

**Comment--and
Discomment**

In these days, when the doings of the gamblers and poker players are almost as interesting as the tales of husbands who refuse to stay at home nights, we are minded to tell the best poker story we've heard in years. This is it.

Three brothers lived down in Missouri, who were champion poker players. One of the boys finally moved to Wyoming, reformed and went to the other extreme of becoming a preacher. The aged father, while on a visit to the latter boy, was suddenly taken ill and died, and the preacher wired his other two brothers, who were still in Missouri and sin and iniquity, as follows: "The Lord called father last night." The answer came promptly back: "How much did father lose and what kind of a hand did the Lord hold?"

All of which reminds of the touching little ballad that Doc Tanner sang at the minstrel show that the editors put on during their last excursion. It was to the tune of "Mother," but the words ran like this:

P—is for the pup who taught me poker;
O—is for the "owe" in I. O. U.;
K—is for the kind of hands they dealt me;
E—is for the easy mark I be.
R—is for the royal flush they held out.
When they dealt me queens—and aces three.
Take them all together they spell Poker,
The game that made a bum of me!

But to get away from political questions, we'll discuss the efforts of certain estimable ladies back east—Massachusetts is certainly back east in the land of fair women and mortgages, if you'll recall the plays they used to feature on the kerosene circuit. These ladies have declared war on the cigarette and have banded together to put it out of business. The next big fight, they say, after national prohibition is assured beyond hope of referendum, will be to down the coffin nail and save the boys.

It is eminently fitting and proper that this movement to save the boys should start in Massachusetts. That state is the only one, and the census figures for 1910 are available to prove it, in which there were more women of marriagable age than men. But why should they try to save Nebraska boys? The average Bay State woman wouldn't live out in this barbarous west if they'd give her a man. We had some little experience with the bean eaters—both sexes—and they aren't strong for us. During the war they made allowances—the dear girls are patriotic, bless their hearts—and managed to love the soldiers and sailors for their country's sake, but now that the excitement is over, ten to one their ideal man is one who carries a dictionary in one hand and goes to prayer meeting with the other.

A discussion of feminine pulchritude is always admissible, if conducted purely from an high-minded and aesthetic point of view, of course. During our naval career,



which was too largely confined to shore stations in the east, we had an opportunity to observe the various types of beauty of at least a half-dozen of those states, and our preference just naturally falls on Rhode Island. It's a small state, but the average is high. It may be that one reason is that this state is honey-combed with mills, and that nine out of ten of the girls are mill hands, and have the opportunity to buy fancy cloth for clothes at lower prices than their sisters. All we could judge by was the general effect—time and money was lacking to make a complete and thorough investigation in the interest of science—and we are frank in saying that there are more pretty girls in the average small mill town in Rhode Island than in the whole city of Boston.

Massachusetts, according to the same census mentioned before, is fast becoming a colony of old maids. Therefore it is natural that this state should be the leader in legislation affecting women. It is natural that it should lead in legislation in favor of dumb animals. And it is also fitting and proper that the nation-wide attack on the deadly cigarette should come from this source. With thousands of women who have nothing to do but mind the canary bird and give the kitty its morning bath, small wonder that their minds should turn toward regulating what they know least about—the habits of the sterner sex.

We hold no particular brief for the cigarette. The friends we have—with the possible exception of Rufe Jones—smoke vile brands that pollute the atmosphere. Some of these cigarettes are stronger than our pet pipe, and others are as rotten as the cigar a paper salesman handed us this afternoon. The scamp was wise—he gave it to us after he had got

his order. We don't like cigarettes, not because they are supposedly deadly, but because they don't last long enough to give a man a real smoke. It's a pest to keep on lighting them. We never accept a cigarette as long as someone will give us tobacco.

But is the cigarette as deadly as these women seem to believe? Of course very few of them have first hand information, and they are excited only because of what they have read. There has been a lot of guff spilled about the deadly influence of tobacco—and a lot of praise of the weed has been fully as nonsensical. Medical opinion can be found to support almost any opinion one wishes to hold. Some doctors will say that the cigarette is deadly, but that the pipe is comparatively harmless and the cigar mildly injurious. Another physician says that the cigar is least harmful—the cigarette next and the pipe the instrument of thousands of deaths. Still another physician may hold up the pipe and tell of the curse of the pipe and cigarette.

