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**EDITORIAL.**

**THE DOPE PERIL.**

As nurses know too well, the drug habit—more especially the morphia or cocaine habit—is contracted with fatal facility, and, once contracted, holds its victims in a relentless grip, from which it requires the greatest resolution to escape—a resolution which the victim, with progressively weakened will, is rarely capable of exercising.

As we recently reported, Miss Ellen La Motte, addressing the Matrons' Council on February 25th, emphasised the existence of a widespread, internationally organised traffic in our midst, more especially in cocaine, and declared that those who watch the papers will constantly read of the arrest of some person engaged in this secret and unlawful trade. Since that date hardly a day has passed on which we have not found in our daily papers proof of the truth of her words. The victims of the "dope" trade appear to be chiefly the young. Girls and lads, by no means necessarily vicious, but giddy, maybe, and thoughtless, full of the joy of life, desirous to have "a good time," and ignorant of, perhaps wilfully blind to, the peril of the Night Club, with its excitement, its opportunities for gaiety degenerating into license, and then the insidious suggestion—the same suggestion as caused the downfall of our first parents—that it is good to taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that its fruit is to be desired to make one wise. The tempter and the tempted, downfall, tragedy; that is the sordid and vicious history, and too often the last chapter records the death of the victim, whether man or woman, by misadventure, suicide, or violence.

To grow rich on the ruin of the weak, and especially of the young, is the objective of those engaged in the dope traffic, whose agents, it appears, in this country are frequently men of colour. The deadly "snow," as cocaine is called, is passed from hand to hand in such vehicles as cigarette cases, matchboxes, even fountain pens. Perhaps, indeed, nothing at all passes, but a sniff of the drug is obtained at an extravagant price, and the craving is temporarily relieved, to return later on with added intensity, and, as toleration is established, requiring larger and larger doses to obtain the same result.

Now that we are aware of this increasing peril in our midst it behoves every one of us to do everything in our power to suppress it. The underground trade, actually as well as figuratively underground, for the majority of the Night Clubs in which the traffic is to a great extent carried on, are housed underground, must be put down with a stern hand, and new legislation, if necessary, enacted to cope with it.

But do not let us forget when we rightly blame the secret agent, that we as a nation cannot be held free from blame so long as in our Eastern Empire, from which the chief supplies of opium and cocaine are obtained, we put upon the market a far larger supply than is required for the legitimate trade, applying the profits to the purposes of revenue.

It is a far cry from an Auction Sale under a tropical sun, at the instance of the Government, to the inquest on the death of a young girl in a London Coroner's Court, but the connection is there, and we must not shirk the fact.

As nurses, let us do what we can, when we can, and where we can, to secure the abolition of this hideous trade, and to rescue its victims.

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