

Shall Tobacco Be Prohibited?

THERE has been more or less agitation concerning tobacco. Shall it be banished along with strong liquors?

Some of this discussion has been fanatic, some humorous. The result may be a bit confusing to honest minds and it may be as well to set forth some of the underlying facts both as to tobacco's injurious effects and as to the province of Government in regulating individual conduct.

Tobacco is not a food. It is a drug. A healthy human being can get along without it. One who has never used it is better off, his health has a surer foundation and his life expectancy is greater than in the case of one who is a habitual user.

Hence the weed has no standing whatever in the court of Science, Hygiene and Sound Sense.

Its use causes many disorders. It often affects the throat injuriously, and many singers, actors and public speakers have found it necessary to abstain.

It sometimes has a disastrous effect upon the nervous system. Many highly strung and sensitive persons have found that it makes them nervous and irritable.

It also has in some cases a bad influence upon the heart; the "tobacco heart" is well known to physicians.

It sometimes injures the eyes.

These are the principal points in the indictment against tobacco.

In its favor it may be said that, once the habit has been formed and the system accustomed to its use, it has a pleasing and soothing effect.

In other words, to a smoker a cigar or pipe or cigaret tastes good and makes him feel good.

And men have always been willing to pay a high price for a pleasurable sensation.

It helps relieve ennui, and most of us are bored much.

Its jolly effect is indicated by Byron, who wrote an apostrophe to

"Divine tobacco, which from East to West

Cheers the tar's labor and the Turkman's rest."

No bad habit, if it be so called, ever overspread the habitable world so swiftly and remained so triumphantly as the habit of tobacco using, which originated among the American Indians.

Now, the question arises: Because some persons, including most women, do not like the odor of tobacco when smoked, and are disgusted with chewing, shall that portion of the race, almost entirely males, be barred from using the weed?

The State has the right to prohibit it, if the majority of its citizens so decide.

But the State cannot afford to exercise this right unless it makes out a better case against tobacco than it has done up to the present.

Its use ought undoubtedly to be prohibited to growing children. No one under age should be permitted to purchase tobacco. As to its baneful effect on adolescents there is no question.

But in the case of adults too many people like it. Public opinion is far from being opposed to it. Cigar and cigaret smoking is a part of well nigh every banquet, including those where ladies are present.

Even the average woman, who is not attached to some form of crusade, says she likes the odor of a good cigar, and means it. It is a sort of a tang of masculinity and is not displeasing to her.

While Science, as indicated above, has set it down as a useless drug which sometimes is deleterious, yet the case is by no means strong enough to make of it a menace to public health.

The fact that nicotine, the active principle of tobacco, is a deadly poison, so that "a drop of it on a dog's tail would kill a man in a minute," is aside from the issue. Nobody takes nicotine that way. In the way men do take it, it is not dangerous enough to cause alarm.

The proposition to abolish tobacco along with booze will therefore probably go up in smoke—as is fitting.

Alcohol causes crime, madness and all sorts of known evil. No such case can possibly be made out against its younger brother in the realm of cheer.

It may be indefensible hygienically, it may be a mere indulgence, it may be wasteful, it may possibly hurt the user, but it tastes good and men like it, and it will take a stronger push than the reformers can now give to compel men to stop doing what they like to do—especially when their wives do not particularly object.