

THE PERIL OF NARCOTIC DRUGS

A Pamphlet for the Use of Teachers and Parents

PHILOSOPHY - HISTORY

The human race is consuming every year many thousands of tons of poisonous narcotic drugs not one percent of which is necessary for strictly medicinal purposes. Nearly all of this great quantity is consumed by addicts who number in the world scores of millions, - who are abject slaves, - who consider getting their drug supply as the supreme consideration, in many cases as a matter of life and death.

The production and distribution of these drugs constitutes a profitable traffic of vast proportions extending to all corners of the earth, - In the Orient, the chief home of the sleep poppy whose seed capsules produce opium, the governments, for the revenue profits, encourage and often subsidize production and control distribution, - In the Occident where chemical science is turned to concentrating the poison of opium into morphine and turning this into a still more powerful poison narcotic, heroin. Laws and regulations loosely enacted for repression drive most of the addiction traffic to cover where it flourishes in the dark in spite of the agents of the law.

The motive and urge that constantly drive the traffic on are the enormous profits, the jobber and retailer in the illicit traffic between them often realizing more than a thousand per cent profit. Add to this the lure for the armies of impoverished addicts of getting the drug for themselves through recruiting and supplying new addicts.

The profits are so great because the poor addict under the awful depression and torture of (withdrawal symptoms) feels he must have the drug no matter what the cost or the consequences, whether he has to spend his last dollar, whether he has to steal to get the money, whether he has to rob or even commit murder.

The bulk of this vast horde are "hooked" into addiction because of their ignorance, never dreaming what the consequences are to be when they take the first "shot" or first "sniff".

The sleep poppy, the source of opium, is a native plant in Southeastern Europe and Western Asia. Frequent notices of its use for poisoning are found in ancient and medieval records. Opium smoking was devised by the Dutch in Java in the Eighteenth Century, first mixed with tobacco, then used alone. From Java, it was taken to Formosa, and thence to the mainland of China.

Portuguese traders first developed the importation of opium into China.

They were succeeded by the East India Company with a monopoly of the traffic of India. The amount shipped from India into China rose as high as 10,000,000 pounds in the year 1858. In 1906 the production in China itself was estimated at 44,000,000 pounds, importations from India that year being over 7,000,000 pounds. At that date estimates place the number of addicts in China at 27 per cent of the adult male population.

In 1803, a French chemist discovered how to produce morphine from opium and a half century later, an Austrian chemist discovered how to produce cocaine from cocoa leaves.

These concentrated drugs used generally in medicine, ten times as powerful as opium, swiftly produced addiction in all lands, at first as a by-product of medical practice, later through exploitation as well.

In 1898 a German chemist discovered how to produce heroin from morphine, between three and four times as powerful as morphine. With the spread of heroin, the narcotic menace has developed into a pressing world peril.

In 1729 the Chinese Government issued an edict prohibiting opium smoking in China. The effect was good but proved of little permanent avail. In 1790 the Chinese Government again issued an edict prohibiting opium smoking and in 1800 prohibiting the importation of opium into China. This led up to the opium wars waged on China which compelled its submission to the importation of the opium.

The dawning of hope for real reform came when America in 1905 enacted a law prohibiting opium traffic in the Philippine Islands and sent a Committee to the Governments of the Orient. This action was followed by China in 1906 with an edict prohibiting the use of opium and the culture of the poppy. Upon the initiative of the United States, the first International Opium Conference was held in Shanghai in 1909, followed by a second and third conference at The Hague in 1912 and 1913. Recently conferences of the Opium Commission of the League of Nations and its Committees have been held at Geneva.

These conferences while of great value, particularly in bringing out the fact that narcotic drug addiction is a problem to all nations and to the human race, have illustrated how slow and how difficult it is to secure adequate international cooperation and how, even where these have been secured, though of elementary nature, the greatest difficulties have been encountered on account of smuggling. Universal experience has shown that laws and treaties are difficult to secure and more difficult to enforce.

TOXICOLOGY -- BIOLOGY

The principal narcotics that have defied legal control and are now scourging humanity, namely, opium, morphine, cocaine, heroin, belong to the general class of organic or hydro-carbon poisons. They concentrate their attack upon the nervous system, producing delirium, coma, convulsions.

These are all alkaloidal poisons, most of which in nature are generated by plants.

Opium is the coagulated sap of the capsules of the sleep or white poppy grown chiefly in India, China, Turkey and Persia. Morphine constitutes the principal poisoning element in opium, about eight to fifteen per cent. Heroin was made formerly only from morphine by treating it with acetic acid and hydrochloric acid. It is reported now, as stated, that chemists have learned how to make it synthetically from coal-tar products. Cocaine is made usually from the leaves of the cocoa plant grown chiefly in South America, but is now made also synthetically from coal-tar products.

