

## **Congrès international contre l'abus du tabac / by C.R. Drysdale.**

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# SMOKE NOT No. 31.

## *Congrès International Contre l'abus du Tabac.*

By C. R. DRYSDALE, Esq., M.D., Senior Physician Metropolitan Hospital,  
London.

A Paper read to the Congress by Dr. C. R. Drysdale, contained a list of the diseases which either his own experience or that of other Medical men has made attributable to the use of Tobacco. He referred to the injury done to workers in ill ventilated Tobacco factories by the odours of the Tobacco, especially hurtful in the case of young boys and girls, and dangerous above all to the life of the infants tended by mothers who are operatives in the factories. He then spoke of the injury done to the heart's action by smoking, and to the frequency with which smokers and chewers become affected with weakness of vision and even were made blind by the power of nicotine. The use of Tobacco was very deadening to the intellect, and in Schools and Universities it had been found that those youths who took the highest places in competition work were but very little addicted to Tobacco. In Switzerland, indeed, from a knowledge of this fact, the use of Tobacco was prohibited to youths under the age of 15. Dyspepsia and loss of memory were frequently due to the habit of smoking. He was glad to hear that Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas had not smoked, for the habit was greatly on the increase among literary men, to the great destruction of their own health and powers of clear exposition.

In a communication by M. Marambat entitled *Tobacco and Crime*, the results of an enquiry authorised by the Ministre de l'Interieure, that gentleman found that of 603 children and young people within the age of 16, convicted of crimes, 435 or nearly three-fourths, were convicted for theft, and of these 233 were consumers of Tobacco. There were in all 306 smokers among these youthful criminals and of these two-thirds were arrested for theft. Among adult criminals 87 per cent. were found to use Tobacco and only 13 not to use it. M. Marambat asserts that the expense for assistance to the poor and for Lunatic Asylums in different parts of France was considerably greater in those parts where much Tobacco was consumed than in those where less was used. Thus, in 8 Departments where each person on an average was found to consume more than a kilogramme of Tobacco there was a payment of 229 francs, and in 28, when only 190 grammes were consumed the payment for the above objects was only 41 francs. Hence the use of Tobacco is probably one cause of indigence.

A Turkish Medical man, Dr. Omer Bey, observed that in Turkey it was not Alcoholism that caused injury to health, but Tobacco. "It kills the individual person, the race, and enervates the Country. Nicotism in my country is what Alcoholism is in France and Morphinism is in Eastern Asia. In Turkey, people do not drink, thanks to the abstinence enjoined by the Koran, but they smoke everywhere and for ever; it is for this reason that we may conclude that Nicotism is a question more important in my native land than Alcoholism."

Dr. Flachi then alluded to the excellent paper written by Dr. Henry, and which obtained for that author the prize of 1,000 francs. Dr. Fradil spoke of the influence of Tobacco on pregnancy and lactation in women who make use of it or who work in Tobacco factories. He gave many examples to show how injurious Tobacco was to women. He alleged that work-women in Tobacco factories are more subject to the accidents of pregnancy than other women, and that the mortality, convulsions and weakness of the infants born to these women was very great. In Constantinople, said Dr. Omer Bey, the fact was noticed among women who smoked.

M. Marambat gave a short piece of statistics concerning the proportion of suicides per 100,000 inhabitants among those who smoke more or less. In 8 Departments where the average consumption of Tobacco was above 2 kilogrammes per head there were 30.2 suicides in 100,000; Whilst in 28 Departments where 190 grammes were consumed there were only 10 suicides.

M. Decroix spoke of the allegations of Dr. Pecholier of Montpellier, and of M. Passinari, that the use of Tobacco was important in warding off the attacks of typhus and other fevers. By using the microscope, it can easily be shown that myriads of vibrios and other animalculæ live in an infusion or decoction of Tobacco, and even in the juice of Tobacco, which is sold in State factories for certain agricultural purposes. Dr. Bourdin has also treated this question in a pamphlet "Le Tabac et les Microbes" and shows that Tobacco is no germicide as supposed by the above named gentlemen either in the case of Consumption or in Cholera, both of which diseases attack smokers in great numbers.

M. Decroix also treated the question of the influence of Tobacco on health and discipline in the Army and Navy, two prizes of 300 francs each had brought in Essays which showed that soldiers and sailors who smoked were more frequently punished and more frequently on the sick list than non-smokers.

Dr. Bodros of the 47th regiment of the French line had shown that the rule which forbade smoking in certain localities was often violated, and as Tobacco is a violent poison, it was not surprising he said, that it often caused illness.



