



SHOULD LADIES SMOKE?

A DISCUSSION.

I.—HER HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS GAGARINE.

"Why?" said Alice.

"Why not?" said the March Hare.

OF course they should, if they like it. There are a great many very charming women who smoke and a great many who do not. The question is not so much in smoking as in the smoker. Personally I dislike it heartily, and nothing would make me take it up. When I was a little girl, two boys, great friends of mine, decided I was to be taught to smoke. It made me faint and miserable; but the boys, who had passed through that stage, assured me I should enjoy it presently, and, by dint of persuasion, pinching, and calling me "Just a girl!" contrived to make me smoke four cigarettes. Then I went home with a headache, and was scolded by my governess for smelling of tobacco. Next time the boys wanted to give me a lesson in smoking I flatly refused, and have never smoked since.

I suppose nobody liked smoking from the beginning, and surely most people begin it out of mischief: some think it is smart

and *chic*, and make up their minds not to pay any attention to the preliminary suffering and unpleasantness; and women reduce the unpleasantness to a minimum by smoking cigarettes. I have never even heard of a woman smoking a pipe, and I know only one who, in private, indulges in a cigar. I respect other people's likes and dislikes when they are genuine; and the lady's strange taste is surely natural!—no woman would smoke cigars and look as horrid as she does unless she really found some pleasure in it.

It is generally thought that in Russia all women smoke. As a matter of fact very few do, and those few are nearly all middle-aged. Their generation thought it was the thing to smoke. In the 'seventies the writings of Tolstoï, Tourguéniev, Dostoievsky, who were then at their best, produced some quite unexpected changes in society. Their ideal woman was the comrade and fellow worker of men, learning the same things, working for the same cause, living the same life as

they did. This current brought to light some women who, like Sophie Kovalevsky, made a name for themselves; but they were the exception. The generality thought it easier, on the whole, to help their husbands, by smoking cigarettes with them. But my generation thinks otherwise, and, since smoking is now allowed in the elder classes of most of our public schools for boys, most of the young men do not smoke either.

I do not think the question of health is very important in this case. In the East all women smoke, and feel none the worse for it. It is true a *narghilé* is quite a different thing from a cigarette, and certainly a much cleaner thing. The smoke passing first through the water loses most of its bad qualities. If there is any harm done it is to the lungs, which become too dilated through the effort of drawing in the smoke. And how very ungraceful the Eastern ladies look, squatting on the floor and pulling away at their *narghils* just like overgrown babies!

However, if no harm is done to the health by smoking, it is quite certain that no good is done either; and, above all, it is so absolutely

useless! Like all forbidden things, smoking has to answer for a great many lies, deceit, and disobedience. The fate of the Archduke Albert of Austria's daughter is forgotten now, but at the time it was much spoken of. The young Archduchess, who was about sixteen years old, had taken to smoking in secret, and one day, hearing somebody come into the room while she had a cigarette, and, fearing she would be found out, she hid the lighted cigarette in the pocket of her thin summer dress. The dress caught fire, and she died from the effects of her burns in fearful suffering. I have always wondered if, at the time, her sad fate made some girls discontinue smoking.

Surely women have better things to do than smoke. And in moments of idleness is it not better to sit quite quiet, without any of the fidgeting caused by the lighting, dropping of the ash, and continual going out of a cigarette? How few women possess the art of being calm! and how reposeful it is to be with such a woman, so much more than with one who puffs away at her cigarette, looking incongruous and old-fashioned!

M. J. Lang

II.—MISS EVELYN LANG.

IN my opinion, most decidedly not. No one is more anxious than myself that women should have their "rights," but these "rights" are not identically the same as those of men, and there are certain occupations and habits which are eminently unsuited to them, and among the latter I should class smoking. A novelist usually describes his heroine as having pearly teeth, perfumed hair, and a faint odour of violets clinging to her; but no one has yet attempted to interest his readers in a girl whose teeth are discoloured by smoking, and whose hair and clothes exhale a perfume of stale tobacco. Every vestige of romance vanishes when smoking appears on the scene. The mother kissing her sick child with lips from which a cigarette has just been taken, or the sick-nurse who relieves the tedium of watching by a little

smoke, does not present herself in an agreeable light to the imagination.