Chemically, these poisons are built up around the deadly pyridin base containing five atoms of hydrogen, five atoms of carbon, and one atom of nitrogen, joined together in a nucleus like a closed ring. The complex structure in this opium group contains three rings, the phenanthren structure united to the nitrogen nucleus, with oxygen introduced.

In morphine, the formula, C 17, H 19, N O 3, contains seventeen atoms of carbon, 19 of hydrogen, and one of nitrogen, three of oxygen. The formula of cocaine is C 17, H 21, N O 4. In the case of heroin, acetic and hydro-chloric acid introduce additional complexity, giving more powerful poisoning properties, producing morphine-diacetylata, having the formula C 21, H 23, N O 5.

Protoplasm, the living material from which all living parts are built, is composed of proteins, water and a little salt. Its life processes require a regular supply of food and oxygen and regular elimination of waste products. Some poisons attack the protoplasm itself; some interfere with its necessary life processes; some do both.

The highly organized alkaloidal poisons combine readily with proteins, and easily penetrate the wall or sheathing that protects the living cells. Consequently, we would expect the result to be not only violent derangement in the

usual activities and life processes, but permanent injury to the structure.

Since the nervous system is the most highly organized part of the whole human organism, it is not surprising that these complex alkaloidal poisons should show their chief effect upon the nervous system and should attack man more than the lower animals. Since, of the nervous system, the upper brain is the most delicate, it is not surprising that this part should be the first attacked and the most deeply injured, although it is from damage to the functions of the lower brain that death occurs with a fatal dose.

PHYSIOLOGY

Narcotics are soluble in fat, so they penetrate the fatty sheathing that protects the brain from most harmful substances in the blood current, and in this way the poison comes quickly in contact with the delicate, highly organized gray matter.

One of the earlier physiological effects is to stop the action of the parts that cause the sensation of pain, and this is what gives narcotics their chief legitimate value in the practice of medicine, but even in the effect of deadening the sense of pain, the action of the drug is that of a poison.

In the same way, these poisons attack the delicate carefully protected organs of reproduction, impairing the sexual powers of the male, causing the female addict to become sterile, and undermining the germ plasm by virtue of which the species renews its life from generation to generation.

Tyrode (Harvard) in his Pharmacology, sums up the symptoms of morphine addiction as follows; "Depravity of the mind; general debility; loss of weight and appetite; loss of sexual powers; sleeplessness; eczema, contracted pupils, diarrhoea alternating with constipation, and finally death from mal-nutrition."

The case is different with cocaine and heroin. The victims of these powerful drugs unless they have repeated treatment live but a short time, at best. The degeneration of the upper brain is so swift that the elements of character crumble in a few months. Complete demoralization follows and often the life of crime joins with physical ills and the spur of the torture of the drug to hasten the end.

One-eighth of a grain of morphine or one-twenty-fifth of a grain of heroin is sufficient to put a person under the drug. In a few days, the system will develop sufficient capacity to neutralize this quantity. Then the drug effect will be felt only after getting beyond the point of neutralization, when it will be necessary to have a quarter of a grain, later a half grain, and soon a grain and more to produce the desired effect. Though one to two grains of morphine is a fatal dose ordinarily to a person unaccustomed to the drug, ten grains of morphine daily is common, many taking 20 grains, some 50. There are records of more than 100 grains taken daily.

When the drug begins to subside, as it does in a few hours, the equilibrium is upset as though by an irritating poison. The distressing effect is general, no part of the body escapes. A condition of torture sets in. The muscles seem to become knotty. Cramps ensue in the abdomen and viscera, attended frequently by vomiting and involuntary discharge of the bowels. Pains often succeed each other as though a sword were being thrust through the body. In advanced cases this suffering (called withdrawal symptoms) is considered the most acute torture ever endured by man, and continues for days. In some cases, death will ensue if the addict is far advanced and the dose or "shots" are suddenly stopped. The drug of addiction will quickly relieve this torture. Naturally, the addict comes to consider getting his supply of the drug as a matter of life and death.

PSYCHOLOGY

Morphine, cocaine, heroin are white powders, all soluble in water, all bitter to the taste. Morphine is usually put up in the form of tablets. Cocaine and heroin are called "snow" and in various localities by other names.

Heroin predominates now, especially in the eastern portion of the United States, so that "snow", "snow parties", etc., refer usually to heroin.

