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Trask, George

no. 16

AN APPEAL TO A CLERGYMAN

ON THE

USE OF TOBACCO.

MY DEAR SIR:—

I address you as “an Elder, who am also an Elder.” In the brief interview we had a few days since, you remarked that “the ANTI-TOBACCO CAUSE could not be of sufficient consequence to occupy my time, or that of any clergyman; that few or no clergymen use the thing, and they should not trouble themselves about it.” I disagree with you, Sir; and will state the grounds of my dissent.

First, *Tobacco stands in the way of the salvation of men.* Many of your hearers are its victims. It poisons their blood, discolours their skin, wastes their muscle and strength; and their bodies, rightfully “the temples of the Holy Spirit,” become shamefully defiled, and God is robbed of the living and holy sacrifice, which he expressly claims. Science pronounces it a “*rank poison*,” a poison which leaves not a membrane, tissue, nerve, or hair of the head, unaffected by its malarious touch. Hence, a college of physicians testify, that its habitual use changes the nature of its victim, and renders his condition completely abnormal. Hence, a physician of eminence has lately given his opinion that some eighty diseases, great and small, may be traceable to its agency; and hence the late Dr. Twitchell states, that it is a more fearful destroyer of human constitutions, than alcohol.

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It stops not here. It seizes upon the whole nervous system. At one time it stupefies its victim, at another it exasperates him ; he is amiable or unamiable, rich or poor, very much in accordance with the dictates of his quid or pipe. Tobacco is making many a "wise man mad." You, I presume, have parishoners, who are often peevish and misanthropic, dissatisfied with you, with tax bills, with church, parish and all, because exasperated by the effects of this vile thing. You soothe them by various expedients, and recommend more piety. I would say, *give up Tobacco*, and the angry demon will disappear.

It goes further : having seized the nerve, it passes over upon the intellect, and a bad memory, a timorous judgment, idiocy and outright insanity are its legitimate results, as many maniacs in asylums mournfully testify.

Your young men use it. They use it as their fathers never did. It is with them not only a fashion, but a fatal passion, an idol and the very deity they serve. The Sabbath with them is a gala day, in its indulgence. Thousands on thousands, over the land, become captives to its sensualizing potency. The mass of them are not in church ; the mass are not victims to strong drink, but victims to the "honey dew drop" and choicely flavored cheroot. Your pulpit, my brother, may have charms, and be occupied by a charming preacher, but it is no match for any one of your fashionable cigar shops. Such a shop has from fifty to a hundred varieties of the article, and the whole paraphernalia of pictured lust ; it is a vortex which sweeps in whole shoals of young men ; and where your pulpit saves one, that cigar shop may ruin scores.

This narcotic stands connected with vile affinities. Indolence, poverty, strong drink, and crime. Where is there a mean and wicked man, where is there a horse thief or scape-gallows that does not use it ? It is an insidious demon, it steals the march upon the nation ; and in many localities, where temperance measures have been successful, it is now doing ten times the mischief of alcohol. There are many standing high in the temperance ranks, who have only exchanged sins — Rum for Tobacco ; who have delirium tremens, in its incipient stages ; who might just as well have drank themselves to death, as to smoke themselves to death.

Did it ever occur to you, my brother, that more is paid

in your city for Tobacco, than for pulpits, or schools? Did it ever occur to you that your own people, repining about taxes, may be paying nearly as much for Tobacco as for you? Did you ever calculate for a moment the national cost of this poison? You love the A. B. C. F. M.; did it ever occur to you that the nation pays enough for Tobacco to support *eighty* such organizations? Did it ever occur to you that the churches of our land pay enough for this to support a *dozen* such organizations? The money view is the cheap view; the injury here, is nothing compared to the injury done to health and life, piety and patriotism; but when gentlemen like you trifle with this enormous evil, it is well to tell them that there is a fearful expenditure, a gloomy grandeur, "a blackness of darkness" in this quarter, which eclipses all their little doings for the heathen world. Said a clergyman to his people, I will build you an academy and support it, if you will give me what you consume on Tobacco. I think, my brother, if you and others, who dispatch this evil with a mere puerile joke, had a little more of the financial talent and good sense of this clergyman, it could do no harm.

Secondly, *I disagree with you, because clergymen to some extent are victims of the weed.* I am glad to believe that clergymen as a class are more free than formerly, and that of all professional men, none are so little defiled by this impurity. They are the purest of men. Still it is a burning shame, that any in the sacred ranks should defile themselves with this loathsome sin, bring reproach upon the whole order, and curse millions of rising youth, by their example.

