

The other narcotic : addressed especially and earnestly to abstainers from intoxicants / by Mrs. Hind Smith.

Contributors

Hind Smith, Mrs.
Anti-Narcotic League (Manchester, England)

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THE OTHER NARCOTIC.

(Addressed especially and earnestly to Abstainers from Intoxicants.)

BY MRS. HIND SMITH.

I AM aware that my subject is a somewhat delicate one. It affects the daily practice of some of my best friends, and is, alas! becoming more and more interwoven with the habits of society. At the very outset I wish it to be distinctly understood that my objections and protests against the use of tobacco are not from *prejudice*, but on principle, and although some may hold opinions contrary, I am obliged to believe that in most instances opinions contrary to my own are held either through ignorance of facts, or from the partiality with which people usually defend an indulgence—*because they like it*. Probably if they would consider the subject, they would take the same view as I do.

I have not formed my opinions from those of others, but if personal influence is to be acknowledged at all in their formation, I may say how much I owe to the intelligent views held on this subject by the best of fathers and brothers, and subsequently by the best of husbands. It has been my privilege to associate with those who have made a stand in this matter; and so seriously do I regard myself that I do not court argument and discussion, but rather the honour of persuading my friends and especially my fellow-abstainers to think over the matter seriously, both as regards their well-being and their influence upon others. I have not space to go into the point of *influence*. As teetotalers, we admit its importance in relation to the drink. Our practice has not merely a selfish and personal object, but, while securing our own safety by abstinence, we stretch out over others the influence of our example and precept. In the same way ought we not, with so high an aim in one direction, to desire that *all* we do should be on the right side—the side we can safely urge everyone to take? What better proof can we give of the depth of our own religious convictions, and the earnestness of our faith in Christianity, than to say with St. Paul, “I would to God that thou and all that hear me were

both almost and altogether such as I am." And so in reference to this and other fields of conviction, let us be true ourselves, and never practise what we cannot earnestly commend to others.

I maintain that the use of tobacco is—

- (1) UNNATURAL;
- (2) DANGEROUS;
- (3) SELF-INDULGENT;
- (4) SELFISH;
- (5) ENSLAVING;
- (6) TENDS TO DRINKING;
- (7) IS LARGELY PATRONISED BY THE LOWEST OF THE LOW.

In taking up these points, I may say they are only some out of many. The *physiological* question, for example, I leave almost untouched, and I cannot do better than refer all who wish to study this phase of the subject to various high-class pamphlets which are courteously forwarded to any address by the secretary of the Anti-Narcotic League, 56, Peter Street, Manchester.

1. The use of tobacco is *unnatural*.—Medical writers, without exception, describe tobacco as a poison. Its essential principle, nicotine, is of such deadly properties, that less than the tenth of a grain will kill a middle-sized dog in three minutes, and enough tobacco-tea can be made from a single cigar to kill two strong men. If it be asked how any smoker can survive such a poison, I reply that Providence has given the human system immense power to fight against adverse influences. People in Styria get used to arsenic and eat it regularly, just as elsewhere men and women innure themselves to doses of laudanum and alcohol that would kill a beginner outright. It has been truly said, however, that "in the physical world there is no forgiveness of sins," and in all these cases there is in the end a heavy bill to pay. The opinion of one of England's greatest physicians, Sir Benjamin Brodie, with regard to tobacco smoking cannot be too often quoted:—

"From the best observations which I have been able to make, I am led to believe that *there are very few who do not suffer harm from it, to a greater or less extent.* . . . From cases which have fallen under my observation, and from a consideration of all the circumstances, I cannot entertain a doubt that, if we could obtain accurate statistics on the subject, we should find that *the value of life in inveterate smokers is considerably below the average.* Nor is this opinion in any degree contradicted by the fact that there are individuals who, in spite of the inhalation of tobacco smoke, live to be old, and without any material derangement of the health; analogous exceptions to the general rule being met with in the case of

those who have indulged too freely in the use of spirituous and fermented liquors. . . . But a still graver question remains to be considered. What will be the result if this habit be continued by future generations? It is but too true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children and their children's children."

