

NICOTINE KNOCKOUT OR THE SLOW COUNT

By Gene Tunney

It's over thirteen years since I retired from the heavyweight championship. But here's a challenge: If Joe Louis will start smoking, and promise to inhale a couple of packages of cigarettes every day for six months, I'll engage to lick him in fifteen rounds!

Of course Joe wouldn't be foolish enough to meet my terms. No boxer, no athlete in training, smokes. He knows that whenever nerves, muscles, heart and brain are called upon for a supreme effort, the tobacco-user is the first to fold.

But how about the ordinary chair-sitting citizen who never climbs into a prize ring or laces on a spiked shoe? Does smoking affect his vitality, shorten his life, and nudge him down the trash skid before his time? The grim monosyllabic answer, based on medical testimony, is "yes." Heavy smoking has a positive and demonstrably bad effect on longevity.

With every puff, heavy smokers shorten their own lives. Dr. Raymond Pearl, of Johns Hopkins, found that among 100,000 heavy (over ten cigarettes a day) smokers, 53,774 die before the age of sixty. Among the same number of non-smokers, only 43,436 die before that age. "Smoking," he announced, "is associated with definite impairment of longevity. This impairment is proportional to the habitual amount of tobacco used." Even if you smoke moderately, you have much less chance of reaching sixty than if you don't smoke at all. It's a slow count, but it gets you finally.

The cause of most of the trouble is, of course, nicotine. No one has ever denied that nicotine is poison. Taken clear, it is as quick acting and fatal as prussic acid. A drop of it on a shaved rabbit causes immediate convulsions and death. The nicotine dissolved out of a few cigarettes and placed on the tongue of a grown man would kill him in fifteen minutes. Luckily the bulk of the nicotine in tobacco is volatilized in smoke; you do not get the poison straight. But if you smoke a pack a day, you inhale four hundred milligrams of it a week. That much in a single dose would kill you as quick as a bullet.

This powerful poison is the source of all the "pleasure" derived from smoking. It touches off the mechanism by which the adrenal glands release quick energy from the liver and muscles. You do get a "lift" when you light a cigarette. But it's exactly like the lift you get from cocaine, heroin, marijuana. All these things can stimulate the adrenals, cause a momentary increase of sugar in the blood. Under the flogging of the nicotine whip, the body burns up sugar faster; heart action, respiration and blood pressure are kept at a ding-dong pitch. At the end of a two-pack day, the smoker's system has received an unmerciful beating. Impoverished nerves and body cells cry out with fatigue and irritation. The chain smoker suffers from a chronic "tired feeling." He is an energy bankrupt, and must borrow new energy at the outrageous interest rate of still heavier smoking. Meanwhile, his food tastes like a motorman's glove, and a hacking cough keeps his throat as raw as a sandpapered blister. Some fun, smoking!

But these are minor matters. Nicotine leaps straight at the heart and circulatory system. Smoking even one cigarette narrows every blood vessel in your body. Dr. Alexis Carrel states that even one puff from a cigarette contracts the tiniest capillaries in your legs and

feet. As a result of this constriction, the heart must pump faster and harder in order to force blood through the narrowed arteries. The resultant strain is clearly shown in electro-cardiographic examinations. The Life Extension Institute, which makes thousands of these examinations annually, lists excessive smoking high among causes of anginal heart attacks and Buerger's disease—the latter a horribly painful blocking and tightening of the blood vessels in the body extremities. Nicotine also causes undue amounts of hydrochloric acid to pour into the stomach. Heartburn, indigestion and "acid" conditions are directly traceable to excessive smoking, and an almost certain way of getting stomach ulcers is to smoke regularly on an empty stomach.

But nicotine isn't the only toxic substance found in tobacco. When you inhale you take carbon monoxide, ammonia, carbolic acid, pyridine, and a host of tarry substances into your lungs—and through them into your blood stream. Carbon monoxide causes headaches; ammonia irritates your nose and throat. Pyridine is a powerful irritant of the bronchial tubes. The tarry substances coat your tongue, blacken your teeth, and are thought to play an important part in causing mouth and tongue cancer, found oftenest among heavy smokers. Arsenic, sprayed on tobacco plants to kill insects, remains in the processed tobacco in measurable quantity. The scorching heat of the smoke itself, reaching 140 degrees as your cigarette burns down toward the end, sears the mucous membranes of nose, throat and lungs, reducing your resistance to colds and other respiratory diseases. "Not a cough in a carload" may be true about cigarettes themselves—the cough is in the smoker's roughened throat and congested chest.