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M Marambat said that until 1837, Tobacco was tolerated in prisons, but in that year it was forbidden to those prisoners on the cellular system ; since 1841 it has been forbidden in all prisons.

The following resolutions were then adopted by the Congress. 1. That a law should prevent youths under 16 years from using Tobacco in public places, a law analogous to that which in 1873 prohibited minors from the use of Alcoholic liquors, and similar to the one promulgated in Connecticut, U.S.A. in 1889. 2. That Railway companies should place at the disposition of travellers a sufficient number of compartments with the words *smokers* on them, as existed in other countries, and that the servants of the railway should take care that delinquents should be prosecuted. Some other resolutions were also passed such as one advising the Minister of War to prevent smoking in the sleeping wards of soldiers in barracks, and cab drivers from smoking whilst on the box. The use of safety matches also was recommended, and the abstention from smoking in omnibuses or tramways. A note was also added by caution to smokers in mines, or in establishments containing explosive substances. It was suggested that smoking should be prohibited in all Post Offices

A paper was next read by Emile Lequien " On the function of the Teacher in forewarning children against the premature use of Tobacco." M. Lequien stated that since the year 1883 he had unceasingly drawn the attention of Parents and Teachers to the war which they ought to wage against the use of Tobacco in youth. All his correspondents had observed that in the first place, they gave an example to their scholars in not using Tobacco. To persuade pupils not to use Tobacco it is important not to exaggerate its evils. In giving lessons about plants, it is possible to show a drawing of the Tobacco plant and to explain that it is a poisonous herb. The uncleanly habits engendered by the use of Tobacco should be alluded to, and the economical question touched on. One of the teachers mentioned by M. Lequien had had a number of printed papers sent round in the presidency of M. Leysenne, Inspector General of the Primary Instruction of France, who had been delegated for that purpose by the the Minister of Public Instruction. The President spoke of an army of 50,000 Teachers in France who perhaps were ready to second the efforts of the society.

A most interesting communication appears in the work before us from M. Maurice de Fleury, a Physician and literary man. It is entitled " The Effects of Tobacco on the health of literary men, and its influence on future of French literature." In his first chapter our author speaks of the " Opinion of celebrated literary men on Tobacco." It appears that the distinguished romancist Balzac considered that Tobacco was a mortal poison which intoxicated those whom it did not brutalize.

Goethe and Heine, the two most distinguished German writers did not smoke: Byron smoked: Victor Hugo did not, nor Alexandre Dumas. On the other hand Eugene Sue, George Sand and Alfred de Musset were great smokers. But says Dr. Fleury, Byron was sickly and in despair, and his genius was not healthy. The great Goethe was an example of calm thought and detested Tobacco. He said "I have a horror for three things, firstly Tobacco." Michelet also was not a smoker and detested Tobacco. Victor Hugo considered that smoking changed thinking into dreaming. George Sand, it appears smoked "enormously" and often made herself ill by the custom: and Musset smoked and drank hard. Emile Zola is said to have abandoned the habit of smoking at the advice of a physician for twelve years. Alexandre Dumas (fils) considers that Tobacco and Alcohol are the greatest foe to the intellect. M. Feuillet was made so ill by smoking he was forced to give up the habit—"It blunts, he says, the faculties of the mind." M. Jules Barbier also says he was nearly killed by the use of Tobacco and had been obliged to renounce it.

In his second chapter, M. Fleury gives Medical testimony against Tobacco. Dr. Rouillard for example, in an essay published in 1886 in *l'Encephale*, shows that children who smoke are brutalized by it, that the best scholars are those who do not make use of Tobacco: and that Tobacco lessens the power of attention and the memory. Most literary men who smoke suffer from dyspepsia, palpitations of the heart and neuralgia with more or less loss of memory. They are apt to lose their energy and become melancholy, indolent and irritable. Smoking encourages pessimism. Dr. Fleury then carefully analyses his own case which shows that he had seriously damaged his health by smoking and nearly brought on blindness by it. He had found it a very hard task to abandon the habit: and whilst weaning himself from it had suffered more than he could describe. He gives a gloomy prognostic as to the future of French literature if the present mad desire for Tobacco should continue to dominate the present and future generation. In all this we thoroughly coincide with our able French brother medical observer, Dr. Fleury. We congratulate him in thus having tried to lessen the spread of one of the most menacing of all modern drawbacks to civilisation and health.

On April 8th, 1888, there was a distribution of prizes given at the Sorbonne by the Societé Contre l'abus du Tabac.

To be had of the Editor of the Anti-Tobacco Journal, "Clissold Lodge,"

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