

## **A talk with our boys about tobacco / Anti-Narcotic League.**

### **Contributors**

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A  
TALK WITH OUR BOYS  
ABOUT  
TOBACCO.

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SECOND EDITION.

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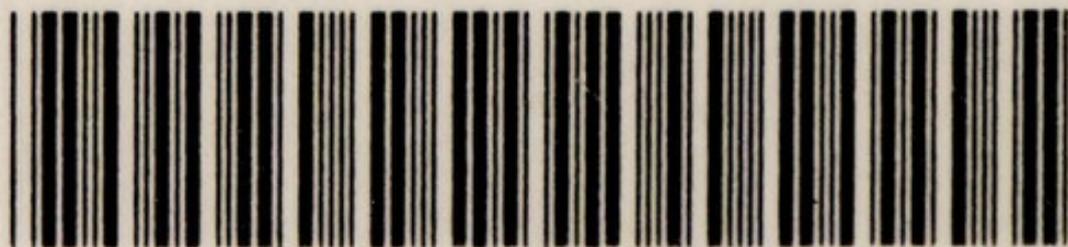
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# A TALK WITH OUR BOYS ABOUT TOBACCO.

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When I was a lad, not so very long ago, a certain old lady used to say to me—"Be in at nine o'clock." "Never drink spirits." "Fear God," and many other wise words; but I took them like pills: needful, but nasty. Many a time have I shrugged my shoulder, and said—"I am tired of so many lectures." But she kept at it till I obeyed; and if I have done any good thing since, it can be traced to her words.

Now, lads, I am going to give *you* a lecture. It will be short, if not sweet. The wise ones among you will say—"Come, now, here is something from a man who was a boy himself not long since; let us hear what he has to say." Let me ask you before I go any

farther—"Do you smoke? No?" Well, never begin, and you will become a nobler man for abstaining. But, perhaps, you answer "Yes." Well, I am not going to scold; but I would like to have a quiet talk with you. Now, tell me—Was not this the beginning of it?—

You saw men smoking; some of your companions smoked; and you thought it would make *you* look manly to smoke. You did not find it pleasant at first, and besides, you were obliged to hide the thing. But there was a spice of romance which made you struggle against the voice of conscience; and so it has gone on till you find yourself a regular smoker!

Now, my lads, this friendly talk of mine is just to help you to break off a very bad habit. And I believe that if you were convinced that it is wrong and hurtful to smoke you would give it up, I shall give you reasons for doing so. You began to smoke because you thought it would make you more like a man. Well, remember:—

It is not good for a boy to be a man.

You are not a man, but a boy; and would you wish to appear what you really are not?

In school there is no one more hated than a fellow who is always bouncing and bragging what he will do, and trying to appear a very big man. Would you care to be like him? While we are boys let us be so. The time will come soon enough when you would give a great deal to be a boy again.

But only think. Is it so manly, after all, to smoke? What men do is not always manly. It is manly to forgive our enemies; but most men hate them. It is manly to deny ourselves some comfort to help those we love; but too many think more about themselves than about anybody else. After all, does it seem a very manly thing to spend money and time in learning to draw smoke into our mouth and then puff it out? The boy does not require it; he is generally sick before he can take it; he spends money which he cannot afford; puts a bad smell into rooms; makes his clothes

stink ; annoys ladies and sick people ; makes himself the slave of a bad habit ; poisons his constitution ; prepares the way for drunkenness ; and often ends by ruining himself and his character for life. Does that strike you as very manly ?

Besides, you have learned to smoke because you wished to be like other people. You did not ask—Can I afford it ? Do I require it ? Will it do me good ? Shall I be setting a right example ? But you yielded to a custom. Now only think what this means. Where would you land yourself if you went on doing like other people ? Other people not far off, take on expenses they cannot meet, borrow money in all quarters, demean themselves, and often leave the country in disgrace. Other people (some of them you know yourself) are fast livers. They go into all kinds of pleasure-seeking and riot, turning night into day,—from the theatre to the ball, from the ball to gin-palaces or clubs, from these to worse places still. “ They are sowing their

wild oats," people say. Now, remember that if you sow wild oats you will reap wild grain. Would you like to follow other people in that style of thing? It is dangerous to do as other people do *unless they are very good people indeed.*

What did one of the best men in the Bible say, when asked to do as other people did? "So did not I." All the best men in England have a mind of their own. If you begin by doing things because other people do them, you will learn to dress more showily than you can afford; you will have a very fine house before you can pay for it, and perhaps fall so low as to wear clothes and use furniture which belong to other people. And would not that be a disgrace? You think I am making too much of a little thing; but—

"Little drops of water, little grains of sand,  
Make the mighty ocean, and Himalaya land."

The world is made of little things; life is made up of little things; and many a little thing becomes a very big thing at last. You have

seen a river. It has generally a very small source? Now, suppose that source were a well of rank poison, so that the river instead of sending through the country pure water which people could drink, and in which you could bathe, which would fertilize the meadows and give us flowers and waving harvests, sent instead poisoned water, which spread death in the fields and villages? What would you think of a man who stood at the poisoned well and said it was only a little one? Would you not say—"Little or big, the well is the fountain of a big river which does a deal of harm, and we had better close it up, or do something else to stop its mischief."

