

GIRLS AND SMOKING *By Alexander Stewart*

A LETTER TO GIRLS

Dear Girls,

Supposing you were asked "What is a girl's chief charm?" What would you reply?

All kinds of answers might be given to the question. Such, for instance, as:—beauty, good manners, a pleasant disposition, cheerfulness, wit, intelligence, graciousness, good temper, a natural smile, innocence, purity, girlishness. Of all of these, the last mentioned might be chosen, for if there is anything of the tom-boy about a girl she loses her girlish charm.

There is a sense in which girlish charm might be compared with a flower: the beauty, fragrance and sweetness of which attracts and captivates.

How disappointing it is when a flower is spoilt, maybe by some grub or insect destroying petals and stamens. Delight and pleasure are turned into dissatisfaction and disappointment. As grubs and insects spoil the beauty of flowers, so that which is unbecoming or evil spoils the attractiveness of girls.

Like a grub eating into a flower, the smoking habit adopted of recent years by girls is spoiling their lives and robbing them of charm. To counteract this evil, and to help in the common cause of good, objection to smoking by girls might be made, because it Defiles, Disfigures, Deceives, Destroys Physical Fitness, Demoralizes, Depredates, Disappoints.

DEFILES.

To defile is to make foul, to make dirty, to pollute. Cleanliness, we are told, is next to godliness: that is to say, to be clean is one of the highest duties in life. Dirt in every sense is disagreeable and offensive. Its very presence shows a want of refinement and good taste. A dirty person is a most unpleasant person.

Girls,—Don't pollute your breath by smoking. Avoid the habit and the stench which will make your presence unpleasant. Scented sweets do not destroy the tobacco odour from the lungs. Keep your breath pure. Be wholesome and sweet like the fragrance of flowers.

DISFIGURES

To disfigure anything is to spoil its beauty. The works of creation, by which we are surrounded, have all their special forms of beauty: the divine purpose as far as we can understand it, being to make the world a pleasant and attractive place.

How disappointing when girls fall from the high place of beauty and grace to which they have been exalted. How displeasing and unpleasant to see tobacco smoke coming from the lips of girls, and what a disfigurement of girlish beauty to see a cigarette between those lips. Neatly made, daintily coloured, golden tipped cigarettes do not conceal a disfiguring and unsightly habit. Fingers stained by nicotine are disgraceful and vulgar.

Girls,—Don't smoke, and so help to make the world a beautiful and a pleasant place.

DECEIVES

The word deceives is derived from two Latin words which mean "to catch," or "to take." The meaning implied is that of a crafty hunter alluring and trapping his prey. The deceiver misleads, causes to err, cheats, disappoints and destroys.

Tobacco, like the proverbial spider, says, "Will you walk into my parlour?" Enticed by what appears a harmless and, maybe, a pleasant habit, from which it might seem easy to escape, innocent persons are caught in the grip of an insatiable craving from which but few get free. Lacking in instinct, foresight, courage, and individuality, they walk into the spider's web simply

because others do so: misled by bad example, or maybe fearing to be thought odd, prudish, old fashioned and unsociable, they light their first cigarette. Some, on the other hand, begin to smoke out of a spirit of bravado; considering themselves "clever" or able to "show off," they parade their folly and senselessness as cheap mannequins. Others, again, begin the tobacco habit falsely believing—or trying to make themselves believe—it to be a harmless practice, soothing to the mind, good for the nerves, helpful to thought and study, and a consolation in trouble.

Girls: Don't walk into the tobacco spider's parlour! Remember that every cigarette contains a narcotic drug subtle in its effect upon the mind and will, and so binding in its power, that eventually the victim is caught by a craving, which renders him or her helpless and, humanly speaking, hopeless of escape.

Don't be deceived. Don't be misled. Don't smoke the first cigarette. Don't entertain the thought of smoking.

The non-smoker is infinitely happier, freer, and better in mind and body than the smoker.

