

Indulgence in Poisons

Since the remotest times, man has consumed poisons for his pleasure. The intoxicating drinks, wine, beer, mead, have been in use from the most distant times. In Mesopotamia, in Egypt, in Persia the oldest inscriptions make mention of opium. According to Herodotus, the Scythians knew the properties of Indian Hemp (Kif, haschich, marihuana). As far as their traditions go back, the Indians of South America used to chew coca leaves, or in Mexico the peyotl; in North America they smoked tobacco. Distilled alcohol is mentioned in India and in China, eight hundred years before Jesus Christ. Some Siberian peoples used to get drunk on the most toxic of mushrooms, the false orange, the Polynesians on the Kawa root, a kind of pepper. The animals themselves delight in these perilous pleasures: among the horses of the Far-West, certain of them eat toxic vegetables (lose-weeds) and often travel a considerable distance to find them; they waste away, are agitated by trembling, their gait becomes reeling; they have to be slaughtered to prevent the example from spreading.

Chemistry has given us new sources of intoxication: laudanum, morphine, heroine, codeine, cocaine, ether, chloral, sulfonal, trional, veronal, luminal, dial, gardenal, somnifer, and many others; there even may exist eaters of camphor and arsenic, drinkers of chloroform, of benzine or even of mercury and sublimate.

All of these poisons, if taken daily will give rise to a need so dominating, that in order to satisfy it addicts will some-times go as far as committing a crime; but it is necessary to distinguish between the products which lead to a general decadence followed by a miserable death, and these substances which are less injurious. The offspring of alcoholics, of morphinomaniacs or of cocaine addicts frequently show some blemishes; nevertheless, the addict himself is often the victim of a deadly heredity, so that it is difficult to say what may be attributed to the transmission of these anomalies, and what is the effect of the poison. We may add that even for a healthy individual, misery, sickness,

sorrow and also opportunity and temptation constitute terrible menaces.

Why has humanity, from time immemorial knocked at the door of artificial paradises? Sometimes fatigue pushes us to seek strength outside of ourselves, sometimes it is physical pain, moral suffering, or the desire to escape from the realities of existence which demand a freeing of the body and mind.

Moreover, these hopes are always deceived, because on one hand the endurance of the chewer of coca leaves or of the eater of opium is derived from a temporary insensibility to fatigue, but does not give any additional strength; on the other hand, the sensation of well-being and the happy dreams which narcotics confer, are the most treacherous of our temptations; as it is always necessary to increase the dose, it is soon a descent to hell.

Let us admit that wine, beer and tobacco taken in moderation, may add to the pleasures of existence, and as for tea, coffee, betel nut, or the kola nut, these stimulants turn aside the peoples of South America, of the Mohammedan world, of the Orient from alcohol. Let us not be too exacting towards human nature, so feeble and so imperfect. Asceticism is the portion of wise men, who find compensations of an exalted nature in an interior life. The rest of mankind, incapable of ascending to these heights, lead an existence often trying, or disappointing, or at least monotonous and commonplace. Experience has proven that it would be in vain to forbid them an innocent stimulation in which they could momentarily find deliverance from their condition.

All our severity should turn against the poisons destructive of health and of the race, which undermine the will power and end up by degrading mankind: alcohol in too liberal doses, and in any large quantities except for medical use, opium, morphine, cocaine, haschich. If these substances still cause enormous ravages, diminished, it is true, by the rulings which international conventions have imposed, it is because they yield tens of millions each year to those who manufacture them, transport them and

sell them, often fraudulently. Have not they been known to offer the formidable sum of 125,000 pounds sterling to a customs officer, which he refused, to obtain his complicity? Such a figure is evidence of the enormous profits to be made.

Only the vigilance of governments, the incorruptibility of their officials, the power of a public opinion awakened to

the danger of narcotics—and here the Red Cross owes it to itself to play a conspicuous part—will permit the production and consumption of these substances to be reduced to legitimate needs. Indispensable to the doctor, the surgeon, the oculist, the laryngologist and the dentist, they have eliminated the terrors from the most painful diseases and the most terrible operations.

Important Notices.

The T.N.A.I. Annual Conference

By the kind invitation of the Hyderabad State it is announced that the Annual Conference of the Association will be held in Hyderabad, Deccan on or about 20th to 24th November. All members are asked to note this date and to plan to be present if at all possible. Fuller particulars will be given in the October Journal, together with registration slips.

Student Nurses' Exhibition

In connection with the T.N.A.I. Annual Conference an exhibition of

models, diagrams, etc. will be held under similar rules as obtained last year. Student Nurse units intending to submit exhibits are asked to get into touch with Miss Checketts, Mens' Hospital, Palwal as soon as possible.

It is also announced that two prizes will be awarded in an essay competition. The essays should be written in English on the subject "The Nursing Profession in India, and its possible future development." All essays in this competition should be posted to be with Miss Checketts on 15th October, 1944, and the competition is limited to student nurses.

Public Service Commission, United Provinces

Applications are invited from British subjects, preferably of Indian domicile for the post of Superintendent, Nursing Services in U.P. Pay Rs. 600-750. The post is a gazetted one of the status of a Provincial Service and non-pensionable, but the incumbent will be entitled to join the U.P. Contributory Provident Fund. A person already holding substantively a pensionable post will continue to enjoy pensionable rights in respect of this post also. The appointment will be on contract for five years, renewable for similar five year periods. A candidate must not be more than 45 years (46 years for Scheduled Caste candidates) of age on 1st January, 1944. She should have passed the C.M.B. examination, and should be registered either in India, the United Kingdom, or the British Dominions and Colonies, as a fully trained nurse in the medical and surgical nursing of men, women and children. She should have had wide administrative and teaching experience, and should have held the appointment of matron in a hospital recognized for the training of nurses. Last date for receipt of applications on prescribed form obtainable from Secretary on furnishing a treasury chalan for Re 1/- (not refundable) September 30, 1944. Candidates who have already applied for the post need not apply now.

Dated Allahabad, July 28, 1944.