Now, it is because I am convinced that the pipe or cigar is like that poisoned well, that I am anxious you should smoke no more. Listen to my reasons: It is bad for you to begin doing anything which you have to hide from your parents. In most cases boys smoke on the sly at first. A boy who does things on the sly you call a "sneak." Would *you* like

to be called that? Besides, if you conceal it, have you not sometimes to tell a lie? "Have you been smoking?" said your father only last week, because of the smell from your breath. "N—o—o, father," and you had been! That was the lie of a coward, which must be punished in this world and the next. If you learn to tell lies, nobody will trust you even when you speak the truth. If you get a situation you will soon lose it. After a while, when your character is broken, you will become a ruined man, and people will say, "Poor fellow; he had fine prospects, but he made a bad use of them."

But, besides that, smoking is very bad for you. I am not going to argue whether smoking is bad for men or not. It is so, and I can prove it. But it is bad for *you*. All men, whether smokers or non-smokers, whether doctors, or ministers, or teachers, or parents, or friends, agree that smoking is bad for boys. Your body is tender and easily influenced. Tobacco is a poison. It makes you

smaller in size, feebler in mind, leads to other bad habits; you find yourself in danger of getting lazy,—lolling about when you ought to be at work, and finding out that

“Satan finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do.”

It deranges your body, and takes away the healthy appetite you once had for plain substantial food. It creates a very unnatural thirst, which some day you may begin to quench with beer, or gin, or even brandy. Thus it may lead you to become a drunkard.

Evil habits, like evil men, go in company. A great American statesman once remarked, “I don’t say that every smoker is a blackguard, but I will give you a white blackbird for every blackguard you can show me who isn’t a smoker.” All who smoke do not drink spirits; but there are few drunkards who do not smoke; and if you were to become a drunkard, only think for a moment what it means. That man who staggers in rags through the streets, dirty, unshaven, debased, cursing God and annoying men, who falls into the gutter and is rolled in

the mud, who is avoided by his friends and laughed at by his companions, who lives in poverty and dies in misery, leaving a life of anguish for a life of torment, that man is you, my lad, if you follow the same path, as too many smokers do. If you want, then, to be healthy and happy, able to live on plain food, and to need no "stimulants," give up smoking. Only consider what an expensive habit you have acquired. There is an inscription on the monument of a great man in Peel Park, Salford, which you should look at carefully: "My wealth consists not in the abundance of my possessions, but in the fewness of my wants." He who feels and acts on this must become a good and useful man.

You are beginning life. Most of you wish to get rich. Well, if you are "rich toward God," and wish for wealth to enable you to make thousands of other people happy and blessed, that is right enough. But without Christ, the richest are merely like the rich ones of Laodicea, whom He said were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,

and naked." The grand old Bible, which I hope you read often, says, "That a man's life (happiness) consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses;" and that is very true. True wealth is in having a wise, happy, and generous mind—a new heart, which God gives to all who, as lost sinners, ask pardon and peace through Jesus Christ. Nobody can take from them these "heavenly riches."

But you wish money in order to increase your power and influence for good? How are you going to make it? There is a true saying that it is not what comes in, but what goes out which makes men rich. Those who have plenty now were generally poor enough one time, but they were careful—denied themselves many comforts to begin with, and by that means gained a little capital, which has now become a great deal. Some men become rich by evil means, but you would not like to do so. Now the expensive habit of smoking will certainly keep you from getting on. And if you wish to make yourself a good and successful man, you will

do well to begin by avoiding all unnecessary expense.

There is a very strange story which tells about certain people who were punished by being made to carry water out of a well in a sieve. Now, that is like some people; they are at a well from which they must draw water; but they make holes in the dish till it becomes a sieve, and the water flows out as fast as it comes in. Every fresh need which you make, such as smoking, wearing jewellery, expensive clothes, going to theatres and concerts, is making so many more holes, and as fast as your salary comes in, it goes out again. This will do you much harm, and bring you into many difficulties. I knew a man who went into debt from which he found it hard to recover. He borrowed money, but it was no use, the more he got, the more he wanted; till his friends were tired, and gave him the cold shoulder. He fell into low spirits, became consumptive, and died in debt. *He began his own ruin by learning to smoke.* What a wretched thing it is for a man to be a trouble to his friends. It

takes the man out of him and leaves him only a wreck.

So, my lads, if you are going to do work, count the cost before you begin. Determine to give up every thing you can do without. Be content with necessaries ; the less you care about dress and food and amusement the surer you are of true success. Remember Sir Isaac Newton, who, when asked to smoke, made the noble answer, " I will make no necessities to myself."

But perhaps you will say—"My father smokes, my teacher smokes, our minister smokes, and why should not I?" Well I confess there *seems* some force in that, and I do not wonder that you should be influenced by them. But ask your father, teacher, or minister if smoking is good for you, or if they would like to see you smoke ! They will all say, "No ; I am sorry I ever learned to smoke myself, and would be very glad to give it up, but I cannot."