From the point of view of health, smoking is most undesirable for women. Too many Englishwomen already injure their nerves by the immoderate use of tea or coffee, and if the poison of nicotine is to be added to these, women suffering from "nerves" will become far more common. Men find tobacco soothing, and it does not do them any harm as a rule; but then they principally smoke cigars and pipes. Cigarette-smoking is considered by many doctors to be most injurious, on account of the paper; and in Spain the excessive cigarette-smoking indulged in by the men is considered to be most harmful, and to cause fits and other diseases.

It seems to me a great pity that English girls should be adopting such a masculine habit. It is true that many foreign ladies

smoke who cannot be called in the least masculine; but it is the only "advanced" habit they have, and is always done in private, they not having yet arrived at the dignity of smoking-rooms at their clubs, or, for the matter of that, at having clubs at all. In England it is different. There is no doubt that many girls are in danger of losing their feminine charm in their efforts to emulate the habits of the opposite sex. Certainly, when one sees some of the girls of the present day, with their figures made angular and bony by overmuch cycling and athletic exercise, their unbecoming masculine dress, their use of slang, and their cigarettes, one feels an uneasy doubt as to whether in some respects the "old" woman were not superior to the "new."

One is much struck by the want of charm of English girls after having been in the society of foreigners. Of course, the helpful, vigorous, well-educated, and independent girl of to-day is a great improvement on the sentimental, fainting, crying, and helpless

woman of the early Victorian period. But English people have an unfortunate habit of running into extremes, and it is much to be regretted that so many women, in their anxiety to show they can do precisely what men can do, should adopt a habit so unsuited to their sex as smoking. I read lately that in certain parts of the United States women were trying to concert measures to prevent the sale of cigarettes to boys and youths, owing to the baneful effects this practice has caused among them. It must certainly be quite as injurious to young women as to young men, if not more so. However, I do not suppose for one moment that the fact of its being good or bad or any other argument would have any weight in the matter: a woman who wishes to be up-to-date must smoke, and there is no more to be said. But I think her a horrid, unfeminine creature for all that, and I hope men will shun her as she deserves: there is nothing more likely to bring her to her senses.

III.—THE HON. MRS. HENRY CHETWYND.

THE question as to whether women should smoke can best be answered by saying it depends upon the *how* and the *when*, and the *where* and the *why*. There is no reason why a woman should not smoke if it is not done aggressively, if it is done when it puts no one to inconvenience and offends no one else, and if it is done in the intimate society of those who also affect it.

Women who have been much abroad, or much thrown into foreign society—two very different things—get accustomed to smoking because it is more common among Russian and French and American women than it is here. A cigarette soothes the nerves of a woman quite as much as it does those of a man, and there are many to whom a cigarette is of benefit. The harmfulness of smoking cigarettes really depends upon the presence or absence of opium, which is introduced into certain cigarettes, and which is naturally injurious. And the habit of smoking a very great deal is, of course,

injurious, like most things not used only, but abused.

But it has sometimes been said—and with some element of truth—that scandal would be less virulent if women talked it with the help and under the influence of a good cigarette. Also, as nothing is more trying than talking to your husband or brother in the smoking-room if they smoke and you do not, it promotes companionship and good-fellowship in a *tête-à-tête* with a near and dear relation. But where it is very objectionable is when a manly woman tries to ape a man's way of smoking, or smokes all day everywhere in public and in an aggressive manner, regardless of the prejudices of other people, annoying and disturbing them.

Nothing can look worse than to see a woman lounging about at a railway station with perhaps a cigar in her mouth and a vulgar swagger worthy of that cigar. I have seen this. It is enough not only to bring

condemnation on the habit among women, but to warn off any one having an inclination to smoke at all. If a woman elects to smoke everywhere, she should at any rate find out if in doing so she is likely to annoy other people. But it is one of the many misfortunes attending the adoption of men's habits that it is generally the least desirable manner that is copied. A well-bred man only smokes when his doing so is not an annoyance to others, but a woman who wants to assert her "right" is too apt to assert it in an offensive way.

Another argument against women smoking is the detestable odour of stale smoke; but this any refined woman gets rid of very easily.

Some men have a very strong prejudice against any woman having such a habit—a prejudice which is a little selfish, because those who mostly object are the very men who most appreciate and enjoy tobacco in all shapes—cigars, pipes, or cigarettes.

