

HOW TO CARE FOR A MEERSCHAUM.

Some of the Troubles That Smokers Have in Coloring Their Pet Pipes.

"Smokers are continually writing to me to ask how to take care of their meerschaum pipes," said a dealer of Fulton street. "From that I infer that not half of the owners of meerschaum pipes know how to handle them. The most common complaint is that their meerschaum will not turn from the natural yellowish-white color to a rich brown even after the smokers have smoked themselves into the color of a dried mummy in the effort. If the pipe is of good meerschaum, there is no reason why it should not take color. If it does not do so, then the fault lies with the smoker. In what way? Why the purchaser of a new meerschaum, worth perhaps \$50, thinks night and day about the toy, and is so anxious to color it that he overdoes it. He finds that he has "burned" his pipe, as he expresses it. To explain why you can spoil a pipe in this way, you must understand how the meerschaum is prepared. After the artist has finished cutting the design and has shaped the bowl, the finished pipe is boiled in wax. Why in wax? Because the wax penetrates the pores for a short distance beneath the surface and serves to keep the coloring matter in the pipe. The coloring matter is the oil of tobacco, not nicotine as many erroneously suppose, and it sinks into the meerschaum, which is simply a very fine, porous clay, and is stopped by the wax before it is driven out at the outer surface by the heat inside. If it were not for the wax the coloring matter would pass out and get rubbed off, and the pipe would never be colored. A glazing of glass would do as well as wax, but wax is the cheapest material that has been found for the purpose. Now, when overanxious smokers try to hurry the process of coloring by smoking pipeful after pipeful of tobacco the wax is driven out, leaving the pipe raw and dry. The nearer to the top of the bowl the wax is kept the finer it will look when colored. If this was more generally known you would not see so many meerschaum pipes with a dirty, light-yellow ring around the top where the oil has been forced out by over-smoking. The smoker should take a long, slow pull at the pipe, and after one pipeful is exhausted the pipe should be laid down to cool off before it is filled again."

"It seems to be an art with very little fun in it, this coloring a meerschaum pipe."

"Smoke temperately, my boy, as you should do everything else, and there's no trouble or disappointment following. Next to coloring a pipe, I have most complaints about finding the pipe broken when no one has been using it. If smokers would take care not to break their pipes while they are smoking from a warm room into a cold room, or out of doors into a cold room, they would not find their pipes broken so often. Another thing, the article should not be laid on a marble mantel or other cold substance immediately after smoking. Fine meerschaums with delicate carvings are sure to crack. The reason is that when heated the pipe expands, and after one suddenly contracting, it snaps."

"It seems that a meerschaum pipe needs as much attention as a baby."

"That's a mistake. You can take too much care of it. Many smokers begin by making a close cover of chamois leather to fit the pipe, so that they will not have to handle the bowl. After they have smoked for a while, and are curious to see how the coloring is going on, they take off the chamois skin covering, and behold, the pipe is covered with blotches, and it is ruined. The chamois skin has absorbed the wax while the pipe was hot. It is dangerous to put any covering on the bowl."

"Must the bowl never be touched?"

"Not while the pipe is hot. Then the wax on the outside is disturbed, and if there is perspiration on the fingers a gray spot appears wherever the bowl is touched. As to the effect of perspiration on the bowl, I have two customers who cannot keep a pipe colored. It turns out an ashy gray. I have even had bowls colored for them, but it was just the same. In a few months they turned the same color. In all my experience I have heard of only these two whose pipes served them such a trick." —New York Sun.

Death in the Dish-Cloth.

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