

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,828.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1923.

Vol. LXX

EDITORIAL.

"THE WORLD'S HEALTH."

CALLING A HALT IN THE DRUG TRAFFIC.

The World's Health, a monthly review, is published by the Secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies, and there are three editions—in English, French, and Spanish. The review is now in its fourth volume, and those of us whose sympathies are international from a human viewpoint cannot fail to find its contents of interest.

In a recent issue "The Drug Problem" is dealt with by Miss Ellen N. La Motte, on the basis of the excellent address given by her before the Matrons' Council at the London Temperance Hospital last year, when she gave a filip to the conscience of the Council on this all-important question.

Miss La Motte repeats that a new activity in the field of preventable diseases is the fight which must now be made by public health workers in all countries against the habit of drug addiction: the taking of habit-forming drugs, such as morphia, opium, heroin, and cocaine. This drug habit is no new thing, but what is new is the realisation of its extent and ramifications. It is making rapid inroads upon the peoples of all countries, and is a menace to the well-being, and to the mental, physical, and economic efficiency of individuals of all races. The United States has had a sharp awakening to the danger, and is becoming fully aware of the magnitude and seriousness of the problem. America has always been keenly alert on all matters relating to public health and national welfare, so it is not surprising that the agitation for the suppression of dangerous drugs should find its chief support in that country. No nation in the

world, however, is exempt from this drug danger, but, so far, no other country has made such a study of the evil. Should they do so, they will find the same facts before them, and will receive the same uncomfortable shock and surprise upon learning how prevalent is the habit, and how difficult, if not impossible, is its prevention.

Where do all these drugs come from, in the first place? Why is there always an immense output—to be sold, legally or illegally? Opium, from which morphia and heroin are obtained, comes from the opium-producing countries—India, Persia, Turkey, and China. In China, however, opium-growing is illegal, and is done in defiance of the law. In India, the largest opium-producing country, every step of cultivation, manufacture, and sale is conducted by Government monopoly. In India alone the output for 1919-20 amounted to about 971 tons.

The amount of opium required for the proper medical needs of the world is small, indeed infinitesimal, as compared with the immense output used for drugging. Therefore this gigantic over-production must be stopped before the drug evil can be abolished.

The Opium Commission of the League of Nations is attempting to weld the world together by a system of restrictive legislation, similar in all countries, the object of which is the final suppression of the traffic. But the opium trade dies hard. Its end can be accelerated by an aroused public opinion that will no longer tolerate this immense over-production, part of which finds its way through the world by legal and illegal channels, which make temptation easy and revenue certain. The time has come when on this issue the moral forces of the world must call a halt.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)