DESTROYS PHYSICAL FITNESS

No one can fully estimate the value of bodily health and physical fitness. If these are impaired, the whole outlook on life is changed. Pain takes the place of ease and pleasure; disappointment and inconvenience displace joy and happiness; light becomes darkness; liberty changes to confinement; success to failure, and so on. It is especially important in youth that the laws of health and strength should be observed and physical development carefully considered. Anything injurious to health and strength, or detrimental to growth and development should be systematically avoided.

In Part I. of the Poisons and Pharmacy Act, nicotine is classed as a deadly poison, alongside opium, prussic acid, strychnine, cocaine, arsenic, morphia, etc.

"Smoking is much more injurious to women than to men. Nicotine is a muscular depressant and lowers the activity and vitality. Women smoke nervously. Their nervous condition develops anaemia and other ills to which the sex is susceptible."—Dr. S. A. Brown, Bellevue Hospital, New York City.

When a student, the writer spent some time assisting a doctor in the out-patients' department of a children's hospital; babies and small children suffering from sickness and infirmities of all kinds were brought in for treatment. In some cases after a diagnosis of the baby, the doctor would examine the mother. "The trouble is with you. Your ill-health is affecting the child. You need the medicine. When you become healthy the child will become well," he would say, as he prescribed some restorative medicine or tonic for the mother.

That the girls of to-day are to be the mothers of to-morrow is a fact that should keep every girl from smoking.

Girls should remember the law of hereditary transmission or penalty—(Exodus xx, 4, 5, 6), "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the 3rd and 4th generation of them that hate me." By this law children are made sufferers through the evil habits of parents. In a special sense the bodily sins of mothers are visited upon the children. Any practice or habit which impairs the health of the woman or undermines her strength has a corresponding injurious effect upon the child.

Out of consideration for the welfare of the children yet unborn, every true girl will avoid smoking. She will regard it as unfair, unwomanly and, because it injures the child, even criminal.

DEMORALISES

Morality has to do with character and conduct. To have moral character is to be conformed to right, virtue and the ethical. It is to have a right attitude of mind to what is true and upright, the quality and disposition of the soul itself being good.

It is the plain moral duty of everyone to strive to be good and to improve in character.

To become demoralised is to lower the standard of one's life, to reduce the quality of one's soul. It is to leave the path of goodness for the ways of evil.

How loudly the voice of conscience condemns the smoker when first he or she begins to smoke. It is the consciousness of guilt that makes the wrong-doer retire to some place unseen by morally superior friends and acquaintances. How humiliating for a girl to descend to such practices.

Girls, depend upon it that if you do anything on the sly you are in the wrong. Remember, your conscience is your friend, therefore obey its voice. Smoking dulls the conscience. A bewitching and deadening drug, it silences the warning of the inner voice. Enchanted by the nicotine drug, the divine voice is disregarded, the standard of life lowered, and character demoralised.

Don't smoke, and so keep your quality of soul. Maintain good character and be true ladies.

"Do you agree with ladies smoking?" a young lady once asked a gentleman friend. "Ladies don't smoke," was his reply.

DEPREDATES

This word simply means to waste, or to plunder. There is a sense in which to waste anything is to destroy it. It is as wrong, therefore, to waste as to destroy. Useless and unprofitable expenditure—whether it be of time, energy, material or money—is waste and should be regarded as destructive.

Tobacco smoking is a habit, which makes great demands upon the purse. When we consider that in Britain about £200,000,000 are spent annually in tobacco, and that this enormous amount of the nation's wealth is consumed merely to gratify an artificial craving, which does no real good to anyone, such expenditure might well be considered waste and evil.

At first the amount of money spent by the smoker is comparatively small. As the craving to smoke develops, the expenditure in money increases, until eventually in some cases, ten, fifteen, twenty shillings and even more, are spent per week by individuals in tobacco.

How much more profitable and satisfactory it is to spend money in making useful and necessary purchases. How much better to buy books, or to travel, and so improve the mind and widen experience. How much nobler to give to the needy and support the afflicted.

