

XXXVIII. RAISING TOBACCO.

In the early days of Marshall County every farmer who used tobacco, and some who did not, raised a small patch every year s regularly as they did lettuce and onions and beets and cabbage and other garden truck. At that time there was very little of what was called "boughten tobacco" to be had, and what there was, was known as "Kentucky pig-tail." It was soaked in licorice, was a black as tar, and was altogether villainous stuff. Some of the tobacco raised here then was of fairly good quality, and after having the habit of using it firmly fixed it answered the purpose, and was as good - or more properly, bad - as much of the imported stuff in use nowadays.

It was a dreadful ordeal one had to go through with to accustom himself to the use of tobacco, and it was equally as hard to rid himself of the habit after it had been acquired.

The writer remembers as vividly as if it were only yesterday his first effort at learning to chew tobacco. It was the home grown weed. Nearly every boy in those days deemed it necessary to use tobacco. The boy who couldn't chew the stuff and squirt the "ambier" - to use a word coined for the purpose - didn't amount to a ---!

It was on a summer day. He was resting from the day's labor in a fence corner in the shade of a tree when the man who was with him asked him to take a chew of tobacco. He concluded that was as good a time as any to begin and bit off a large mouthful and went at it. For a time all went well, but presently a sickly feeling came over him and it was not long until he heaved up Jonah to beat the band! Sick! Well! Don't talk! A sicker child you never saw! He parted with everything from the top of his head to the soles of his feet! He saw all the stars in the heavens above; the aurora borealis quivering in the northern hemisphere, and felt several distinct shocks of earthquake! Finally he managed to get to the house, where his mother almost went beside herself, being sure he had the cholera! The true state of affairs was divulged and after sassafras and sage tea had been administered and the proper antidotes applied, life began to return, and by the next morning he had fully recovered.

The reader may think that this experience ended his efforts to learn to use the filthy stuff! Not so! The neighboring boys had mastered the art and were squirting the tobacco juice with as much gusto as the biggest man in the neighborhood! So he determined to learn to chew tobacco or die in the attempt. And he did, and after a while the habit became so firmly fixed on his system that when he wanted to quit it he found it was almost impossible to do so. He determined, however, not to be a slave to tobacco or anything else, and long ago quit it entirely, forever and a day.