue bene loath, to haue taken so farre the imputation of that disease vpon them as they did, by vsing the cure thereof. For *Sanis non est opus medico*, and counter-poisons are neuer vsed, but where poyson is thought to precede.

² By Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the greatest and most learned men of the age, whose head the author cut off, partly influenced, no doubt, by his detestation of tobacco. Smokers may therefore look upon the author of the "History of the World" as the first martyr in their cause.

³ A centenarian has recently died, the papers relate, who, till within a few days of his death, was in perfect health, having been a constant smoker, but was unfortunately induced by his friends to give up the habit, from which moment he rapidly sank. Probably these barbarians were affected in the same manner.

But since it is true, that diuers customes slightly grounded, and with no better warrant entred in a Commonwealth, may yet in the vse of them thereafter, prooue both necessary and profitable; it is therefore next to be examined, if there be not a full Sympathie and true Proportion, betweene the base ground and foolish entrie, and the loathsome, and hurtfull vse of this stinking Antidote.

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