

Henry Ward Beecher on Smoking.

I must be permitted to specialize still another danger under the general head of dissipation,—one that you are not accustomed to hear spoken of in the pulpits. I mean the danger of using tobacco. Do not think that I propose to deliver an indiscriminate tirade of abuse against this practice. I wish to speak moderately, and to give the result of my reflection is founded upon much observation. I do not deny that there are many temperaments that seem to be able to use tobacco all their life long with comparatively little inconvenience—to themselves. I do not mean that every young man who addicts himself to chewing or smoking will of necessity take to other vices, or let this habit run to excess. But we are a nervous people. Everything in the economy of our society tends to develop the brain and the nervous system unduly. Now as a matter of fact, it is true among such a people, smoking is apt to lead to drinking. Not always, not necessarily; but frequently, and naturally. The cup and the cigar are well acquainted with each other. The use of tobacco always tends to waste the nerve-force and the brain-force; and in thousands of cases there can be no question but that it squanders life by leakage right from the centre. And you do not know whether you are the one in five that will be poisoned and prematurely destroyed, or not. If there was one single reason for this habit, there might be some excuse for those that indulge in it; but it is a thing which is utterly without any reason whatever. You have to make superhuman exertions, in the first instance, to be persuaded to touch tobacco. It would seem as if God, when he made that weed, said, "I invoke all spirits of nausea and nastiness to stand round about and defend it from any touch." For it seems to me that if anything would be secure from human meddling, that would. It is repugnant to every feeling. The whole nature revolts from it. You are not drawn to it by anything that is in you or in it. Not one single element of health does it give you; and the pleasure that is derived from its use is, in the main, illusive pleasure. And such is the effect of it as a poison upon many constitutions, that the struggle of breaking away from it is next only to the struggle of breaking away from the cup. And it has led many and many a youth to the cup. If you have but just begun to smoke, ask yourselves what earthly good it will do you; and if you fail, as you will, to find a good excuse for continuing the habit, leave it off. If you chew and smoke, your misery is double; and if you do but one, do not try to cure yourselves by doing the other; for you will end in doing both. On grounds of simple common sense, I ask every young man in this congregation who is addicted to the filthy practice of smoking or chewing, is it worth your while to spend your means, and

to entail upon yourselves an unnecessary expense, for the sake of keeping up a habit that incommodes others, that annoys those about you; that will probably have a bad influence upon your health, and that will possibly injure your morals? While I would not seem to be extravagant, I cannot fail to give a solemn and affectionate warning to the young people of my charge on this subject. If you have not learned to use tobacco in any form, I beseech of you abstain from it. The young often acquire the habit because they feel that it will be a distinction? No: unfortunately, smoking is so common that it is not a distinction. If you wish to have a distinction, refrain from smoking: that will make you rather remarkable.

BUT ONE ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE.

An instructive incident is related of a Missionary and a proud and powerful Indian chief. The chief was convicted of sin. Trembling under a sense of guilt he approached the Missionary, and proffered his belt of wampum to be freed from his crushing fears. "No," said the Missionary, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." The Indian departed, but soon returned, offering his rifle and the skins he had taken in hunting. "No," was the reply, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." Again the Indian went away, but soon returned once more with a troubled conscience, and offered his wigwam, wife, child, everything, for peace and pardon. "No," was the reply, "Christ cannot accept such a sacrifice." The chief seemed oppressed with surprise for a moment, then lifting up tearful eyes to the face of the Missionary, he feelingly cried out, "Here, Lord, take poor Indian too."

How many poor Indians there are in the world! "Men," says one, "will argue for religion, give for it, fight for it, die for it, do anything but live for it." And yet to live for it, to devote one's self to a life of sacrifice in its interest, is of the very essence of religion. He who withholds himself from Christ has not given all that Christ asks.

DAILY RELIGION.—I have no faith in that woman who talks of grace and glory abroad and uses no soap at home. Let the buttons be on the shirts, let the children's socks be mended, let the roasted mutton be done to a turn, let the house be as clean as a new pin, let the home be as happy as home can be; and there will be room for those little deeds of love and faith which, in my master's name I seek of you who love his appearing. Serve God by doing common actions in a heavenly spirit, and then, if your daily calling only leaves you cracks and crevices of time, fill these up with holy service. To use the apostle's words, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."—*Spurgeon.*