When luring girls into addiction the peddler often calls heroin "headache powder." With peddlers at large, using as they often do boys and girls to aid them, the safe precaution for a youth of either sex to take is to repulse instantly any suggestion to "take a shot" which means to take a hypodermic of morphine, to take "a sniff" or "a blow" of "snow", and to avoid all forms of white powder.

It is the custom to give away heroin free to the youth till he or she is "hooked". When children are away from home it is a safe practice to accept nothing as a gift to eat, drink or whiff, not even from a supposed friend. When you decline the first offer the boy or girl aiding the peddler will taunt you or challenge you and say "try anything once", "you will get a kick out of it"; "Watch me"; "Come to our 'Snow Party' and watch the other fellows do it." Alas! ONCE is once too often. The poison is so swift that the poor youth will seek the next party for relief, and the next. A "snow party" a day for a week will probably drag a youth into the bondage of addiction worse than death from which experience teaches there is no sure escape.

The narcotic poison penetrating the upper brain, naturally inflicts the deepest and swiftest injury upon the parts that are the tenderest, the most complex and unstable, which are developed latest in human evolutionary progress and distinguish the man from the brute. This part of the brain may be considered as the temple of the Spirit, the seat of altruistic motives, of character, of those high, God-like traits upon which an advanced and enduring civilization are built.

The transformation in character is swift in the young, and swifter with cocaine and heroin than with the other narcotics. In an incredibly short time, a youth of either sex "hooked" with the "snow gang" loses the results of good heredity and of careful home training.

Self respect, honor, obedience, ambition, truthfulness melt away. Virtue and morality disintegrate. The question of securing the drug supply becomes absolutely dominant. To get this supply the addict will not only advocate public policies against the public welfare, but will lie, steal, rob and if necessary commit murder. Thus we can understand how intimately addiction is connected causatively with crime.

In addition to the general antisocial traits of all addicts, the heroin addict has two special characteristics. First, for a period after taking the drug he experiences an "exaltation of the ego", looks upon himself as a hero. Bent upon getting money to buy his drug, he will dare anything, thinks he can accomplish anything. The daylight hold-ups, robberies and murders committed by these young criminal heroin addicts eclipse in daring all the exploits of Jesse James and his gang. This can be said also of cocaine addicts.

Secondly, the heroin addict has a mania to bring everybody else into addiction. It may be said in general that all addicts have a desire for company and wish others to share with them the problem of securing the drug supply, but in the case of the heroin addict, it is an absolute mania for recruiting. He thinks, dreams, plots to bring all whom he contacts into addiction. All addiction is communicable. Heroin addiction can be likened to a contagion.

Another general characteristic of addiction psychology is secretiveness. Where the drug supply is easily accessible so that withdrawal symptoms do not

occur, addicts sometimes remain for months or years undetected by their own families and almost intimate friends.

SOCIOLOGY

The family is the foundation of society. In the family, society not only prepares its citizenship in the most essential attributes of character, but renews its very life through the welding of two lines of germ plasm. Without considering the economics of the home and the want and tragedy that come in with narcotics, we must look upon narcotics as making a deadly assault upon the germ plasm itself. In the earlier stages addiction weakens the germ plasm and tends toward the production of abnormal offspring.

In the later stages of addiction, the male addict loses sexual power and the female addict becomes sterile, thus the line of germ plasm ends.

It is usually morphine given in illness by a careless physician or taken in patent medicines that brings addiction with its train of sorrows, to parents in established homes. However, these make but a small percentage of the new addicts. Heroin on the other hand, usually catches the boy and the girl between sixteen and twenty, or even younger, like the young bird, before it has learned to fly, and the new homes are never built. These victims constitute the bulk of new recruits that are swelling the ranks of addiction.

The average standard of character of the citizen determines the stage of civilization. The spread of morphine addiction tends to bring social disorders and gradual decay. The spread of heroin besides lowering the standard of citizenship, of necessity, hastens social death by stopping the reproduction of homes.

It is with the nation as with the individuals and the families that compose the nation. The unchecked advance of addiction must entail national degradation ending in national death.

In scientific circles because of their ghastly plight and almost hopeless outlook for permanent relief, addicts are called the "living dead". The spread of addiction in any land must be regarded as the approach of the "living death" to that people. Left to run its course the approach will be slow or swift according to the drug. Slow with opium, faster with morphine, galloping with heroin.

Suppose it were announced that there were more than a million lepers among our people? Think what a shock the announcement would produce. Yet drug addiction is far more incurable than leprosy - far more tragic to its victims, and is spreading like a moral and physical scourge.