Too many people accept their craving for tobacco as a commonplace social habit. But I maintain that heavy smoking is a disease symptom. Whenever I see a chain smoker in action I know at once that he is plain sick, and should submit to a searching medical examination to discover the underlying cause of his smoking. On the physical side, this may range from a thyroid deficiency to a faulty diet or lack of exercise. Or there may be an emotional factor. My psychiatrist friends tell me that most of their patients are frantic smokers. When their lives get straightened out, the craving for tobacco falls away.

I've always opposed the pernicious advertising that extols the "benefits" of tobacco-using. While I was training for my second fight with Jack Dempsey I was offered \$15,000 to endorse a certain brand of cigarettes. I didn't want to be rude; so, in declining, I merely said I didn't smoke.

Next day the advertising man came back with another offer: \$12,000 if I would let my picture be used with the statement that "Stinkies must be good, because all my friends smoke them." That compelled me to say what I thought—that cigarettes were a foul pestilence, and that advertising which promoted their use was a national menace.

I am here reminded of the Metropolitan Opera tenor whose picture was emblazoned on billboards with this joyful declamation: "Gaspies Do Not Hurt My Throat." When asked about it, he laughed and replied: "It is true, Gaspies never hurt my throat—I don't smoke."

Such misleading advertising I cannot rap too hard. It is dangerous, particularly to our 35,000,000 young people. To contract the to-

bacco habit when the growth factors of the body are exerting themselves to their maximum is to handicap oneself physically and mentally for life.

To me the ugliest of advertising is that which features soldiers or sailors smoking cigarettes. As director of the Navy's physical-fitness program, I can bluntly say that few things could be worse for physical fitness than promoting the cigarette habit.

"Sentimentalists will object: 'Why deprive the boys of the innocent pleasure of tobacco?'" My reply is: "Should our citizen Army be less rigidly conditioned than a college football team?" And here's a special word to mothers—send your boy in camp athletic equipment instead of cigarettes—a baseball mitt or a set of boxing gloves.

If you think this sounds goody-goody, take a look at my companions in the non-smoking section. The late Knute Rocke, Notre Dame's wonder coach, said: "Tobacco slows up reflexes, lowers morale; any advertising that says smoking helps an athlete is a falsehood and a fraud." William Muldoon, famous conditioner of men, considered nicotine the greatest harm to health in the modern world. Ty Cobb, the famous Georgia peach of baseball, says, "Cigarette-smoking stupefies the brain, saps vitality, undermines health, and weakens moral fibre. No one who hopes to be successful in any line can afford to contract so detrimental a habit." In the face of such testimony I can only ask, with Tolstoy: "Why do men stupefy themselves with tobacco?"

I have never heard a sensible reply. But let me tell you the story of the Bedouin chief who told the young men of the tribe: "There are three good reasons for smoking: First, if you smoke enough tobacco, you smell so strong the dogs will never bite you. Second, if you smoke long enough, you will develop a lung trouble which will make you cough even when you sleep. Robbers, hearing you cough, will think you are awake, and so will not try to steal your belongings. Third, if you smoke as much as you can, you will have many diseases, and will die young."—Reader's Digest.

In an address given to ministers and workers after his ninetieth birthday, George Muller spoke thus of himself: "I was converted in November, 1825, but I only came into the full surrender of the heart four years later, in July, 1829. The love of money was gone, the love of place was gone, the love of position was gone, the love of worldly pleasures and engagements was gone. God, God alone became my portion. I found my all in Him; I wanted nothing else. And by the grace of God this has remained, and has made me a happy man, an exceedingly happy man, and it led me to care only about the things of God. I ask affectionately, my beloved brethren, have you fully surrendered the heart to God or is there this thing or that thing with which you are taken up irrespective of God? I read a little of the Scriptures before, but preferred other books; but since that time the revelation He has made of Himself has become unspeakably blessed to me, and I can say from my heart, God is an infinitely lovely Being. Oh, be not satisfied until in your own inmost soul you can say, God is an infinitely lovely Being."

Religion is all moonshine—moonshine is the reflection of the sunshine, and true religion is the reflection of the Sun of Righteousness.