Far be it from us to declare for any one of them, or curse any. We get a moderate enjoyment from a cigar, provided someone else buys it and provided, further, that it tastes not of sumac, the Jimson weed or the lowly cabbage. Our pipe is a wonderful companion, save that we are vexed every day or so when we let her drop and the stem is busted. Cigarettes are welcome when pipe or cigar are not at hand. We have a theory that the use of the weed helps keep our weight down to normal, and if any physician seeks to disprove this, we warn him that we will not argue the question. That's our position, and we will stick to it, no matter whether we are proved wrong or not. We have illustrious precedent for our attitude. We know of one Alliance man whose own sworn statement has proved him mistaken, but he will not admit himself convinced.

What we seek is information. If someone will conclusively prove to us that tobacco is harmful, we'll concentrate on the least harmful way of using tobacco—unless it turns out to be cigarettes or snuff. One funny thing about the tobacco business is that the majority of those who are best fitted to know its harmful effects—the physicians—are among the most confirmed users. We checked over twenty-five Lincoln physicians, a year or two ago, and out of the twenty-five, but two were abstainers. Remember, we are speaking of tobacco. Out of the twenty-three, three-fourths of them smoked cigarettes.

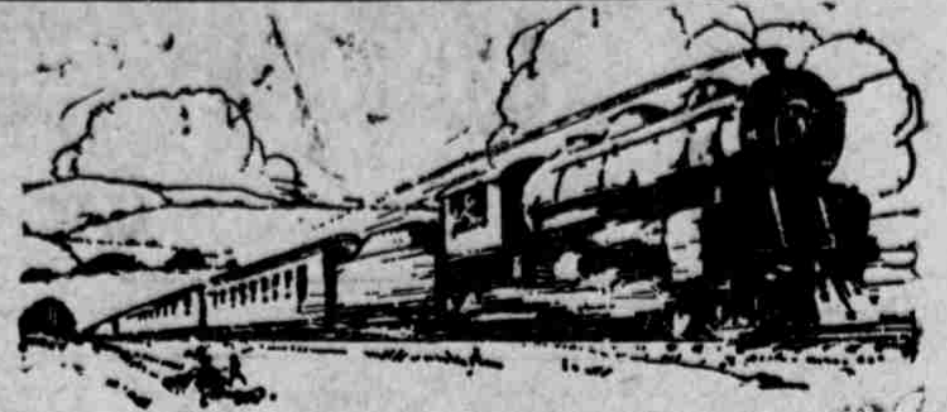
We spoke to one of them about the matter, and he told us that he used cigarettes because they were the least harmful. Our informant was the leading surgeon in Lincoln—some folks call him the leading surgeon in the state—and a few of his friends say "west of Chicago," which takes in a lot of territory. He's one of the few men that the writer would be willing to have cut into him. Bear in mind that we do not yearn to have anyone pry into our depths; the operating table has no charms for us. We dislike the thought of it, wholly apart from the expense.

This surgeon said that a number of his colleagues, in fact quite a percentage of the members of his profession—believed the cigarette to be the most harmful way of using tobacco. He didn't agree with them. He had tried them all, save snuff, and he found that a cigar or a pipe made its effect known on his nerves—and a cigarette had no such effect. When a man is performing all sorts of operations, day in and day out—

in some of them where a hair's breadth difference in using the knife might mean the loss of a life—his word on the tobacco question ought to be worth something.

Oh, well! The girls back in Massachusetts don't intend to put a stop to anything but cigarettes. We may still smoke our pipe, and a cigar when we can afford it, or when a salesman drops in. But we do hope the girls aren't making a mistake. We hope they'll thresh it all out in sewing circles to the music of parrots and canaries. It would be better—they'd realize this if they were married—to have their husband smoke cigarettes than eat onions or cabbage, but they haven't any husbands and their chances of getting them are slimmer than those of their sisters out west. Their motive troubles us a bit—is it the revenge of spinsterhood, or is it simply another thing for idle hands to do?

At least, if the worst comes to the worst, it will be easy for a man to stack his cellar with cigarettes. Picture the day when it will be necessary to hide when rolling your own, or taking one from the case. Think of the numbers that will be thrown in jail. There'll be a cigarette squad to every police department, and the one alibi will be cubebbs—unless they, too, are prohibited by law. But that would be too much to expect. The millennium isn't due to arrive for a few years yet.



A vast amount of work now remains to be done which the intervention of war has necessarily delayed and accumulated, and the result is that very large capital expenditures ought to be made to make up for the interruptions inevitably caused to the war, and to prepare the railroads to serve adequately the increased traffic throughout the country.
WALKER D. HINES,
Director General of Railroads.

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