But supposing we knew nothing of the poisonous properties of tobacco, we need go no further than what we see every day to know that it is unnatural in the double sense of the word. No one has a natural desire for it. It is not pleasant to children, like food, drink, warmth, exercise, sweet-meats, and so on. The taste is wholly an acquired one, and, further, tobacco goes against nature. Nature *rebels*, and by headaches, nausea, languor, loss of appetite, and sometimes loss of sleep, protests against it. The symptoms may vary according to different constitutions, but the exceptions are very rare, if to be found at all, where tobacco has not had to be persevered in before nature has yielded to its sway. Again, the *act* of smoking is unnatural. Is it not evident that it is contrary to the natural uses of the mouth, throat, nose, and the organs connected with them, being both injurious and offensive to their delicate structure?

2. The use of tobacco is *dangerous*. This follows partly from the fact that it is a poison. All poisons are dangerous, and should only be used, if at all, *under* necessity, and very cautiously. For this poison we deny that there is any necessity; but, alas we see but little caution. The injury is often slowly, but none the less surely done. Many a man is to-day injuring himself in body, mind, and soul by this habit, which he gradually and thoughtlessly acquired, but which he cannot throw off without a struggle—possibly a desperate one. Beware, then, of the dangers of the habit—the danger of being mastered by it; the danger of going beyond the "safe" limit, if any such there be; the danger of being led into undesirable if not evil company;—and, further, even *if* safe yourself, the danger of others being led by your example into a path from which you cannot extricate them. To other dangers I need not do more than refer. Thousands of lives in collieries and elsewhere have been sacrificed, and incalculable amounts of valuable property destroyed, by fires on land and sea, through the recklessness of smokers bent on the gratification of their passion.

3. The use of tobacco is a *self-indulgent* habit. We want every help to action, self-denial, and self-control; and any habit which induces idleness and apathy lessens the chances of our ultimate victory in the battle of life. We are told to "lay aside every weight," as well as "the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us." And is not the use of tobacco a "weight" to many a runner in this race? To indulge in smoking seems to me the very opposite of being "sober,

vigilant,"—of "girding up the loins of our mind,"—of "walking circumspectly,"—"redeeming the time,"—"doing all to the glory of God,"—"denying ourselves," etc. It seems to me much more like putting off our armour than putting it on; more like being led captive, than resisting; more like swimming *with* the tide, than breasting the wave. There are surely hindrances enough to our progress upward and onward, in our conflict with evil in ourselves and in our poor world, without taking up a needless luxury, indulgence in which we *know* cannot do ourselves or our neighbours any real benefit. A habit which begins with self-indulgence and tends to destroy self-control cannot be a good habit.

4. The use of tobacco is *selfish*. First as to the expense. What a man spends on tobacco is shared by no one in his family: a copper spent on a newspaper, sixpence spent on a book or ornament for his house, ten shillings spent on a new piece of furniture—these sums cannot be called selfish expenditure, because all share the benefit; but no one shares the tobacco money. Moreover, the habit which tobacco fosters, of spending on self, grows, to the neglect of positive claims. During the last thirty years the annual amount consumed in Britain has increased from 14 oz. per head to 22 oz., and the national tobacco bill has reached the prodigious total of £15,000,000! How many solid home comforts and necessities might not such a sum have purchased, to say nothing of the multitudes of destitute or distressed cases it might have rescued or relieved? Men excuse themselves on the score of the necessity of being soothed and comforted by tobacco in the midst of the care and worries of life. Then why not recommend their mothers, wives, and daughters to try it too? For, taken as a whole, women have far more worry than men in their daily life, and *their* labour is not confined to "nine hours!"

