

acknowledged to be of comparatively recent introduction, when we call to remembrance that that strange people preceeded Europe in wood engraving, printing, the compass, and others of the most important of modern discoveries, there would be no just cause of surprise should it be proved that to them also we must ascribe such merit as pertains to the initiative in the uses to which tobacco is applied. Such evidence, however, must not be too hastily accepted; for a profoundly scientific botanist, though an altogether trustworthy authority in relation to the habitat of the plant, may be very little qualified to pronounce an opinion on the value of such Chinese monumental evidence as Dr. Meyen loosely refers to under the designation of "very old sculptures."

The Koran has been appealed to, and its modern versions even furnish the American name. A traditional prophecy of Mahomet is also quoted by Sale, which while it contradicts the assumed existence of tobacco in his time, foretells that: "in the latter days there shall be men bearing the name of moslem, but not really such, and they shall smoke a certain weed which shall be called tobacco!"* If the prophecy did not bear on the face of it such unmistakeable evidence of being the invention of some moslem ascetic of later times, it would furnish no bad proof of Mahomet's right to the title of "the false prophet," for Sale quotes in the same preliminary discourse to his edition of the Koran, the Persian proverb "coffee without tobacco is meat without salt." An appeal to the graphic pictures of eastern social habits in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," furnishes strong evidence against the ancient knowledge of a custom now so universal; and in so far as such negative evidence may be esteemed of any value, the pages of our own Shakespeare seem equally conclusive, though, as will be seen, the practice had not only been introduced into England, but was becoming familiarly known before his death.

The "drinking tobacco," as smoking was at first termed, from the mode of partaking of its fumes then practiced, finds apt illustration in the language of our great dramatist. The poet, in "Timon," speaks of the sycophantish followers of the noble Athenian "through him drinking free air;" in the "Tempest" Ariel, eager in her master's service, exclaims: "I drink the air before me," and in "Antony and Cleopatra," the Egyptian Queen thus wrathfully pictures the indignities of a Roman triumph:—

* Sale's Koran 8vo. Lond. 1812. p. 164.