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## THE TOBACCO HABIT.

*An Address delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Saturday, April 6th, 1895, by*

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

My brethren and sisters and friends: This indeed is an inspiring sight, these thousands of people gathered from all parts of Utah, and probably from adjoining states and territories also, for a common purpose, and particularly as that purpose is one of the most exalted that mankind can have in all its works. I esteem it a particular favor to be permitted to stand before you for a short time, though, as has been stated, I do it without premeditation, not knowing that this privilege and courtesy would be extended to me.

I am quite sure that all who are present will admit the importance of the subject that President George Q. Cannon has just announced (the tobacco habit, and its effects on the physical and moral nature of man); and, finding myself in the stand, I shall take the opportunity of speaking for a few moments from the standpoint of an educator and a teacher amongst the people. I doubt if there is any necessity indeed, of urging upon you the necessity of observing the laws of health—those laws which have been found by man oftentimes through study, investigation and experiment, and those rules that have so often been revealed of God for the governing of His children. We all profess to be observers of these laws to a greater or less extent, while many of us in our carelessness, forgetfulness and selfishness are apt to tread them under foot and to feel that the penalties that have been threatened will never fall upon us. I do not believe, however, that we should shun this habit merely because of the penalty, but for the higher purpose that we know it is unmanly and that it is contrary to the will and the purposes and the laws of God. The using of tobacco has been denounced for reasons that are good, founded on physiological grounds, and others of an intellectual nature; and there are objections from a moral standpoint which have been, and are repeatedly urged. Many of those present will remember that at the last Conference of the Church, the general authorities devoted a great deal of attention to this subject, and their efforts were applauded, not only by members of the Church, but by those who do not profess the faith that the

majority of those before me hold and revere; for it is recognized not alone as a religious principle, as a physiological, as an ethical but as a moral principle that we should take care of our bodies. Every year the discoveries of learned men, wise and earnest investigators, convince us that the words of the great prophet were true when he declared that the body of man is fearfully and most wonderfully made. No mechanism that man has ever shaped or framed can be compared to it in delicacy and in efficacy. This organism that has been given unto us, (for the majority of those here believe that it has been given us to do with as we choose, except with the provision that we shall be answerable for the consequences) for a divine purpose, can be disorganized very readily, thrown into confusion, made unfit for its exalted purpose. What that purpose is many people will answer differently. I take but one answer for the present, from one of the wisest men whose words have come down to us from a former age: It is indeed the temple of God, and for that reason ought not to be defiled.

Physicians have been telling us for many years of the ill effects manifesting themselves, particularly in the young, from the use of tobacco. They tell us that many of the vital organs are affected, and affected in a manner that is most serious and permanent. It is true the body has within it that tendency, God-given in his mercy, to right itself, to repair itself, and to recover from injury to a very great extent. But there are some assaults from which the body cannot recover, and the effects of tobacco are among those from which it is most difficult to recover. The injury wrought by it is amongst the most serious and far-reaching of injuries, affecting not only the immediate users, but their posterity; for the weakening of the vital organs, the impairment of the senses, particularly sight and hearing—these weaknesses are transmitted from generation to generation, and truly do we realize the fulfillment of the great declaration that the sins of the fathers should be visited upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation.

But closely associated with these physical or physiological weaknesses are the intellectual troubles, weaknesses, depravities that assert themselves. I have declared many times, and do it again, that I know not where you can find another community of men and women amongst whom are to be found so many children of promise—promise because of their physical perfection, or a condition approaching perfection, because of their intellectual power, because of their high moral beliefs and

sentiments, as amongst the Latter-day Saints. I believe that we have here a chosen people, physically, intellectually and morally; and I believe too that this being chosen in this sense, being distinguished as a community because of these elements and perfections, concerning them the Lord our God will allow no trifling, no trampling under foot of those laws that He has established and that you have accepted as true and binding. As a teacher I can testify to the fact that those who come to us having been born perhaps with this tendency toward the use of such things, this stimulant of the appetite, they come with a burden on their backs that it will perhaps cost them the greatest effort of their lives to escape from. What would you think of starting a boy upon a race tying his hands and legs so that he could scarcely move, and then expect him to keep pace with his free competitors? Yet in such way are many of those who are in the habit of using these things placing an incubus upon their children and bringing them into the world with a curse from the time of their birth. But I address my remarks not so much to their parents for their own sakes as for the sake of their children born and unborn. These young boys and girls who have been appropriately termed the pride of Utah are indeed choice sons and daughters of God, and as such they should be guarded most jealously from temptation in the first place, and from these weaknesses that are liable to assert themselves, the germs and seeds of which may be implanted within them through the indiscretions of parents and through the weaknesses of associates and professed friends.

There is one point in the philosophy of the nineteenth century that I have never been able to master—indeed one among many; but there is one that appeals to me as being particularly illogical and absurd, although it is defended oftentimes with many so-called arguments. It is this, that if we know a thing to be wrong, if we know a certain habit to be injurious, if we know that it works evil to the state, to the community, to the family, to the individual, that then we will countenance it in any way directly or indirectly. I do not mean that I would recommend any effort to destroy the liberty of the man who chooses to kill himself in that way but I do say that if the Latter-day Saints know that these things are wrong, if as they profess in their testimonies from time to time the revelations of God have denounced them, and the Lord has told you that tobacco is not good for the body, then why does sanction its use, why do we permit it to be brought before the children in a manner