It has been noticed by certain medical men that some women like and can smoke cigars far stronger than those commonly used by men. Mantegazza, the Italian philosopher, who has studied the question of *feminism* from every point of view, quotes this as a remarkable fact in a recent number of the *Humanitarian*.

But if a woman finds solace and comfort in anything, she is apt to use that form of comfort to excess. *L'appétit vient en mangeant*, and where the weakness of woman's will comes in sometimes is precisely in not knowing how to keep a habit within bounds. When this is the case it is natural for those who see a bad influence to lay down the maxim that women should not smoke at all.

Women have to bear, often in silence, much that so essentially tries the nerves, that no solace or soothing influence should be denied them. Men can get away from home worries, if these exist, and take refuge in outdoor amusements, clubs, etc. But when can women altogether shake off these things?

Upon her fall those tiresome, minute, and incessant little worries which are often so much more irritating than the larger trials of life. If she tries to keep the home atmosphere bright and unclouded for a husband who may be a politician or a professional man, it is very often at the cost of a great deal of expenditure of her own nervous energy. She has a thousand cares, a thousand petty trials, to face, of which, if she is a proud woman, the world will never know anything. And when the evening brings quiet, is she to sit by and see her husband smoking "the cabinet of peace on the carpet of contentment" and not share his pleasure? This would indeed be unjust. And yet how shocked some men are at the bare idea of a woman venturing to smoke! If they think the habit horrid, why do they not prove the truth of the old adage, "Example is better than precept"? But no real, sound argument has ever been produced against the woman in this case being put on a different footing from the man. Where, however, those whom a woman is bound to consider have a fixed and rooted objection to a woman smoking (even the post-prandial cigarette), of course she must resign herself to the deprivation.

No temporary solace, no fleeting satisfaction, is worth a dispute or a family jar, and prejudices and convictions upon one side must be respected; therefore it must not be argued that, because I see many reasons, many arguments, in favour of a woman being allowed to smoke, I think she would be justified in doing so when it is displeasing to those she is in every way bound to consider. Nothing can well be more harmless in itself than the peace-inducing cigarette, and it is only when strong prejudice makes it a ground of offence that it should be viewed differently and treated as holding a possible danger—the worst of all dangers in home life, a serious difference of opinion with one beloved.

Julia K. Ketchum

IV.—MISS MERESIA NEVILL.

THIS is a question which, without being of any great importance, has agitated and disturbed many, and would by the majority of people be answered in the negative. Let us proceed to examine *why* this answer should be thus generally given, and I think we should be able to prove that it *is* so generally given because of prejudice, and nothing else. Smoking by ladies is, as far as regards this country, the result of that gradual emancipation among women which is making itself felt, more or less, in every relation of life, and shows itself particularly in the different positions women now take up, such as lady doctors, lady clerks, etc., etc.

Of course, Turkish harems have ever been the resort of the lady smoker, and, from what one hears of their serenity and composure under a trying existence, we must concede much to the soothing power of a cigarette.

One of the reasons why ladies who smoked were looked upon with horror was, I think, because the habit began amongst the fast set, and it seemed impossible for people to separate the quiet "lady," who smoked because she enjoyed it, from her fast sister, who did it because it was considered the "right thing to do."

Again, with regard to ladies smoking, *why* should not they enjoy a pleasure which can be shared with their male relations, and which, if indulged in in private (who could wish to see a lady smoking on the top of a drag or in the park or any public place?) conduces to good temper and soothes ruffled nerves? There is, of course, one great danger, not only to ladies, as regards smoking, but to men also—that is, that they should get *too* fond of it, and indulge in it to the detriment of their health; but this applies to most "indulgences." At the same time, it is a very real danger to be guarded against. The most sensible advice with regard to smoking was that given by a real woman of the world, who said: "If

you consider smoking to be *wrong*, do not smoke; but if you do, don't for one moment be ashamed of it." Personally, I should never mind any one knowing I smoked. In short, I can recall instances when, having a friend coming, I have said to myself, "I *know* they will be shocked at seeing a cigarette in my mouth"; but after grave consideration I have decided whatever they think is not worth the sacrifice of my cigarette, and I am thankful to say in every case I *have* kept my friend. In these days it is the exception to find people shocked at a lady smoking, and, more often than not, cigarettes are handed round at luncheon to men and women alike.