But the selfishness of smoking is not only seen in those who spend on themselves what might be better spent for the benefit of their families. The habit is positively *annoying* to others, and although this is well known it is nevertheless indulged in everywhere and on all occasions. I quite agree with Dr. Gibbons, who says, "A man has no right to make himself repulsive to those with whom he comes in contact." English custom condemns the American vice of *chewing* as objectionable, but does not smoking invade other people's rights more obtrusively! Chewing is a disagreeable personal habit; but smoking tobacco in other people's faces, vitiating the air that others would prefer to breathe pure, and, uninvited, scenting other people's clothes, is a public offence. This may be considered a strong opinion, but it is mine. I hold that no one has a right to impose an annoyance on others for his own gratification.

5. The use of tobacco is *enslaving*. Sir Isaac Newton refused to smoke, replying, "I will make no necessities to myself." It is admitted

by most smokers that what was, at first, "no necessity" to them, has in the end become such,—not merely by habit, which always becomes masterful with us, but by the very nature of the narcotic. Again and again have I been told that it is easier to give up drinking than smoking. What does that mean? It means that there is *slavery* in tobacco. Once let a man indulge freely and habitually in this practice, and he has bound himself with chains hard to snap. The experience of Charles Lamb is well known and very striking. He acknowledged, in truly touching language, the chains by which he was bound.

Read a preacher's confession as follows:—"More than fifty year's ago I learned to love tobacco. For years I have loved it better than my food. I have believed that I was a *slave* to it. I was satisfied I did not use it to glorify God. I have many times, in twenty-five years past, tried to quit my tobacco, but did not succeed. So strong was my love and desire for it, that it seemed as though I could not live without it. The last day of December, 1870, I spent the day in beseeching God, with strong crying and tears, to help me. I told Him that I believed He required me to leave my tobacco, but I had used it so long, and loved it so well, that I never could quit it without His assistance. I pleaded as I rarely ever did before. The good Lord heard and answered my prayer. I have used no tobacco since. I seem to have a new life. For more than fifty years my whole body was so filled with tobacco that I was not myself as I am now. For years I could not rest at nights. If I retired early, I could not get any sleep before the clock struck eleven, and rarely before twelve; sometimes not until three a.m. Now I retire at eight or nine o'clock, and immediately fall asleep, and awake in seven or eight hours greatly refreshed, glorifying God for His love to me."

An eminent minister once said, "I would lay down one hundred pounds gladly at any time if I could give up smoking." Dr. Stock, of Huddersfield, in his "Confessions of an Old Smoker," said that no one ever enjoyed the weed more than he did, and no one ever had a harder fight to give it up. He reckons the abandonment of smoking among the greatest moral victories that he was ever enabled to gain over himself. His deliverance he ascribes to a higher power than his own. No man knows better than he how tremendously strong is the fascination of the habit. The whole of his little book is worth perusing, as showing that I have not exaggerated facts in saying that the use of tobacco is *enslaving*.

I have dwelt at greater length on this phase of the subject, because I think it is the most important one. If such is the bondage in which tobacco holds its slaves, how much need is there for us all to set our face against the first beginning! I rejoice to know that the Juvenile

Templars' pledge includes abstinence from all narcotics; but let the children be strengthened in this by the example and precept of adult abstainers. I ask the latter for their own safety, and for the sake of example, to abstain from tobacco. If the habit be already formed, let them take encouragement from the victory achieved by others, and spare no pains to save the young men and lads. "How little," Professor Kirk says, "does the boy-smoker think that he is, perhaps, making himself a miserable slave for life!"