Girls:—Use your money aright. Don't spend it in tobacco. Be kind and generous. In this way you will find greater satisfaction: others will be better and the world made happier by your so doing. Remember that money spent in tobacco is waste. In the form of smoke it is blown into the atmosphere, polluting the air and causing inconvenience and unpleasantness to others.

DEGRADES

The word degrades is derived from two Latin words meaning "a step down, or downwards." To degrade is to lower in grade, degree, or rank, to deprive of honour, dignity, office; to lower in character; to disgrace.

Every right minded person aspires to excel. To excel in the truest sense is not to desire to rise above others as if one were some exalted or superior being, but rather to reach the highest mark. For example, the true aim of a girl in school should be to rise from the lowest classes, standards, or forms, to the highest: to advance from a lower stage of learning to a higher.

In everything worthy of attainment the true girl seeks to reach the highest level. There is nothing higher, more exalted and more to be desired than to excel in character; to reach the highest standards in goodness, purity, culture, graciousness of disposition and action. It is in this sense that angels are regarded as exalted beings, living above the lower levels of evil and wrong doing.

Did it ever occur to you that it is because men instinctively think of girls and maidens as being the nearest approach to angels, that in most cases angels are represented by girls and maidens? Do you know that it is because of this instinctive thought, and the desire to see girls rise to the highest angelic standard, that a smoking girl is so displeasing and disappointing? Like a fallen angel, who lowers her state and standing, her influence also

becomes lowering and degrading; changing from good it becomes evil: her example is bad, and unfortunately she contaminates others.

Girls,—Aspire to high ideals and standards of life. Do not lower yourself by smoking. Do not degrade others by evil example.

"I don't like to see a girl take a glass of wine, and I hate to see a girl smoke. I would plead with the younger women of to-day not to let the country down," said the Bishop of Hereford recently.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

To disappoint is to deprive of that which one expects, or for which one hopes. It is to fail in achievement; to render anticipations vain and empty; to fail; to frustrate what is appointed.

Disappointment causes discouragement, depression, vexation. It deprives of energy and checks progress.

Girls who smoke are a disappointment to those who are striving to make the world a better and happier place. They are a disappointment to friends, and to those who desire their welfare. Not only is this the case but such girls are preparing the way for future disappointments. Eventually they become disappointments to themselves, and, should the day come when these girls become the mothers of sons, those sons, whether they openly confess it or not, will be disappointed in having mothers who smoke.

DECIDE therefore never to smoke. Regard anyone who tempts you to do so, as unkind and disrespectful to you: your tempters regard you as inferior in character. Refuse to heed those who point to others who smoke as examples for you.

The highest type of woman does not smoke. Don't take the first cigarette, and you won't take the second. Don't yield to the subtle temptation to smoke "To be sociable." Don't yield to curiosity, "To see what it is like." Learn to say NO to evil. Stand by your convictions. Refuse to be coerced. Dare to stand alone. "I do it because others do it," said a woman speaking of the smoking habit of her companions, and giving that as her reason for following their evil ways. She was a moral weakling.

"I was proud of my sister," wrote a young man whose sister—a non-smoker—refused a cigarette offered to her in company. Remember the power of your example—you will help others by being true to principle and right. Your refusal to smoke keeps up the standard of your own life and helps others to keep up their standard. Look to God for help and strength to conquer, and you will retain the charm of girlishness and capture the admiration, appreciation, and the love of others.

Though this booklet is written especially for girls and women in general, the writer, as the reader might guess, does not condone smoking by boys and men. It is because he was once a slave to smoking and for many years has been free from its filthy and clammy bondage, that he seeks to warn and safeguard girls and women from a temptation which, as far as they are concerned, might be regarded as new. In some measure this booklet is also an endeavour to counteract the attempts of mammonistic spider tobacco magnates, who, by subtle and delusive advertisements, seek to draw girls and women into their destructive webs.

[The smoking evil has reached such proportions in this country that we gladly publish this article in the hope that our U.P.A. girls at least will take note and refrain from this objectionable and wasteful evil. And what applies to girls also applies to boys.—Editor.]

Donations towards the distribution of this circular will be appreciated.

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