If your minister or teacher lisps, do you think you ought to lisp ? Certainly not, you

answer; it is bad to lisp even if the minister does. Smoking ought to be one of these things; and even if your minister should say, "There is no harm in a pipe," don't believe him till you have thought over the matter for yourself.

But you say, "It must be a very nice thing to smoke, or so many people would not do so. We have heard men tell what a luxury it is to sit down of an evening to a quiet pipe; how it soothes the brain, and how much better they feel after it." That is all very fine. There are other people who say they cannot go to sleep without their "night-cap," meaning so much strong drink. They have used themselves to it. Only think of that. Now it is the same with those who indulge themselves in smoking. The smoker puts his body into an unnatural state. When he is tired, he finds that rest will not come by resting; so to get rest at once he takes what will make him more restless, and out of sorts next day. All that sounds very queer, but it is quite true. The man who never smokes becomes less tired,

and can read and speak and write of an evening far better than if he smoked.

No doubt there is a certain kind of coarse pleasure in smoking, but "Is it good for one? and are there not far purer pleasures?" It is with smoking as with all kinds of stimulants; they are pleasant but dangerous. They spur up a man for a short time, but they leave him weak and useless, beside wearing out the wheels of his nature. High pressure men—like high pressure boilers—are unsafe. Fast men—like fast trains—are in danger of jumping off the rails. When a man talks next time about his quiet pipe of an evening, ask him why he cannot, like every toiling hard worked mother, have a quiet evening without his pipe.

There is something else yet. Have you ever noticed how selfish a man is with his pipe? When it is in his mouth he cannot speak. When in a room he will indulge in it although he knows there are some present who will be annoyed. On our railways, even although smoking compartments are provided,

the man who wants his pipe generally takes it out anywhere and begins to smoke; if any one objects he scowls or insults him. He cares only for himself.

What a pitiable sight! To the already numerous trials of railway travelling, he has made for himself that of being in discomfort for want of a pipe; and if he removes his own discomfort by smoking he adds to his selfishness by making other people uncomfortable. What a position to be in! Truly the way of transgressors is hard. Now, who cares for a selfish boy or man? What did you think of the boy who would never share his plum-cake or sweetmeats with anybody? but who, like

“ Little Jack Horner sat in his corner  
Eating his Christmas pie,”

all to himself. Nobody liked him. It is the same kind of selfish feeling which a smoker has. Now, we are by nature already too selfish, and learning to smoke will only make us more so.

If you are not tired I have something more to say. Have you not sometimes wished to do good, thinking “ It would be a grander thing

to make men brave, pure, unselfish, and Christ-like than to make them rich?" If these thoughts ever come—and I hope they do—cherish them, my lads. God sends them; they are His voice. Well, the first step to blessing others in this way, is to conquer yourself. What is the use of telling another man to be what we are not striving after ourselves?

If you wish to become a successful missionary to others, you must say to people, "My hands are clean. I am an abstainer from drink and tobacco and all kinds of extravagance." Begin your life, then, by setting before you as an aim, the doing of good. Many lads begin by thinking how to make money for its own sake, or for the selfish pleasures it will buy them. Now, money-grubs are the curse of our times. The love of money is a root of all evil. We want some brave lads who will give up the things of this life for the sake of others. Having a right aim, then set about to accomplish it. Resolve to give up smoking at once. Become a total abstainer, and you will be stronger in body, clearer in brain, and braver in purpose.

What say you? I have shown you that in smoking you are not manly, because true men are not led by the nose by others, and think more about the comfort and good of other people than about their own. Besides, even if it were manly, you are boys and not men. I have also shown you that by smoking you give people the idea that you are one of those fast young men who ruin health, character, and prospects, and are often at last fastened in the fetters of vice; that you are creating a false appetite and thirst, which may lead you expensive luxuries and strong drink; that it is bad for your health, acting like slow poison, undermining the vital powers—making you stunted and weak; that it leads to habits of concealment, that it multiplies your wants, till even if you were a rich man, you would be poor in the true sense; that it may lead you into debt and make you cringe, both crippling your power of work and damaging your character.

I have answered the objection that people get pleasure from “a quiet pipe.” I have shown you the danger of becoming selfish,

and have urged you to become a brave lad with high, unselfish purposes, living for God and men, and not for self. And now, what about the pipe? Depend on this—those who have taught you to smoke are not your friends. Give it up. Never mind sneers and taunts. Those who speak against smoking are sneered at many a time, but go on. We have the right on our side, and can afford to wait till people see that we are right.

But you boys of old England—our dear scholars—the hope of the nation and the church—we are anxious about you. In a few years you will be our ministers, business men, lawyers, statesmen, and artizans. We want a race of sober ministers, sober business men, sober lawyers, sober statesmen, sober artizans. And because we seek that, we say again and again, If you have never learned to smoke, *don't begin*. If you have, *smoke no more*, and depend upon it you will look back with pleasure to the day when you gave it up.