6. The use of tobacco tends to *drinking*. It has been said, "Smoking is one of the legs upon which drunkenness rests. Another writer says, "The use of tobacco is one of the most powerful accessories of the temptations to drinking which surround British youth. The late Dr. Jas. Hamilton remarked, "Extinguish the pipes of London and you will go far to shut up the public-houses." I am quite aware that it is urged by those who defend tobacco that it is easier to give up one bad habit than two, and that as drinking is the worse of the two, we should be satisfied if a man gives that up and comforts himself with the other. But I am much of Dr. Gibbons' opinion, "The use of tobacco tends to vitiate the sense of taste and to create unnatural and morbid thirst, which craves some other means of gratification than the pure and wholesome beverage provided by the Creator. In this way it leads to the use of strong drink, and becomes the stepping-stone to intemperance." Moreover, the associations are very strong between smoking and drinking—"the pipe and the pot." The same habit and the same company being maintained, the difficulty is all the greater in keeping off the drink. (It is a fact that in most cases of breach of the "Good Templar obligation" the man has been a smoker. In the Lincolnshire District, for example, a careful investigation proved that the smoking teetotalers were a little more than seven times as liable to break their obligation as the non-smokers! The "Good of the Order," therefore, and its very safety and stability require that this tobacco question shall be fully and fairly discussed in its Lodges.)

7. The use of tobacco is *vulgar*. Here I am touching on very tender ground. By "vulgar," I mean that tobacco is *patronised* by the low, the vulgar, the uncultivated,—what we hold to be really the "lower" classes. (I don't say working classes.) I maintain that the use of tobacco is incompatible with real refinement, and that a man who has an intelligent mind and a good position in life is not true to himself when he contracts a habit in common with a pauper and a tramp. Although I do not say a man is not a gentleman because he smokes, I do say that in that particular he is forgetting himself, if tidiness and cleanliness, and refinement of manners are the true criteria! I rejoice to know that the highest lady in the land long ago put her veto upon smoking in the royal household. If smoking is

defensible at all, surely the argument is in favour of its monopoly by those who make no pretensions to any elevation of mind, and who are aiming at nothing beyond plodding through the lowest levels of life.

In conclusion, let me say that, with all my personal shrinking from the smell of tobacco—the effect on my system being instantaneous, producing headache and nausea in proportion to the length of time I am occasionally and unfortunately obliged to inhale the fumes—yet I would willingly bear the annoyance and inconvenience if I thought anyone really profited thereby. But I know that this is not the effect of the habit, and that the temporary relief it gives is only a relief to suffering and uneasiness which it has *itself created*. Dr. Gibbon justly describes it as “a blessing only where it has become a curse.”

Examine for a moment the phenomena of the habit. During the reaction from a dose, a terrible *ennui* sets in. Can it be wondered at that, whilst in this condition, the poor victim—hodman, literary man, or preacher—is in a state utterly unfit for work? Give him, however, his narcotic, and all his wretchedness disappears—his whole frame is comforted, soothed, and refreshed; and, semi-intoxicated as he is, he blesses and praises tobacco for its wonderful inspiration and stimulus to work.

But now we are brought face to face with a momentous consideration. Spiritual life in the soul is directly hindered by alcohol, tobacco, and all other narcotic “stimulants.” The experience of one minister in regard to tobacco is thus expressed—“While I have seen many honoured and beloved brethren manifestly injured in their spiritual interests by the habit, I have never yet seen one made a better man for it.” And Dr. Stock, in the book already referred to, testifies, “When I gave up smoking, one ligature that bound me to the earth was loosened. I found smoking anything but friendly to a growth in grace, and, on the other hand, I have found decided spiritual advantage from the renunciation of the habit.”

Dear friends, “The time is short.” Our day of usefulness is limited. Let none of us be so anxious to prove how much we may indulge ourselves as how much we may give up for the Lord Jesus, and for our fellow-men, “for whom he died.” And let it never be said that we total abstainers are only half in earnest; that while knocking down one evil habit we are building up another; while attacking the traffic in drink we are countenancing and supporting the tobacco trade. Let us be out-and-out in the reform we seek, and, by our habit and example, as well as by our words, teach the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” “I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

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