Of course, if one wants a historical mention of smoking, one thinks of the story of Sir Walter Raleigh in his study at Youghal, when, his servant seeing him smoking and being alarmed at the smoke, rushed for water to put it out. I can also call to mind the story of a lady friend who went to lunch in the City with a man friend. After they had had lunch, he said to her, "Do have a cigarette." The lady, all too willing, lit one. The waiter coming up, she quietly hid it in the folds of her skirt; whereupon the waiter, seeing only the smoke, said, "Pardon, sir, the lady is on fire."

The people I consider as absurd are the ladies who affect to smoke, hating it all the while, and looking a sorry figure, puffing away at a cigarette as if they were moving a weight. No, certainly leave this habit alone unless you really like it.

To sum up the whole question of ladies smoking, it all depends *how* it is done and *where* it is done, and a lady will never do it when it is likely to annoy or give offence.

Where the prejudice exists most strongly against ladies smoking is among the middle-class and old-fashioned people, who view the extension of the practice with disgust and alarm.

Meresia Nevill

V.—MRS. HUGH FRASER.

'Twere better, perhaps, if we parted !
 'Twere better we never had met !
 But now you are part of my lot, dear,
 Destructive, but sweet, cigarette !

THE subject seems to have two sides, which should be separately dealt with—namely, smoking as it effects women themselves, and women's smoking as it affects the family and Society.

First, as regards ourselves, I am inclined to think that healthy and happy women, who are not obliged to work for their living, would do well not to initiate the habit. They do not require the solace or the stimulant which it affords. A habit formed unnecessarily is like a loan obtained at heavy interest when the borrower has more than enough for his needs already in hand.

A very charming girl, finding herself rather "out of it" in a gay circle where all the rest were smoking, asked me if I would teach her, since she was afraid to begin in public. I invited her to lunch the next day, and she came, expecting to have her first whiff, and perhaps her first headache. But I had put the cigarettes away. "Don't begin it at all, my dear," I said. "We should all feel that it took something from your charm. It will be time enough if you are ever hard-worked and lonely—but not now."

And this is what I would say to all girls—Not now! For reasons of health, for reasons of beauty, for reasons of taste, abstain from smoking until it can be of distinct use to you, and then curb the habit with care, lest it become your master.

As a servant, to hard-working people it is invaluable. Any woman who sits, as I do, seven and sometimes eight hours a day at her writing-table, will find that there are moments when a good cigarette is like the gift of a new head. The nerves are soothed and the brain stimulated. When the pen is taken up again, it often finds that some knotty point has become clear, that some tangled sentence has resolved itself into grammar and harmony.

There is nothing like a little good tobacco for softening the keen isolation of lonely

journeys, solitary meals, and silent evenings. It would be unreasonable to forbid any one to take advantage of such a help. But all the good of smoking turns into harm at the slightest excess; and there is something especially painful in seeing a woman the slave of a physical habit.

Perhaps my sisters will think me very old-fashioned if I state my conviction that, as far as smoking in the family circle or any other is concerned, we ought to be governed entirely by the feelings of our men on the subject. It should be almost a matter of chivalry with us to do nothing that can offend their taste. We do not have many opportunities of returning the countless daily courtesies which we regard as our right—courtesies which involve the sacrifice of something, be it only the back seat in the carriage, the best place at the play, the first helping from the dish—the unnoticed trifles which we should be so amazed and angry to miss. What gave them to us? Chivalry, the doctrine of the beauty of ideals. I would rather give up every indulgence in life than hurt my own picture in the eyes of one who loves it.

As a matter of fact, many men are pleased to have their womenkind smoke a little. It makes home smoking less lonely for themselves, and encourages good comradeship in the evenings. It has been my pleasure and profit to sit with my sons and their friends through whole nights of the most brilliant and interesting talk that any woman could listen to; and the fact that they looked upon me as one of themselves was due in great part to their knowledge that smoke had no terrors for me, and that an occasional whiff from "Mummy's" Turk mingled with the heavier fragrance of their cigars. But I have heard these same boys speak with cold disgust of girl visitors who thought to amuse and please them by flaunting ill-managed cigarettes in their faces.

Finally, if you decide to smoke, learn how to do it before making an exhibition of yourself; don't make faces; don't inhale, and avoid cheap cigarettes.

Muriel Crawford Fraser