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TOBACCO

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This invention relates to the treatment of tobacco, and has for its object certain improvements in the method of treating tobacco as well as in the treated tobacco as an article of manufacture.

One of the most important considerations that enters into the question of the quality of a smoke, be it a cigarette or a cigar, is its moisture content. Throughout the various stages of manufacture, the control of the correct moisture content is most important. If the percentage of moisture (water content) falls too low, the resulting dryness causes brittleness of the tobacco, accompanied by breakage and the formation of dust. On the contrary, if the moisture is allowed to become and remain too high, a condition of mouldiness, and perhaps fermentation, is liable to result. It is the aim of the tobacco manufacturer to have his finished product contain the correct amount of moisture to preserve not only physical pliability and softness, but the subtle flavor and smoke-taste, which is characteristic of a tobacco having a correctly balanced moisture content. This condition, by means of the modern machinery now used by the manufacturer, and the methods of control now followed, is easily achieved; the finished product leaves the factory in the correct condition of moisture.

It is after the product reaches the hands of the distributor, or the consumer, that the problem begins because incipient and more or less continuous drying sets in. A dry cigar, or a dry cigarette, or a dry pipe mixture is distasteful to most smokers. It has an unpleasant, stinging quality when smoked. The manufacturer attempts to guard against the loss of moisture after the product leaves his factory by packing the product in moisture-proof wrappings and containers. This accounts for the use of metal foil, and of waxed, moisture-proof and glassine paper in cigarette containers. Certain type of containers used for cigars and pipe mixtures have also for their object the maintenance of correct moisture content. Various types of "humidifiers" are employed in cigar display counters and storerooms to prevent this undesirable drying-out of tobacco.

However, when the cigar or cigarette reaches the hands of the smoker and the container is opened, unless the tobacco is immediately consumed, drying sets in. Tobacco is an hydroscopic substance; it gives off or takes on moisture according to the temperature and moisture content of the particular atmosphere in which it is kept. In the highly heated air of modern residences and office buildings, it dries out rapidly.

As a result of my investigations, I have determined that this tendency of tobacco to dry out, and hence change its flavor, can be offset in large part by the application to the tobacco, preferably while in process of manufacture, of certain organic substances which, while not deliquescent in the exact meaning of the word, tend by their presence to hold moisture and retard evaporation. Among such substances are gelatine, certain soaps and seaweed or its products such as agar-agar. Gelatine derived from animal matter is soluble in hot water but forms a jelly mass in cold water and a small amount will, in the jelly form, take up and tend to hold a much larger amount of water. Agar-agar is a refined seaweed which will hold water for a considerable length of time. It may contain a small amount of sea salt which is deliquescent.

A suitable deliquescent compound evenly distributed over or through the tobacco in the proper amount will substantially maintain the desired moisture content. The amount of water which the various substances will absorb is known and hence the amount of the compound can easily be determined when the desired moisture content of the tobacco is determined. The quantity of compound required would also be dependent upon the character and quantity of flavoring materials used.

The treatment compounds or mixture of compounds may be applied to the tobacco in aqueous solution or in a solution of other suitable liquid. It may be applied in finely divided form and evenly distributed over the tobacco or may be mixed or added to or dissolved in the usual "casing" or flavoring liquids which are sprayed upon or otherwise applied to the tobacco in process of manufacture.

The taste will not be materially affected by the salt or compound thus applied, and any slight effect can be taken care of by the usual flavoring liquid used.

It will thus be seen that in the practice of the present invention if one or more of these substances is mixed with or incorporated in the tobacco it will greatly retard the rate of evaporation and cause the tobacco to maintain its moisture content for a much longer period after exposure to the atmosphere than is otherwise the case.

I claim:

1. A smoking tobacco mixture comprising tobacco and a moisture-containing gelatinous ma-

terial which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

2. A smoking tobacco mixture comprising tobacco and moisture-containing gelatin which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

3. A smoking tobacco mixture comprising tobacco and a gelatinous material from seaweed which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

4. A smoking tobacco mixture comprising tobacco and moisture-containing agar agar which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

5. A method of preparing a smoking tobacco mixture which comprises mixing with tobacco, a moisture-containing gelatinous material, which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

6. A method of preparing a smoking tobacco mixture which comprises mixing with tobacco, a water solution of gelatin, which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

7. A method of preparing a smoking tobacco mixture which comprises coating the tobacco with a water solution of a gelatinous material which tends to retain the moisture in the tobacco.

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