I can name clergymen sickly, lank and lean, who when not at fashionable resorts, or on fashionable tours, move among their people as apparitions from Hades, or perfumed hypochondriacs, where the difficulty lies chiefly in this poison.

There are clergymen who worship the vile weed. They confess they can neither think, write, or preach without it. Sir, said one, "I *will* live while I live, and if my cigars shorten my life seven years, I *will* use them." Said another who has left the ministry, "I know Tobacco injures body, mind, and moral character, but I shall not give it up." I can name clergymen who are sad and tearful as they confess their abject bondage; and one who now praises God as a freeman, who says he once used to weep like a babe when making unavailing attempts to free himself from this tyrant.

Clergymen can be named whose professional life has been

abridged from five to twenty-five years. They became tremulous, irritable, gray, wrinkled, and imbecile at an early period, and a ministry nobly began from love to Christ, has been ignobly ended by slavery to Tobacco !

There have been clergymen who have died of palsy, apoplexy, and cancers ; clergymen found dead in bed, who have dropped dead in their houses and in streets ; others who have become idiots and maniacs, where the chief cause of mischief was in this pernicious habit. Said a clergyman in a public meeting, " I am suffering to-night in body and mind from the fact that my parents were frightful consumers of Tobacco."

I can name clergymen, who have gained notoriety as public perfumers ; as they move they fill several cubic feet of pure atmosphere with the profane stench of Tobacco. They mean no harm, and being completely narcotized, they know none ; it seems, therefore, a pity to tell them that they are often nauseous at the bedside of the sick, and at the communion table ; and many studies and many pulpits they leave behind, may never more say, I am clean.

Tobacco is a DEMORALIZER. An unusual number of clergymen, who have gone into secular pursuits ; an unusual number who have been ejected in dishonor from the ministry, are known to be devotees to this sensualizing influence. I can name three in a single town, of this description. And here and there a Christian church, praise be to God, begins to see the anti-moral and anti-Christian bearings of this drug. The time is coming when it will not be so easy for narcotized young candidates to gain elegant pulpits, at pleasure. " Bishop Stowell," says a London journal, " has determined never to hire a curate who uses Tobacco." " A young candidate," a friend informs me, " was seen puffing his cheroot by some fair ones of our parish, who thought his example out of the pulpit would do more harm than his services in it would do good, and therefore he failed to receive a call." I can name more than one minister among us dismissed by council, where the essential cause was Tobacco ; and it is to be hoped that councils may wax a little more bold, and make known to all concerned, what they sometimes speak freely of in conclave.

Yes, my dear sir, clergymen use Tobacco, some openly, some secretly, and though the Apostle tells them that " those who strive for the mastery, should be temperate and keep under the body " — though modern boxers, the HYERS and

SULLIVANS of the day, lay aside Tobacco—though these bloody men, who aim to be strong as Samson and nimble as the deer, lay aside Tobacco—though these brutish men, who fight, as we judge, without a motive, in order to train themselves to fight like wild beasts, deny themselves this enervating, emasculating stimulant—still we have clergymen! self-denying disciples of Christ! clergymen who are fighting “the good fight of faith!” that are wasting their whole manliness upon Tobacco! We will not bid such go to Christ and his Apostles to learn better things, but to notorious boxers; there they may learn that this drug so unmans a man, that the boxer’s religion, such as it is, utterly forbids the use of it.

My brother, you were hasty. There are ministers who use this poison. They are sometimes killed by it. And is it not as important to *save* ministers as to *make* them. Tell me what branch of the American Education Society is raising up as many ministers as Tobacco is murdering, or laying aside! Tell me why should there not be an *Anti-Tobacco Society*, as well as an *Education Society*? Let common sense answer.

Thirdly, *Clergymen, by position and character, have great power in meeting this evil.* Where the power is, there is the responsibility. Men of influence must commence reform. Hence, not only the *example* of clergymen must be right, but their aggressive power must come down as an avalanche upon this abomination. *This is practicable. This is indispensable.* This vile habit is at war with the Gospel, with revivals of religion, and the salvation of men. It wastes time, character and strength. It is an unreasonable self-indulgence, inconsistent with Christian self-denial. It is a noxious, nauseous habit. It is a “lust of the flesh,” which “wars against the soul” by its sensualizing power. It annually wastes millions of dollars, and puts back the millennial day promised in God’s Word. Let this destroyer go on from conquest to conquest, and it will dwarf the nation; and Puritan manhood and Puritan blood will become a cheap affair, as cheap as Italian or Mexican.

