

Written for this Paper.

## TALKS TO BOYS.

## X—TOBACCO AND MORALS.

Those appetites and influences which effluinate physical and mental degeneracy in men necessarily produce moral debasement in their victims. This is the rule, whether we accept as the standard of ethics either utility or the revelation of the divine will. Logically, then, the tobacco habit, operating to the destruction of physical and mental powers, is essentially immoral, whether considered from the standpoint of the rationalist or infidel or of the devout worshiper of God; hence the Creator's declaration that it is not good for man is the moral expression of a law already set forth in the operations of nature. As it interferes with the controlling functions of the brain and dulls the finer sensibilities which lead men to the pure and noble ambitions of life, so it gives rein to the baser passions which draw him to practices from which even the heave of the field and forest refrain as violative of natural laws.

Reference has been made to the customs of great warriors, statesmen, and philosophers. Ascertain the attitude of any of these whom the world regards as exponents of high moral principle, when their attention has been drawn to the tobacco habit, and it will be found to have received their unqualified condemnation. The Duke of Wellington, eastern in his practical solicitude for the moral and physical welfare of his men as in the courage which faced the French cuirassiers on the field of Waterloo, issued an edict against the excessive use of tobacco indulged in by his troops. In line with the same policy of preserving the morale of the army was the command issued just previous to the Crimean war in the historical document known as General Order No. 577, to the Horse Guards, in which the commander-in-chief of the army states he has information "that the practice of smoking, by the use of pipes, cigars or cheroots, has become prevalent among the officers of the army; which is not only in itself a species of intoxication, occasioned by the fumes of tobacco, but undoubtedly occasions drinking and tipping by those who acquire the habit; and he entreats the officers commanding regiments to prevent smoking in the mess rooms of their several regiments and in the adjoining departments, and to discourage the practice among the officers of junior rank in their regiments." This admonition was not heeded for long; and the present inefficiency complained of in the British army has been traced, in part at least, to the moral degeneracy attending the tobacco habit.

The general order quoted from contains a statement which devotees of the weed have sought, though vainly, to controvert. They have urged that tobacco was in some degree a substitute for alcohol instead of a stepping-stone to the use thereof, and tended to protect from intemperate drinking. But the evidence in human experience is conclusively the other way. The blighting effect of the drug on the mouth and throat, in smoking, creates an unnatural thirst which often is a strong inducement to resort to alcoholic drinks.

Yet above this is the incontrovertible fact that habits are gregarious in their nature. They flock together as naturally as do sheep. The tobacco habit gathers in others of its own immoral kind, and within the person who submits to it there is soon an aggregation of vices, unless there interferes a strong restraining influence to keep the tendency in check. The man who loses his self control to tobacco is not long in associating with it other vices, either openly or in secret.

There is no denying the statement that tobacco leads away from good company. The boy or man who smokes or chews does not seek holy surroundings to indulge in the practice. He does not invoke the sacred influences of prayer or of divine worship to uphold him in his conduct. His use of the narcotic carries him away from the family circle and from the associations of virtue and honorable manhood. Instead of seeking ennobling pursuits and companionship, he drifts to that society where profanity and obscenity hold high carnival.

In respect to morals, there is no denying that the paths of the user and non-user of the noxious drug lead to destinations far apart. This may be learned, aside from all other evidence, by noting the simple fact that tobacco is often excluded from the society of the virtuous, but never from corrupt society. The devotee of that habit which, from its evil nature, is condemned by the pure and the good, is welcomed by all ranks of the opposite class. As Dr. Gibbons tersely states: "The young man who takes in his mouth a cigar or pipe turns his back forthwith on the sanctuary of home and on the temple of religion, and sets his face toward the saloon, the bar-room, the grog-shop, the gambling-house, the brothel. The path of abstinence leads in the direction of sobriety, domestic enjoyment, chastity and religion; the path of indulgence is license, tipping, profanity and licentiousness." The journey is not made by a single step; frequently, progress is by almost imperceptible stages.

The moral aspect of the tobacco habit affords one of the strongest reasons for contending against it. This is the basis of antagonism to it even among its victims, so many of whom wish they had strength to break its chains. They know, when by thorough investigation or experience they ascertain the truth, that of that "triple alliance of vice—tobacco, strong drink and profanity," it is by no means the least potent for the destruction of good morals. Having no inclination to virtue in itself, its tendency is to disregard virtue. Often it is the molting cause that leads to the other evils named, and makes of their victims hopeless slaves.

It has been said that habits are gregarious—"birds of a feather flock together." This belongs true of bad habits also is true of good habits. So, by a training which enables a person to overcome one temptation there is imparted strength and inclination to resist others. A course of manly independence that will qualify a young man readily to recognize and avoid the insidious influences of tobacco also gives ability to turn from others of like character. As "evil begets evil," the use of the

weed must follow its nature; and by the associate rule that "good cleaves unto good," abstention from such use necessarily reaches to a higher and nobler plane, and is conducive of general morality in the avenues of life.

It is a moral duty that every young man owes to himself to preserve his mind and body in purity and health. This obligation resting upon every boy and man is no less a responsibility upon every parent, every teacher, and every leader of humanity. In its nature the body presents no craving for tobacco; the weed is revolting to the natural appetite, and aversion to it is stamped by the Creator upon every human palate. The mental forces that are assailed, humbled and banished from the human system by its use, proclaim against the usurpation. And the protestations of mental vigor and physical strength receive full sympathy and support from nature's moral law, which inveighs on every side against the tobacco habit.

That the indulgence in this habit which works ruin physically, mentally and morally also extends its harmful influences beyond time and reaches into eternity, is a principle of truth as clear as the light of the noonday sun upon a cloudless day; for as surely as every cause produces a kindred effect to the work of man perform an important part in determining his condition hereafter. Hence every noble aspiration in life, every exalted hope in time or eternity, pleads with parent and child, man and woman, young and old, priest and people, to banish the evil as a viper that preys upon both body and soul; to banish it in self-defense, and in defense of all that is good and pure. There is no indulgence in the sin that can be called permissible in moderation. There is no lawful temperance in a bad habit. A man may not do a little stealing or other wilful wrong, and plead justification on the ground of being moderate therein. Crime and vice are to be shunned altogether.

The examination we have conducted in this field has given answer to the inquiry made at the outset. The tobacco habit leads to the debasement and ruin of mind and body, and throws its whole influence toward plunging the soul into the awful darkness of eternal misery. This being the case, the man who holds the place of instructor or guide among the people, either in a religious or secular capacity, and whose example leads to the tobacco habit, is a foe to both spiritual and temporal welfare of those who look to him as a teacher and exemplar of correct principle; while he who points the way from the habit, and to the associations of healthful development which attend abstemiousness from evil, is a friend whose admonitions are not to be lightly disregarded.

When we began our investigation we had pictured before us the two roads of the young man's dream, vivid and realistic in life. One led to a peaceful, sunny land, covered with a fertile harvest, and resounding with soft, sweet songs; the other to a deep, dark cave, whence there was no issue, where poison flowed instead of water, and where serpents hissed and crawled. We have found which one the tobacco habit pursues, by the impress nature has placed upon its progress with both