In the latest hearings - those conducted by the Committee on Ways and Means, having under consideration the Porter Anti-Heroin Bill just enacted - Dr. Amos O. Squire, Chief Physician of Sing Sing Prison, said: "That drug addiction is on the increase there is no doubt in my mind. To illustrate, since 1918, comparing it with the year ending June 1922, shows an increase of 900 per cent in the number of drug addicts admitted in Sing Sing Prison. There has been a radical increase since 1919."

Before the same Committee, John W. H. Crim, Assistant Attorney General of the United States, speaking of narcotic addiction, said: "It is unquestionably increasing. About 40 per cent of the prisoners we are sending to the penitentiaries at Atlanta, Leavenworth and McNeil Island this term of court are addicts.

Dr. Alexander Lambert, in a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 67th Congress, said: "Cocaine brings an insanity, an acute insanity with it, but cocaine and heroin both, inflate personality. Heroin cuts off the sense of responsibility in the moral sense much quicker than morphine. The heroin addicts

will more quickly commit crime with no sense of regret or responsibility for it. The herd instinct is obliterated by heroin, and the herd instincts are the ones which control the moral sense in the sense of responsibility to others. Heroin is the worst evil of them all."

On account of secretiveness, no one knows just how many heroin addicts there are in the country. We know it is an army. Serious estimates for the total number of addicts as reported in the 1918-19 survey of the Treasury Department range from 200,000 to 4,000,000. Dr. Carleton Simon, Special Deputy Police Commissioner of New York City, has estimated that while only 58 ounces of heroin were lawfully prescribed by the medical profession in the City of New York in the last twelve months, 76,000 ounces were consumed. Remember that 2,000 young addicts can be created with one ounce. The mind that concentrates upon the heroin problem must stand appalled.

TREATMENT

While a real beginning has been made in international relations, looking toward the control of the production and international distribution of narcotic drugs, experience has shown how difficult it will be to secure and enforce adequate measures. High hopes have been created by the activities of the Opium Commission of the League of Nations, but an investigation of the particulars has shown how many obstacles, -- some almost insuperable, -- have been encountered, especially where vested commercial and financial interests are involved. Even if an adequate agreement were reached as to the production of opium by the members of the League of Nations, some of the most important producers of opium are not in this League. Even if it were possible to control the production of opium from the poppy, its production or the production of its narcotic alkaloids by synthetic process can scarcely be controlled even by the most drastic international and domestic laws.

Our Treasury Department estimates that more than 90 per cent of all the drugs used in addiction are now smuggled, in spite of all that our Federal Government and State Governments are doing. All measures found practicable should be taken to secure standard laws by national, state and local governments, and co-operation of agents in their enforcement. Yet vast profits are at stake; the drugs are powerful and concentrated; airplanes or even carrier pigeons are effective as carriers. Consequently, the law at best is not an adequate effective treatment of the problem.

Much confusion exists in the manner of treatment of addicts. The methods are various and the results are varied. The consensus of expert authorities however shows that the percentage of addicts who remain permanently cured is exceedingly small, -- so very small that while salvage is an important humanitarian matter, it cannot be considered in any sense as a primary means of treatment.

Prevention is society's recourse. Education alone can be regarded as adequate treatment. Quick information conveyed to society everywhere as to the peril that exists will arouse a motive for self-preservation from which will flow the best that can be done in laws and in salvage. Regular instruction, uniformly, wisely, automatically carried out in homes and in schools will cause the young hereafter to have a consciousness of the danger upon the approach of a peddler and this education repeated through the generations, will clothe society with a mantle of protection, producing a race consciousness of this new peril of environment leading ultimately to immunity. The words of the Legislative Committee appointed by the New York State Legislature sum up the case as to narcotic drug addiction: "The cause is ignorance, the consequences misery, the remedy education."

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we have the following conclusions. Narcotic drug addiction is a serious universal problem which has become acute in America through the spread of heroin addiction. There are probably five times as many narcotic drug addicts in the world as there ever were slaves at any one time and the bondage is far more abject and far more dangerous.

America is being assailed by opium with Asia as a base, by Cocaine with South America as a base, by Heroin and Synthetic Drugs with Europe as a base. An unscrupulous traffic within joins the traffic from without. This deadly drug warfare, that from three sides and from the inside is striking at our citizens, our homes, our institutions, the very germ plasm of our people, is more destructive and biologically more dangerous to our future than would be united military warfare against us from these three continents.

Without knowledge of this peril, people, especially the youth, fall easy victims to organized exploitation. Delay will be costly to the nation in life and character and the stability of our institutions. To the task of carrying out promptly an adequate educational program all good men and good women who love their country and love humanity, and all constructive organizations, -- private, semi-public and governmental, should rally. Upon the result hangs the destiny of America and in large measure the destiny of the world.