You may ask, my brother, what can clergymen do? I answer:

1. Clergymen can examine this evil, and no longer be deceived by its insidious operations. “Satan,” says South, “has no subjects he likes so well as those who deny his ex-

istence." Let us no longer play into the hands of Satan by overlooking this foe, "and thereby make a mock at sin." Cleanse the churches from this drug, and it will be as life from the dead. We sometimes strain at a gnat — discipline spiritual souls for slight mistakes, and fellowship others who are stupid and dumpish sots on Tobacco. *The Profession* may well ponder a moment upon this theme.

2. Clergymen who use this narcotic can give it up. Many have. Said one, "Sir, I will renounce this habit, if it takes the flesh from my bones." He did it! Said another, "I will be free of this, if I die in the attempt." He also succeeded. Another, 70 years old, rising in an audience, said, "Sir, here is my box; show it to my younger brethren where you go, and tell them it has been the bane of my life."

I wrote to a Boston millionaire, soliciting aid in my work among youth, and sent him a book. His reply is instructive.

Reverend Sir :— I have received your little book, UNCLE TOBY ON TOBACCO, and thank you for it. But the best proof of its utility should be its effects upon the clergy. We can hardly expect youth to refrain from Tobacco when their moral teachers set them so bad an example. When you have reformed those of your own profession, if you will apply to me, I will give fifty dollars to reform the rest of mankind.

Yours very respectfully, &c.

3. Clergymen in examining candidates for church fellowship can enquire as to the use of this drug, as well as to other intoxicating agents, and advise its victims to stand aside till self-denial shall rise to a higher pitch in their case. An eminent divine assures me that he goes fully into this matter, and would no more admit to his church a devotee to Tobacco, than a devotee to rum. There are churches in the Sandwich Islands which act already on this principle; and if we would purify the waters of the sanctuaries around us, we must do the same.

4. Clergymen can do much with youth, in schools. In nine cases to ten, the habit is formed in boyhood; therefore we should begin with the young, where the disease begins. Hence schools, academies, and colleges, with which clergymen are identified, should receive special attention. And then our colleges, instead of teaching this vile habit, will become centres of purity, radiating light and spreading reform far and near.

5. The Pulpit can assail this sin. The late Dr. Edwards said that "the use of Tobacco is a destructive lust, a crying sin, and little would be done against it, until Christian ministers and pulpits did their duty." The late Dr. Woods fully concurred in these sentiments. Why should not the pulpit assail it? It assails the pulpit, and silences many an eloquent preacher in the dew of his youth, and abridges the usefulness of multitudes. Do you say that it is an *impurity* — beneath the dignity of pulpit rebuke? All sin is an impurity in the sight of God; why should it not be in the sight of men? If this habit is too vile to be named in the house of God, what shall we think of ministers and deacons who practice it in the house of God? Do you say that it is merely a habit, and pulpits are not called upon to meddle with habits? All continuous violation of law is a habit: this is a violation of law — law written upon body and soul by the finger of God; and may not the pulpit enforce God's laws?

Do you say good men use it, and hence the pulpit must be silent. Believe it not. Good men have different views; their consciences accuse them, they believe the habit to be wrong, and they will honor the preacher who rebukes it. Let clergymen speak, especially those who can speak from experience; let the renowned clerical "*Apostle of Temperance*" speak against Tobacco as he once did against alcohol; let him tell us of the woes he has felt in his own soul and ministry by its agency, and his confessions will remind us of the confessions of Hawkins and Gough, or the confessions of the far-famed opium eater.

Let 20,000 pulpits and 2,000 Christian presses speak on this great evil, and exhibit its destructive bearings upon the souls and bodies of mankind, upon the church and world, and a reform will come on, which the good on earth and in heaven will both approve and love.

“Men called of God to expound his laws,
 With all your might and tongue and pen,
 Called to his courts to plead the cause
 Of virtue with your fellow men,
 Hope ye to make your work succeed
 By virtue of a poisonous weed?”

Baptized in the Redeemer's name,
 The holy and the undefiled,
 When ye administer the same
 Baptism to a new-born child,

Findeth your inner man a use
For baptism in Tobacco juice ?

Are ye, when with the adoring throng,
The Almighty Spirit ye invoke,
Made in the strength of God more strong,
By memories of Tobacco smoke ?
Think ye the incense of your prayer
The sweeter that it taints the air ?

When parents stand with tearful eyes,
And ye kneel down beside the bed
Whereon a dying maiden lies,
With thin, white hands, and drooping head,
Think ye, ye make that bed of death
More sweet by your Tobacco breath ?”

Yours truly,

GEO. TRASK.

Fitchburg, Mass., 1855.

